

Freemasonry and 18th Century Democracy by Dane Rudhyar

These are times when the very ideals of democracy are challenged by powerful movements in Europe and in America; when a devastating conflict bleeds nations which for nearly a century and a half had striven to realize democratic ideals; when deep confusion spreads among citizens of the land of traditional liberty. It is indeed relevant to ask what is the future of democracy? And such a question naturally leads to others: Whence came this democracy about which so many talk, yet which perhaps only a few understand in its historical background and development? What is the essence and meaning of democracy, in America, in Europe, and elsewhere?

Historians and philosophers have written volumes to answer these queries. And perhaps they have said all that can be said from their own points of view. But what of astrologers? Astrology may not find it easy to deal with a broad movement responsible for the spread of democratic ideals and institutions spread over the entire world. Astrology can only make charts for the exact beginnings of particular manifestations of life, for the exact beginnings of individual lives and of nations or social groups. Its understanding of vast historical cycles is at present very limited. Nevertheless astrological research, while it cannot make a chart for the birth of democracy, may reveal very interesting signs and trends, and may provide a basis for the re-interpretation of the lives and activities of key personages who made history. It may do so at any rate, provided the astrologer is able to think in broad terms of historical and social evolution.

In this series of studies, our purpose is not quite as ambitious as the foregoing might suggest. Above all, we wish to focus the readers' attention upon **significant personalities** and **critical events** which have been of the greatest importance in the shaping of democratic ideals and democratic institutions; and with the help of astrological analysis, so to interpret such personalities and events in a manner which will engender a more vital and fresher grasp of the present situation; of those very things for the sake of which he may have to suffer, to fight, to pay taxes and to die.

Whence Democracy?

It is easy to speak, in sober or in passionate tones, about democracy. It is much more difficult so to define the term as to satisfy everyone who uses — and often abuses — it. It is very essential to distinguish between: **1)** democracy as a spiritual idea defined in broad terms of human relationship; **2)** democracy as a political system of parliamentary

government; and **3**) democracy as the particular way in which this political system operates in the United States.

In the first sense, democracy can be defined as an ideal of human relationship according to which any human being is considered as an individual with certain inalienable rights which he possesses simply by virtue of his being a member of the human species and with no regard to any difference of sex, color, race, social and financial situation and religious belief.

It is an ideal of relationship between human beings which deliberately ignores all distinctions and particular characteristics giving to a human being a personal character and personal destiny; which recognizes only that which, in every human being, is **common to all**: viz. ones "humanness." Democracy stresses thus the permanent and basic factors in every man and woman; the impersonal factors. It denies the **real** significance of personal differences produced by heredity and claims that, if a healthy and harmonious social environment were created, human nature would show its glory.

As the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau — one of the most influential figures of the 18th century — taught, Natural Man — unspoiled by government and social systems — is good. Give men and women a real chance, and all will be well with society. All trouble lies in the wickedness of civilization. Thomas Paine and others later indicted the fallacies and blind beliefs imposed by organizations. Give man his "self-evident" rights to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"; let the government operate by the "consent of the governed," and "by the people, for the people" — and mankind will reach happiness and security.

Such are the idealistic foundations of democracy. Democracy, thus considered, is a religion of optimism and faith in man. It became in the 19th century a religion of the "common people"; of the "average citizen" and later, of the "proletariat" — the virgin, pure, and supposedly unspoiled because undifferentiated masses in whom all potentialities (and no crystallized, set attitudes) abide.

At this point, it is essential to realize the strong differences between 18th century and 19th century ideals of democracy. The former was above all a philosophical, intellectual, political ideal which can be connected with the beginnings of modern Free Masonry in England. The latter became a religious, emotional Movement. Its source can be traced to the emotional Jean-Jacque Rousseau and to the French "Humanitarianism" of St. Simon and Fourier. It took in America the form of Abolitionism — foreshadowed by Thomas Paine. It was forcefully presented in political ideology by Lincoln and in literature by Walt Whitman. In Germany and England, the same religious fervor took a different form leading to the Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx and Engels and the "First International."

In this and the following articles we shall deal with democracy as conceived by the great intellectuals of the 18th century; after which, we shall study the more religious-emotional aspect of democracy as particularly emphasized in the 19th century. The first step is to inquire into the relation of modern masonry to American democracy.

