

Probing the Human Mind
by Dane Rudhyar

What is the human mind? How does it develop? How much is the result of an individual's daily experience since birth – how much is inherited and determined by the individual's environment and the patterns of his society? Is the mind an entity or a mass of forces and memories? Do we have one mind or many minds which often are at war between themselves – and if there are several minds, where do they come from, how do they develop, how can they be harmonized and unified, how can man become "at peace with himself?"

Many and varied answers have been offered to these and similar questions; philosophical systems, religions and psychologies have been founded upon these different systems. My purpose in this article is not to challenge the validity of any of them or to build another system but simply to interpret some evident facts of human experience and to clarify their meaning and their practical application with the help of astrology. The result will be a somewhat new interpretation of the two planets Mercury and Pluto. By means of it, a better understanding of the mental life of an individual should be possible; conflicts which so often disturb or rend asunder this mental life should become nearer to a solution.

When the child matures and begins to family, this family lives in a community and is subject to the pressures, laws, customs of a particular class of society, a particular culture and usually a particular religion. A family is a group of human beings who live together linked by ties of blood. Even if the baby happens not to have a family or not to have any vital contacts with it, he or she grows in the midst of a group of other human beings. He grows in a constant state of relationship with them. He is surrounded by love or hatred, jealousy or affection, interest or indifference, happiness or emotional conflicts.

The child experiences these relationships; he reacts as well to heat and cold, hunger and pain, well-being and stimulations of all sorts. He sees, hears, touches, feels, tastes, smells. A multitude of impressions, conveyed to his brain by senses and nerves, are remembered or dismissed, given value to, cherished or hated. He seeks to reproduce some again and again; he avoids or fears others. All of this builds up his personal, conscious mind.

This type of mind is based on direct and personal perceptions, on quick associations of sensations, which produce concrete pictures and more indirect, abstract, or symbolic "images" strongly associated with emotional response or "feeling." It is the type of mind which is founded upon memory, for without the memory of past impressions, there could be no real sense of value, no mental associations, no conscious and deliberate process of thought. It is the Mercury type of Mind.

When a baby is born, he is part of a function in a wider social circle. In school or among his friends or in the street; when he hears the radio and sees motion pictures or reads the comics as well as his schoolbooks, then his mental life is influenced by something else besides his own personal and conscious reactions to sensations, pleasures or pain, and immediate experience of all kinds. He becomes subjected to the pressures of the **collective mind** of his society, his class, his culture and religion.

This collective mind is already there when the child is born. He is subjected to its impacts, first, **indirectly** through the behavior, moods, and thoughts of his family, which he imitates unconsciously; the **directly** through the process of intellectual education. Any book he reads, any motion picture he watches, any opinion which impresses upon him a particular social or intellectual attitude and bias is part of this education by society.

This society compels him, subtly or violently, to adopt its standards, its basic ideology and its collective goals (or lack of clear goals); these constitute the collective mind, the Pluto type of mind, in the individual person. It is the mind of a generation, which in turn determines the collective way of life of such a generation or broad age group. It establishes the **style** of a period; this style characterizes all social, political, artistic, literary, scientific, and industrial activities during that period.

The passage of Pluto through one entire sign of the zodiac provides us with a most convenient and accurate means for establishing the style characteristic of any period or age

group. The length of Pluto's stay in any zodiacal sign varies considerably, from about twelve years in Scorpio to about thirty-one years in Taurus; this is because of the elongated orbit of this distant planet. Pluto crossed the sign Gemini in about thirty years (1882-1912); Cancer, in about twenty-six years. Pluto occupied, since 1938-39, Leo and went out of Leo around 1957. Its stay in Libra will be even shorter, as it will enter Scorpio in 1983-84 and Sagittarius around 1996.

Every person born with Pluto in Gemini has carried, therefore, as part of his total personality makeup the stamp of this particular Pluto-in-Gemini type of "collective mind." Pluto represents the focus of expression of this collective mind in him, which is as much as an integral part of his personality as the type of personal mind represented by Mercury.

In other words, "mind" in an individual personality exists in two different conditions. In one condition (Mercury mind), mental activity is the result of the response of the individual to his immediate personal experiences, to all the impressions which he receives from the world around him, which he associates into definite mental pictures and concepts and fits into compartments. In the other condition, mental activity is determined by the impacts of collective "images" and ideas which did not arise directly from the individual's personal experience as such but were imposed upon him by his society, his culture, and his religion.

