

***Must You Be the Victim
of Your Stars?***

by Dane Rudhyar

If we are to determine whether astrology really has value as a guide to richer living certain basic questions must be faced, analyzed and answered.

Do we really have "free" will, "free" choice? What provides the data for our value judgments on which crucial decisions — free choices — are based? Beyond lies the still deeper problem: When a person says, "I, Mr. So-and-So, am making this decision," what within him leads to the choice?

Philosophers have had to deal with this since the advent of Freud and depth psychology. Who, or what is "I"? At the moment of decision what does the choosing? Is it the whole of "me" or only a part — now that we have come to realize man operates on conscious and unconscious levels? If indeed "free" — or today we may say "authentic" — decisions can be made, who or what makes them?

The basis of astrology — that the planets, the Sun and the Moon impel or "compel" us to act in a certain manner according to our birth charts — seems to negate free will. But has man the power to overcome the pressures and influences of the stars?

The great 16th Century occultist Paracelsus said, "Whatever the stars can do we can do ourselves, because the wisdom which we obtain from God overpower the heavens and rules over the stars . . . Man's soul is made up of the same elements as the stars; but as the wisdom of the Supreme guides the motions of the stars, so the reason of man rules the influences which rotate and circulate in his soul."

The traditional view, resting on a strictly dualistic concept of man and the universe, is no longer acceptable to many people today. Scientific experiments with personality-altering drugs and hypnotism, and the findings of depth psychology, have shown us a very different picture of the human being.

In line with modern thinking a new type of astrological attitude is developing, a concept that an individual human being is **represented** by his birth chart. It reveals the seed pattern of the person's individuality and the basic structure of his life's unfoldment — as the acorn contains the germ and schedule of growth of the mighty oak. Could the oak overrule or alter what was latent in the acorn from which it originated?

To what extent can we will to become what we are not? And if we can, does it make any sense? The whole problem of "free will vs. determinism," which has haunted Western thinkers and religious men and deeply affected our political institutions, in my opinion is fallaciously approached.

Our overwhelming and enduring Western concern for "freedom of decision," in contrast to the acceptance of "being determined" by one's birth chart, progressions and transits, can be shown to be based on an incomplete picture of individual evolution. When an individual reaches real freedom he comes to accept willingly the destiny conditioned by the time and place of his birth. His much-vaunted free will becomes the "will to destiny." He is utterly determined by what he is as a person. **If he be true to himself he can choose only what is necessary for him.** Necessity and freedom thus are integrated in him.

In terms of astrology there is a way in which an individual person can transcend the assumed influence of any particular planet. He can transcend it however, only in the sense that he can use it: make it serve the purpose of his individual approach to life, his destiny. He can do so only if he in fact has become an "individual." What it means to be an individual can be explained by a simple illustration.

Let us say that the wife of a busy New York executive has been ordered by her doctor to Arizona to recover from serious bronchitis. She is learning to ride horseback and feels attracted to the young riding master with whom she spends long hours every day. He is single and she believes that he desires a more intimate relationship with her. Having a love affair for these few weeks would be diverting and completely safe. The decision is hers to make. Is she "free" to decide?

The moralist will say of course she is. But simply to say so is a naive and elementary way to assess a complex situation. The woman is not a simple homogenous monolithic entity. She exists at several levels. First she is a human being of a certain age. This categorizes her at

the generic level of all human beings; they breathe, experience hunger and sexual urges and respond to basic biological stimuli. Since her birth in a particular American family her psychological being has been stamped with a definite set of social imperatives, molded by family and class attitudes and traditions and impregnated with ideas and ideals of the American culture. This is her **cultural** level. Then

, being a living organism with individualizing features, which makes her different from even her sisters born in the same environment, she has reacted to the combination of generic and cultural forces by seeking her own unique manner of responding to every day challenges. Although at this level of being she may have fears, complexes and emotional problems, this is her **ego-consciousness**.

The woman in all her complexity faces the decision: will she or will she not give herself to the fascinating horseman? Each level of her personality meets the issue in a different way. Her sexual nature clamors, **Yes!** Her moral education thunders, **No!** The relationship with her husband conditioned by those with her father and brothers, her fear of pregnancy and a variety of other complexes may conflict within the sphere of her ego-consciousness.

Let us now look at the situation astrologically and assume her Venus stands close to the riding master's Mars. Her progressed Sun is reaching her natal Uranus in the fourth house, while transiting Mars is passing over her Gemini Moon (the bronchitis). Will this intriguing planetary combination compel her to give in to her generic sexual urge or force her ego to surrender to a complex of frustration and loneliness fed by an unsatisfactory marriage? Where in all this is her "freedom of choice"? What is **she**?

My answer is that "she" is the total of her generic nature plus the product of her culture plus the result of childhood and adolescent experiences plus the Arizona desert situation and the riding master in it. The whole point however becomes: Is this total situation **integrated** so that she can make a "free decision"? **Is she a conscious individual person aware of her identity and self?**

If such an integration has not occurred a battle will rage in her personality. The strongest "force" will win, temporarily reducing the other factors to relative importance. But let us explore this "integration."