Modern Free Masonry

A prolonged controversy has raged as to the true origins of Masonry. The publicly evident fact is that what must be called "Modern Masonry" was born in the Appletree Tavern of Charles Street, Covent Garden, London on June 24, 1717. Anthony Sayer was then elected grand Master of the "mother-Lodge" of Masonry. Presuming that the recorded date refers to "old style" calendar then used in England, this gives as the "new style" date July 5, 1717; a most interesting date indeed when compared to that of the Declaration of Independence, fifty-nine years later.

A fifty-nine year interval means, astrologically speaking, two complete Saturn cycles, and two "mean periods" of the progressed Luration cycle — each of these cycles lasting approximately twenty-nine and one-half years. These cycles are significant, because they refer to **structural factors**. Saturn represents in every organic entity the "structural law" which is basic and in the main, permanent: the foundation, the root-power, the inherent destiny, the pattern of organization of all parts within the whole, the essential "constitution" of the organism — the Father-principle. As for the progressed Luration cycle (which measures the time between two successive conjunctions of the progressed Sun and Moon in the so-called "secondary" progressions), it refers to the cyclic unfoldment of the organism and of the personality as a whole, **within the Saturnian structure**.

There has been a great deal of controversy as to what date should be considered the birthday of the United States. For the purpose of this study there is little doubt that the Declaration of Independence marks the official beginning of American democracy; even if other dates may be relevant when the beginning of the American **nation** is discussed. Thus we may consider a chart erected for July 4, 1776; and for reasons (both historical and astrological) which I shall state in a later article, I believe the correct time of the adoption of the Declaration was around 5 p.m., giving Sagittarius as the Ascendant (probably very near the Mars of the Masonic chart). A comparison between this chart and the one erected for the opening of the **first Lodge of modern Masonry** is significant. I have cast the Masonic birth-chart for noon; which is likely to be the correct time. At any rate the chart produced is symbolically a most remarkable glyph of modern Masonry.

I shall not discuss here the United States' chart, but a brief study of the **Masonic chart** is of great value. Its pattern of Houses strikes one immediately as being identical with that of the chart of the first moment of every New Year. Its "axis of destiny" (the line of the Moon's Nodes) is identical with the chart's horizon, and Saturn is just rising. This Saturn is about one degree away from the United States' natal Saturn; and in both cases in square to the Sun which is located on that same Cancer 14°, with this significant Sabian Symbol: "**An old man, alone, faces darkness in the North East**". It is a significant symbol because according to the occult, and I believe also Masonic, tradition "North-East" symbolizes the line of spiritual-cosmic influx of power — this because of the inclination of the Earth's axis in relation to the plane of the Equator. In other words, the symbol suggests a rebirth of an "old" Mystery-Pattern. Also in both charts Jupiter, Venus and Mercury are close to the Sun

— especially in the Masonic chart, where the profoundly significant square of Jupiter to Saturn is nearly exact.

The squaring of a Cancer grouping of planets by a Libra Saturn could possibly be considered as the very signature of 18th century democracy. The angular square of Jupiter to Saturn reveals particularly the intense struggle pursued by Masonry in its attempt to build an operative pattern for a new type of human relationship. The essential character of such a relationship is its breaking away from political tyranny, church dogmatism and social injustice due to class-prejudice. Such a disruption of Jupiterian power and Saturnian traditionalism is symbolized by the square of Jupiter and Saturn, which reveals a **structural crisis** in the organization of society and also in the realm of the ethics of human relationship. Out of such a crisis, new energies arise. Man can see the Vision of **a new order of society**.

The Masonic Lodge, briefly said, is to be considered (and undoubtedly was meant) as a small model, an experimental structure, for the testing and the proving of the new order of society envisioned by some of the Founders of Modern Masonry.

It is **a microcosm of the new society which should emerge out of the present world-crisis, after we learn to integrate the two complementary Principles of fundamental democracy and operative hierarchy**. Such an integration is strongly related to the factor of ritual. Ritual, broadly speaking, can be defined as organic group-activity performed under law and with an integral and integrating consciousness of the meaning and value of symbolism.

