

***The Three Faces
of Your Horoscope***
by Dane Rudhyar

While most popular religions have spoken of man as a twofold being — soul and body, or even angel and beast — the more occult and philosophical traditions have described him as a tri-une being: spirit, soul and body, or spiritual monad, psychic being and physical-vital organism.

Early this century, Alan Leo, who was influential in reviving astrology in England, singled out three factors in a birth-chart: the Sun, the Moon and the Ascendant, which were said to represent respectively man's spiritual nature, his outer personality and his physical body. Alan Leo was a Theosophist who sought to link the traditional concepts of astrology with the basic beliefs about human nature spread by the early teachers of Theosophy and New Thought. These teachers often spoke of man's spiritual nature as the "individuality," in contrast to the outer "personality." A higher self was opposed to a lower, more personal self; the former was seen expressed in the natal Sun, the latter was identified with the position of the natal Moon. The Ascendant was understood to indicate the basic character and structure of the physical organism.

These correspondences are no doubt valid; yet their validity essentially depends on a certain type of metaphysical or psychological philosophy. Indeed, the meaning and function of all the factors used in astrology are inevitably conditioned by the philosophical approach of the astrologer to the universe, to man and to society. Astrology is, in a very real sense, a "language."

A language is a complex system in which symbols are used to convey meanings and directives for human behavior. The planets of astrology, the signs of the zodiac, the natal horizon and meridian which define the four basic angles of the birth-chart, are symbols. Likewise numbers in ancient numerology — Chinese, Hindu, Hebrew or Pythagorean — and geometrical forms (like mandalas) in the secret practice of theurgy, occult meditation or ceremonial magic, whether Asiatic or Western, are symbols — powerful symbols. Most esoteric groups, past and present, also use "words of power" and mantrams; and the Gnostics of the Mediterranean Hellenic world spoke of the "creative word" or **Logos** as the foundation of all existence.

THREE BASIC FACTORS

Thus if Alan Leo gave to the natal Sun, Moon and Ascendant certain definite meanings, it was because his theosophical outlook on life and on man led him to such an attribution of meaning. An astrologer with a different kind of philosophical approach would naturally interpret these three factors differently.

There are, nevertheless, basic and incontrovertible **astronomical** facts behind these astrological symbols; and these facts establish an undeniable relationship between the Sun, the Moon and the Eastern horizon (or dawn point) at a person's birth. But again all depends on the position one takes in viewing these astronomical factors. The position of the observer, his capacity for observation and the kind of mind he uses to define and interpret what he has observed are determining factors in any interpretation — a point which astrologers often forget.

To an observer who considers every living entity from the point of view of the energy which this entity uses for its vital operations, the Sun must seem the most basic factor in a chart because the Sun is the source of all energies operating within, and affecting, the earth's biosphere, and thus all living organisms.

Another observer may not think so much of energy per se but he may have a quasi-mystical approach to "light"; he will then be deeply impressed by the contrast between the radiant, heat-producing light of the Sun and the cool reflected glow of the Full Moon. This contrast will become for him a contrast between spirit, as the source of light, and soul, as a personalized reflection of the spiritual or divine light. To him also the Ascendant, as the symbol of dawn and sunrise, will have a special meaning; he may think of it as the way in which spiritual-solar illumination reaches a particular earth-born human being.-

But there may also be astrologers who feel themselves deeply and basically rooted in the

earth. The Ascendant may symbolize for them the first moment of human existence; and, as astrology always primarily deals with "the beginning of things" and the starting point of cycles, they may feel that this astrological factor contains the key to the whole of life development of the individual — somewhat as the germinating seed contains in potentiality the entire form of the mature plant. For these astrologers the Sun may still represent the "energy principle," but what interests them more is the "form principle" of the organism within which the energy operates.

There was a time when the Moon played an essential role in astrology, probably because for nomadic people tending their flocks, and sleeping under the night sky, the rapid movements and changes of shape of the Moon as she passed in front of the backdrop of the stars seemed filled with mysterious meanings and, indeed, messages. The monthly lunar cycle was seen to be related to animal and human fruitfulness; thus it was of special meaning to cattle-raising tribes. It is indeed almost certain that the first "zodiacs" mankind devised were lunar zodiacs divided into 27 or 28 "mansions." In those ancient times matriarchy was the dominant principle of social-tribal organization; and the Moon has usually been related to the feminine gender, perhaps because of the character and quality of her light, in contrast with that of the Sun.

However, since the days of the Egyptian Pharaoh Akhnaton, who sought to establish a cult of the Sun disc, Aton, as a manifestation of the one cosmic God (and perhaps long before, in India and elsewhere) the Sun has been worshiped as the male deity, as the one Creative Principle. It was logical, therefore, for Alan Leo to believe that the Sun's position in a natal chart informs us about the spiritual nature of the "native" (i.e., of the person whose birth-chart is being studied). For the Theosophist spirit is everywhere, but in what may be called a higher dimension of being; and the Sun is like a lens focusing this diffuse energy of universal Spirit in various ways according to the angle at which the sun rays strike the earth. Likewise the Spirit in man, atman, is but a condensed form of the universal Spirit, **Brahman**. According to the time of year a person is born, the spiritual energy operates in one or another of twelve basic forms, or Rays, symbolized by the signs of the zodiac. Man is an individualized unit of Spirit, a "solar Self" this is his true "individuality". But this spiritual entity, the "real man," in order to manifest on earth and to reach consciousness and mastery, has to experience duality, change and conflict. And here we reach the lunar realm — a realm where solar-spiritual power is experienced only in a reflected manner, where change is constant. It is the psychic realm, uncertain, filled with shadows and mystery. The position of the Moon in a birth-chart was therefore believed by Alan Leo, and still is believed today by many astrologers, to be the indication of the "personal" character of a human being and the basic nature of his "feelings" and his outer responses to life and society — that is, of what Theosophists and followers of New Thought mean when speaking of the "personal ego," or the "lower self."

