

# Da Vinci Stellar Template Hypothesis

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In this paper I will explore how Carl Jung's framework of archetypes of the collective unconscious helps to explain the symbolism in Leonardo da Vinci's sublime artwork *The Last Supper*, looking at archetypes as stable natural patterns that underpin the meaning of cultural symbols.

Jung and Leonardo shared the belief that restoring the connection between culture and nature is a primary moral concern. For Jung, this moral idea of connection integrates our social world within a natural context, to see a deeper reality, a sense of how our life fits within a whole story. For Leonardo, his pioneering work on exact depiction of nature is famous through his anatomical and botanical drawings. The moral dimension is reflected in Leonardo's comment that when poets use words to describe what exists in nature they resemble painters, but when they use flowery and flattering speech and images they are no longer poets.<sup>1</sup>



Jung and Leonardo both insisted on grounding cultural ideas in natural observation. One main result of that approach is to shift the paradigm of religion away from supernatural revelation toward a basis in evidence. The redemptive quality of these ideas about the importance of evidence and accuracy, being true to nature, reflects the Gospel claim that knowledge of the truth will set you free.<sup>2</sup> Leonardo saw truth in modern terms as empirical fact rather than revelation from God. Similarly, Jung found the story of the whole by placing our symbolic ideas within a rational scientific framework, an endeavour that can help to save the world from the dangers of delusion and fantasy.



*The Last Supper* is recognized as one of the greatest art works of all time. It dramatically depicts one of the central tragic moments of the Christian passion story, when Jesus tells his disciples that one of them will betray him and he identifies Judas as the culprit.<sup>3</sup> Since the original painting is so faded, I will use this accurate copy to illustrate its figures. All the disciples are shown in highly distinctive

theatrical stances and reflect the intense realism of Leonardo's anatomical method. Judas sits at the table indignantly holding his bag of thirty pieces of silver. Saint Peter leaps up behind Judas, holding the concealed dagger he will use tomorrow to cut off the ear of one of the group arresting Jesus. The strangely androgynous Saint John at Jesus' right hand has been compared to Mary Magdalene in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*. On the other side of Jesus, doubting Thomas points his finger up to the sky, seemingly exhorting us to look up to the heavens for our salvation, like Plato in the *School of Athens* by Raphael.



<sup>1</sup> [The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci, paragraph 658](#)

<sup>2</sup> [John 8:32](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Matthew 26:21](#)

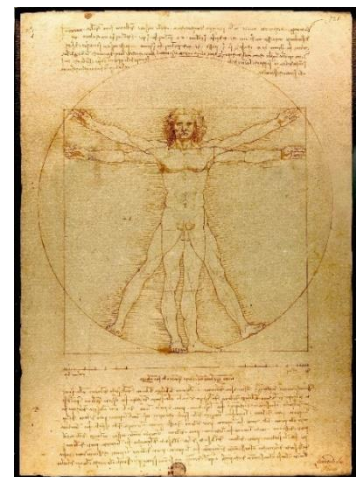
The variety of reactions depicted among the twelve disciples show a vast range of emotions, putting the story of Jesus into a completely human framework. Leonardo illustrates moral sentiments of greed, stupidity and wickedness on the one extreme with Judas, and of graceful love, faith and sacrifice with Jesus on the other. Along the existential spectrum we see indignation, bewilderment, analysis, shock, comfort, rancour, piety, care and anger, as the disciples react to the simple but unbelievable news from Christ about Judas. However, this great painting is not just a historical story; it also contains an eternal message about how our life on earth is connected to the stable patterns of the cosmos. As I will explain, this cosmic message is just as empirical as Leonardo's exact anatomical method, but far more controversial, reflecting a subtle and profound comment on religion.

Before developing this analysis of The Last Supper, it is useful to note some other examples of common archetypal patterns described by Jung. Gender archetypes of male and female energies and symbols are pervasive throughout society and were central to Jung's analysis of personality types, with his concepts of anima and animus. Similarly for archetypes of age, Jung discussed figures such as the wise old man and woman and the eternal youth, while archetypal relationships include mother, father, brother, sister, child, friend and enemy. Archetypal characters include the hero, the fool and the saviour. Conscious identity also generates an unconscious archetypal shadow. In his *Answer to Job*, Jung explained religion in terms of mythological archetypes, saying "the archetype of wholeness approximates to the God-image."<sup>4</sup> Through this idea Jung identified God with the unconscious, imagined in perfect human form as Jesus Christ, the mediator between earth and heaven. This perspective sees Christ as the symbol of wholeness who connects human history with a vision of eternal divine truth. Jung saw this theme of the embodied presence of God on earth in the life of Christ as a primary example of the archetype of wholeness residing in the collective unconscious. My interest in this paper is to explore how the archetypal dimension of time creates cultural meaning for periods such as the month, season, year and age.



To illustrate how Leonardo's Last Supper symbolizes the annual cycle of time, also serving as a symbol of wholeness, we can readily see that the twelve disciples form four groups of three, and that each group is like the three months in the four seasons. This structural element reflects Leonardo's understanding of how the story of Christ connects to the natural cycle of the year, and is just the start of the natural symbolism in this celebrated work.

Leonardo's central philosophical maxim was that man is the model of the world in microcosm. This idea is most associated with his Vitruvian Man, with its explanation of human proportion. As I will show, it also appears most vividly in The Last Supper. Comparison between human and natural scales of measurement dates back to the ancient Hermetic philosophy that inspired both Leonardo and Jung. The central Hermetic idea 'as above so below' at its most basic level means that the whole universe follows the same physical laws. This principle of consistency inspired the discovery of the law of gravity by Sir Isaac Newton.<sup>5</sup> The Hermetic philosophy is seen in Leonardo's idea of man as model, and also in his mention of "Hermes the Philosopher" in his notebooks.<sup>6</sup> The rediscovery of Hermetic literature by Marcello Ficino was one of the great achievements of Leonardo's Florence,<sup>7</sup> inspiring Renaissance



<sup>4</sup> 648

<sup>5</sup> cf. [Sir Isaac Newton's translation of the Emerald Tablet of Thoth](#)

