

***Official Birthday
and Solar Return Time***

by Dane Rudhyar

In the spring of 1964 I wrote what follows, for this seemed to me a valuable contribution to astrological thinking. The editors of the magazines for which I was regularly writing at the time nevertheless declined to publish the article. I kept a copy of it in my voluminous files of articles entirely forgetting about it through the very crowded and busy years that followed. Yesterday, however, on March 22, 1979, something occurred that forcibly brought the forgotten article to my mind. A similar situation developed spontaneously — for the first time since the day of fifteen years ago. It was vivid enough to make me feel that the matter should be shared with the new generation of astrological students and devotees that has made astrology and solar returns popular topics of discussion. I shall therefore ask the editors of **The Aquarian Agent** to reproduce the old article as it was written, and I will afterwards add a few comments relating to what just occurred for my 84th birthday and my interpretation of the whole issue.

I want to share an experience which, though evidently not conclusive, may point to the solution of a problem which has concerned astrologers for a long time. When I began to work with astrology many years ago, the current practice in America was to erect charts for a person's official birthday and birth time; and opinions varied as to whether one should take the exact birth-moment for the place at which one was born or for the place of residence on the particular birthday. Later on, I believe largely because of the influence of European astrologers, the practice was given up, and "solar returns" — charts calculated for the moment the Sun returns each year to the exact zodiacal position it had at birth — came into more or less extensive use. From a strictly astrological standpoint, it is indeed rather evident that the "solar return" chart is preferable to the "official birthday" chart, and in some cases, like the leap year 1964, the difference between the two times can be considerable — several hours.

Coming now to the experience I had this year: I was born on March 23rd in Paris, around 0.42 AM, the Sun being about 2°08'01" Aries. At this time (1964), I lived near Los Angeles, California; and with eight hours difference between Paris Time and Pacific Standard Time, it was 4.42 PM on March 22nd when, according to French clocks, I was re-born. However, because there were 29 days in February, and the Sun entered Aries on March 20th instead of the more usual March 21st, my "solar return" occurred about 6:00 PM Greenwich Time, and thus at about 10:00 AM Los Angeles Time.

The weeks and especially days before this spring equinox had been very strenuous, for a variety of reasons. On March 20th and 21st, I had to give lectures involving long drives on crowded freeways, plus consultations which had turned out to be quite exhausting. The night of the 21st-22nd was heavy and unrestful, and I awoke so tired on the 22nd that I did not think of my birthday at all, worried as I was by this state of depletion at a time when I was just facing very important events in my life and a change of residence. I had to try to work during the morning even though it was Sunday and in spite of the way I felt. I listened to music for a while after a late lunch, but I was still so tired that around 4:15 PM I had to lie down.

My thoughts were rather "downbeat", and I felt very tense. However, after some time of unsuccessful attempts at relaxing, I felt calmer, and fairly soon a change of mood came about. For at least a few minutes I did not realize how clear-cut the change was, but I soon became aware of a sense, not only of great calm, but of real exaltation — as if something had just happened which made all the difference in the world for me at that time. **Only then** did I realize suddenly: "But this is my birthday!" I had totally forgotten this fact, **at least in my conscious mind.**

I jumped out of bed, looked at the clock and saw that it was past 5:00 PM. I realized at once that this was the time, **in Paris**, at which I had been born. This, of course, started me thinking. Did the exhausted feeling of the last twenty-four hours correlate in part with the "crisis of birth?" Was I then ending a cycle — indeed "dying" before being "reborn?" Since

many things had happened during the last fortnight of the winter, and they were just about to reach a conclusion, the period had indeed been some kind of end-of-cycle. But what was interesting was that I should have emerged from those tensions and reached a state of really vivid inner happiness and near-elation just at the moment of my official re-birth in Paris, and **not** at the moment of my "solar return."

As I said at the beginning of this article, the experience is obviously not "conclusive." What is worse, I could not duplicate it next year or the following year, for I have now been alerted consciously to the problem, and my imagination could play a trick. Nor could anyone, **after** reading this article, check on the validity of such an experience in the future, for the very same reason. Possibly, someone has had a similar experience in the past, and if so I would be interested to know about it. But I realize that a similar concurrence of circumstances would be required to produce such a clear-cut change of conscious state.

Conscious state: this is the crux of the matter — and these words may well focus the whole problem of the meaning of astrology **for an individual person.**

There may well be a kind of astrology which deals with the impact of "forces" upon the human organism as well as upon the planet Earth as a whole. Whether we have the real or complete key to measuring and correctly evaluating both the forces and the impact is, however, another matter, which I am much inclined to answer in the negative. But there is also a kind of astrology which refers to conscious states, that is, to the many changes in the consciousness of individuals, many of which have an ascertainable rhythm and character. It is such a rhythm of states of consciousness, such periodical modifications of the **focus of attention of a person's mind** which astrology can, in my opinion, most significantly "clock" and interpret.