Obviously, these two types of mental activity react upon each other and blend with each other. There is no clear-cut line of demarcation because what the individual sees, feels, touches, loves, or hates, as a purely personal being is already conditioned by the collective patterns of society. The child's relation to his parents, to his home, his food, his playthings is influenced by the way of life and the "style" of the period. What he sees and hears, the moment he is born, carries the stamp of these collective characteristics of society. He can no more escape these than the fish can escape from its watery environment.

Nevertheless, as the child grows up, he normally tends to differentiate the Mercury and Pluto spheres of the mind. He at least tries to become an individualized, if not entirely independent, thinker. He places himself (whenever he can do so) as an objective critic of the collective mind which he sees at work **not only outside of him** in the men and women of his time, **but also inside of him**. If he fails to do so in any degree, then he lives and thinks only as a "mass man," as Mr. Average-Citizen, self-satisfied (even if inwardly bored) with his normality and his "successful adjustment" to society – which usually means unconscious and blind identification with the biases and set patterns of this society.

If there is such a complete identification with these collective-mind patterns and ideals, then Pluto does not really operate in the natal chart, paradoxical as this may seem. **A natal planet indicates a specific type of solution to a particular category of life problem.** If the problem is not there, there is no reason for any planet to act as a solution to what does not exist. Thus, when the operation of the collective mind within the individual causes no basic problem – i.e., when its controlling power is taken for granted and unconsciously accepted – Pluto has no importance as a **natal** planet. It is important nevertheless as a **transiting** planet; it indicates then the changing pressures and demands which the basic way of life of society makes at every moment upon the individual – even if this individual accepts this way of life as unquestioningly as the animal accepts instinctual urges.

This distinction between Pluto as a planet **in** the birth-chart and Pluto as a planet moving by transit **over** the birth-chart is essential. It applies also, even though to a lesser degree, to the cases of Neptune and Uranus, for these planets are slow and they refer to factors in the human being's natal psychological setup.

These three remote and recently made known planets symbolize powers which have always been active and always affect human affairs. But it is only recently that the operation of these powers has become the cause of specific and acute, **conscious and individualized**

problems for the average human being. As these problems come to disturb vitally the minds of an increasingly vast number of individual persons, **individual solutions** automatically become provided by God and the creative spirit in every man. These individual solutions are symbolized in astrology by the **natal** positions (and the interrelationships or "aspects") of the distant and slow-moving planets beyond the ring of Saturn.

The zodiacal sign **and degree** on which these planets are found in the birth-chart indicates the basic substance of the problems and the general character of the solutions they require. The **natal** house in which the planets are located reveals the particular **field of experience** in which this solution should be sought. Opportunities for working out this solution can, therefore, be expected in that particular field. Let us not forget that **crises are opportunities**.

I shall take as an example the chart of Henry Ford, in which Pluto is placed in the sixth house and on the thirteenth degree of Taurus. The meaning of this degree, in the Sabian list of symbols, is given by the picture of "**a porter cheerfully balancing a mountain of baggage**". The picture suggests symbolically an extreme of self-reliance and faith, the joy of effort put forth, particularly in the completion of a task of service to people of a dynamic state of movement. The sixth house is, besides, the "field of experience" connected with labor, service, technology, training and procedures of work.

The house and degree position of Ford's natal Pluto obviously fit well the type of **individual solution** which the pioneer industrialist was called upon, by his destiny or his creative genius, to work out. This is a solution of what? It is a solution of one of the basic problems of his generation with regard to the needs of a fast-growing industrial civilization. Pluto in Taurus is in a zodiacal sign which represents the evolutionary power of life from the roots upward, the one-pointed idea of progress from the material earth to the cultured person and the very concrete urge to see physical results, to produce and to achieve a social security founded upon the formal possession and individualized use of objects or tools. These characteristics of Taurus fit well indeed the main focus of attention, the basic desire and techniques of the Victorian Era, in which Ford was born (July 30, 1863). They given the keynote of "Pluto in Taurus," at least in our present modern society – and they define the "style" of the period, the Victorian way of life.

One cycle of Pluto before (1606-1637), they fitted, in a somewhat modified way, the growth of modern nations and of "classical" thinking along the lines of empirical materialism, from which "modern science" has derived. Outer conditions change; yet a few basic attitudes and human needs can, under many forms, be identified as related to the passage of Pluto through each of the zodiacal signs.