<sup>6</sup> Notebooks, Paragraph 1425

<sup>7</sup> A commentary on Ficino is at [http://philippcoppens.com/ficino\\_mag.html](http://philippcoppens.com/ficino_mag.html)

science, but remained controversial due to its perceived clash with Christian dogma. Even so, this Hermetic philosophy of the unity of all things is reflected in the Christian prayer that the will of God be done on earth as in heaven. As another example of this theory of correspondence, Leonardo saw the world ocean currents on the model of the circulation of blood, and mountains as like our bones.<sup>8</sup>

This philosophy of correspondence applies directly to The Last Supper. I will show that Leonardo designed The Last Supper as a model of the visible universe, using stars as his template for each figure. This analysis is an original hypothesis on my part, that I first raised a decade ago.<sup>9</sup> It is quite a perplexing idea, with a number of readers having commented that it is obviously accurate, while others have found it impossible to understand. In this paper I explain the method that Leonardo used to depict the connection between humanity and nature, to understand Jesus Christ and the twelve disciples as symbolic models of the natural structure of time. Putting this analysis in the psychological framework of Jung's concept of archetypes of the collective unconscious shows how this central human story reflects the natural system of the cosmos. The key is the empirical demonstration of Leonardo's use of natural stellar patterns as templates for the stances of Christ and the twelve.

The underlying archetypal patterns of the twelve months of the year inspired Leonardo's design of The Last Supper, with the one to twelve relationship between the solar year and the lunar month providing the archetypal foundation for the story of Jesus Christ and the twelve disciples. I will now analyse the painting in detail. All the diagrams are my own work, with star pictures created using the astronomy software Skygazer 4.5. An Appendix to this paper repeats the images with star lines added.

Leonardo modelled the twelve disciples on the twelve constellations of the zodiac, and Jesus Christ on the constellation of Pisces the fishes. Beginning with accurate observation of the visible star positions as his template, he artfully designed each figure to display key features of these star shapes in order from right to left, reflecting the annual path of the sun. This analysis reflects Leonardo's viewpoint from Italy 500 years ago, recognising that the stars have barely changed position since then.

The disciple Simon stands at the right end of the painting, in furious dispute with Thaddeus. Both have their hands in unusual rhetorical poses, while Matthew seemingly implores them to notice what is happening between Jesus and Judas. Looking at the stellar template hypothesis, these figures symbolise the three months of spring, when the sun travels through the constellations Aries, Taurus and Gemini. We should therefore expect to find the shape of the stars in the constellation Aries, the first zodiac star group, used in the stance of Simon. The constellation Taurus, the second zodiac group, should similarly appear in Thaddeus, and the third star group Gemini should be the template for Matthew. And indeed, this is precisely what can readily be seen. Let's go through them one by one. Aries has three main visible stars joined at angle of 150 degrees. This is exactly the same shape as Simon's two hands and forearm in the painting. Thaddeus is even more distinctive. The second zodiac constellation is Taurus. Its main stars are the V shape known as the Hyades, around the bright star Aldebaran, and the small O-shaped circle of stars called the Pleiades, also known as the jewel box. We see Leonardo has painted the hands of Thaddeus in a V shape and a circle, exactly like Taurus, and has even contorted Thaddeus to put these two parts of the constellation in their correct relative positions. The next constellation is Gemini, whose visible stars form two parallel lines. As predicted, we find that Leonardo has used two

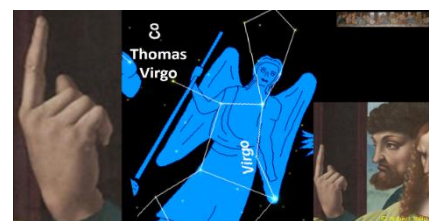
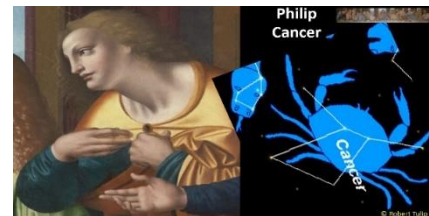


<sup>8</sup> Notebooks Paragraph 929

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.booktalk.org/the-zodiac-in-leonardo-da-vinci-s-last-supper-t10213.html>  
<https://forum.cosmoquest.org/showthread.php?112585-Constellations-in-the-art-of-Leonardo-da-Vinci>

parallel lines as his template for the stance of Matthew, whose arms and hands are drawn in this shape. This figure illustrates that Leonardo began with the star group as his template, but manipulated it slightly to fit his artistic objectives, placing the two lines closer to each other than in the star group. This minor change does not at all detract from his use of this stellar source, especially considering he may well have wanted to conceal his method in view of its political risk.

Over the northern summer, the sun travels through the constellations of Cancer, Leo and Virgo. Looking to find how Leonardo used these star groups, we should first expect to find evidence of the star shape of Cancer the Crab in the fourth figure from the right, Philip. And yes, the star group Cancer is shaped like a Y, which is exactly how Leonardo has drawn Philip, with his hands touching his heart. For the first time this use of the stellar template by Leonardo involves more than hands and arms. In this instance Philip's head forms part of the constellation Y shape, with his pose of devoted concern. Interestingly, this star group does not at all resemble a crab. There is a crab shape immediately to the south, now seen as the head of Hydra, shown as a crab on the ancient Dendera star map. The change appears to have been based on the requirement that zodiac constellations should be exactly on the path of the sun.



The next figure is James, who appears to be reeling back in shock at the news from Jesus of his expected betrayal. How has Leonardo used the star group of Leo the Lion for James? While there is some artistic distortion here, like with Matthew, the distinctive question mark shape of Leo's mane - ? - forms the design of James' hands.

The sixth star group is Virgo the Virgin. Leonardo has incorporated the shape of this constellation in the raised hand of St Thomas, with index finger pointing to the heavens. Perhaps this is a clue from Leonardo inviting us to decipher his composition method, telling us just to look up to see the visible stars of the sky in order to find the meaning of the painting.

Before returning to the central figure of Jesus Christ, we continue through the twelve disciples. On our hypothesis, the third group, next to Christ on the left side of the painting, should be expected to use the stars of autumn for their design. The three zodiac constellations for autumn are Libra, Scorpio and Sagittarius. We therefore expect to see Saint John, Saint Peter and Judas Iscariot resembling those star shapes.



The first of these, Libra, the Scales, is one of the faintest zodiac groups, having just five low magnitude visible stars. As predicted, these stars form the same shape as the clasped hands, arms and head of John.

