

Labour VII:
The Capture of the Erymanthian Boar
Libra, September 22 - October 21

The Myth

The great Presiding One, within the Council Chamber of the Lord, pondered the nature of the son of man who is likewise a son of God. He thought on what was needed to make him still more like unto his Father. "Another labour must be carried out. Balance he needs, and judgment sound, and preparation for a major test and future service to the race of men. For this, let him prepare with care." And the Teacher, noting on his tablets the purpose of the coming test, went forth and spoke to Hercules. "Go forth, my son, and capture the wild boar; salvage a ravaged country, yet take the time to eat." And Hercules went forth.

And Hercules, who is a son of man and yet a son of God, passed through the seventh Gate. The power of the seventh sign passed through him. He knew not that he faced a dual test, the test of friendship rare and the test of courage unafraid. The Teacher had instructed him to seek a boar, and Apollo gave to him a brand-new bow to use. Quoth Hercules: "I will not take it with me on the way, for fear I kill. At my last labour, upon the shores of the great sea, I slew and killed. This time I slaughter not. I leave the bow."

And so unarmed, save with his trusty club, he climbed the mountain steep, seeking the boar, and seeing sights, on every hand, of fear and terror. Higher and higher still he climbed. And then he met a friend. Upon the way, he met with Pholos, one of a group of centaurs, known unto the gods. They stopped and talked and for a time Hercules forgot the object of his search. And Pholos called to Hercules, inviting him to broach a cask of wine, which was not his, nor yet belonged to Pholos. Unto the group of centaurs, this great cask belonged, and from the gods, who covered them with the cask, had come the word that never must the cask be broached, save when the centaurs met and all were present. It belonged unto the group.

But Hercules and Pholos opened it in the absence of their brothers, calling to another centaur wise, to come and share their revels. This he did, and all the three together drank, and feasted and caroused and made much noise. This noise the other centaurs heard from distant points.

In wrath they came, and a fierce battle then took place and in spite of resolutions wise, again the son of man, who was a son of God, became the messenger of death and slew his friends, the centaurs twain with whom he earlier had drunk. And, whilst the other centaurs sorrowed with lamentations loud, Hercules escaped again into the mountains high, and again renewed his search.

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Up to the limits of the snow he went, following the tracks of the fierce boar; up to the heights and bitter cold he followed it, and yet he saw it not. And night was drawing on, and one by one the stars came out, and still the boar outdistanced him. Hercules pondered on his task and sought within himself for subtle skill. He set a snare with skill, and wisely hid, and then he waited in a shadow dark for the coming of the boar. And hour by hour went by, and still he waited till the dawn drew near. Out from its lair the boar emerged, seeking for food, driven by ancient hunger. And in the shadows near the snare waited the son of man. Into the snare the boar fell and in due time Hercules released the savage beast, making it the prisoner of his skill. He wrestled with the boar and mastered it, and made it do the thing he said, and go the way that he desired.

Down from the snowy summit of the mountain high came Hercules, rejoicing on the way, driving before him, on the downward way, the fierce though tamed boar. By the hind legs twain, he drove the boar, and all upon the mountain laughed to see the sight. And all who met the son of man, who is the son of God, singing and dancing on the way, laughed too to see the progress of the two. And all within the city laughed to see the selfsame sight, the staggering, weary boar and the laughing, singing man.

Thus Hercules performed his seventh labour and returned unto the Teacher of his life.

And the great Presiding One within the Council Chamber of the Lord remarked: "The lesson of true balance hath been learnt. A lesson still remains. At the ninth Gate again, the centaur must be met and known and rightly understood."

And the Teacher said: "The seventh labour is completed, the seventh Gate passed. Ponder upon the lessons of the past; reflect upon the tests, my son. Twice have you slain that which you should love. Learn why." And Hercules stayed within the city gates and there prepared for that which later should befall, the test supreme.

