

The Beauty of Aging

by Dane Rudhyar

The radical changes taking place in family life under the relentless pressures of industrialism, big business, and frequent moves related to the search for new jobs or advancement have brought to the fore new problems concerning what we call "old age."

Much too often, two of the most characteristic features of the American way of life — the cult of youth and physical vigor, and the drive toward achievement and personal success — have made men and women regard the natural aging process as a tragedy whose last acts have to be delayed or prolonged at almost any cost. Medical technology was spurred by these psychological drives and in turn gave them more power by evoking the mirage of everlasting youthfulness. This mirage, which commercial interests presents with increasing vividness to easily affected and confused T.V. viewers and magazine readers, has given greater strength to the fear of death, for death is presented as the ultimate affront to individuals yearning for unceasing achievement and power.

The result of these socio-cultural and psychological developments has been the appearance of a multitude of problems concerning "senior citizens" and, in general, a deterioration or perversion of the natural aging process. In older cultures, this process was met with quiet acceptance and reverence. It was seen imbued with most valuable possibilities and spiritual meaning, leading to a death which was not only the obvious end of an organic life process, but also a release of a spiritual seed out of which, in due time, a new birth would evolve. This belief in rebirth did not always take the form of an acceptance of the idea of personal reincarnation. It did not have to do so in societies in which individualism and the glorification of the personal "I" had not become dominant factors. The dying person could easily accept being absorbed in a tribal or all-human psychic collectivity from which cyclically new individuals forms of existence always emerge linked with, but not identical to, the old ones that had experienced death.

Individualized forms of consciousness appear, bloom in personality, disappear; but mankind remains. Life does not die. To realize that this is so, to let go of the particular form and return peacefully to the ocean of life whence at birth this form emerged — this is what the natural process of aging could and should bring to harried individuals. It does bring quiet acceptance and peace when the individual comes to experience his or her life as a process. This process has various phases. The last one is that of "detachment"; and in this detachment, there is not only serenity, but in many instances also a glow of transcendent beauty and charisma.

When rightfully used and not in terms of fortune telling (or even sophisticated predictions based on traditions or on modern statistical research), astrology can help us, modern men and women, to feel life and give meaning to the development of consciousness in cyclic processes, rather than in terms of rigid form-bound entities we call "individuals" clamoring at every step: "I"! Astrology is not the only way to foster such a priceless realization. In ancient societies — most specifically, in India — a human life was understood to be a process divisible into four basic phases. These four stages were childhood and studenthood, biological and social maturity, and dedicated service for the next step we call death and the state beyond. Unfortunately, Western individuals have usually lost any deep feeling of life processes. They experience what the psychologist Carl Jung graphically called "the cramp in consciousness" — what one might also call "ego-sclerosis." To them, astrology can perhaps be the most significant and easiest means for freeing this cramp and for dissolving ego rigidity and the toxins it engenders. Yet, I repeat, astrology can only bring about, or at least start, such a process of liberation and ego decongestion if it is a "holistic" kind of astrology dealing primarily with cyclic motions and playing down the importance of planets and signs

as separate and quasi-unchangeable entities.

n what concerns us in this articles two planetary cycles are particularly to be considered: the nearly 30-year cycle of Saturn (i.e., the number of years it takes this planet to return to the place it occupied at birth) and the much longer Neptune cycle, whose approximately 164-year cycle can be divided into four — and in some cases three and five — periods. Saturn returns to its natal place during the 30th, 59th, and 89th year — or, in some cases, a few months before or after. It opposes its natal place at ages 15 or 16, 44 or 45, 74 or 75. Neptune comes by transit to the square of its natal place at age 39 or 40. It reaches the trine aspect to its natal place at 53 or 54; and the exact trine aspect is usually repeated three times within at least a twelve-month period.

These aspects are formed in every human life lasting long enough to experience them. They are generic, not individual; but they acquire an individual significance if they occur near other planets and in terms of the natal houses they fall in. This individual significance can usually give a valuable clue to the actual way in which the person can be expected to respond to the age situation; more than this, from the point of view of the "humanistic" approach to astrology I have promoted, it is a clue to the best way (because the most natural way) the person can shape his or her response to the life situation then occurring — particularly in terms of his or her consciousness of aging. Such a consciousness can be a significant factor even in youth, as often people in their twenties already deeply feel the aging process in its first manifestation, which we call "maturing."