The next star group is Scorpio, perhaps the single most distinctive zodiac constellation. Its position at the December solstice puts it very low in the south as seen from northern latitudes, unlike Australia where it is very prominent through our winter months. Scorpio provides one of two direct symbolic parallels between the stars and the painting, with the sting of the



scorpion's tail in the exact position of the dagger concealed by Saint Peter. The unusual contortion of Peter's right hand holding the dagger copies the stellar template of the curving tail seen in the star shape. Peter's head is in the same position as the head of the scorpion, and his left hand is based on the stars of the scorpion's left claw.

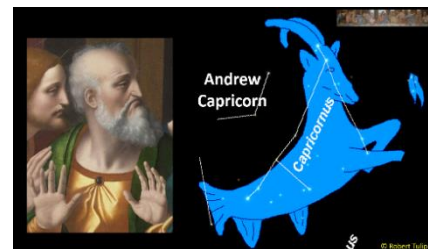
The dramatic centre of the whole painting is the reaction of Judas to being exposed by Christ. Holding his bag of blood money, he looks guiltily toward Jesus, his other hand raised as though in denial or ready for flight. The constellation of Sagittarius, in the equivalent position in the zodiac, consists of a series of wide pairs of visible stars in a shape popularly known as the teapot. Sagittarius is an interesting example to work through in detail, because the star group and Judas have so many exact points of identity. Beginning from the bag of money, the lines connecting the stars provide a template for the bag, the right hand, right elbow, right shoulder, head, left shoulder, left elbow and left hand. Eight stars are in the same angular relationship as the rather complex figure of Judas.



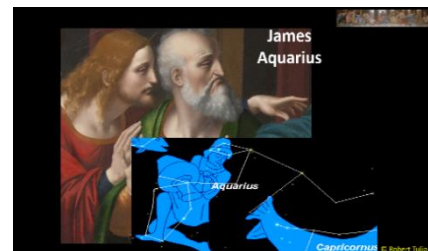
The final season of the year is winter, marked by the constellations of Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces, and corresponding to the left hand group of disciples in The Last Supper, Andrew, James and Bartholomew.



Capricorn should appear in the position of Saint Andrew, and as expected his head and open hands have the same triangular shape as their source in the sky, with its faint but distinctive triangle.



The second Saint James, second from the left in the painting, appears where we expect to see the shape of the constellation Aquarius. Again, this is a very unusual star shape, forming a large group of faint stars. James is standing with his left arm reaching past Andrew, and his right hand on Andrew's right shoulder. Leonardo has used the long line of stars on the right side of the constellation as his model for Andrew's right arm and hand. He used the distinctive small Y shaped group at the star group's head as James' head, and the stars of the Aquarius water jug for Andrew's left hand.

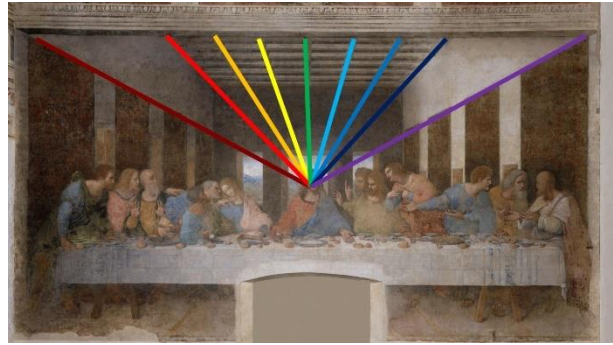


Finally, the last of the twelve is Bartholomew, at the left end of the painting, who we should expect to be modelled on the stars of Pisces, the twelfth constellation of the zodiac. Here we see the second example of a direct thematic borrowing from astronomy. The traditional picture of Pisces has two fish connected by ropes. The star joining the two lines of rope stars is called Al Rishi, which translates as the knot or cord.<sup>10</sup> When we look at how Leonardo has depicted Bartholomew, we see he has placed a distinctive large knot tying his robe, in the exact position of the knot star, connecting two lines of fabric going to both of his hands. The lines of fabric match the star lines in Pisces, and his hands are drawn on the model of the fish shapes in the sky.

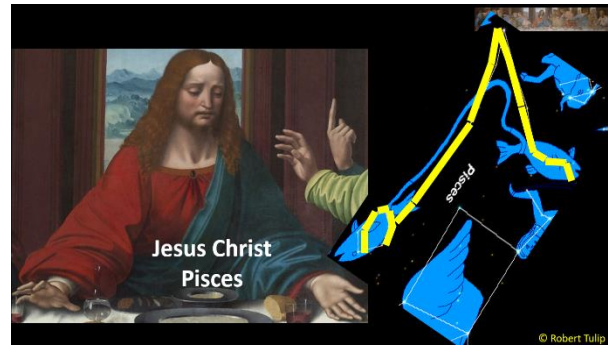


<sup>10</sup> <https://earthsky.org/brightest-stars/al-risha-knots-the-two-fishes-of-pisces-together>

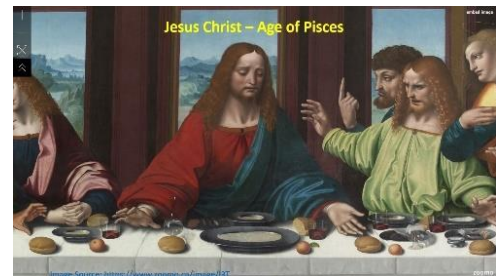
The central point of the whole painting, where Leonardo has placed the famous perspectival focus based on the architecture of the Upper Room, is the head of Jesus Christ. How would Leonardo depict Christ in the stars? It should not surprise us that Leonardo has chosen the constellation Pisces as his template for Jesus Christ. His overall triangular shape is modelled on this constellation. His right hand has fingers making a circle, modelled on the Pisces star group known as the Circllet or the Second Fish, while his upturned left wrist and open hand match the star shape of the first fish. This Pisces theme reflects the abundant fish imagery about Jesus, such as the ICHTHOS Christian symbol.