Pluto in Taurus represents, thus, the "collective mind" in Ford's personality and the problems of such a mind. Henry Ford was unusually sensitive, it seems, to these problems; he became interested in a type of business in which these problems seem to him particularly in need of solution and found this solution in the technique of mass production and the assembly line. This solution made him one of the richest men of the world and made millions of men automatons.

The development of Ford's new technique occurred while Pluto passed through Gemini, but the social consequences of the revolution they caused came to light only during the passage of Pluto through Cancer; just as the social forces which asserted themselves early in the 17th century in the Elizabethan Age and at the close of the Wars of Religion on the continent came to maturity only after 1660, when Pluto moved into Cancer, and the era of Louis XIV's court at Versailles revealed the prototype of the Fascist state and sent the pattern of European classicism and rationalism.

In other words, Ford's "collective mind" was of the Pluto-in-Taurus type; his most characteristic solution to the basic problem of his time was "Taurean." [Editor's Note: This article was written three decades before Ford Motor Company introduced its best-selling

Ford Taurus model.] However, as it became accepted, this solution helped create new social problems, a new way of life for America. It contributed to the modern meaning of the transit of Pluto through Cancer and then through Leo. It moulded the "collective mind" of men born during these transits.

Transiting Pluto represents to men born previously a kind of "social fate," in that there is something in the social power it measures and symbolizes which, because it is entirely collective and impersonal, has massive weight and inevitability. It is the socially inescapable result of what the "collective mind" of previous generations had thought out, visualized, and set in operation.

But this Pluto, which is social fate (or, at a higher level, spiritual-cosmic necessity or karma), for already grown or growing individuals **produces instead opportunities for the human being born.** It presents the opportunity for each newborn to solve problems of the "collective mind." No natal planet ever represents fate or some inevitable outcome. It is, on the contrary, God's solution to one of the newborn's typical problems. It is a power within him, latent at first, but one that he always can arouse into activity, at least to some extent. As the latent power of the **natal** Pluto is aroused into activity by the individual, it is the very force which can handle the problems of a Plutonian type as they are brought into focus by the **transiting** Pluto in the everyday experience of this individual. But if this latent natal-Pluto power is not made active, then the individual becomes more or less helpless in dealing with the deep collective pressures and compulsions to which the transiting Pluto refers in his life.

In other words, the "collective mind" within the personality must be given expression and the opportunity to produce effective individual solutions to problems caused by the mere fact of living as an individual within a complex and ruthless society – or else the individual will be completely moulded by these problems and standardized by their impact. Indeed, he will cease in this respect to be an "individual." He will become one of the passive crowd, a mere example of a collective and impersonal type. **The big question, therefore, is:** How can a person rouse in himself the latent power of his **natal** Pluto and make it produce individualized solutions to the big social-political-economic problems of his generation? The answer depends upon the character of his own individual Mercury mind and upon the relationship (aspect) at birth between Mercury and Pluto.

The relationship between the two minds within a person (the individual) and the collective minds described at the opening of this article) is a key of very great significance, provided one understands first of all the nature of the Mercury mind. This is done astrologically by studying the direction of motion (whether direct or retrograde) of the natal Mercury, its speed, whether it rises before or after the Sun (the **Promethean** or **Epimethean** types of conscious mentality). etc.

The study of Mercury in a natal chart cannot be gone into now, but a few indications as to the meaning of the main "aspects" between Mercury and Pluto can nevertheless be given. In the case of Henry Ford's birth-chart, Mercury in Leo is square Pluto in Taurus. Mercury is, moreover, in the eighth house, which refers essentially to the products of partnership, to business, and to all the practical results of group activity. Mercury rises before the Sun and has, thus, a forward-looking, eager, "Promethean" or prophetic, quality. The Sun is also in Leo, opposed by the Moon and both are squared by Pluto.

The square of Mercury and Pluto is, thus, one might say, backed and magnified by the position of the Sun and the Moon (symbol of the generation and distribution of the life force). It is a forceful aspect which suggests a personality whose mental process are dynamic and without too much regard for precedents. Mental conflicts are also indicated and an inner tension between the individualistic and the collectivistic approaches to experience. Ford's Mercury mind was intensely individualistic, but he contributed as much as any one man could contribute to the collectivizing and standardization of modern living – just as the all-individualistic late F. D. Roosevelt (with his Mercury and Pluto square) contributed to the

trend toward collectivism and socialism because of the "need of the times".