In its mythological representation, Saturn refers to the cosmic power that brings any cycle to its conclusion. Saturn is said to symbolize time; but for most people of the Western world, time has unfortunately an almost exclusive quantitative character. A person feels he has much time, little time, or no time. We usually think that if we are bored or waiting for something we want to happen, time moves slowly; if we are happy and engaged in an activity we greatly like, it moves too fast for us. This is a subjective approach; it does not deal with the objective reality of time, but with our individual sense of time. In this sense, time is merely a frame of reference we use to measure the speed at which we act or our relative inability to act. This speed is experienced and instinctually (thus, unconsciously) measured according to cyclic patterns of change. The most basic of these is the average or normal length of a human life — that is, the span of life of a physical human body. In our culture, such a life span is traditionally defined in terms of years (the period of revolution of the Earth around the Sun) and of days (the period defined by a complete rotation of the Earth globe around its axis).

Thus, when we think that we "have little time left," we mean that, in terms of certain characteristics and more or less highly valued sets of activities, we have what, to us at that moment, seems only a small number of years or days — and in some crucial cases, perhaps hours or minutes (subdivisions of the day period) available for these activities. If we deeply experience this lack of time, we are — astrologically speaking — oppressed by Saturn. We experience such a lack of time in two basic instances. If we failed to act in the past, we may now feel that we have to accelerate or rush our activity in order to finish what we believe we have to accomplish before the period in which it can be done ends — or else, if in the past we have started too many things now reaching maturity, we are oppressed by the feeling that we should complete them before our life span as a physical organism terminates.

In general, Saturn in astrology represents our personal involvement in a series of activities which we believe can be performed only during a particular well-defined period of our life — for instance, before we get married and have children, before we reach the age of retirement, or, in a more limited sense, before the day ends or vacation begins or ends, or before our husband comes back from work, etc.

Saturn refers to our conscious or subconscious sense of frustration as we feel unable to perform smoothly actions in which we have involved our ego and perhaps our pride. It

represents a psychological sense of pressure affecting the spontaneous and natural rhythm at which we, as a whole person (or our body as a physical organism whose functions normally operate at a particular speed), are accustomed or prefer to act.

Today in America or Western Europe, a human life can be expected, under favorable circumstances, to last at least two and, in a majority of cases, about two and a half or even three Saturn cycles — thus, 60 to 90 years. These Saturn cycles essentially refer to the relationship between the character of our basic activities and our subjective sense of time. The years preceding the start of our second Saturn cycle (i.e. the period between 27 and 30) in most cases constitute a period of readjustment and reevaluation. During these years, what is actually at stake is the development of a new way of experiencing time with reference to an at least relatively new level of activity and consciousness. There is a new level of consciousness because the most important of our activities are then being gradually (and perhaps mostly unconsciously) referred to as a more individualized and creative sense of "being I." This new sense of individuality is the seed result of what has been experienced during the first twenty-nine years of life. When the new Saturn cycle begins, this new awareness of individual selfhood should, if all goes well, become more concrete and better defined.

The individual should normally accept the limitations defining and bringing to a focus the new sense of individuality. Such an acceptance implies a deep-seated, though usually not clearly conscious, realization of the span of years within which these limiting boundaries (mental, social, family, personal, physical) can or should be "full-filled" according to the general patterns of the culture and society in which we are operating as adults.

A sense of personal attachment to what the envisioned type of activity can normally be expected to bring comes with such a realization. The mature ego feeds on such an attachment — while in earlier years, the adolescent and post adolescent ego most often gains strength from rebelling against prenatal expectations and social-educational pressures. These represent the basic form Saturn takes in the consciousness of the growing person during his or her first 30-year cycle.

The years between birth and 30 have an astrological midpoint: the time when transiting Saturn opposes its natal place. This occurs between 14 and 16, depending on the zodiacal sign in which Saturn was placed at birth. In the second cycle, the midpoint occurs between 43 and 45. In the first case, we have the often dangerous period of rebellion and confusion following puberty; in the second, the equally dangerous forties, which I once called the period of adolescence in reverse because much that occurs during the psychological (if not biological) "change of life" is often an attempt to compensate for the frustrations of adolescence. In the third Saturn cycle, this same transiting aspect takes place around 73 or 74, frequently a time of biological crisis.

In all these instances, the possibility of emotional (first cycle), mental, religious or social (second cycle), or biological and spiritual reactions is strong. What is reacted upon is the pressure which had resulted from the changes following the events connected with the beginning of the cycles — that is, at birth, around 29 and 59. After puberty, the teenager reacts against the set of family patterns into which he or she was born and which have molded his or her childhood. During the dangerous forties, the individual reacts against the limitations which the mature state or social existence had imposed upon his or her ego. The revolt has emotional and often sexual components; yet, underneath them, the psychologist can most often find an ego protest against cultural and religious traditions — and often this protest turns into a deep religious crisis.