Here we can return to Carl Jung, whose book *Aion* comments extensively on Christian fish symbols. Jung says Christ “was born as the first fish of the Pisces era,”<sup>11</sup> and that “through the precession of the equinoxes, the spring-point moved into the sign of Pisces and thus inaugurates an age in which the "fish" was used as a name for the God who became a man, ... who had fishermen for disciples and wanted to make them fishers of men, who fed the multitude with miraculously multiplying fishes.”<sup>12</sup>



Leonardo could well have depicted Christ as Pisces to reflect both the fish symbolism in the Bible and the knowledge of precession, the slow reverse movement of the position of the sun at the spring equinox. As Jung states, the equinox precessed into the constellation of Pisces at the time of Christ. This makes Christ a solar deity positioned as the avatar of the zodiac age of Pisces.



Knowledge of precession dates to ancient times. Leonardo would have been well aware of precession in view of his amazing knowledge of astronomy. For example he wrote that ‘the sun does not move’, decades before the heliocentric theory was published by Copernicus.<sup>13</sup> His use of the fish symbol in the Last Supper, seen as precession of the equinox, places Christ at the position of the sun. The time of Christ was when the sun first began the natural year of the seasons in the constellation of Pisces, an event that occurred in 21 AD. The archetypal dimension of this observation, considered in terms of The Last Supper, is seen in the twelve to one relationship between the solar year and the lunar month, which had a widespread influence on ancient mythology. The twelve disciples, the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve labours of Hercules, the twelve Gods of Olympus and the twelve gates of the holy city all reflect this theme. Considering Leonardo’s intentions against Jung’s archetypal framework, his depiction of Christ using the stars of Pisces reflects this idea of Christ as allegory for the sun. As well, the crossing of the equinox point into Pisces was a unique moment when the stars and seasons were in harmony, explaining the archetypal alpha and omega symbolism of Jesus.

The theme running through this whole analysis is that natural patterns are reflected in Christian myths. The rhythm of the seasons operates both in our conscious awareness and in our collective unconscious, supporting the mythological framework for Christian festivals such as Christmas and

<sup>11</sup> *Aion*, p147 (All Jung page numbers are from *The Portable Jung*, edited by Joseph Campbell, Penguin Books, 1976)

<sup>12</sup> *Aion*, p148

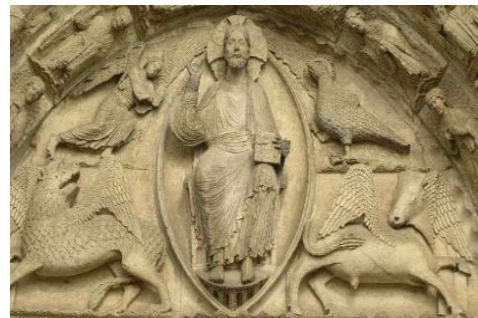
<sup>13</sup> *Notebooks*: Paragraph 886

Easter. Analysis of unconscious factors in this natural cycle can help to connect scientific and religious worldviews, developing a rational framework for the meaning of mythology. Supernatural theories are implausible, but that does not make religion meaningless; rather it calls us to develop natural interpretations of the stories of faith. Jung explored such language in symbolic terms, seeing Biblical stories mainly in terms of what they say about the collective unconscious, and therefore what they mean for us today, rather than assuming the stories describe actual historical events.

The Last Supper is a sublime example of the natural religious perspective shared by Leonardo and Jung, their belief that reconnecting culture with nature creates a redemptive path toward a state of grace. This natural theology has been regarded as heresy by the church, creating a political and cultural psychology of repression that helps to explain why such ideas have not been more widely discussed. Astrology is even more despised and rejected by both science and religion today than it was in Leonardo's day. This helps to explain why Leonardo did not discuss his use of the zodiac, despite his work involving no astrology, and why this real Da Vinci Code has not previously been noticed.<sup>14</sup> In our situation today, with the planetary ecological climate crisis, the alienation from nature promoted by conventional supernatural faith is a primary danger, and the type of natural thinking seen in Leonardo and Jung offers a moral path out of the mess.

Many considerations help explain this hypothesis that the Last Supper is a metaphor for the visible heavens. The Bible is full of symbolic language. For example, the Gospels of Mark and Luke<sup>15</sup> tell us this final meal of Christ and the twelve happened in an upper room. Like many Gospel stories, the upper room comes from the Old Testament, where the prophet Amos wrote "The Lord God builds his upper rooms in the heavens."<sup>16</sup> So the Bible provides a basis to read the Upper Room both as an historical event and also as a parable for the orderly eternal perfection of the visible heavens. This symbolic language tells us our salvation comes from contemplating the stable eternal order of God that we see by looking up to the starry sky, like Raphael's Plato. Rather than a focus on the possible historical events of the Passion of Christ, we can therefore explore the Last Supper as symbolising the orderly unchanging perfection of the starry heavens brought down to earth and symbolised in the story of Jesus as divine mediator. My contention is that this symbolic reading holds a profound meaning about the mythological and religious identity of Jesus Christ.

Jung says "symbols imply something more than their obvious and immediate meaning, and have a wider unconscious aspect."<sup>17</sup> He gives the example of the Christian symbols of the four living creatures,<sup>18</sup> the ox, lion, eagle and man, symbols of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, shown in this sculpture of Christ in Majesty from Chartres Cathedral. This well-known image of Christ on his heavenly throne can support the analysis of Leonardo's symbolism in The Last Supper. It has a simple but



contested astronomical meaning, that Christ is like the sun, sitting at the centre of the visible heavens, which are defined by the stars of the four seasons. The basis for this interpretation is that the four creatures symbolise the constellations Taurus the bull, Leo the lion, Scorpio the scorpion or eagle<sup>19</sup>, and Aquarius the man, representing the positions of the sun in spring, summer, autumn and winter.

This interpretation is a primary example of an archetype of the collective unconscious, appearing in the psychological shadow of the dominant conscious religious attitudes that ignore such cosmic

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<sup>14</sup> Leonardo's caution about public discussion of religion is discussed at <http://calteches.library.caltech.edu/357/1/inquisition.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Mark 14:15 and Luke 22:12

<sup>16</sup> Amos 9:6

<sup>17</sup> *Man and His Symbols*,

<sup>18</sup> The four living creatures are mentioned in the Bible at Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4:7

<sup>19</sup> The Israelite tribe Dan was symbolised by the snake or scorpion in Genesis 49:17. This symbol was allegedly later changed to the eagle, perhaps because the eagle constellation is more easily visible immediately above Scorpio from northern latitudes, or because the eagle is a more dignified symbol than a scorpion.

symbolism. Religion imagines God as the source of order, power and perfection. What more perfect and orderly power can we see than the stable unchanging grandeur of the stars with their annual cycle? That was certainly the attitude of ancient astronomer-priests across many cultures. Looking deeper, psychological analysis of this image can readily see the underlying symbolism of the orderly pattern of the seasons, helping us imagine the infinite and eternal glory of God. Observation of the unchanging visible cosmos as metaphor for God is seen in the myths of Christ as cosmic reason, the eternal logos and word made flesh.<sup>20</sup> Christ is called the light of the world,<sup>21</sup> just like the sun, which repeats its orderly path each year through the cycle of the seasons, symbolised by great festivals such as Christmas and Easter.

