

# *Rudhyar's Formula for a Full Life*

## *by Dane Rudhyar*

**In our age of specialization and automation** — when the human being tends to be looked at only as an ever more indoctrinated consumer of standardized goods and a mere number in all kinds of social, educational, and political statistics — it is important for us all to hold before our mind the ideal of living a full life. But what is a full life? It is a life in which our whole nature as a person has the possibility of revealing itself. It is a life in which what was only potential at the time we emerged from our mother's womb into the open world, where a vast variety of impressions and experiences was waiting for us, should gradually become actualized. We have to meet these impacts of an outer world. We have not only to react to them more or less instinctively and automatically, but we should also respond to them consciously.

Most people's responses are, as it were, programmed by family imperatives and examples, public and religious school teaching, by social-cultural fashions or styles of living we unquestionably imitate and whose validity we take for granted. By responding to life in such a manner and trying not to see too deeply the problems such an existence poses — thus dealing with symptoms rather than causes — we may live happily and, if all goes well, successfully. Yet from the point of view of a truly individualized and autonomous person, this is not living a full life; or, to use a term popularized a few years ago by European philosophers, it is not an "authentic" life. More popularly speaking, it is not "doing my own thing." But what does "doing my own thing" really mean? What is an authentic life? How can we know what is authentic and what is only an imitation, a cleverly (or emotionally) propagandized duplication of a model having become fashionable for our particular social, sexual, or age group?

Such questions obviously cannot be answered by the usual kind of recipe for success in doing one thing or another. The question here does not refer to "doing" but rather to "being." How can you be what not only is possible for you to be, but what is also potential in you and, therefore, ready for actualization? The first requirement is not merely to know yourself, for there are various types of knowledge, and what a scientific type of psychology or dogmatic religious teaching considers knowledge is today in most cases not a really adequate solution to the problem of living a full and authentic life as an individual person.

Astrology can help you to give a pertinent and significant answer to this problem; but it certainly is not a cure-all, and it does not provide a pat solution. What your birth-chart — if accurately erected for the exact moment of your first breath — and its development (progressions and transits) reveal has to be interpreted in the light of a psychological

understanding of human nature and of the sociocultural conditions surrounding your birth. Such an interpretation should not be done quickly and superficially, as unfortunately is often the case; it requires study and concentration, plus a great deal of intuitive understanding that transcends mere book knowledge.

There are, nevertheless, many things which can be written down; and if not taken too literally and certainly not dogmatically, they can point to lines of study which are eminently valuable, even if only because, in order to follow them, the student of astrology has to learn to think in a new way — and not the usual textbook and mnemo-technical way. In my many books, for over 40 years, I have tried to explain how one could best proceed in the development of the special "technique in understanding" provided by astrology. I would recommend here for the beginner the small but condensed volume [The Practice of Astrology](#).

In this article, as in many previous articles through the years, I shall simply take one astrological factor which I consider of great importance in the determination of an authentic life. I shall present a somewhat new way of approaching the study of the four angles of the birth-chart. I should state at the outset that such a study is possible only if a person is relatively certain of this or her birth moment, at least within about 15 minutes. If the exact birth-time is not known, a solar chart can, of course, give very significant information; but the information deals with human nature in one of its aspects rather than with the potential for a full and authentic existence inherent in an individual person.

## The Four Angles

In many ancient cultures, the mother giving birth to a baby squatted so that the baby was born vertically along the line of the meridian at the birthplace — thus, along the line of gravitation which links the center of the Earth to whatever star might be just ahead. In olden days, astro-philosophers spoke of the Milky Way as the womb of souls; they presumably did not know that all the stars we see are part of our galaxy; that we "live, move, and have our being" in galactic space. It may be indeed, as some people believed, that there are as many stars in the Milky Way as there are immortal souls in or out of bodies.

At any rate, the vertical line is for man, as it is for trees, the line of power, for it is man's privilege and responsibility to stand with erect spine — and to walk also in a vertical position.