Finally, the midpoint of the last Saturn cycle tends to bring either some kind of illness or slow biological deterioration, or (in rarer cases) the fulfillment of the new and higher consciousness that began to take form before the age of 60. In ancient China and Greece, the 60's were said to be the age of wisdom — at least for the relatively few individuals

whose vitality remained unimpaired and whose minds were able to harvest the essence of their life experiences, at the same time reaching beyond dependence upon the outer forms these had taken.

These opposition aspects of the transiting Saturn to the natal Saturn, therefore characterize periods of months during which a kind of detachment is possible; new events are likely to present opportunities needed for such a feeling of liberation from the past — provided the I-center of the personality is able and willing to recognize this possibility and act accordingly! Such a kind of detachment tends, nevertheless, to remain within limits that the culture as whole and the collective mentality of the society of the time make very difficult to transcend. Yet today such a transcendence has become an ever-increasing possibility. Such a possibility can now be at least tentatively charted by studying the rhythm of Neptune's cycle.

Astrologers have given a great variety of meanings to Neptune — some very negative, others most glamorous. If Neptune symbolizes the vast ocean filling the larger part of the earth's surface. We can readily see that the sea can indeed be given many meanings. What mainly concerns us in this article is the relationship between Saturn and Neptune, and this relationship can most simply and concretely be characterized as that between solid boundaries and the fluidity of the one ocean out of which all land masses have arisen and into which flow the refuse of the myriad of life activities that developed on the continents. All living organisms that grow or have their base of operation on land are to some extent attached to the land, inasmuch as they are dependent upon the products of the soil — even if, as birds, they seem to be free from constant physical contact with the solid ground. Animals as well as plants grow in particular regions, climates, and at certain levels of altitude. Early man, operating in tribal societies and cultures, was equally attached to a particular land to which he claimed exclusive possession. Men were attached to it just a fertilized ovum is attached to the mother's womb; and the tribesman's consciousness was as rotted in a collective tradition and its social and religious rituals as a tree is rooted in soil from which it takes its strength.

This rootedness in the land has at least been partially overcome by modern individuals; yet the vast majority of people are still attached to the region of their birth and to old cultural traditions. When this attachment is overcome, it tends to become attachment to the personal ego. The ancestral Saturn of the first cycle (birth to 30) then becomes the individualized Saturn of the second cycle (30 to 60). As to the third cycle (60 to 89), not many present-day individuals age in such a natural bio-psychic manner or experience the clarity of vision and of transcendent inner realizations that can bring to them the harvest of real wisdom. The wisest aspect of Saturn, I repeat, does not imply transcendence. It means only fulfillment in peace and beauty. Transformation, transmutation, transfiguration are processes which can be best understood by referring to the cycles of the planets beyond Saturn — Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto.

The Uranus cycle last 84 years. Today, quite a few people can experience the beginning of a second Uranus cycle, but usually not many years thereafter. The Uranus and Neptune cycles are closely related because Neptune's revolution around the Sun takes close to twice the number of years as that of Uranus. The Uranus cycle is essentially a cycle of change and transmutation, thanks to which the human being can move from one Saturn level (birth to 30) to the next. It is best understood as a series of twelve 7-year subcycles or as three 28-year periods. The 28th birthday should normally spark the process that leads to the development of the new consciousness of time and individual selfhood which is due a year or so later. When the third 28-year period begins at 56, trends are usually set in motion which could lead to the possibility of consciously entering into a fulfilling third Saturn cycle (around 59); yet this result is assuredly not often what the human being will experience as he or she develops in his or her own way.

The Neptune cycle overarches this periodical action of Uranus upon Saturnian rigidity. Neptune presents to the land-bound or ego-bound consciousness a transcendent kind of

vision. It can — yet need not — reveal transcending vistas of universality and selflessness. It reveals that from which a particular person emerged at birth and with which he or she will be reunited through the gates of death — that is, the oceanic community of humanity, seen as a spiritual organism beyond individual (Saturnian) limitation.

Such a transcendent revelation need not wait for the age of wisdom to begin. It is always possible, though rarely experienced in a truly positive manner, in youth. There may be limitations of it and perhaps a foreshadowing of the eventual realization. These glimpses into the universality of life and the unity of transcendent being pervading all separate forms of consciousness and rigidly defined egos may occur at all ages; but they are likely to be attuned to the inner rhythm of Neptune's cycle — that is, when the always moving (transiting) Neptune forms aspects to the zodiacal degree it occupied at birth. The most important of these aspects may be the opposition, square, and semisquare; but the trine and the quintile (72 degree aspect) are often also very significant.

Because the Neptune cycle takes about 164 years to be completed, Neptune opposes the place it occupied in the zodiac at birth at about the age of 81 or 82.