In the case of Lincoln, Mercury and Pluto are in conjunction and Jupiter is nearby also; the threefold group is in Pisces and square a conjunction of Saturn and Neptune.

There, the individual mind is seen, as it were, almost identified with the collective mind of the period but at a point of focalization which is eminently dramatic and much involved in the subjective realization of a state of social-national crisis (Pluto-Jupiter square Saturn-Neptune). Lincoln became the symbol of a powerful social ideal; his individual mind became a lens to focus this great idea – and he incorporated the latter (a product of the collective mind of his generation) to the extent that he died for it and he now lives immortally in it, as the Great Emancipator.

A conjunction often betrays, however, a lack of perspective, a subjective and not too realistic involvement in the dynamic impulse which drives one ahead regardless of ultimate consequences. While this made of Lincoln a great symbol and a martyr to a cause, it also brought to the realization of this cause elements which in due time have proven themselves seeds of national problems of the greatest magnitude.

In Karl Marx's chart, Mercury, at the beginning of Gemini, is sextile Pluto, at the end of Pisces; the same relationship is found in Carl Jung's, Luther Burbank's, and many prominent people's charts. These men take a great collective idea and use their own thought processes, even their personal complexes, to work it out practically and effectively. They build systems or, like Burbank, new species of life or, like Abdul Baba, a new religious organization. In the case of a trine of Mercury to Pluto, there is less of the systematic building-up process and more of the imaginative or idealistic approach in whatever field this relationship operates.

The opposition of Mercury to Pluto should interest Americans particularly as this aspect is found in the birth-chart of American Democracy (July 4, 1776). One may say that with the official discovery of Pluto in the sky by astronomers, the conflict inherent in this opposition has been brought to a focus in the national consciousness; the discovery came at the time of the Depression, when the "rugged individualism" of American pioneers became rudely challenged by the apparently inescapable "need of the time" for some state management and centralized controls.

Actually, this line of opposition, Mercury to Pluto, is basic in our American society; strangely enough, we find a similar aspect in the natal chart of the ill-fated League of Nations (Pluto in 6 ½ degrees Cancer opposed by Mercury in 3 ½ degrees Capricorn), which was President Wilson's ideological progeny. In this chart, the two zodiacal signs involved are Cancer and Capricorn, as in the U.S. chart; but the positions of Mercury and Pluto are reversed.

The opposition is between the narrow field of integration (Cancer, the home, the individual person, the sovereign nation in a global world organization) and the larger field (Capricorn, the big organization, the state, the world federation). In American politics, the conflict was originally between the independent states and the Federal Union; today, it is more acutely manifest in the problem of reconciling the idea of freedom and dignity of the individual and the need for impersonal quasi-totalitarian controls of large-scale management, necessary if there is to be vast productivity and abundance for all.

The individual Mercury mind faces the Plutonian "need of the times" and the answer of the collective mind; what this confrontation will lead us to can hardly be foreseen. In the meantime, it very often imposes upon the person too sensitive to social problems or too weak emotionally to meet them positively the typical mental illness of our time, schizophrenia – a name which covers a magnitude of cases, varied as to the form of unresolved conflict has taken in the insane person, yet similar in that it reveals a basic split between the individual and the collective minds.

This obviously does not mean that such a natal opposition of Mercury to Pluto tends to produce a split personality! Much more is necessary, particularly with reference to the emotional life, to cause a psychotic condition. A great woman and leader, Annie Besant, had

such a natal opposition – and a great many other "difficult" planetary aspects. Gandhi also was born with this Mercury-opposition-Pluto aspect. What it indicates is the necessity, for the person with it, **to work at the inner integration of these two polarities if the mental life**. It indicates, thus, a great opportunity for mental achievement.

Another aspect worth noting is the quintile (72 degree) of Mercury and Pluto; we find it in the chart of George Bernard Shaw, one of the most brilliant minds of his generation, a great humorist and intellectual rebel against all the shams and traditional biases of his society. This aspect reveals a creative and free relationship of the individual mind to the collective mentality of the time. The individual thinking is free, buoyant, ready at all times to make new connection between words, concepts, situations. It is uninvolved in the fetishes of the collective mind.

In closing, let me repeat that the study of Mercury and Pluto and their aspects in a natal chart does not tell **all** there is to know about the mind of the person. Every element of the chart contributes to and is influenced by every other elements. Nevertheless, there is in any mind a basic polarity around which its processes are built and operate; there is no better way of knowing fundamental facts concerning these processes than the study of the natal pair Mercury and Pluto.