Today, in our Western civilization seemingly dedicated to the development of the principle of individuality in human beings and of an individualized form of consciousness — which did not exist in man in the tribal stage of society — babies are normally born in a nearly horizontal position, with the mother lying down. The horizontal direction is that of the Earth's surface. On the surface of our globe, animals move about in search of food and contacts with each other — for eating or copulating. The horizon has always been the symbol of the limits of what you are conscious of. We speak of a narrow or vast horizon. We

climb mountains (in the vertical direction) to gain a broader outlook, a less confined horizon.

In a two-dimensional birth-chart, we see a circle divided first of all into four sections by the horizontal and the vertical lines; each section is further subdivided into three subsections. Each of these twelve subsections (houses) gives us some specific information concerning the way in which the four angles operate, the angles being the ends of the vertical and horizontal lines of the birth-chart. These angles are the most basic factors in a chart calculated for the exact moment of the first breath, when, through the intermediary of the air which unites all living organisms, the baby begins to operate in the open environment of the Earth's biosphere. These angles are most basic because, while the planets represent the operative power of the organs of the body (and their psychic counterparts or extensions), in the symbolic language of astrology, the angles stand for the essential structure of the individual man or woman. They constitute what has often been called the "cross of incarnation" — or, more accurately and realistically, the basic frame of reference for all that the consciousness of the individual apprehends, directly or indirectly, through his senses or by the use of deeper psychic faculties.

I speak of "frame of reference" because everything reaching the individualized consciousness — in most cases today what we call the ego and the conscious mind ruled by the ego — is automatically referred to this fundamental framework defined by the four angles. Somehow, what reaches the ego and the ego-mind has to be fitted into that framework — just as, when we see a lovely piece of furniture and we buy it, it has to find its place in the rooms of our home. If it does not, it is sent back to the store or stored in the garage, the attic, or the basement for possible later use.

## Ascendant and Descendant

We shall deal first with the horizontal dimension because, at our present stage of human evolution, it occupies a very conscious characterization; it will at once become associated with a word or a mental picture, thanks to which it will acquire meaning. The element of meaning should be related to the zenith (midheaven).

Feeling is always a personal factor. At the deepest level, it is not communicable. No person can feel exactly as another does when facing the same situation, even if a state of empathy exists linking the two persons. Feelings and experiences are essentially private. They can be communicated only if one formulates them by means of gestures, images, sounds, or words. These formulations, however, are based, in most cases, on sociocultural elements — that is, on a language, a type of art, a code of gestures which belong to the particular community, culture, or nation in which the individual lives or was born.

We normally seek to give some sort of meaning to what we experience. If we cannot do it, our consciousness becomes either frustrated or overloaded with experiences to which it cannot give meaning. In the first case, we may declare the experience absurd or irrational or refuse to take it into account; then it is dropped into the waste basket of the Freudian

subconscious, where it may bundle up with similar ones of the past and eventually form a "complex." In the case of overloading, the consciousness becomes confused; it has no time to think clearly of words; it mixes all its metaphors (if it tried to use symbols), and the end result is that sooner or later the capacity to feel and experience deeply becomes blurred and ineffectual.

Emergence and commergence — experience and the giving of meaning: These then are the two basic pairs of elements in human consciousness. Other words may be used to describe these elements, but they actually refer to secondary manifestations. In the past I have attempted to relate what the psychologist Carl Jung called the four psychic functions to the four angles of astrological charts: intuition to the ascendant, feeling to the nadir, sensation to the descendant, and thinking to the midheaven. But these four Jungian terms are very often misunderstood. As a result, some astrologers have made other correlations which seem to me rather unsound.

This is quite an important matter because, if we apply wisely the ideas I have expressed in the preceding paragraphs to our own or any birth-chart, we can obtain significant clues to the way our inner life operates. These clues may enable us to understand what conditions, and perhaps blocks, the operation of the four basic modes of operation of our psyche. The key to such an understanding is the idea that whatever we find in the house preceding the four angles (i.e., the cadent houses) tells us what conditions and affects the operation of our intuition, our sensations, our feelings, and our thinking processes.

