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Excerpts from  
**The Heavens Declare**  
Astrological Ages and the evolution of Consciousness

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## **Part I**

### **The Astrological Signs**

*With our eyes open, we share the same world; with our eyes shut, each of us enters his own world.*

Heraditus

*There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not:*

*The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid.*

Proverbs 30:18-19

*God never does the same thing twice.*

Martin Buber

## Chapter 1

### The Ring of Quiddity

Dear friend,

October 25th, 1980, was a rather remarkable day. It was a wedding day, and the bridegroom and the bride were both crowned with white hair. To tell the truth, it was one of the happiest days of my life! I am only sorry that you were not there, but I had not yet met you. Despite the protest, at first, by one of my children that it might be unseemly at our age to have a big wedding, we had one. When I pointed out that all those invited might be willing to show up at my funeral, so why not a wedding, she really had to agree. Well, we called it a “love feast,” and friends and family all came bringing food. We were married in an Episcopal church by two dear friends who are clergymen and a Buddhist monk. Walter had flown to Long Island from California. Miraculously, we had met aboard a ship on the Mediterranean while I was teaching a course on Jungian symbolism and the collective unconscious as we visited Italy, Greece, Egypt, Israel, Turkey, and Yugoslavia.

I wore a deep rose-red velvet gown with a crown of daisies on my head and was attended by two little granddaughters, who were flower girls, and a solemn grandson, who was the ring bearer. Another dear friend sang the aria from Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*, “Oh trust in the Lord, wait patiently on him, for he will bring thee thy heart’s desire.” I remembered first really hearing it on the radio some twenty years previously while mending my children’s clothes and pricking my finger, which brought tears—a time when life seemed pretty hopeless indeed. It is so strange, isn’t it, when we are asked to trust, how the ego interferes and tries to sort it all out, and we remain convinced that there is no way out of despair. I have experienced that quite often and can only say, numb as I felt, I did trust. Probably because, having met my teacher M when I was so young, I knew better than to deny the possibility of solutions. But I can confess it was hard, and it went on being hard for a long, long time. So this music on my wedding day filled my heart with special gratitude.

When the Buddhist monk began his blessings, we were on our knees and wondered how long the chanting would continue. I clearly remember Jessie, aged four, calling out in great concern, “Oh, Daddy, he doesn’t know how to talk!” After the ceremony, we repaired to the reception hall, a medieval Norman building brought over stone by stone from France by J. P. Morgan. Some Irish musicians began to play the accordion and *bodhran*, the drum, and we danced jigs and reels till the lights suddenly went out. Huge iron standing candelabra were brought in, flares were lit, and we went into a sort of time warp. The whole event, in fact, felt like time out of time.

My reason for mentioning this is that, besides the wedding guests, all the elements attended. There was such a storm that most of the eastern seaboard suffered a blackout! The wind howled, thunder and lightning boomed and crackled, and sheets and sheets of rain fell from black skies and swirled and eddied in huge puddles outside the church. I remember one daughter-in-law, up to her knees in water, writing “Just married!” in lipstick on our car. When we left for our honeymoon, we drove in utter darkness to Connecticut, and the next day the seas were so rough that the ferry to Martha’s Vineyard was unable to sail. That’s rough!

I was reminded of this when I began thinking how to start our next series of letters. I knew that we should begin with a discussion of the signs. How could we first approach them through the elements? Somehow the “coniunctio,” or inner marriage, takes place in the midst of the four elements, and, by golly, that’s what really happened. So by hindsight, I see that the wedding must indeed have been blessed with more symbolism than I had realized. I never truly appreciated that until this moment.

What a pleasure to hear from you! I am so pleased that you are eager to continue your study of astrological processes and that you see how they relate to Jung’s many-faceted concepts of the individual and, indeed, the collective psyche. I am so grateful that the former letters on the planetary archetypes (*Jungian Symbolism in Astrology*), merited publication and proved helpful to others, as well. You should keep that book handy to refer to as we go along. It might help refresh your memory.

Maybe it would be helpful to give you a preview of what I hope to cover in this next series of letters, so that you can see the whys and wherefores of studying the elements and the signs before getting to the exciting but more transpersonal matter of the astrological ages. We hear so much about the “New Age” and do not appreciate the fact that not only is there a recurring cycle of ages, each cycle approximately 26,000 years long, but there is every historical evidence pointing to the fact that both the collective unconscious (Jung) and the collective conscious are in evolution, and, furthermore, that this evolution is repeated sequentially and psychologically in each individual. This makes it relevant to each of us. So I will try to explain this majestic unfoldment in terms as clear and simple as I can find.