- The Tibetan

Prologue

"The Mythus is the undisclosed thought of the soul." (Isis Unveiled)

Libra presents us with many paradoxes, and marked extremes, depending on whether one is on the clock-wise turn of the zodiac, or on the reversed path, the disciple who has turned, consciously, to the evolutionary path, the way homeward. **It is said to be one of the most difficult signs to understand.** It is the first sign that has neither a human nor an animal symbol, except that holding the balance stands the figure of Justice—a blinded woman, blinded perhaps to the outward objective sight, that the inner intuitive sight may divine where justice lies.

It is an interlude, we are told, comparable to the quiet listening in meditation; a time of assessment of the past. Again, strangely, the average man approaches Libra through the drastic test of Scorpio, while the more evolved man enters into the Libra test from the sign of Virgo, with the Christ consciousness stirring in his heart and mind. Think how different will be the experiences of these two men in Libra. In one case the balance will swing wildly up and down; in the other balance will be approached, or achieved, between matter and spirit, and all lesser pairs of opposites.

At this point we begin to see why, in this quiet sign, we meet with the problems of sex and money, both good servants and bad masters, according to the use made of them. Sex is a sacrament, at-one-ment of male and female, for the production of forms, for the carrying on of evolving life. Money is a means of exchange, of sharing at a distance, if not loved and held for itself alone, the gold of the miser, or the gold of the loving, giving heart.

The balance of the pairs of opposites (*Esoteric Astrology*, p. 250) is sharply defined. The balance may swing from bias and prejudice to justice or judgment; from dull stupidity to enthusiastic wisdom. How unusual and delightful a combination of words is that. In common parlance we symbolise wisdom by the rather stupid, blinking owl, and those who think themselves wise are too often full of solemnity and a bit stodgy, but wisdom should be "enthusiastic". Something to ponder, that. And there may be intrigue, the winding ways of man-made laws invite it; or there is straightforward conduct, and the Libran may be characterised by materialistic or by spiritual attitudes. Over and over again on this journey round, the constellations are all harmonious, good and for a purpose; it is our receptivity and use of them that determines what we manifest. It correlates with painful exactness the impressions gained by the casual tourist, and the man who goes and lives for a while in a country, and really knows its people. Sometimes one thinks that an intelligence test should be given before a visa is issued. Such wild ideas, for instance, are brought back by people who have spent a few days in Paris and think they then know France.

And in this stately sign of balance and justice and the law we find that the test ends in a burst of laughter, the only labour that does. Down from the mountain came Hercules, trundling the boar like a wheelbarrow, singing and laughing, and all onlookers laughed with him. How delightful; and this despite the fact that again Hercules made a dire mistake. The Teacher had told him to "take time to eat", but Hercules took time for a drunken orgy with two wise old centaur friends. And take note that they broached the cask of wine which was to be opened only by and for the group. A whole sermon could be preached on that point and also on the fact that, while Hercules took every precaution not to kill the boar, he ended by killing two friends. Thus does temptation come up behind us when we think we have cleared the path before us of pitfalls. But then the wise Teacher, when assessing the labor, passed lightly over the brawl, to which all had contributed, merely saying, "Ponder upon the lessons of the past" (Libra's

assessment). "Twice have you slain that which you should love. Learn why." That is all; and we are reminded that the personality remains outside the ashram (our teachers see only whatever light we bear). There is no special praise, Hercules just passed, not cum laude; but the seventh labour was declared complete and the seventh Gate passed. Justice with mercy. "If Thou O God wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord who may abide it?"

Reflections of a Libran

Before Hercules captured the Erymanthian boar, he sat at the table of Pholos and drank heady wine. At this time he was the soul of conviviality, seeking and finding pleasure. For Hercules, as for all who assume the labour that must be performed in Libra, the fumes of pleasure must be dissipated before the greater task of self-mastery, i.e. the capturing of the boar, can be undertaken.

It is to be noted that the quaffing of the wine by Hercules leads to a tragedy, the death of Pholos. This sudden interjection of catastrophe into the pleasure-seeking existence of the Libran, harsh though the experience may be, is a necessity for the growth of the soul. Without such tragedies, the potentialities of Libra remain dormant. The Libran sets out upon his journey in winter, a time of bleakness when the personality life has lost its allure.