In other words, it might well be said that the extent to which American Democracy has failed to come up to its highest possibilities is that to which it has failed to incorporate the **living spirit** of its Masonic Founders. A vast majority of the Signers of the Declaration and of Washington's Generals in the War of Independence were Masons. And the story of how Masonic Lodges and related groups prepared the ground for American freedom and unity has probably never been completely told; though enough evidences can be found already.

Masonry may have degenerated into a purely fraternal organization for mutual help, but the **idea** of the Masonic Lodge and Masonic Ritual has power today; it has indeed an essential message to offer to the America of tomorrow. And the concept of the Lodge (on which modern Theosophy moulded its idea of the "White Lodge" — or vice versa) is a typically Cancer-concept, astrologically speaking. Interestingly enough, H. P. Blavatsky, founder of the modern Theosophical Movement, had presumably Cancer 13° rising.

Cancer signifies not only the "home," but any concrete expression and focalization of an ideal of integrated activity. It represents the actual "personality" of an individual person; i.e. an organic whole of biological and psychological activities and energies. A Masonic Lodge is such an organic whole. It is meant as **the prototype of all truly operative social organisms**. The family is necessary at this stage of evolution as an intimate biological-personal unit, but in terms of the establishment of a steady and efficiently functioning human society the ideal type of the "Masonic Lodge" — especially perhaps in the Co-Masonic

stage, where women are included — provides the Cancer-pattern for the operative integration of groups of personalities.

The Libra Ascendant, with Saturn and the Moon's North Node rising, stresses the above. Libra symbolizes group-integration; the forming of any greater human organism and communal consciousness. Saturn is the principle of structure and the North Node a point of deliberate, willful integration. And these three astrological factors square the 10th House planets; indicating thus, on the plane of **outer events** a fight against social and political traditions, and on the plane of **deep realities** a birthing of a greater tradition and a greater Cancer-integration in terms of a greater Libra-group of human beings: thus the process of expansion from the biological personal family unit (which modern technology is transforming today beyond recognition) to the social-spiritual **operative group** of the future: the Lodge.

The process of rebirth is emphasized by the presence of the Moon and Neptune in the eighth House (death and regeneration of the lesser into the greater). Neptune represents the "power of society"; the Moon, the collective past of humanity. During the period of the 18th century just preceding this official beginning of modern Masonry (and which witnessed also the 1712 Slaves insurrection in New York, the important Peace of Utrecht in Europe, and so on).

Is there a direct astrological time-relationship between the **birth-chart of Masonry** and that of the **United States**? If one measures one year to one degree between planets (an aspect of the "Radix system," or of what I have called the "time-analysis of a planetary pattern") one finds a few correlations which seem significant. There are 59 years between the dates of the two charts; and the distance between Sun and Pluto in the Masonic chart is a little over 58 degrees pointing to the trine of the battle of Lexington. The distance between Sun and Uranus is 74 degrees, which gives 1791; perhaps referring to the French Revolution and the overthrow of French monarchy. The arc Sun to Ascendant gives the date 1803 (the Louisiana Purchase); the arc Sun-Saturn, the date 1807 — the time of the so-called "Burr conspiracy" which marks one of the first tendencies to national cleavage in the United States and the beginning of the embargo which led to war with Great Britain. Add 59° to Mars' position and you have Taurus 14°, which is the approximate sextile point to both Sun-Jupiter and of course Mars itself. Progress the Moon of the Masonic chart for 1776, and you have the last degree of Cancer — the close of the Moon's period in the all-important sign Cancer; thus stressing all the events between 1775 and 1776 which led to the American Independence. (Thomas Paine's **Commonsense** was published in January, 1776, as the Masonic progressed Moon met the USA's Mercury.)

These are all significant time-correlations, and coupled with the previously discussed similarities in planetary pattern and position they go far to give a strong astrological backing to the historically and philosophically evident relation between the beginnings of modern Masonry in England and the birth of American Democracy. The America of Franklin, Paine, Jefferson, Washington and the Declaration of Independence was steeped in the ideals of

Masonry. Few however were the men, even the Masons, who had the courage and the vision necessary to realize the depth and the extent of the connection between the Masonic Lodge pattern of activities and the Democratic State they were building. Had they done so, the world-chaos of this day would probably have been avoided.