Also, I thought it might be helpful to you to include a small manual summarizing basic definitions of terms so that you can refer to it (pp. 231) whenever you feel uncertain of something we covered in the first series of letters. There are many excellent texts on astrology already in print, so the purpose of these letters is rather to emphasize two things: 1) the necessity for understanding within yourself and through your own body the various processes represented by the signs; and 2) appreciation of their equivalent within the psyche. After all, we are psychosomatic creatures, and Jung has pointed out that many of our individual problems can be worked upon within the psyche without necessarily being acted out in the physical world as “fate.” This would include many illnesses having a psychological disturbance at their root, though not all.

I always like to remember that the word “cosmos” means beauty, the beauty of order and harmony. When you realize the way our solar system interconnects with the greater model of the ring of the twelve visible constellations, it takes your breath away. I think what would relieve much of the religious angst of the modern world is to see at least a glimmer of patterned meaning or meaningful pattern to the unfolding of our history, both individual and collective. We have had to wait for a more general understanding of the collective unconscious and Jung’s other great contribution, the further development of the concept of synchronicity, to grasp this. (See Glossary. Go on, try it!) But I think we are ready now, and, hopefully, a new understanding of astrology’s function will be our guide. Each of us has to take on the task of seeing a spiritual reason for our individuation: it is our very uniqueness that represents our gift, our “widow’s mite,” to the collective. And the collective unconscious is the sum total of consciousness of all creation, ever there for each individual to draw upon deep within himself or herself. No wisdom nor love is ever wasted. Even our terrible sufferings are not wasted, for they go through the alchemical transmutation of pain into wisdom, leaving traces behind in the collective unconscious which may help others. This is the source of myths.

There is a deep reason why universal myths abide, becoming the ground of all religions of the world. As Jung pointed out, they are not “untrue stories,” but rather are always true of the psyche unfolding in sacred time and space, always now and here. They are the literature of the collective unconscious. Myths can be seen as providing a “morphic resonance” for the psyche. Rupert Sheldrake proposes that, with the gathering of a critical mass, sudden leaps occur in evolution. Perhaps then myths provide a gathering place for collective wisdom, for all the human trials and errors, of each individual’s suffering, failure, and triumph. Through the templates of universal myth, God willing, we may be guided and initiated, one by one, until the story of each age is completed. Thus, no one’s love or effort, however small or seemingly insignificant, is ever in vain. Any one of us could add the culminating and critical drop of consciousness that might suddenly change us all for the better. Humanity, despite its rich differences in race, culture, and religion, remains a collective species. As we evolve into this new Age of Aquarius the task is clearly that we need to recognize this as a fact and to see that the new creative dichotomy will be that of the individual and the collective, that of the collective and the cosmos.

So, for me anyway, the essential message is a positive one: we can look up to the mystery of the heavens and see that they connect simply and naturally with the vagaries of our everyday life, giving it the meaning we so desperately seek and want to believe in. This connection may no longer be a question of blind faith: there is now a modicum of factual proof—scientific, practical proof. There seems to be a “menu”(!)—a sequence, something that the ego in us can “read” for comfort’s sake but must always remember that we cannot control. We can now recognize it, savor it, and help to fulfill it. My glass of water connects me to all the water in the world; my little candle flame connects me to all the fire in the universe. But I need not aspire to control the total of these elements. This would be hubris, and it seems typical of humanity sometimes to forget that.

I always remember my teacher M’s admonition that the true purpose of astrology is a spiritual one, to help each individual understand those universal processes, called “gods” by our forbears, that operate both outside and inside us. Its deepest purpose is to reveal the *unus mundus* underlying our various graspings of reality. Alas, much of today’s “astrology” remains a parody of this, which is all the more reason to persevere.

So let’s begin without further ado. Just to refresh your memory, let me repeat a few basic concepts:

Natal astrology answers five elementary questions:

*Who?* Answered by the Sun, which generates its own system.

*What about the Who?* Answered by the Moon and the other planets which reflect, in different ways, the light of the Sun.

*How?* Answered by the twelve signs, which modify the above and will be the subject of these letters.

*To what degree?* Answered by the aspects or geometric relationships among the planets, which will also be discussed.

*Where?* Answered by the twelve houses, which give us the locale in the outer and inner world and represent the stage sets upon which the drama of a lifetime unfolds.