If astrology is a "science," it is — as I see it — a mental and archetypal rather than material and empirical science. Evidently astrology can deal with concrete events; but what are concrete events caused by in the lives of modern individuals? We know today how 'psychosomatic' or "psychogenic" the majority of illnesses are. Psychoanalysis has shown us that even accidents occur in relation to their victim's mental or emotional states. Physicists like James Jeans and Erwin Schrodinger, chemists like Donald Hatch Andrews, and many others are presenting to us a picture of the universe which is "mental" rather than "material." The vast majority of events in people's lives come about as the result of individual psychic responses to external circumstances — which have in turn come about as the result of previous responses to prior circumstances. What astrology tells us about is the need for certain kinds of responses at certain times, and **not** about the external circumstances stimulating response.

Astrology — that is, natal astrology — is, in my opinion, essentially the clocking of turning points in the lives of individuals, and the attempt to help these individuals fully to understand the character, meaning, causes and the probable effects of these turning points (or crises of change) **in relation to their entire life-pattern from birth to death.** A birthday is always, to some extent at least, a turning point in consciousness. The person's age changes, and the change in some cases may be very important, socially or personally. If the person **knows** he or she is born on March 4th, the fact that the "solar return" may occur on March 3rd is not in most cases significant if the person does **not** know it. Even if he or she knows about it — as in my own, above-mentioned case — perhaps the organism-as-a-whole doesn't know it; the person's friends do not know it; his social papers do not know it.

The old adage "What you don't know doesn't hurt you" may be far truer than we think. Several astrologers I have asked have somewhat reluctantly admitted that "things" happened in their lives in exact accordance with planetary transits and progression, **far more so** since they knew astrology than before they began their study of the matter. But this need not be a point against the use of astrology! On the contrary, it may mean that since this kind of knowledge seems to precipitate potential changes into actuality, we may live a richer, fuller existence because of it — simply because otherwise our ego tries to

protect itself from changes that might put in question the validity of its control over our entire personal life.

I have strayed rather far away from the initial reason for writing these pages: viz. my 1964 birthday experience. But the experience started this process of thinking and I trust sharing both with the readers of this magazine will prove to be an incentive for a deeper investigation of some matters which most of us who are interested in astrology usually take for granted. We should never take anything for granted, but perpetually ask questions. And we should always be ready to change our customary answers.

What had happened before March 22, 1979 was simply a rather strong sense of exhaustion, following particularly the too-rapid composing of a new String Quartet intended, somewhat unexpectedly, to be recorded on an LP album (C.R.I: New York) by an excellent musical group, the Kronos Quartet, deeply devoted to new music. My body obviously is no longer young, and various physiological functions are reacting unhappily to accentuated pressures in a still very busy and productive life. Thus, on the days preceding my birthday, I was exceedingly tired and in some pain. On the afternoon of the 22nd, I was alone, as my dear wife Leyla was giving a class in San Francisco. I was resting on the couch in the living room, in a depressed mood, but not particularly thinking of my official birthday on the next day, or if subconsciously aware of it, being weary in advance of phone calls and a party planned for it.

I was listening to the radio — a rather depressing discussion of recent social and political issues — and I got up to turn the radio off at about 4:45 PM. Then I suddenly realized that somehow a heavy pressure had lifted up from me; and a feeling of quiet peace and greater positiveness and strength became noticeable, indeed very much in evidence. My mind had cleared up and I was even clearly thinking of a new book which I was about to start, and whose beginning had eluded me, as it presented some obvious problems.

Only then did I suddenly remember the experience of fifteen years before, and realized how similar it had been to what was now happening. And indeed this was the time I would have been "reborn" in Paris, were I now living in my birthplace. My solar return for this year 1979 had been calculated a few weeks before on a computer, and it was scheduled for March 23, at about 1:00 AM, nearly eight hours later.

As I wrote in 1964, such experiences do not "prove" anything. They may nevertheless suggest some important points which I made in my unpublished article. The way I would state the matter today is, however, that the Sun in astrology refers primarily to the biological level, that is, to the source of the life-force. Solar cycles deal fundamentally with vitality, and for most people the energy factor has a physical-biological character. Thus the return of the Sun each year to its natal place refers for most people primarily to a renewal of the biological functions and physical energy. But for an individual whose life has very little of a physical and biological character, and especially when the person is in old age and very involved in mental and social-cultural activities and responsibilities, the strictly solar element may not have to be considered the dominant factor.

Actual birth is, after all, not mainly a strictly biological fact. It is the beginning of a person, rather than of a body. A person begins its career when relating as a separate entity to other entities in the environment in which its "personhood" will develop. Being in a womb is not "relating" to the mother, it is being "contained" within a binding, nurturing envelope. The baby-mother relationship is not really a relationship, it is a "possession," which is why it is often so difficult to transcend. An embryo in the womb is a prenatal body, it should not be thought of as a person — a point so often unrecognized today in our society still bound to pagan(i.e., solely biological) values and body worshipping.

Thus, when the biological level is transcended or losing its power of attraction in old age, and the individual is still strongly and productively operating in his or her personhood as a sociocultural center of radiating energy, it may be logical to assume that the exact solar

return is not the most important factor, not the place in which one is then living, but the return of the moment at which the "person" was born in his or her socio-cultural environment. This moment marks the relationship of the person to the planet (and humanity) as a whole. It stamps upon this person a specific planetary impress — the seal of his or her personhood.

March 23, 1979 Palo Alto, California