## The Background of Intuition and Sensation

The word intuition has been used and abused in many ways. In the last section of his book **Psychological Types**, Carl Jung defines intuition as follows:

". . . that psychological function which transmits perception in an **unconscious** way. Through intuition any one content (of the mind) is presented as a complete whole, without our being able to explain or discover in what way this content has been arrived at. Intuition is a kind of instinctive apprehension irrespective of the nature of its contents . . . (These contents) possess an intrinsic character of certainty and conviction . . . Intuition is a nonrational function notwithstanding the fact that many intuitions may subsequently be split up into their component elements ... (It is) the material soil from which thinking and feeling are developed in the form of rational function."

Valid as these and many more similar descriptions are from the point of view of a psychology concerned only with the description of what can be observed empirically — thus, according to what now is known as the scientific method — they do not reach the essential nature of the intuition; they deal only with its manifestations in the conscious mind of a

person. Intuition astrologically refers to the ascendant because the ascendant symbolizes the emergence of a new living organism out of the motherly past. As Jung rightfully states, an intuition reaches our consciousness as a complete whole. It reaches our conscious mind as an image, a sudden thought, a deep feeling of value or non-value; but in any case, it is an organic whole. To "intuit" is to give birth, to create, to start a new trend in consciousness, a new process which may branch out in many ways.

Birth, nevertheless, inevitably has parental antecedents. Every new organism emerges out of the accumulated past of its race or species. This is what is meant in Hindu philosophy by the karma that conditions a person's birth at a particular time and in a particular family, nation, religion, and culture. In that sense, a person's karma is that out of which he or she is born as a potential individual. This karma, at least theoretically, can be seen by considering the twelfth house of the person's birth-chart. In many cases, nothing spectacular can be deduced from that twelfth house; but a consideration of the zodiacal sign on its cusp and of the planet ruling that sign can be rewarding if the student has developed a sensitiveness (an intuition) to astrological symbolism and, as it were, can "read between the lines." More definite information can be gained if planets are found within the twelfth house or at its cusp.

A twelfth-house planet indicates a function (a type of biological and/or psychological activity) coloring deeply the background of the individual's consciousness. In some instances, it may mean that the function should be reevaluated, purified, or transformed; but it also can prove to be the foundation for intuitive realizations and the most effective channel for a flow of inspiration, a channel having been used in "past lives."

At the opposite point of the birth-chart, we find the descendant as a symbol of what Jung called sensation, but which, as I see it, actually means the capacity to make direct immediate contacts with other living beings — thus, the capacity to establish vital relationships. At the ascendant, a human being is strictly what he or she is — a unique manifestation of at least some of the immense amount of potentialities inherent in the human species. At the descendant, the human being has to use what he potentially is as an individual in order to actualize this birth potential. He does so as he relates himself to other individuals and to the world in general. He relates himself in terms of what he senses the other persons or entities to be. At first, this sensing refers merely to the information his physical senses bring to his nascent consciousness; later on, what he sees, touches, hears, smells becomes the impelling reason for making this or that kind of approach to, or flight away from, the external reality.

The character of the manner a person senses the nature, quality, and the possibility of pleasure or pain expectable from another being is conditioned by previous experiences. These originally or prenatally may refer to developments having occurred in past lives or to inherited ancestral characteristics, such as genetic malformations and functional imbalances, all of which can be symbolized astrologically by conditions in the sixth house of the birth-chart — the house which comes before the descendant. At birth, these sixth-house

indications obviously can refer only to genetically or spiritually inherited features and trends. Later on, the sixth house reveals the background of a person's approach to others and the manner in which the experiences of the preceding years of life have conditioned the way he or she meets and intimately relates with others; and ill health or the result of psychological crises may be involved.

## The Background of Feeling and Thinking

The ability to experience as a whole person integrated around a center of consciousness is symbolized by the nadir of the chart—i.e., the cusp of the fourth house. The center of consciousness at birth is only a biological center; it is the area of the body to which the activities of all organs and cells send information. It is probably the area of the "old brain," though two areas may be involved, the other being what in Japan is called the Hara center, just below the navel. This Hara center may be related to what once was the source of foetal nourishment, the umbilical cord.