Hercules does not use brute force in taking the boar captive. He sets a trap, waits and allows the beast to trap itself. When the boar flounders in the snowdrifts, Hercules seizes his opportunity. It is curiously Libran to avoid a direct encounter, and not to expend more force than is necessary. He seeks to achieve his ends gently, not coercively.

We are told that Hercules seizes the hind legs of the boar, and compels the beast to walk down the mountainside on its front legs, and that this spectacle excites the laughter of all who witness it. In this incident we observe the Libran's ability to find unusual solutions, and to perceive the value of the incongruous.

Matters of great consequence in the history of mankind are determined by unusual approaches to common problems. For example, a Tartar chieftain started a great fire behind his own troops, thus forcing them to press forward with such desperate vigour that no enemy could withstand them. Again, when Hannibal sent his elephants against Scipio, the latter ordered soldiers to blow trumpets into the ears of the animals; confused and frightened by the noise, the elephants stampeded, and killed many of Hannibal's men.

The perception of incongruities is one of the greatest weapons given to mankind in its perpetual fight against glamour. It is the source of the laughter that explodes presence and destroys outmoded institutions.

This is the only labour that ends in a burst of laughter. Not only does Hercules perform the task assigned; he makes the ferocious boar an object of ridicule. By a slightly altered perspective, many of the terrifying experiences of life may be transformed by a beneficent sense of humour. Much of what people regard with grave and serious earnestness has decidedly ridiculous overtones.

The graphic description of Hercules driving the boar by its hind legs is a symbolic representation of the soul directing the ungainly body. This relationship in which each aspect achieves due importance is characteristic of the more highly organised Libran. Thus is the principle of balance observed.

The Libran goes about weighing and balancing all things. This attitude frequently makes him appear hesitant and indecisive. Knowing that there are innumerable gradations between black and white, he is seldom inclined to be an extremist. He knows that those who are regarded as pillars of society may be Pharisees, and the unostentatious and humble, the salt of the earth; that those who protest their excellence most vehemently may be the least meritorious; that the worldly-wise may act like fools, and fools may stumble upon treasures; that the judgments of the world may be reversed by a higher court; that truth may walk the earth in many an unlikely guise.

The quest for truth, then, becomes changed into the development of discrimination. In a sense, truth does not exist for human beings, for all truths are but fractional parts of greater wholes. The search for these more inclusive concepts is of more importance than the insistence upon an isolated fragment of a narrow, separative segment.

Like a busy spider, the Libran is perpetually spinning threads of relationships, creating a sensitive network of meanings. The result of such activity is synthesis. Between the concrete and the abstract he stands, trying to relate the two. Always there is a discrepancy, always the gap between the end envisioned and the goal achieved; and yet, the web glows luminously and assumes a pattern of intricate beauty.

Halfway between heaven and earth the Libran waits. Looking above, he sees the vision, the golden dawn gilding a snow-capped mountaintop; gazing downwards, he beholds the sloughs and the mire through which the sons of men pass. On the one hand, he cognises high ideals; on the other, he perceives them repudiated. At this midway point he must stand and work. If he rises towards the ideal world, he loses touch with common things; if he descends to the level of materialistic activity, he loses the precious perceptions that are the mainspring of his being. Between these two worlds he is poised in order that he might gain understanding; an understanding that includes the highest and the lowest, the good and the bad, the lofty and the insignificant. This is compassion.

The knowledge gained brings disillusionment. Peering into human hearts, he perceives the obscure shadows, and the sediment of strange passions therein. He discovers the base methods by means of which persons of consequence establish their success, the dark spots in the lives of reputable men, the clever ways by which they evade the promptings of conscience. He observes the budding ideas which are frost-bitten at the first temptation. He contemplates the long onward march of the human race, with its sporadic achievements and its multifarious failings.

What is the result of such reflections? First of all, the glammers that so often chain a man to earth are substantially weakened. He becomes aware that man lives in a swirling mist of illusion, clinging to life as an end in itself, often fleeing from truth as from a catastrophe. This description of shortcomings does not mean that human goodness is overlooked; without a sufficient measure of it, the world could not endure.

