

Decoding the Oracular Messages of the Planetary Emissaries

Mercury Guiding Star Report for 2009

by Gary P. Caton

Behold, Magi came to Jerusalem, saying, *Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His Star in the East [or at its rising] and have come to worship Him.* -Matthew 2:1-4

The wise men of biblical lore are known by scholars to have been Zoroastrian priest/astrologers who held and practiced the secret knowledge of astrology before it was divorced from astronomy. Scholars assert they were following the heavenly birth of the wandering star Jupiter to the birth of Christ on earth. As above, so below.

In contrast with most astrologers today, I practice an ancient form of Visual Astrology deeply connected to astronomy and the cyclical appearance of the Wandering Stars -or visible planets (the word *planere* meaning: “wanderer”). These wanderers move to and fro against the backdrop of the fixed stars or constellations.

Just as the Magi followed a particular Star to the birth of Jesus, at each person's birth there is a particular Star announcing its presence most prominently in the Heavens. This is your personal Guiding Star.

The speediest of these Wandering Stars, is of course the fleet-footed Mercury. The most important moments for Mercury is when he is nearing a place where he will stop and stand still in the sky before turning and moving backward and finally disappearing from sight (to later be re-born in the East). This is very much like those fleeting moments when the dancing Tinkerbell stands still or when the elusive Golden Snitch hovers in place, begging Harry Potter to capture it!

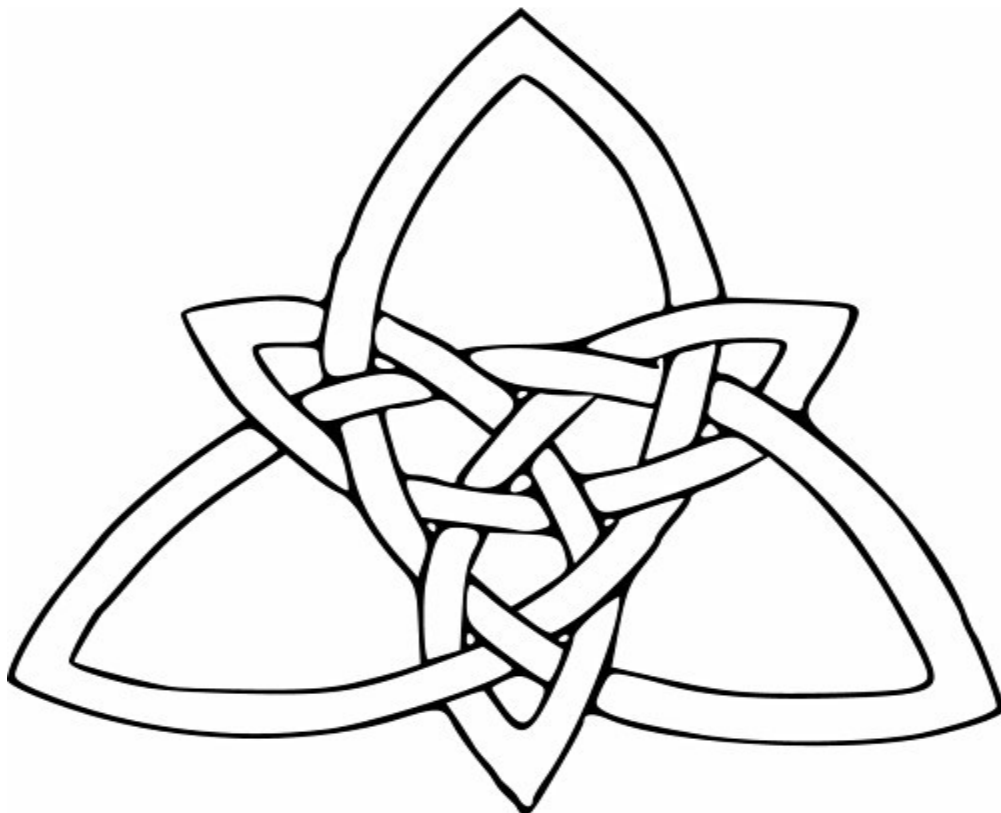


The Greeks called the planet Mercury, Hermes. Hermes was God of highways, thieves, and also trade, profit and commerce. The word *mercurial* is commonly used to refer to something or someone erratic, volatile or unstable. Why is this? Well, because of his speediness, it appears visually that Mercury dies and is reborn 3 times each year! Compared to the 12, 19 and 26 month cycles of the other visible planets, Mercury is in virtually a constant state of Transformation.