This natural symbolic meaning has been heavily repressed by Christian dogma. The church traditionally sees such natural theology as detracting from the metaphysical dignity and glory of Christ. Yet the symbols were originally developed consciously, and in my view must have deliberately pointed to their natural references in the stars, given the exact correspondences, even if explicit evidence of this method has been lost and largely forgotten. Such natural symbols illustrate the statement in the Gospels that Jesus speaks in parables to the general public but reserves the secrets of the kingdom for initiates.<sup>22</sup> Through mass psychological repression such ideas have been forced into concealment in the collective unconscious, so most people are unaware of the meaning. Yet as Freud said, repressed material is indestructible and inevitably returns to consciousness in some way.<sup>23</sup>

To say today that the four living creatures represent the visible stars meets doubt from many in the church, illustrating how our connection with the natural order of the cosmos, the source of the archetypes of the collective unconscious, has been forgotten and repressed.<sup>24</sup> As part of this process of repression, the story of Jesus served to unite all Christendom for a thousand years in a shared supernatural ideology, while the unconscious power of shared cosmic archetypes grounded the emotional and political appeal of faith. Jung sought to bring these unconscious symbols into conscious awareness, pointing to a possible future reform of Christian faith. He saw such natural meaning as a way to overcome the separation between spirit and nature, instead looking to ground our culture in direct scientific observation.

In his essay *The Structure of the Psyche*, Jung said “ordinary everyday facts, which are eternally repeated, create the mightiest archetypes of all.” The natural patterns of time, such as days, weeks, months, seasons and years, are prime examples of such ordinary everyday facts eternally repeated. Jung contended that such simple familiar patterns serve as “the supreme regulating principles of religious and even of political life, in unconscious recognition of their tremendous psychic power.”<sup>25</sup> These patterns of time have their basis in the cycles of the sun and moon. For example, the seven days of the week have their origin in the universal observation of the four quarters of the lunar month.

Looking to ancient symbols to justify Jung’s claim that natural patterns regulate culture, we find abundant examples. The traditional natural symbols of the months are the zodiac stars, the twelve constellations marking the annual path of the sun. We do not need any astrological speculation to view this twelve to one ratio between the month and the year as an important analogy for the story of Jesus and the twelve disciples, as it simply describes the relationship between the observable periods of the sun and the moon. Contrary to widespread modern assumptions, this use of zodiac figures need have nothing to do with astrology, but rather serves just as an empirical framework to imagine how God is manifest in the heavens, with no connection to fortune telling.

And indeed such symbolism is widespread in religious art, including ancient Jewish synagogue mosaics like this one at Beit Alpha, and this magnificent rose window from the Abbey of Saint Denis in Paris.

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<sup>20</sup> [Colossians 1:15-20; John 1](#)

<sup>21</sup> John 8:12

<sup>22</sup> Matt 13:10-11; Luke 8:10; Mark 4:11; John 6:65; Colossians 1:27

<sup>23</sup> [The Interpretation of Dreams \(1900\)](#)

<sup>24</sup> Information on Jung’s analysis of repression is available at <https://frithluton.com/articles/repression/>

<sup>25</sup> The Structure of the Psyche: 43



At Leonardo's time in the Renaissance, the zodiac was a recurring design element in cathedral rose windows, as a symbol of the orderly glory of God, although later many were removed. This motif of seeing the presence of God in the stars was then far more widespread than it is today, and did not have the associations with astrology that suppress discussion of the zodiac today.



Jung observed that each person has an internal psychic world. He held that our most powerful ideas derive from archetypal patterns, helping our conscious mind to translate our inner world into visible reality.<sup>26</sup> The conventional symbols of religious faith represent a shared effort at this translation of inner to outer worlds. This process is largely unconscious because so much religion rests on the emotional sentiment of what people find plausible or comforting, rather than any scientific process of evidence or logic. The power of the gospel stories about Jesus Christ reflects how well they have resonated with people's inner worlds, and especially with the collective unconscious aspects such as our shared experience of time through the annual seasons.

Today the outer world of faith is in turmoil. Jung's call to translate inner beliefs into visible expression confronts the clash between supernatural mythology and modern scientific knowledge. This observation is not to deny the emotional and ethical power of religious ideas, only to say that this power needs grounding within natural patterns rather than in old assertions about divine revelation. Psychological analysis of archetypes such as the structures of time can help to ground faith in reason to integrate religion and science.

Jung set several criteria for archetypes. He called them "the accumulated experiences of life in general, a million times repeated, and condensed into types",<sup>27</sup> and said they "represent the laws governing the course of all experienceable things", seen in "uniform and regularly recurring modes".<sup>28</sup> As well as time, these criteria apply to a wide range of cultural patterns of gender, age, relationship and character, which all reside within our collective unconscious in religious mythology. For Jung, this psychic system has a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals and is inherited, setting the direction for motivation, as patterns of instinctual behaviour.<sup>29</sup>

In a statement directly relevant to Leonardo's inspiration for *The Last Supper*, Jung said that archetypes provide the "the secret of great art, and of its effect upon us." He says "the creative process... consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work. By giving it shape, the artist translates it into the language of the present, and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life. Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking. The unsatisfied yearning of the artist reaches back to the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequacy and one-sidedness of the present. The artist seizes on this image, and in raising it from deepest unconsciousness he brings it into relation with conscious values."<sup>30</sup>

With this language about the creative spiritual wellsprings of great art, Jung invites us to "imagine God as an eternally flowing current of vital energy that endlessly changes shape."<sup>31</sup> A great example of such eternal vital energy is how the stable patterns of the sun and moon inform our mythological images of the divine, such as Christ and the twelve.