The Libran is not at all sure he cares to take part in the aggressive struggle to make a living, and to push his way forward belligerently to a place of power and prestige in the world. Were he concerned about himself alone, he would probably retreat to a library, and spend his days there. However, other human beings also exist and they have claims upon him. The motive of service thus takes root in his life, a sense of service based on a realistic appraisal of human nature. Actually, it is very difficult to serve the incredible species called man. Inform a man of a truth that would, if accepted, alter his stereotyped way of life, and he will as like as not condemn you as a radical, reason with him, and he will stubbornly insist on the primacy of his instincts; on the other hand, display indifference to his plight, and he will denounce you for being callous to his sufferings. Whoever would serve the human race must be prepared for misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and the perversity that upholds the opposite of what is said.

The Libran is not inclined to be either a zealot or a tyrant. Seeking to persuade rather than to compel, he understands the art of spiritual compromise; this involves a willingness to yield on all non-essential points, and an understanding that heaven is reached by a series of separate steps rather than by a single salvational leap. Serving others requires a just appraisal of their capacities; to expect from them what they are incapable of giving is both unwise and frustrating. The help given to a person must find expression within the framework of his limitations. If this is not done, the aid may prove an impediment. A careful distinction must be made between too much aid and too little; if too much is given, the individual will not be encouraged to use his own resources, whereas too little may cause him to sink in a sea of despair. In other words, the help given must be carefully suited to the needs of the individual involved. In many cases, help would only be an encumbrance; therefore, it is often better to allow a person to fashion his spiritual certainties out of his own bitter conflicts.

The constant weighing and measuring so characteristic of Libra have one aim; the establishment of equilibrium. The world is upheld by equilibrium, and this the Libran understands. As a matter of fact, the laws of karma may be considered as equilibrising activities that prevent the continuance of an unbalanced condition. The catastrophes that befall a man are meant, not to punish, but to restore equilibrium in his nature. He who establishes equilibrium in his own life will not be obliged to have it imposed upon him by harsh, bludgeoning circumstance. The scales of Libra are easily tipped on either side, but the mid-point on which the balance rests remains unchanged. This is the point of equilibrium, the secure retreat which the fluctuating shadows of earthly upheavals and catastrophes can never menace.

It should be pointed out that equilibrium, as here conceived, is a dynamic rather than a static condition. A balanced system of energies would be a more adequate definition; phrased differently, it might be called an ordered arrangement of energies directed and controlled by an over-arching will-to-good. The fully developed man, or initiate, might perhaps be described in such terms also.

In the midst of dissonance, the Libran cherishes the dream of harmony; in the far country, he remembers his Father's house. In memory thereof, he seeks to be a point of peace in a sea of clashing forces. That is the goal, but not always the achievement. However, this longing for harmony strengthens in him the desire to be a peacemaker. He can usually understand both sides of an issue, and this ability serves him well as a mediator and arbitrator.

The energies he employs are persuasion, courtesy, and co-operation; when these fail, he disdains harsher methods. He is naturally inclined towards group work, and is attracted by all programmes of action that promote brotherhood and unity.

There is a strongly feminine element in the Libran, and this is natural, since Venus rules the zodiacal sign. The hard, driving thrust of modern life is too aggressively masculine; the softer grace and artistic beauty of the feminine component should act as a complementary influence. The Libran instinctively understands this. He knows that masculine assertiveness must be modified by the subtler savour of feminine sweetness; that yielding water will outlast implacable stone and rigid steel.

When the Libran has assimilated the soft harmonies of Venus, he begins to respond to another vibration, that of Uranus. The statement in the Bible which describes this impulse is expressed in the words, "Behold, I make all things new." The old forms are understood to be chains and shackles. They must be discarded. The broom of God must sweep away the debris of the ages in order that the high ideals of brotherhood and unity may be incorporated into the very structure of our institutions, that the lives men lead may reflect the divine image that is indelibly imprinted in their essential being. Yet, this revolutionary change is not to be accomplished by a re-arrangement of outer shapes, forms, or institutions; it must originate within the human mind, in the silence of a man's heart, when he turns towards the light that shines upon him from the residue of immortality dwelling in him. The Libyan sets out to remake himself, knowing that this is his first step towards the re-making of the world.