This state of constant transformation is why Hermes/Mercury became associated with Alchemy. The Hermetic maxims: "As above, so below. As within, so without" also form the foundation of Astrology. The very name of this mythic figure Hermes Trismegistus (thrice great) -suggests a connection with Trinitarian principles.

Mercury's synodic period (his relationship with the Sun) is very interesting. Every 7 years he completes 22 orbits. This (22/7) is the ratio of Pi –the ratio of any circles circumference to its diameter. Pi is perhaps the most notorious irrational number –and this suggests to me that Mercury has more to do with abstract thought than pure logic. Ptolemy needed a more complex formula for Mercury than for any other planet. Even Newtonian physics was unable to give a complete explanation of its orbit. Eventually Einstein's general relativity theory explained the phenomenon in terms of a distortion of the fabric of time/space by the Sun's gravity. Mercury synodic returns occur at ages 7, 13, 26, 33, 46, 52, 59, 66, 79, and 92. So if you are in any of these years it will carry a distinctive Mercurial flavor.

There are in fact three complete Mercury cycles (of about 116 days) each year. This of course suggests a connection with trinitarian principles. These cycles begin with Mercury's retrograde conjunction with the Sun. This is analogous to the conjunction of Sun and Moon at the New Moon. This is the time the "seed message" is impressed upon Mercury at the beginning of his cycle. Like the seed planted in a human womb, this union occurs in secret –as Mercury is invisible from view.



10-11 days after Mercury turns retrograde he makes the retrograde conjunction with the Sun. Be sure to honor this time with ritual, prayer, visualization and/or meditation. This is especially true if the seed moment of retrograde conjunction happens near the degree of a planet in your natal chart.

In 2009, Mercury is first Retrograde Jan 11-30. The seed moment of the Mercury cycle at retrograde conjunction happens at 0 Aquarius on January 20.

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Mercury is retrograde next September 6-29 . The seed moment of the Mercury cycle at retrograde conjunction happens at 27 Virgo on September 20.

“I will Sing you to me”

The recently released movie *Australia* included several scenes about the indigenous people’s tradition of “singing,” which is more than just song as we think of it. Australian Aborigines believe the world was and is created through “singing” it into existence. This is why the young boy, when faced with the potential separation from a loved one, told them “I will sing you to me.”

Australian Aborigines see “reality” in two aspects: a primary Universe far more extensive than our physical world, and then there is the physical world we know it as. Aborigines call this primary world “Dreamtime” and believe it contains all of the past, present, and future. From this Dreamtime realm, the world of physical energy continually rises as a dream.



To get to grips with the concept of Dreamtime, you have to understand it as an Aboriginal equivalent of the first two chapters of Genesis-with one significant difference. In Genesis, God was present first and created the Earth, the 'living things' and then fashioned Adam from clay. For Aborigines, the Earth was always present and the Ancestors created themselves (including the Sun and the Moon) from the Earth by singing! Once their work was done, the Ancestor Spirits changed again; into animals, stars, mountains or hills or other objects. For Indigenous Australians, this past is still alive and vital today and will remain so into the future. The Ancestor Spirits and their powers have not gone and are not distant, they are ever present in the forms into which they changed at the end of the 'Dreamtime'



What this means is that this vital creative energy flow of the Dreamtime is all around us and needs us to consciously channel it -whether by singing or any other ritual. Otherwise, if ignored the vital energy from the Dreamtime will get blocked or dammed up and we would feel that as psychological pressure. If we don't do anything about this energetic pressure it will come bursting into our awareness as some overwhelming force over which we have no control -what we call Fate.

To frame this process in terms of another culture/myth we can look at the Celtic sabbat or holy day Samhain. The Celts believed that Samhain was a time when the veil between World's was down and the Ancestors walk amongst us. This is because it is the crossing of a phase point or threshold in the annual cycle of the Sun. So it is as if these phase points represent portals or doorways to this other dimension. This is because any phase point in a cycle represents a bifurcation or "tipping point" where one kind of order or experience organically gives way to another. I see the passage of any phase point within your Guiding Star's cycle as a rich opportunity to "sing" to the Dreamtime or purposefully engage the Creative energies through ritual of any kind. I think the "seed moment" is the most important of these, but I will later give a map of the whole cycle w/ the dates of all the phase points -so you have multiple opportunities to access this other dimension. Mercury turning retrograde represents his approach of this "seed moment" and so a time for you to prepare to channel the Dreamtime.

