

XI

Aquarius the Water Bearer



*Who gives to all a helping hand?
But bows his head to no command??
And higher laws doth understand???
Inventor, genius, superman -
The Aquarian!*

There are two marked dichotomies in the *youth v. maturity* and *air v. water* themes of Aquarius, which resolve within concepts of refreshment and renewed light (enlightenment). Though classified as an *air* sign according to its elemental qualities, the sign's name, *Aquarius*, is a Latin term meaning 'related to water', illustrating a deep-seated association with the symbolism of water and the effects of irrigation (historically, the title 'Aquarius' was given to the royal officer who attended to the king's bath, and in horary this sign indicates water supplies; difficult configurations within it warn of problems through floods).

Whilst typically portrayed as a youth pouring water in an act of modest service, the more ancient civilisations embodied the principles of emotional maturity and prudence, together with the notion of great *force* to effect renewal and change. The Babylonians called the constellation of Aquarius *Gula* 'the Great Man', an epithet for their god of wisdom and waters, *Ea*, who was depicted with streams flowing from his fingertips since he held responsibility for controlling all waters and ensuring that rivers continued to flow.



Top left: Aquarius represented in an illuminated calendar page, dated 1402.

Top right: Depiction of the Babylonian water god, Ea, from the Adda cylinder seal (2300 BCE).

Below left: Image of Aquarius from the medieval *Book of Hours* (France, 1470)

Below middle: Aquarius as depicted in John Flamsteed's *Atlas Coelestis*, 1753

Below right: Detail from Johann Bayer's star map collection *Uranometria*, 1603.



However, the free-flowing water symbolism of Aquarius bears little regard to the darkly mystical, heavily pregnant 'ocean of the psyche' portrayed by the signs of the water triplicity; for in libation, the Aquarian seeks only to cleanse, illuminate and purify. The ancients envisioned the floods that accompanied this sign's culmination and seasonal passage as periods of refreshment, when the land, newly baptised, was cleansed of sin. The month of February consequently takes its name from the ceremonies of purification that were held during the Sun's passage through Aquarius (Latin: *Februa* = to purify + *arius* = pertaining to) since this was when society's attention turned to ritualistic purification of the home, body and soul.

In being cleansed, we are made new again, and classical symbolism captures a theme of youth and purity by identifying the water bearer as Ganymede, the beautiful adolescent boy whose grace so captivated the heart of Zeus that he stole him away to replace Hebes, the goddess of youth, as his cupbearer. The imagery of Aquarius, originally drawn from the sagacious 'Great Man', lingers on youth as part of the cleansing and revitalizing power of water in its post-classical depiction of innocence and refinement.

The latter quality blends neatly with the elemental designation of Aquarius as an air sign, which ties to how the four primary laws of physics – light, gravity, energy and motion – are attributed to the philosophical elements of air, earth, fire and water respectively. Aquarius, as an air sign, therefore

signifies light and its natural extension, clarity, through which the sign also emphasises leanings towards reasoned logic and lucid expression. Although the act of offering a libation demonstrates the Aquarian need to be of service to others, it also illustrates the active condition of extending out to others what is contained within oneself – the principle of *communication* by which we identify Aquarians as the transmitters of knowledge and evolving ideas.

With the noble virtues of modesty and humility being fundamental to this sign, Aquarians often appear unassuming and indifferent to attention, yet they are fiercely independent in matters of mind and spirit. They rarely have a hidden agenda, and their tendency towards clear-thinking and independent analysis makes it almost impossible to beguile them into a position of prejudice. Nor do they take kindly to attempts to pull the wool over their eyes, having no hesitation in speaking out against the common drift wherever belief and assumption tip the scales against logic and fact.

The tendency towards rational detachment runs like a thread through this sign's notable characteristics. On the positive, this gives a remarkable capacity for self-recognition and a crystal-clear awareness of universal intelligence, at a spiritual level allowing pure vision and penetrating perception. On the negative, such self-reliant understanding inclines the Aquarian away from the impressions of others, often making them appear a little 'different' and apart from their community. The Aquarian spirit is characterised by progressive thinking, partly because of the comfortable confidence that allows a sense of ease in being at odds with the norm. On a baser level, however, this can lead to a stubborn, rigid maintenance of personal opinion that resists the benefits of learning from others. As a fixed sign, Aquarius offers stability and endurance, but problems arise where wilfulness dominates the more basic instinct towards humanitarian service, leading to inflexibility and repression of the spirit. When rightfully employed as a vehicle for free-flowing thought, the mix of fixity and air can result in remarkable powers of concentration and application, which accompanies a staunch and uncompromising response to mental challenges.