The Rulers of Libra and Its Opposite Sign

The opposite sign of Libra, with which at-one-ment must be made, is Aries whose exoteric ruler is Mars, while the ruler of Libra is Venus. Exoterically, therefore, there must be at-one-ment between the Will and the higher mind, expressing itself through desire or love according to the status of evolution. The esoteric ruler of Libra is Uranus, and Saturn in this sign is the ruler of that "stupendous creative Hierarchy" which forms part of the third aspect of divinity. It is for this reason that Libra is closely connected with, and explains the third aspect of the Godhead and hence it is a governing sign and a major determining factor where law, sex and money are concerned. The Tibetan further states that, "If students will make a careful study of these three: law, first aspect; relation between the pairs of opposites (sex), second aspect; and concretised energy, called money, third aspect, as they express themselves today and as they can express themselves in the future, they will have a picture of physical human achievement and of future spiritual expression which will be instructive and most worthwhile. The whole process is accounted for by the activity of the three rulers of Libra: Venus, Uranus and Saturn." (*Condensation, Esoteric Astrology*, p.243 et seq.)

Peculiar beauty emerges when considering the keynotes of Aries and Libra as given by Dane Rudhyar in *Gifts of the Spirit*. The note for Libra is "ease", but it is far from the ease of luxurious comfort. The author defines it as "an expression of totally accepted relatedness, be it with an object, a situation or a person . . . Men can only be free from nature by fulfilling nature; by fulfilling it with ease, with elegance.

"By elegance we mean that quality which the mathematician has in mind when he speaks of 'the elegant solution of a mathematical problem', a solution which moves on with extreme ease, with the utmost simplicity of means, with a minimum of intermediary steps, with inherent logic. A redwood tree is likewise the elegant solution of the problem contained in the seed; a perfectly easy and logical development of the potentialities inherent in this seed.

"Natural growth of inherent potentialities, ease and logic of development, elegance of unfoldment; these are jewels of the art of living; these are the tests of mastery."

Let your mind rest in contemplation of these beautiful words. It is difficult to imagine a more refreshing concept of growth, a growth which unfolds from within as a flower opens, instead of with stress and anxious strain. Here we might note that Libra represents the vegetable kingdom, sex and natural affinity. In that kingdom three rays are said to be vibrating in unison. This results in service, beauty, colour and fragrance. Rudhyar's words are not mystical poetry; they are rooted in biological fact, where also creative energy, God immanent, is at work.

Turning to Aries, we find that the keynote is "adaptability", which indicates a method by which the "ease" of Libra may be obtained. We all know of men and women, in history and about us now, who move with poise and power amidst tragic happenings. And what an awesome, inspiring sight it is. We find adaptability also in the camouflage of the animal kingdom, in the colouring of birds and beasts which helps to protect their lives. Man in dangerous circumstances has an equal need for camouflage, in his case, for increased adaptability. This immediately raises a query as to the dangers of compromise, the deserting of principle for safety. But just as the Tibetan has told us that "spiritual compromise" may be a recognition of time and evolution, not involving any treachery to the goal, so we read the following by Rudhyar:

"This type of social adaptation should not be such as to divert or muddy the flow of the release of power. It should not alter the quality of the projected images, or aloud the vision they convey . . . This is a difficult task of discrimination. To be adaptable, yet to retain the purity and total integrity of one's vision and one's ideal, to accept detours yet not lose the direction of the goal; to be understandable and acceptable to those who need the spiritual arousal, yet not distort or lower the character of the message, to use the values born of the past, yet not sell short the future to the uncertain present; to be kind to men, yet uncompromisingly true to the spirit—such are the problems that the Aries person will constantly meet, in one form or another.

The individual who is consecrated and true to the spirit acts as the spirit in terms of human needs."
(Ease and adaptability: Libra at-one with its opposite sign, Aries.)