As you know, the underlying premise of both analytical psychology and astrology is that we all subjectively experience the objective world, and in a fashion that is unique to each of us as

individuals. Jung was concerned that we learn to do this more consciously, thereby fulfilling our deepest duty to God by helping the spirit to incarnate more fully in the manifest world, and, at the same time, through our consciousness releasing the imprisoned splendor of creation. In more ordinary terms, he stressed the importance of self-acceptance, of wholeness rather than perfection, seeing the purpose of analysis leading beyond the healing of neuroses to ongoing spiritual growth. For him, he said, the process of analysis was “maieutic” (note the four vowels!), in which the therapist serves as a “midwife” to the inner rebirth of the transformed ego, now able to function harmoniously in relationship to the inner Self, the mysterious center and totality of the psyche—the Christ Within or Atman, or as I like to refer to it, the Divine Guest. This reborn “divine child” is conceived within the individual mothersoul (psyche) and its indwelling fathering Self, a divine spark, called by some the “scintilla.” This process is said to be *contra naturam* (a reversal of nature’s way), yet it mirrors nature’s laws, for any new birth requires a *coniunctio* between feminine and masculine. Here it comes between a god and a virgin mother—a *theotokos* (god-mother) within the psyche of a mortal individual. Can you see how the symbolism of the human family is the closest the sages could come to expressing such a deep and loving truth? It is not the literalism that obtains here, but the clothing and personifying of a mystery in the simplest terms for our understanding.

To be such a midwife is a high calling for sure, and doubtless for many an unconscious one, very naturally forgotten in countless counseling sessions when two people confront each other to go over the seemingly endless and painful details of woundedness. We have all been there. Nor is this limited to analysis per se; it occurs between parents and children, teachers and students, priests and parishioners, doctors and patients, coaches and athletes—wherever one is seeking guidance and another is seeking to guide in matters involving the inner growth of character and personality.

Astrology fits into the picture in that it can provide a map, if you will, to an invisible world, the very “kingdom of heaven which is within.” It can describe for us, not so much *what* our experiences are, but *how* we tend to process those experiences, to respond through projecting our own inner archetypal images in meaningful ways onto life and the people who surround us. As I have said before, the chart is to the psyche what DNA/RNA is to the body: the template that patterns the way we consume life. We unconsciously use this template all the time, whether we believe in astrology or not. But we are given a blessing and a grace in the option to use it consciously and for its deepest purpose, something Jung called “individuation” as it applies to the Self in us, and the theologians call “incarnation” as it applies to Christ in Jesus. This points to the concept of the Christ Within or the Atman. In this sense, the life of Jesus becomes a paradigm for Christians, a model of how to carry our own cross with faith in the powers of redemption. For every great religion there is such a model, an example of human life lived fully and simultaneously at both the human and archetypal level. They have become one. Moses, in the Age of Aries, is the heroic and poignant model for the collective birth of the ego for, like the ego, he could lead his people to the Promised Land, yet he could not enter it. Viewed symbolically, he, like our own individual ego, had the task of leading his people (our inner throng) out of captivity, through a desert (a meaningless inner wasteland) to a Promised Land, a twice-born life. The closer to individuation any mortal comes, the more archetypally meaningful the events of that life are for the rest of us. Certainly we project upon such avatars, but it is because the highest in us resonates to the highest in them. It takes one to know one!

There is a story about Martin Buber, the great Jewish philosopher, that I have always loved. It seems that one day it dawned on him that if he ever got to heaven, the Lord would probably not ask him, “Martin, why were you not more like Moses?” but rather, “Martin, why were you not more like Martin Buber?”

This higher function of astrology is a far cry from Lady Gazeboo’s “Stellar Predictions” in your daily newspaper, but lady Gazeboo can acquaint almost anybody with what their Sun sign is, and so she serves a humble and mostly harmless role. I worry more about the astrology that is practiced increasingly by astrologers identified with their egos, i.e., their mental and controlling intellects, who think they have all the answers, chop-chop-chop. Both psychology and astrology are, first and foremost, lessons in wonder and in awe of how much we do not know and may never know. Beyond the precious mind—and it is precious—lies the ineffable mystery of the heart. What one cannot put into words is where we truly begin:

*Existence is beyond the power of words  
To define:  
Terms may be used  
But are none of them absolute.  
In the beginning of heaven and earth there  
were no words,  
Words came out of the womb of matter;  
And whether a man dispassionately  
Sees to the core of life  
Or passionately  
Sees the surface,  
The core and the surface  
Are essentially the same,  
Words making them seem different  
Only to express appearance.  
If name be needed, wonder names them both:  
From wonder into wonder  
Existence opens.*

Lao Tzu

Astrology, mother of astronomy in ages past, gives us one great talisman as we venture into the unknown. It is the secret assurance that underneath the bewildering confusion of our lives there abides a cosmic order, a majestic and transcendent beauty so great that it bespangles the heavens with one sweeping arc, fearing not at the same time to miniaturize itself in the infinitesimal universe of an atom, or in the incoming gasp of a newborn infant, or the outgoing gasp of one dying. The study of astrology should remind us that, though we share the process of creating, we ourselves and our wondrous worlds within worlds are created. We did not create ourselves. Even our bodies were created by our parents and theirs . . . , and on and on back to whom? Who created our psyches? The answer to that surely is a paradox.