Saturn's traditional rulership of Aquarius further colours this sign with the qualities of detachment, objectivity and restraint. In astrological philosophy, the Sun and Saturn are conceived as opposing principles, with neither planet able to express its full power unhindered within the other planet's sign of dignity. The Sun craves attention, and when the planetary energies are drawn through the Sun, it centres them firmly upon the *self*. Hence, the Sun is said to be 'in detriment' in Aquarius, where the personal ego is subjugated in favour of egalitarian concepts and far-ranging humanitarian concerns. The Aquarian perspective is drawn from a broad angle and places the vision of the wider scope above that which it sees from a position of self-interest. The spirit of Aquarius is to look beyond the immediate and self-centred, to nurture the interests of progress for collective society and humanity as a whole.

However, the modern association between Aquarius and Uranus has given this sign an exaggerated and undeserved reputation for being inherently rebellious, anti-social, perverse, eccentric and emotionally unstable. These negative forms of behaviour arise as extreme manifestations in individuals who have yet to find their centre. Anyone naturally inclined to care about the interests of social welfare will face their shadow in a world of political frustration where they are confronted with the mirror of their own anger and disappointment. The principles of fiercely independent Uranus sit comfortably within the theme of Aquarius in issues of detachment and mental separation, but the intrinsically volatile nature of that planet contradicts how Aquarius is historically noted to be a *fortunate* and *well-balanced* sign that rarely offers hostile conditions unless the planets within it are afflicted and heavily debilitated. Whilst some degree of separation from the group is a natural and healthy Aquarian trait, radical social isolation is not. Primarily, this sign's impulses work best when supporting well-reasoned theoretical reform rather than violent civil disruption, leaving aggression aside in favour of its polished weapons of diplomacy, logic and tactful gathering of public support.

But Aquarians do indeed veer towards being social idealists, locked in a quest to pursue their guiding principles of truth, justice, democracy, universal harmony and equality. Calm objectivity combined with idealistic vision results in a genuine interest in scientific ingenuity and an instinct for fair-mindedness. Known for being one of the most rational and humane signs of the zodiac, Aquarius, in its positive expression, is the archetype for tact, moderate behaviour and all-round good manners. Traditional texts describe it as a *sanguine* sign (as all the air signs are), indicating that it is underwritten by attractive attributes of grace and civility, and has no leanings towards crude or violent extremes. Since the air signs tend towards a position of balance, Aquarians are generally seen as popular and polite members of society. They usually generate harmonising influences within groups because of their penchant for bringing cool reason to heated debates, which steers attention away from personal and emotional trysts to communal and intellectual problems that concern and unite us all.

Like all air signs, Aquarians bear the double-edged gift of being able to detach reason from emotion, allowing them to rationalise feelings and override sordid instincts or lustful passions. This sign has a natural tendency to assess everything through intelligence, so even where there is an understanding of emotional drives, it is a *reasoned* understanding, such as one derived from a study of emotional behaviour. An Aquarian may lack the empathetic understanding of those who draw from painful personal experience, but their viewpoint is reliably impartial and unbiased, usually well-informed, and motivated along a course of action that seeks logical fairness and emotional equilibrium.

The drawback to this quality is that Aquarians often remain slightly detached from deeply emotional experiences, feeling ill-at-ease with intimacy and uncomfortable when expected to demonstrate enthused familiarity. In close personal relationships they can seem aloof, dispassionate and stand-offish, particularly to those inclined towards ardent infatuations requiring heavy emotional investment. New lovers may be disappointed to find that the freely expressed charm that radiates in social settings and early acquaintance remains static in intimacy and doesn't develop into passionate expressions of romantic obsession for a love that transcends all reason and boundaries. Aquarians tend to keep a cool head in all things.