<sup>26</sup> *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*: 46

<sup>27</sup> *General Description of the Types*: 26

<sup>28</sup> *Instinct and the Unconscious*: 57

<sup>29</sup> *The Concept of the Collective Unconscious*: 61

<sup>30</sup> *Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry*: 321

<sup>31</sup> *Answer to Job*: 525

With the Last Supper depicting a central event in the life of Christ, Jung's view on religion can inform our interpretation of this painting as drawing on creative archetypes. Jung said "the life of Christ is largely myth, and this mythical character is what expresses its universal human validity." Therefore the significance and symbolism of the story rests in its ability to tap the archetypes of the collective unconscious. That archetypal dimension does not mean by itself that the stories in the Bible were invented: Jung describes Christ as an example of how "the archetype can take complete possession of a man and determine his fate down to the smallest detail... The life of Christ is just what it had to be if it is the life of a god and a man at the same time... he is a symbol by his very nature."<sup>32</sup>

In his essay *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, Jung made a number of comments that help us with analysis of The Last Supper. He said "the collective unconscious... constitutes a common psychic substrate ... which is present in every one of us." Looking back to the origins of mythology in pre-literate societies, he wrote "it is not enough ... to see the sun rise and set; this external observation must at the same time be a psychic happening: the sun in its course must represent the fate of a god or hero who, in the last analysis, dwells nowhere except in the soul of man. All the mythologized processes of nature, such as summer and winter, the phases of the moon, ... are symbolic expressions of the inner, unconscious drama of the psyche ... mirrored in the events of nature. The projection is so fundamental that it has taken several thousand years of civilization to detach it in some measure from its outer object. In the case of astrology, this age-old intuitive science came to be branded as rank heresy because man had not yet succeeded in making the psychological description of character independent of the stars."

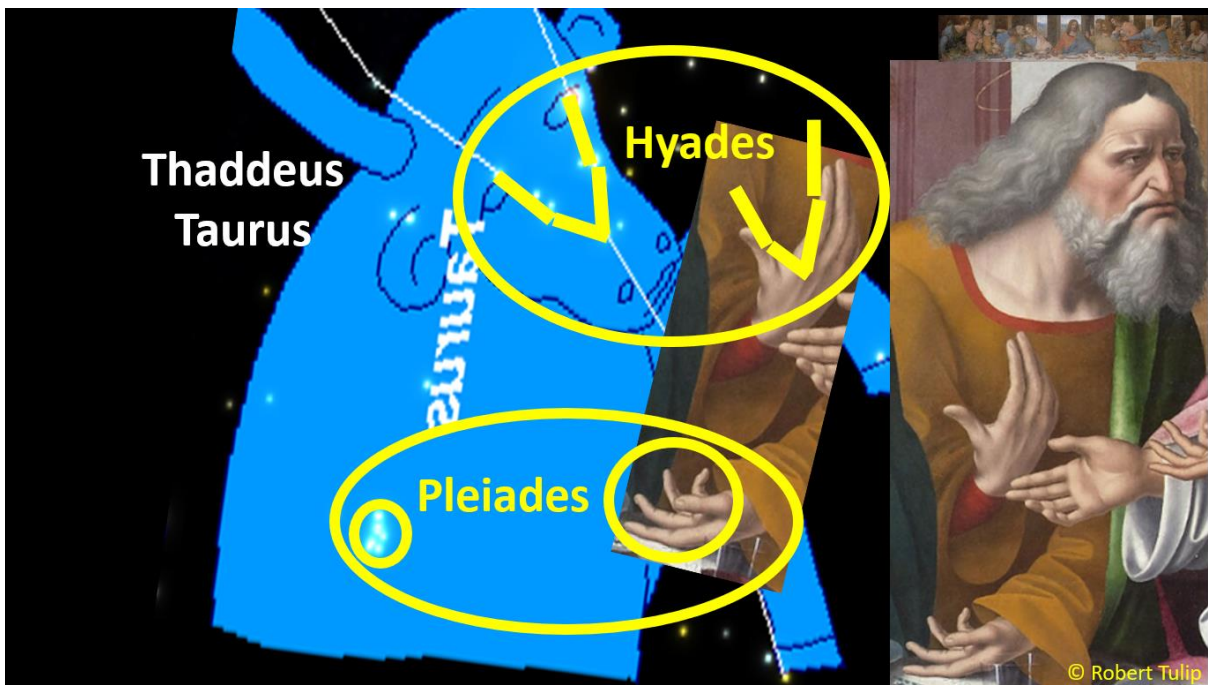
Jung contended that "dogma takes the place of the collective unconscious by formulating its contents on a grand scale." We can readily see this process occurring in Leonardo's Last Supper, with the dogmatic story of Jesus and the twelve reflecting collective unconscious awareness of the relationship with the one to twelve pattern of the sun and the moon in our calendar. Leonardo's genius brought this unconscious relationship into conscious awareness. The fact that this real Da Vinci Code has laid hidden in plain sight for more than five centuries shows how far Leonardo was in advance of his time. Even today, strong psychological and cultural barriers make this simple empirical observation unacceptable and invisible to many. Jung said "The chief danger is that of succumbing to the fascinating influence of the archetypes, and this is most likely to happen when the archetypal images are not made conscious... the antique mysteries reach back into the grey mists of Neolithic prehistory... We haven't the remotest conception of what is meant by the Virgin Birth, the divinity of Christ, and the complexities of the Trinity... The fact is that archetypal images are so packed with meaning in themselves that people never think of asking what they really do mean. That the gods die from time to time is due to man's sudden discovery that they do not mean anything, that they are made by human hands, useless idols of wood and stone. In reality, however, he has merely discovered that up till then he has never thought about his images at all."

The scientific approach implicit in Leonardo and explicit in Jung analyses theology in natural terms. Jung's interest in the hermetic philosophy 'as above so below' found expression in the Last Supper, reflecting the Christian teaching that Jesus did the will of God on earth as in heaven, while viewing heaven in purely natural terms. Natural theology, reconciling ideas with observation, is rejected by conventional religion, but was at the foundation of the emerging scientific cosmology of the Renaissance. For Leonardo in Florence at the end of the fifteenth century, this reflowering of ancient wisdom provided an important element of the new focus on evidence and logic as the highest values. The observation concealed in the Last Supper that the story of Jesus personifies the ancient religious function of the sun and moon serves to ground our religious mythology in empirical observation. Perhaps this can help with the emerging debate on cultural values today, as our ethical frameworks endeavour to combine accurate observation and logical analysis as the highest moral values together with respect for the cultural heritage of the creative wisdom of the ages.