I remember a conversation between an atheist and an agnostic. The atheist believed (an oxymoron to start with) that all creation and evolution were the products of chance.

“Even the human body?” asked the agnostic.

“But, of course!”

“Even the human mind?” pressed the agnostic.

“Certainly,” replied the atheist.

“Well then,” said the agnostic throwing up his hands, “if that is truly so, of what value is your opinion?” Ha!

Anyway, what I am trying to say at the outset is that as Jungian psychology and its equivalents are intended teleologically to lead to spiritual unfolding, so, too, is astrology. It pays to remember that astrology began thousands of years ago when science (based on observation) was one with religion (based on awe). When the two split, astrology’s role in uniting them was repudiated; religion lost its objective proof and science lost its sense of the sacred. However, the resulting tension and polarity may yet have a constructive outcome: a greater consciousness of how astrology might serve in bringing about a new and deeper awareness of the essential affinity of these two. The human race will live in deadly and daily peril until religion and science are reconciled and reunited, both within us as individuals and collectively on our fragile and lovely planet. The great trap for many religions today is the emphasis on “being good.” Being good is the natural by-product, not the goal, of being kind and loving to the Divine Guest within oneself and others. As with innocence, the minute you try to achieve it, you lose it! A shift of emphasis seems required.

We need to remember that astrology itself is neither a religion nor a science. Like mathematics and geometry, it is simply a built-in characteristic of the cosmos as we know it. Dane Rudhyar defined astrology as “an algebra of life.” To pursue its study for me is like reaching out into the darkness and void and touching the face of God, as I felt I did on that lightless night after my wedding.

Once I wrote a little poem:

*STARS*  
*Each star*  
*is a kiss*  
*I would give you—*  
*should others*  
*wake to a starless night*  
*you would be lying*  
*in my arms*  
*covered with light.*

A. O.

It is my intention to present the twelve signs to you in a different way, an oblique way calculated to help you integrate them into your own total being rather than just reading about them using your mind. But in order to accomplish this, I must ask you to memorize *by rote*, without even understanding them, the basics of the astrological alphabet—or scales if you are musically inclined. One cannot read or write without letters or compose without notes, so it is a reasonable request. You will find a set-off booklet, those pages with vertical stripes at their edges, set in the middle of this book (pp. 119–124). The glyphs and sequence of signs are essential. You need to learn them visually as well as orally, so that with ease you can picture, say, Aries and Libra as a polarity and know immediately what signs precede and succeed Virgo or Capricorn, etc. As I have mentioned before, the number of “facts” in astrology, compared to other disciplines, is very small and quite concise. However, the catch is that the permutations are

infinite, so that these potential combinations and regroupings come up constantly in your practice. The universe simply won't stand still for a second while you pin up its hem!

By the way, you will remember the dream that initially gave sanction to these letters. I had been painfully blocked about how to write down my experience of astrology accumulated over forty-three years, and dreaming that I was writing you these letters released the flow of ideas so easily. I am grateful both for you and for the dream. Writing them proved to be an experiment of sorts: would it be possible to take lofty ideas and principles, normally dealt with in logical and sequential exegesis, and present them in an informal and intimate, and (as you remarked) feminine way, a way requiring a meaningful relationship, in this case, of friend to friend? From the response, the answer seems to be an unqualified yes! So consider these letters as a stepstool in a library enabling you, and hopefully others, to reach higher and more lofty volumes. Sometimes the gods and goddesses must envy us our simple human pleasures, which are the direct result of our limitations in time and space. They can't put up their feet and drink a cup of good hot coffee while reading of eternal verities; we can. So many in the world are reaching for higher consciousness, unaware and unremembering that the angels descend as well as ascend. It is only fair, therefore, that we remember them as we wait in line at the supermarket or bend over our desks in the office or walk the nightwatch on an aircraft carrier or with a child sick with a fever. The fair exchange would be to do it for the angels, in the same way that they in their dimension are doing it for us. We just might turn our mortality into a privilege, something as precious as the golden ring of quiddity.

It is good to be back in touch. I look forward eagerly to hearing from you soon.

Love ever,