Ancient sources allude to this element of frigidity by categorising the sign as 'slightly barren' in matters of fertility and drawing pre-pubescent youth or sexless beings into its symbolic expression. Recent astrologers have also made much of the 'brotherhood of man' issues to suggest that the sign portrays homosexuality, noting that the Ganymede myth is the first insinuation of same-sex love in Greek literature. The suggestion is poorly supported by traditional astrological texts, however, and appears to be a modern contortion of a more reliably established Aquarian principle, which is simply that innocence, purity, idealistic love, discretion and moderation are valued above the release of unbridled desire, and that imagined boundaries of gender, race and religion mean little to an Aquarian, who instinctively responds to intellectual compatibility and searches for soul mates in a place where minds can meet.

In matters of profession and vocation, the natural inclination towards logic and progressive ideas bestows Aquarians with heightened potential in the realms of teaching, media, information technology, philosophy, politics, science and law. The sign is often noted as bearing the mark of the scientific innovator, though not without an interest in history or respect for the stability of tradition. Saturn keeps a strong signature in this sign, and even the most pioneering Aquarian requires a structured framework to support the development of their ideas and will draw a reassuring sense of cohesion from established principles.

Ultimately, Aquarius themes support a balanced appreciation between the old and the new, a rare paradoxical virtue that allows a typical Aquarian to span all imagined social and intellectual divisions with ease. Any career path that lies within fields of communication, computing, technology and the engineering of structures (social, personal, scientific, architectural or design), or offers scope for objective re-evaluation, assessment and research is ideal. Aquarians can, of course, excel within the arts and muses too, but even here they tend to fare best where their imagination is combined with logic or channelled into the arrangement of structure and code.

AQUARIUS: RULERSHIPS & ASSOCIATIONS

Airy, warm & moist, sanguine, diurnal, masculine, fixed, humane

DIGNIFIED PLANETS

Dignified in Aquarius

Saturn as sign and day-time triplicity ruler.

Mercury as night-time triplicity ruler.

Debilitated in Aquarius

Sun by detriment.

TRADITIONAL RULERSHIPS

Direction: All air signs relate to the west. Aquarius specifically relates to west by north.

Anatomy: Aquarius governs the shins and ankles and through its rulership by Saturn, relates generally to the bones, teeth, joints and skeletal structure. As an air sign it has some rulership over circulation of the blood and breath.

Illnesses: Aquarius signification includes all injuries and diseases affecting the legs, shins and ankles, including lameness, rheumatism, gout, sprains and fractures affecting the joints. Aquarius is associated with the circulation of the blood and, where afflicted, can indicate problems that arise from blood pressure, poor circulation or an impure blood supply. It is particularly associated with cramps and varicose veins and may be significant in the contributory factors of heart disease.

Places: Aquarius, like Capricorn has general rulership over deep wells, quarries, caverns, tunnels, mines and places that are involved in the extraction of minerals from the earth. Under the traditional rulership of Saturn, it also has signification over land that has recently been dug over or farmed.

As an air sign, Aquarius relates to places that are high off the ground or above the general eye line. Outside it signifies highlands and hills so there is a sense of extremes in that this sign can indicate the most elevated places (mountain tops) or the lowest (mines and caverns). This contrariety, marked symbolically by the undulating 'up and down' nature of its glyph, which intends to represent water but is also linked to airwaves, continues in its association with peculiar or uneven landscapes or eccentric skylines which include features that jut out from the norm. Within the house it signifies roofs, attic rooms, eaves, stairways or places towards the upper part of the house or any specific room.

In the 19th century Aquarius was given signification over aviation, aeronautic experiments and apparatus that relates to those themes.

As the sign of the water bearer, it is also descriptive of locations near natural or manmade sources of water supply, fountains, baths, spas or springs. It is traditionally said to signify vineyards "or places near a little spring or conduit head" (CA., p.99). Inside the house this would include taps, showers and may extend to places where all power supplies emerge.