As the child grows into the youth and the mature person, the center of consciousness (thus, the experiencer) is stabilized at the psychic level. It becomes the ego, able to invest what the whole organism of personality feels with the character of "I." However, feelings should be clearly differentiated from emotions. What a person feels is a reaction from the totality of his or her organism, body, and psyche; at a higher level, mind is also involved. The experiencer of the feeling, the ego, then makes or allows the organism to make a response; and this response is an emotion (literally a "moving out" of a position of equilibrium). The emotion, in turn, gives rise to an action, as nerves order the muscles to contract and to move.

Feeling is intimately bound to experiencing. There is no true experiencing without some sort of feeling, transcendental as the feeling may be in cases of subliminal or mystic experiences. Conversely, where there is no feeling, there is no experience. The background for the capacity to feel and experience is the environment — thus, in astrology, the third house. By environment, I mean not only the physical elements (family and relatives, natural and climatic conditions, etc.), but even more the cultural and psychic surroundings. An individual person's experiences are deeply and (at least at first) inevitably conditioned by his culture, by the religious and educational background of his youth, by his language, and today by such things as T.V. and magazines. In principle, all these factors can be seen reflected in the third house of the birth-chart; rather, they can be found there if special conditions are involved which draw the attention, or focus the consciousness, of the person — for we should never forget that anything in a birth-chart points to an area of the body or a function (organic, psychological, or social) to which we should pay special heed because much in our development depends on the way we handle the problems drawing our attention to that area or function.

Experiencing, in most cases, is useless or confusing unless we can give to the experience a meaning. This meaning may be one dictated or suggested by our culture,

religion, social status, and relative wealth; or it may be a meaning which we have developed out of our individual experience — truly personal meaning. An individual person is characterized by the meanings he or she gives to his or her experiences. Many of these experiences may be common, others quite unusual; yet every person who is truly an individual should be able to give his or her own characteristic meaning to even the most commonplace experiences of everyday life — for instance, breathing, eating, walking, making love.

To give meaning requires the processes of thinking, if by the word thinking we refer to the capacity to relate any particular event or situation to a more or less vast number of other events or situations. We can do the relating according to traditional formulas impressed upon our growing mind during childhood and youth and/or further stamped upon our consciousness by various forms of propaganda and hidden persuaders. We also can discover relationships between events, persons, situations, or even words which are not the usual ones and instead which reveal the originality and/or creativity of our mind.

Back of this process of meaning bestowal, we find a vast number of traditional principles and sociocultural assumptions or paradigms. Whether we know it or not, every meaning we give to anything is derived from some metaphysical, philosophical, religio-ethical, or psychological concept which, in most cases, we take for granted and apply, totally unaware of what we are doing and why we are doing it. Most minds are indeed completely moulded and structured by collective factors and sociocultural pressures (fashion, for instance) of which we are completely unconscious. These collective factors constitute a mental womb which holds us prisoners until we emerge from it as independently and consciously thinking individuals. All of this preindividual mass of mind determinants should be referred to the ninth house of the birth-chart, which precedes the midheaven — the angle at which a person can emerge into truly individual thinking and give life experiences an individual meaning.

Space prevents me from developing further the ideas outlined in the above, and every student of astrology has the right and responsibility to use what has been said as an incentive for looking at birth-charts in a somewhat new and challenging way. It should be clear that living a full life requires an equally full recognition and appreciation of all the fundamental modes of operation of the life power and the potentialities of consciousness available to the person eager and ready to lead such a life — which means a study of what the planets represent. It is a life of individually recognized, understood, and accepted experience; a life of unobstructed and uncompromising relatedness; a life of significance wherein every event, person, and situation finds its place in an ordered and harmonic symphony of meanings. To experience consciously and vividly (nadir), to relate in strength and courageous acceptance of responsibility (descendant), to dare giving to every aspect of one's own life an individual and fully conscious meaning (midheaven) means first of all to have emerged as an individual person (ascendant).

In the full life, the four angles of one's birth-chart blend their potential livingness into a four-part chorus; and the melodies that are sung are marked by the natal positions and the movements of the ten planets (Sun and Moon included). Having intuitively realized who or what he is, the individual person can meet every experience, every relationship, every idea confronting him in fullness, in beauty, and in peace.