The Constellations and the Stars

There are three constellations in Libra, all of special interest. First there is the **southern cross** that has never been seen in the Occident since the time of the Crucifixion, when it was seen at Jerusalem. Now the cross is receding. Let us try to grasp the dramatic presentation in this great symbol. Four bright stars make up this cross; four, the number of the matter aspect of man, the quaternary. The southern cross, the quaternary, is receding. The same symbolism is seen in Gemini, with *Castor* and *Pollux*. *Castor*, symbolising immortality, is growing brighter and *Pollux*, mortality, is growing dimmer. The cross is receding, and this promise is in Libra, called the open door to Shamballa, the sign in which there is found "the narrow, razor-edged path" which leads the man into the kingdom of the soul.

The second constellation is that of **Lupus**, the wolf. Down the ages, the wolf's head has been the symbol of the initiate. But it is a dying wolf, and the wolf-nature that has devoured the soul nature until now is symbolised as dying out, for as man achieves balance the activity and power of the wolf dies out.

The third is the **Corona**, the crown held before man working in Libra. The symbol is based on the story of Ariadne, the mother aspect, who was given a crown of seven stars by Bacchus, symbol of the second aspect of divinity which glorifies matter by making it the expression of the divine mind. (From A.A.B.).

As with all of Libra, interpretations and understanding of the constellations are difficult, but provocative of thought. If the data seems meagre and vague it is perhaps again representative of Libran interlude, which one of the Masters of the Wisdom has called "the master of no-man's land." So we can but ponder, remembering how the wolf appears as the animal that suckled Romulus and Remus; and was the fierce animal which Saint Francis of Assisi tamed by his love for it, and sense of oneness with it.

Some highlights from the lecture by A A B.

In Libra we have the man who does not speak, symbolic of the interlude of silence in the life of Jesus. Between the ages of 12 and 30, we hear naught of him. These were years of silence, whether spent among the Essenes in Egypt or in the carpenter's shop, in which that great son of God balanced spirit and matter and prepared for his ministry as a son of man who was also a son of God—demonstrably. The great revelation to my mind is not that we are spirit, but that all is God in manifestation; it is all energy in different categories. Christ was the perfect expression of divinity in form. He balanced spirit and matter perfectly. That is the work we all have to do ...

The two good centaurs that Hercules killed are known as Cherion (good thought) and Pholos (bodily strength). This test was to show control of the emotional, astral, desire nature, in whatever form it may take; and it is all the more powerful the more advanced a human being is. You cannot control or guide the desire nature by physical strength or by thought alone. You may succeed for a time and then it surges back up in you again. The only answer is to take the boar of desire up into the high mountains. It is on mountain tops that all the great revelations occur, where the mists of the valley disappear and illumination comes . . .

Libra is an air sign and is on the cardinal cross which will govern the next solar system and in this system governs the path of initiation, which is trodden by the flower of the race (*Esoteric Astrology*, p. 279). Again the mystery veils so that we find the sign difficult to understand. But the keynotes of the sign are clear and plain: they speak straight to the heart and without obscurity. To the average man, with no developed spiritual consciousness, the word goes forth again and again throughout the aeons: "And the Word said: let choice be made." The response eventually comes back as a result of the evolutionary process and from the soul. "I choose the way which leads between the two great lines of force." (*Ibid.* pp. 251, 261).

- *The Labours of Hercules An Astrological Interpretation*, Alice A. Bailey p. 125–139

Libra:	the Balance
Element:	Air sign (as are Gemini and Aquarius)
Quality:	Equilibrium. An interlude where duality is known and the life of the soul and form is balanced (law, sex, money).
Polar Opposite:	Aries, a fire sign (subjective, latent consciousness, will to incarnate).
Rulers:	Exoteric, Venus; Esoteric, Uranus.
Keywords:	
From the form angle:	Let choice be made.
From the soul angle:	I choose the way which leads between the two great lines of force.
The Lesson:	Hercules captures the Boar and, through the performance of this labor, demonstrates his fitness to take the second initiation, which concerns the emotional body. He balances the pairs of opposites and demonstrates it in an amusing and symbolic manner. He proves that poise and equilibrium are now achieved characteristics and that he is fit to undertake the tremendous task provided for him in the next sign.