Mercury retrograde begins the final phase of Mercury's cycle which began three months before. Mercury retrograde is the time that the "seed message" –which was impressed upon Mercury at the beginning of its cycle, then received the light of meaning –is now cast to the ground to serve as the encapsulated potential for a new seed message which will arise with the next cycle. So, Mercury retrograde is the Autumn phase of Mercury, where the fruit of the current cycle falls to the ground amongst the leaf detritus –to serve as the potential for re-birth. At such times, we are faced with what Rudhyar called "the autumnal choice:" -to disintegrate with the falling leaves, oriented toward inevitable decay, or to participate in the formation of seeds, foundations for a future cycle of vegetation; seeds that are "oriented toward the sacrificial rite of germination, the rebirth of life forms.... Leaf decay and seed-rebirth. It is for human beings to choose the current to which they are drawn."



What is essentially happening during any Mercury retrograde is that Mercury dies and is reborn again. Mercury goes from being visible in the Western sky in the evening and gradually draws closer to the Sun until he disappears from sight. Mercury then spends approximately 3 weeks in the UnderWorld.



10 days into this invisible UnderWorld sojourn Mercury reaches the apex of his downward movement as he achieves his invisible union with the Sun. This is the “seed moment” or conception of a new cycle. 10 days after this Mercury rises from the realm of the Dead, having passed from setting low in the Western evening sky to rising in the Eastern morning sky. Like any other birth, this event is very worthy of your attention. Babylonian records show that the ancient Babylonian Astrologers watched the rising of Mercury with fanatical attention.

What is being born into collective awareness when Mercury turns direct is a particular orientation to problem solving. I have linked the the 4 astrological elements to 4 primary expressions of the Hero archetype. These represent four basic paths the Hero may take toward self-knowledge and spiritual awakening. These are the fiery warrior, the watery martyr, the airy wanderer and the earthy magician. The warrior fights, slays or conquers and learns through competition. The martyr appeases or sacrifices and learns by taking care of others. The wanderer rejects what some would call safety—and flees it – learning instead by autonomy and independence. The magician seeks to incorporate and affirm all paths and learns through peer relationship.

I have found it very interesting to map out the 3 Mercury retrograde periods of each year to give an idea of how the 3 yearly cycles of Mercury are progressively activating the Elements and Heroic archetypes.

Water years are about being in service to Life itself, producing Martyr heroes who stress the collective, self-sacrifice, and taking care of others. Fire years are about being in service to Identity, producing competition between Warrior heroes and villains to gasp over. Earth years are about being in service to peer relationships, producing Magician heroes who seek win/win scenarios by affirming and incorporating the best that others have to offer. Air years are about being in service to the Social Contract, producing Wanderer heroes who grow through attempts to revise it.

In 2009, Mercury is disappearing/dying in the Air signs and being re-born in the Earth signs. This suggests that the Wanderer hero is being transformed into the Magician hero. The magician seeks to incorporate and affirm all paths and learns through peer relationships.



The magician hero is intimately aware of his/her connection to the collective. This is a person who thinks globally and acts locally. By buying local and/or choosing to support truly like-minded individuals and sustainable enterprises, the magician weaves a magickal web of communal support. The community of the magician is made up of those who know and practice what is best for the whole –for all (not just themselves and their cronies).

As to the wisdom of the earth element of the magician hero, The *Tao Teh Ching* states: "Truly, humility is the root from which greatness springs, and the high must be built on the foundation of the low...in governing a people and in serving Heaven, there is nothing like frugality. To be frugal is to return before straying... Because I am frugal, therefore can I be generous... Difficult things of the world can only be tackled when they are easy. Big things of the world can only be achieved by attending to their small beginnings."



“Attending to small beginnings” means attending to the harbinger of the seed moment of a future cycle. This is what Mercury stationing retrograde represents. The ancient Greeks called this “phasis” –an appearance that speaks. As Mercury becomes stationary in motion, The Sun begins to catch him - moving to swallow him back into the Underworld. So, this “phasis” is really a Dis-appearance which speaks. Just like when major characters enter or exit the dramatic tapestry of a play –Planets who announce they are about to exit stage left are sending us important information about the Dramaturgy here on Earth. As above, so below.