This opposition, therefore, occurs before the 84-year-long cycle of Uranus ends. It is likely to bring to the individual whose mind is still clear and widely open an ever-deepening feeling of detachment from whatever the ego had striven for and clung to as its exclusive possession. It may at the same time reveal a further process of biological deterioration or of functional impairment of some organs of the body. It tends to blur the memory patterns of everyday happenings because of a lessening of attention to everyday occurrences and to personal involvement in relationships, except where the Saturnian imprints of earlier traumas or frustrations may be concerned; these imprints, in some instances, may be the last refuges for the ego seeking to protect its identity.

If, however, Neptune has always been a strong influence in the person's life and career, the period succeeding the 80th birthday may witness a greater objectification of such an influence — thus, perhaps a wider social recognition of what the individual had tried to present to his community as a challenge to transformation at the broadly social, religious, or mystical level. Society may, as it were, catch up to the prophetic vision of the individual. If this proves to be case, the years during which Neptune was moving in square aspect to its natal place are likely to have marked a turning point in the development of the Neptunian vision. In my own life, such a square occurred in October, 1934, and again during the first part of 1935. But it had nearly taken place in the fall of 1933, when Paul Clancy, who had then recently started to publish "American Astrology," became warmly responsive to my new holistic and psychological approach to astrology. During 1934 and 1935, under this persistent Neptune aspect, a series of monthly articles was written which was at once incorporated into the book **The Astrology of Personality**; this started quite a new phase in the development of modern astrology, contributing to its wide acceptance by an increasingly psychologically-oriented young public.

The semisquare aspect of transiting Neptune to natal Neptune occurred between October and November, 1913, and June 1915. The first time this took place (with Neptune stationary retrograde at the exact minute of the semisquare aspect), I met a person who, three years later, was largely responsible for my coming to America. My first book and musical compositions — all very Neptunian in scope — were published in Paris during the spring and fall of 1913, a definite turning point of destiny in my entire life.

Neptune, exactly angular in my horoscope, reached 13 degrees, 14 minutes Libra, 120 degrees past its Gemini birthplace, on October 14, 1948. Within a very few weeks — at the age of 53.5 — I left New Mexico, where I was living, to travel to New York in response to the invitation of some young composers who had become interested in my music (which had not been performed for years) and in my astrological writings. This move had very important results, both immediately and particularly a few years later, as in New York my wife became involved in Dr. Moreno's psychodrama work, which in turn led to her work in a

mental hospital in Iowa (a very Neptunian occupation), and because of what happened there to our divorce — all of which had equally Neptunian repercussions upon my life and consciousness.

The sextile of transiting Neptune to its natal place occurred exactly at the time I received a \$1,000 prize from the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra for symphonic poem — the only time I was so honored. Quintile aspects of the transiting Neptune to its natal place can also be very significant in ways that can be understood only with a full knowledge of a person's transpersonal (or, one might say, spiritual) life. They have occurred in my life pattern at the ages of 30 and 32 and 64-65. In the first case, this was the time I tried to start a series of publications dedicated to a new type of civilization — an attempt which very soon ended in failure because of total lack of response, even from my friends. It also marked the start of a new wave of composing along new musical lines and the writing of still-unpublished large volume on "world music," which at the time [1926] was truly revolutionary.

The second quintile (or, rather, the bi-quintile of transiting to natal Neptune) occurred at the age of 64-65, when I was in Europe bringing to astrologers in Paris my psychological and humanistic approach which had not reached them. A second trip to Europe, based on what had happened during the first, led directly to the publication of several of my books in English by a Dutch publisher — which in time resulted in the eventual wide spread of my ideas in America.

Today, the aging process is being scrutinized by medical researchers and sociologists — as well as by politicians in search of influenceable voters — who are deeply concerned with the welfare of older people sent into often premature retirement by our modern socio-economic practices and often left unattended by their children or grandchildren, who have moved far away from them in both body and spirit. The problems of old age have become a matter of extreme importance in a society in which the proportion of older to younger people is constantly increasing.

This is written by an 82-year-old man who is having a relatively unique experience of having to be perhaps more active and more involved in a variety of creative projects of an artistic, musical, literary, and philosophical nature than at any time in his life. Yet mine need not be a rare instance of the possibility of transcending the Saturnian limitations of old age — if not at the physical level, which has its own rather fateful rhythm, at least at that of mind and spirit. We could all let Neptune sing its oceanic song in our lives. We could leave behind the rigid boundaries of our culture and our ego patterns and embark upon wide open seas of consciousness — there finding peace and ecstasy in the contemplation of star-filled skies unbesmogged by human failures.