<i>Countries & cities:</i>	Associated countries and cities include Russia, Denmark, lower Sweden, modern Central Asia (Tartary), Northern Iran, Arabia, Croatia, Southern Romania, Westphalia, Hamburg, Bremen and Ingolstadt in Germany, and Pesaro and Trent in Italy.
<i>Colours</i>	Typically associated with ethereal blue and sky colours, its spectrum includes bluish greens, yellows and greys.
<i>Stones & metals:</i>	Stones and metals fall under the rulership of planets, not signs, but through its traditional association with Saturn, Aquarius has affinity with lead, diamonds, sapphires, lapis lazuli and all ordinary common stones that are not polished. It also has a particular relationship to marble and Al-Biruni associates this sign with the makers of glass and jewellery.
<i>Animals</i>	According to Al-Biruni, Aquarius has a general signification for all biped (two-footed) creatures and has particular signification for eagles, vultures, all aquatic birds, especially black ones, beavers, jerboas, squirrels, sables and ermines.

TRADITIONAL DEFINITIONS

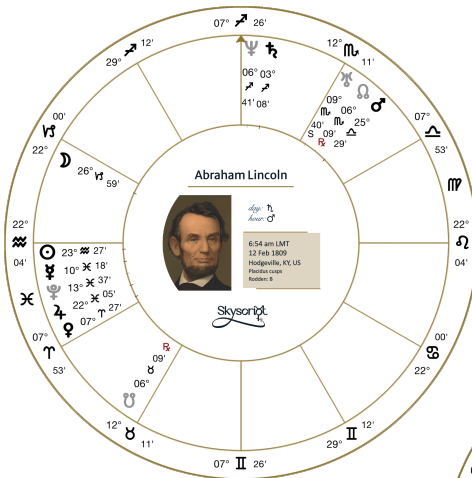
<i>Humane:</i>	Humane signs are those represented by human figures, which are also referred to as 'manly' or 'courteous'. They are renowned for social graces and intellectual skills and include Gemini, Virgo, Libra and Aquarius, (Libra on the assumption that the scales are held by a human hand).
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TYPICAL FEATURES

Aquarius is typically expected to give a strong, sturdy, generally healthy and well composed body. A sign of medium to taller-than-average height, the face is often long with the forehead narrow and the bone structure prominent. The complexion is generally fair and clear, and there is a good overall sense of attractiveness, unless the sign is afflicted or its ruler, Saturn, is badly placed or heavily emphasised. Typically, it gives hazel or dark grey/black eyes, sandy or medium coloured hair (darker if Saturn is strong) and a broad chest. If Saturn is afflicted, it can show some distortion of the teeth or bones, or some overly large features and an uneven gait to the legs.

FAMOUS AQUARIANS

Wolfgang Mozart	27 Jan 1756; Salzburg, Austria; 8:00 pm LMT (RR:AA)
Charles Darwin	12 Feb 1809; Shrewsbury, England; 6:00 am LMT (RR:DD)
Abraham Lincoln	12 Feb 1809; Hodgeville, Kentucky, USA; 6:58 am LMT (RR:B)
Evangeline Adams	8 Feb 1868; Jersey City, NJ, USA; 8:36 am LMT (RR:DD)
Paul Newman	26 Jan 1925; Cleveland, OH, USA; 6:30 am EST (RR:AA)
James Dean	8 Feb 1931; Melbourne, Australia; 6:00 am AEST (RR:A)
Yoko Ono	18 Feb 1933; Tokyo, Japan; 8:30 pm JST (RR:A)
Germaine Greer	19 Jan 1939; Melbourne, Australia; 6:00 am AEST (RR:A)
Bob Marley	6 Feb 1945; St Anne's Bay, Jamaica; 02:30 am EST (RR:B)
Oprah Winfrey	29 Jan 1954; Kosciusko, MI, USA; 04:30 am CST (RR:A)
Jennifer Aniston	11 Feb 1969; Los Angeles, CA, USA; 10:22 pm PST (RR:AA)
Justin Timberlake	31 Jan 1981; Memphis, TN, USA; 6:30 pm CST (RR:AA)



"I promise you to 'keep cool' under all circumstances..."

– Abraham Lincoln, Letter to John Hardin, 19 January, 1845.

"My primary and most essential goal in life is to remain connected to the world of spirit. Everything else will take care of itself. And my number one spiritual practice is to live in the present moment ... to resist projecting into the future, or lamenting past mistakes ... to feel the real joy of now. That, my friends, is the secret to a joyful life."

– Oprah Winfrey, *What I Know for Sure*, 2014.