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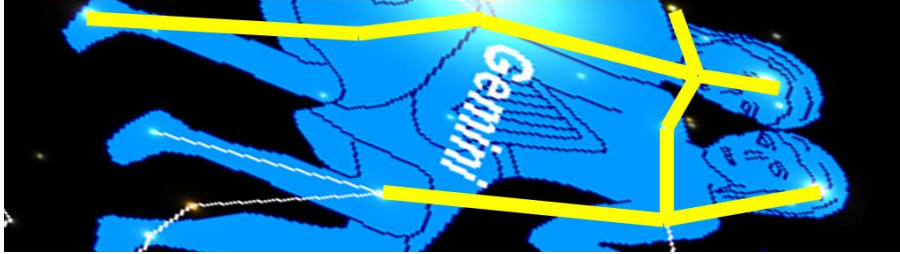
<sup>32</sup> 578 ; Psychology and Religion: West and East Answer to Job : 609

Appendix: Detail Star Maps

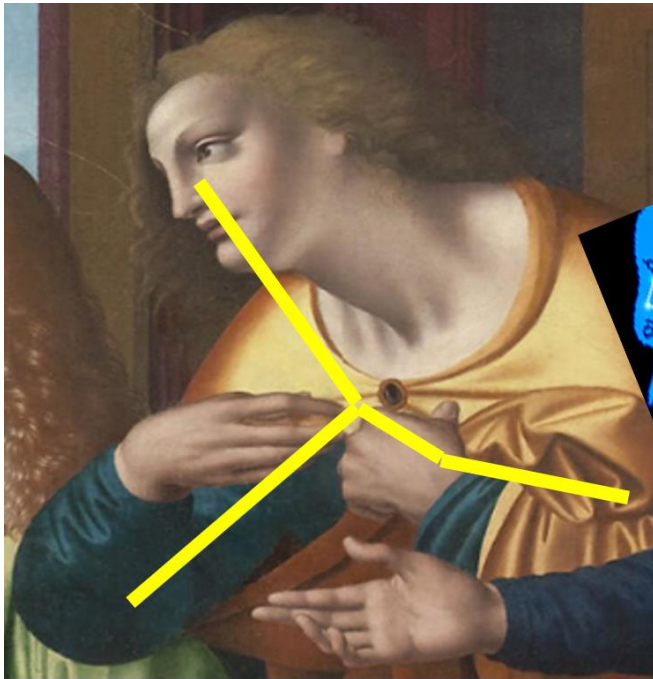




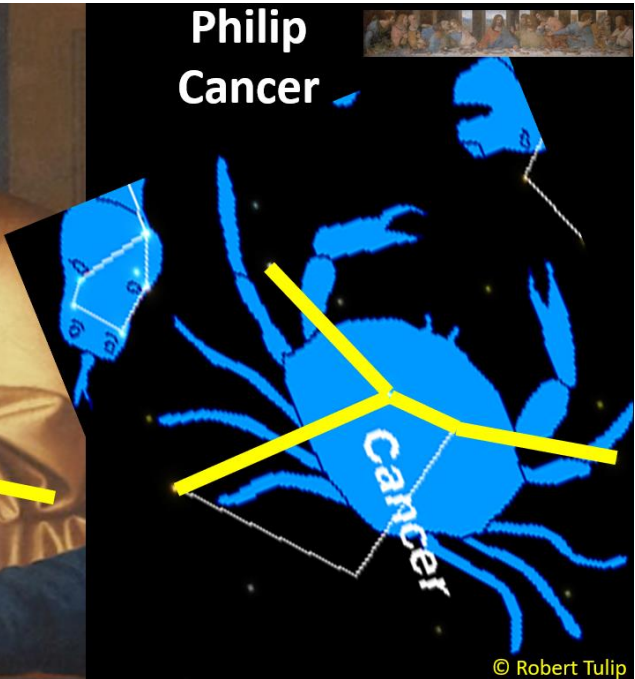
Matthew  
Gemini



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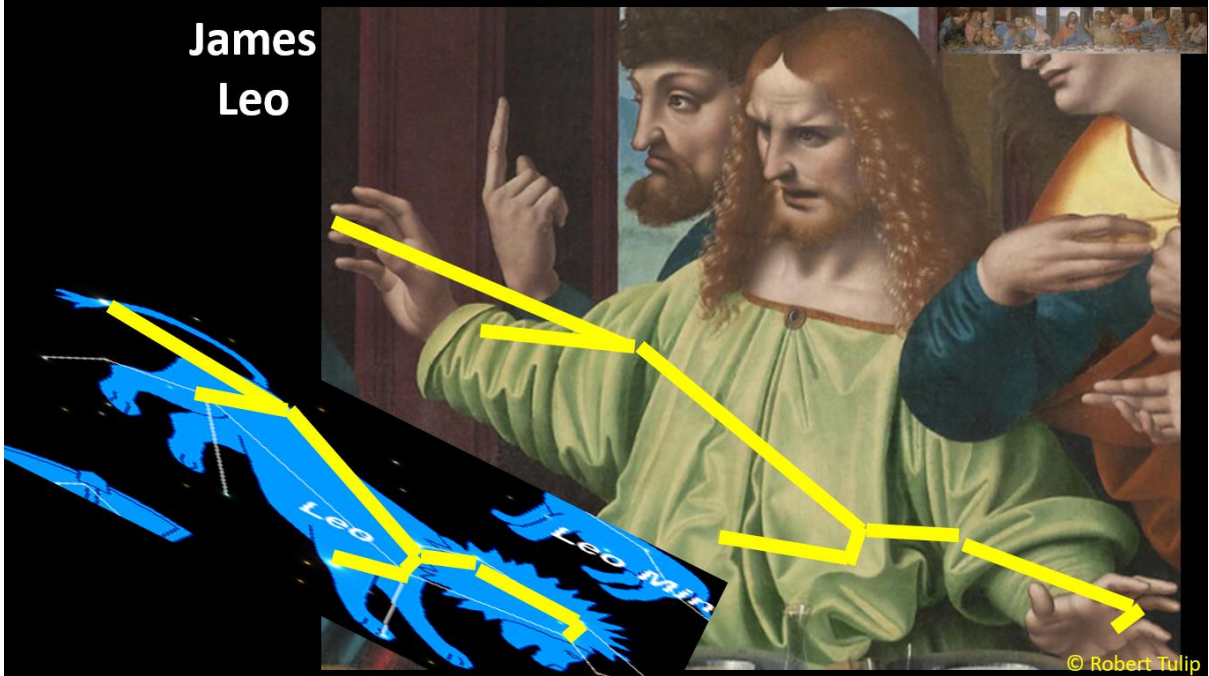