Each human organism has a unique birth chart. Each newborn has certain differentiating features and **potentially** may become an "individual", an indivisible whole with a particular rhythm of existence. The infant can have no consciousness of this because his brain-mind is not yet developed.

To develop this conscious mind definite types of cultural, religious and social-ethical traditions are built by more or less consistent and permanent groups of human beings — first tribes, then kingdoms, nations, etc. Each child develops its mind and consciousness by using the language and following the patterns set by family, school and society.

In its prenatal stage the fetus is surrounded by a formative matrix of the maternal womb; but once born the child remains enclosed within a **psychic** womb wherein his mind and his ego grow and gradually mature. The fetus is not free within the womb except to kick around a bit. Is the teen-ager "free" while growing within the psychic wombs of family, culture, traditions, and college? He can kick around a great deal but nevertheless he is **conditioned** entirely by his physical-cultural-social environment.

The philosopher who believes in "determinism" claims the teen-ager is in fact completely determined, whether he follows passively or rebels against his surroundings. Likewise the astrologer who believes in the "fateful influence" of this or that planet will say the human being is compelled to act according to the position of this or that planet in his chart.

Just as the fetus emerges from his mother's womb and experiences an increasing degree of muscular freedom, so the child having completed some sort of education should be able to emerge from the psychic womb of his family, culture and social tradition and be **reborn as an "individual"**. That young people today more than ever are aware of this possibility — indeed, this requirement for full selfhood — is evidenced by their often passionate and

hectic search for "identity."

As I see it, only the person who has emerged from the matrices of his cultural and social conditioning can be considered really "free to choose." He alone is able to make **authentic** decisions. The emergence from the social-cultural matrix means that the "reborn" individual, while he realizes his development has been conditioned, now finds his behavior need not be determined by single and separate pressures or pulls like those applied during his maturation.

When you are hungry your digestive organs exert a pressure on your whole organism determining a certain type of behavior: you must eat. The same thing happens when sexual glands secrete hormones that arouse in you the drive for sexual satisfaction. A particular single function among the many normally at work in your body takes hold of your behavior and thoughts driving the body toward the satisfaction it craves.

When this happens you are not free, for an individual is the totality of all his functions at all levels of existence. But you cease to be the real "you" (your true all-inclusive identity) the moment **one** of your functions takes hold and controls muscles, psychic energies, imagination **to satisfy their own end.**

This situation resembles what happens in civic life when one particular pressure group forces its will on a legislative body or succeeds in drastically influencing the mind of the executive. Freedom then ceases to be a reality. He who is not whole and confident of his identity cannot make really free decisions. He acts as an agent for this or that traditional idea or collective attitude.

We can readily see how this applies to the question of astrology and free will and how inadequate is the astrological approach that deals with each planet and aspect as if they were **singly determining influences.** Every planet considered separately is a binding force; it drives the body-mind organism to the satisfaction of the life-function it represents. But the **whole birth-chart** is the signature of a man's freedom and his destiny, for it is the blueprint of an individual.

The whole sky represents the person who has become truly an individualized whole — or as medieval philosophers said, a microcosm in resonance to the universal-macrocosm.

Whenever an astrologer singles out a particular planet or aspect as indicating a crisis, an accident or a stroke of good fortune, he is speaking of bondage, not freedom. When a doctor isolates a diseased organ and treats the disease instead of dealing with the entire organism and mobilizing its own healing power, he is approaching man as a complex mechanism on its way to inevitable disintegration, gear by gear.

Now we shall return to the woman in Arizona trying to decide whether to have a love affair. If she follows her sexual impulses her actions are determined; the choice is not free. If she keeps her "virtue" because of the moral code she has been taught she is not free either. The power of a collective-cultural-ethical precept determines her. If she does not care about morals but is stopped by some ego complex or strictly social consideration, her choice is not authentic. Actually the character of freedom does not reside in whether she does or does not have an affair with the man but **in the meaning and purpose of the love relationship or, the abnegation of it.**

In other words, how she as a whole individual meets the situation, the significance she gives to it, the quality of the yes- or no-saying — these are the issues in which she can exercise truly free will. At the real spiritual level nothing compels her and every desire, act and thought can give richness, beauty and depth to her selfhood.

Astrologically, Mars will compel the sexual arousal, Uranus will tend to transform and renew her capacity for intimacy with men (including her husband) and the Mars transit over her Moon will stir up her femininity. But these influences will not **compel** her if she has emerged as an individual from the generic and cultural matrices which once were necessary for her physiological and psychological development.

In the end the only true free will is the will to destiny and the really free decisions are those which are not "made" because they are so evident and necessary they might be said to make themselves. The freedom we have is to choose to be free and to remain so. We are born at a definite place and time in the vast environment of our solar system and the total galaxy. This place-time equation, of which the birth chart is the symbol or signature, shows what the human being potentially is as a whole, person. What would be the sense, of fighting destiny, **willing** to be what one is not?