10-11 days after Mercury stations retrograde he makes the interior conjunction with the Sun. The interior conjunction is analogous to the conjunction of Sun and Moon at the New Moon. The interior conjunction is the time the "seed message" is impressed upon Mercury at the beginning of his new cycle. Like the seed planted in a human womb, this union occurs in secret –as Mercury is invisible from view. Be sure to honor this time with ritual, prayer, visualization and/or meditation. This is especially true if the seed moment of interior conjunction happens near the degree of a planet in your natal chart.

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Each of these “seed moments” represent a vital time for you to engage The Universe through creative ritual because they are the beginning point of a new 4 month cycle for your Guiding Star.

We can see the life cycle of your Guiding Star has 4 phases. As we have noted before, this can be seen like a compressed version of the 4 seasons (with Mercury turning retrograde representing Autumn). Because Mercury has two visible and two invisible phases, we can also view this cycle as metaphorical to the life cycle of the Butterfly.



Mercury retrograde marks the approaching time when the Butterfly lays the egg for the next cycle -which happens at the “seed moment.” This egg then hatches as Mercury rises in the East and the hungry caterpillar goes out in search of experience. Then, during the middle of the cycle, the caterpillar slows and goes within -wrapping themselves in the form of the chrysalis or cocoon. After being transformed by this inner journey, the butterfly emerges to seek the essential meaning or nectar of life. Finally Mercury retrograde arrives to tell the butterfly it is time for the whole cycle to begin again.

The 3 cycles of Mercury 2009

Egg: Jan 11-30. The seed moment of this Mercury cycle is on January 20. This is a time to seek what is essential to you and your needs and to “sing” these needs to the Dreamtime at the seed moment.

Caterpillar: Jan 31 – March 13. This is a time to seek experiences and be the messenger who is constantly flitting about from one interesting conversation or adventure to the next. There is an important person whom you may meet around Feb 24. This person will help you see the forest instead of the trees. Another important meeting is around March 1. This is a very energetic person with whom you can accomplish things.

Crysalis: March 14 – April 14. This is a time to slow down and go within. Seek only your own inner counsel and spend some time in quiet contemplation. After March 30, you will have some important realizations and feel the butterfly wings beginning to form but you will not emerge from the crysalis for another couple weeks.

Butterfly: April 15 – May 6. This is a time to again flit about but instead of seeking experiences you will be like the poet seeking the nectar of meaning and distributing this from beautiful flower to flower.

Egg: May 7-30. The seed moment of this Mercury cycle is on May 18. This is a time to seek what is essential to you and your needs and to “sing” these needs to the Dreamtime at the seed moment.

Caterpillar: May 31 – June 29. This is a time to seek experiences and be the messenger who is constantly flitting about from one interesting conversation or adventure to the next.

Crysalis: June 30 – July 28. This is a time to slow down and go within. Seek only your own inner counsel and spend some time in quiet contemplation. After July 13, you will have some important realizations and feel the butterfly wings beginning to form but you will not emerge from the crysalis for another couple weeks.

Butterfly: Jul 29 – Sep 5. This is a time to again flit about but instead of seeking experiences you will be like the poet seeking the nectar of meaning and distributing this from beautiful flower to flower. There is a very important meeting with an authority figure around Aug 17. This person can perhaps help you deliver your poetic message more effectively.

Egg: Sep 6-29 . The seed moment of this Mercury cycle is on September 20. This is a time to seek what is essential to you and your needs and to “sing” these needs to the Dreamtime at the seed moment.

Caterpillar: Sep 30 – Oct 12. This is a time to seek experiences and be the messenger who is constantly flitting about from one interesting conversation or adventure to the next. There is a very important meeting with an authority figure around Oct 8. This person will perhaps want to slow you down due to seeing something you are doing as destructive or counterproductive.

Crysalis: Oct 13 – Dec 1. This is a time to slow down and go within. Seek only your own inner counsel and spend some time in quiet contemplation. After Nov 5, you will have some important realizations and feel the butterfly wings beginning to form but you will not emerge from the crysalis for another couple weeks.

Butterfly: Dec 2 – 26. This is a time to again flit about but instead of seeking experiences you will be like the poet seeking the nectar of meaning and distributing what you find from beautiful flower to flower.