Philip  
Cancer



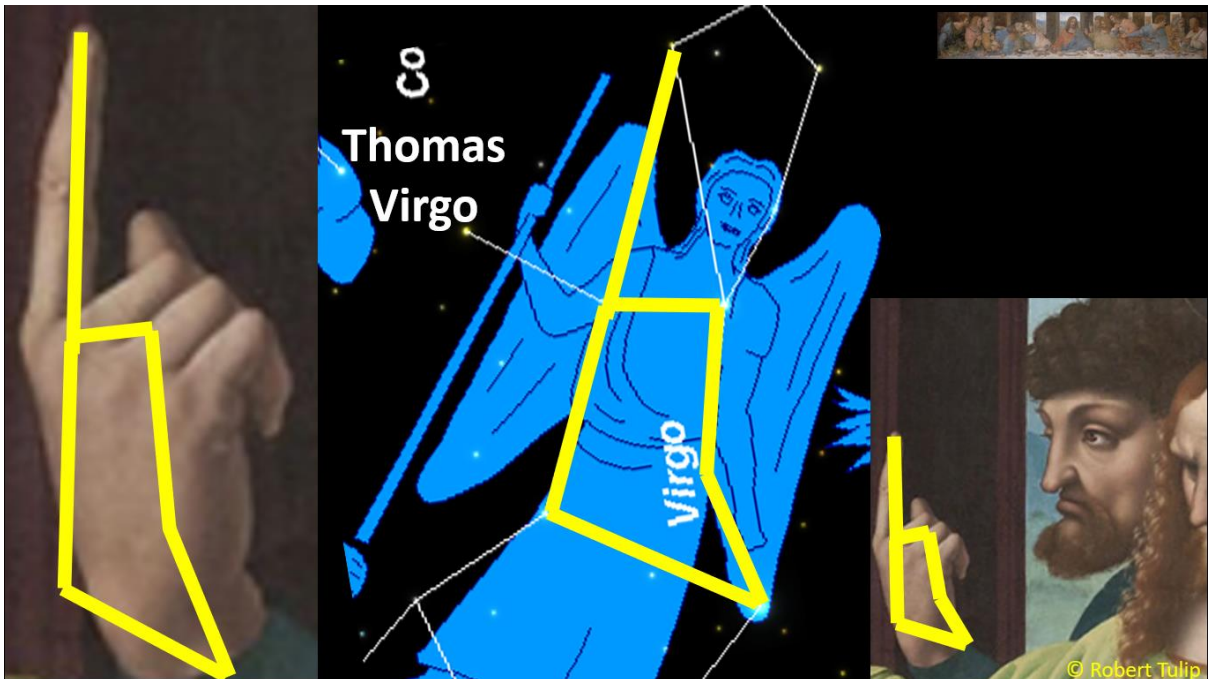
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James  
Leo

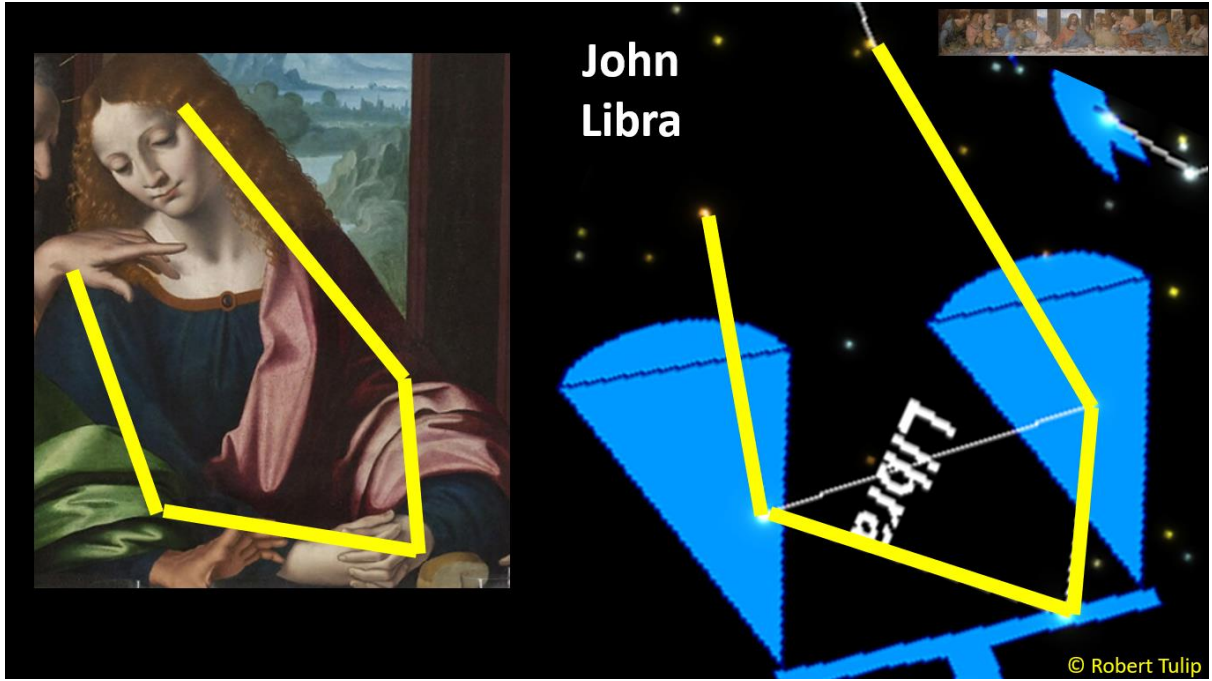


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8  
Thomas  
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Scorpio

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