The third basic factor in an astrological chart is, according to this general philosophical and psychological approach, the Ascendant — and, in a broader sense, the "cross of horizon and meridian," that is, the horizontal and vertical lines in the chart where these two lines meet the circular boundaries of the chart, astrology speaks of the four angles. The Eastern Angle (left side of the chart) is called the Ascendant because, as already said, it represents the sunrise point; it is the degree of the zodiac which rises in the East as a newborn takes his first breath. Its opposite is the Descendant, or sunset point.

Because we are dealing here with a physical and organic factor, the Ascendant is understood to be the symbol of the body, or perhaps more accurately, of the **individual rhythm** of the physical organism. For Theosophist Alan Leo — the birth of a body was merely one of many episodes in the cyclic development of a spiritual Self (or "individuality") which time after time incarnates into such material earthly organisms. Thus the Ascendant was said to refer only to the "suit of clothes" worn by the spiritual Self during one of its incarnations.

THE TWO MEANINGS OF PERSONALITY

In many astrological textbooks, the Ascendant and the First House of which it is the starting point are said to represent "the personality of the man." To add to the confusion, the meaning of the term "personality" differs basically according to whether one listens to a Theosophical or an esoteric author, or to a modern psychologist like C.G. Jung or a philosopher like Ian Smuts. For Jung the spiritual goal of human existence is "the integration of the personality" — that is, the integration of all the energies and drives of human nature into a formed person, a definite, well-organized and positive whole able to operate creatively and constructively in society and, in relation to the universe. The word, "personality" has, on the other hand, a rather negative meaning for so-called "spiritual" groups; and many of them pay attention only to the dualism of individual reality and personality, of spirit and matter, a dualism which has a strongly ethical character. Indeed, astrology is still dominated today by the opposition of "good" and "bad," of benefic and malefic planets, of "fortunate" and "unfortunate" zodiacal, signs and aspects.

Words are indeed most confusing, as they are being used in many different and often nearly opposite senses. Much of the confusion existing in astrology today is due to this fact and the only way to dispel such confusion is first of all to understand clearly that if there are different "schools" which interpret differently even the most basic factors in astrology, it is because each of these schools or groups brings to its interpretations basically different philosophies.

Astrology is not a type of knowledge — or science — unrelated to the essential attitude of life of the astrologer. Every system of astrology is actually the practical application of a philosophy and a cosmology — even if the astrologer is not aware of the fact. For instance, the real issue behind the present controversy of sidereal versus tropical zodiacs resides in the different ways in which the "siderealist" and the "tropicalist" approach the very nature of astrology. If anyone comes to an astrologer he should always ask: "What, in your opinion, **is** astrology?"

But this is not a unique situation. If you come to a psychologist for therapy you had better know whether he is a Freudian, a Jungian, a Gestalt therapist, a student of behavioristic philosophy or an "esotericist." The school or group to which the psychologist belongs may well indicate whether or not he can deal successfully with your problem. The same is true also in medicine, for there are several entirely different types of medicines. The "regular" M. D. approaches the problems of illness and cure (or healing) in a way which basically differs from that of the homeopath, the osteopath, the acupuncturist, the glandular therapist, the naturopath, etc. Every approach has validity and can produce "cures"; but nothing is really gained by confusing one with another. (And one can also give various meanings for the word "cure.")

A PERSON-CENTERED ASTROLOGY

As I see it, astrology is most valuable for human beings living in our disturbed and chaotic society if it is able to help individuals understand more objectively their inner conflicts and their problems of interpersonal relationship, and to fulfill more completely and more harmoniously the possibilities inherent in their total person-body, soul and mind. Thus I speak of a "person-centered" or "humanistic" astrology. It is **not** a predictive and even less a fortune-telling type of astrology. Neither is it an astrology which claims to deal with a transcendent Soul, or past incarnations, or other such mystical or occult topics. It deals first and last with the individual person — but this person considered in all his aspects and as a living, feeling, thinking, self-transforming whole operating in the midst of a geographical and social environment.

The interpretation I give to the Sun, the Moon, the Ascendant — and indeed all the planets and related factors like nodes and "parts" — derives naturally, and I believe logically, from this approach to astrology. The birth-chart as a whole represents, in abstract outlines, the person as a whole. It can be compared to the acorn which contains in potentiality the full-

grown oak. What it reveals is only the potentiality of existence as an individual person. But this **potentiality** of existence has a relatively unique character. Every moment of time, when referred to a particular place on this earth surface, is unique. Each newborn is in some degree unique.

Its uniqueness can only be symbolized by the most rapidly changing factor in a birth-chart — and this factor is the Ascendant, or, more accurately, the four angles of the chart. "Esoteric" astrologers often speak of the "cross of incarnation" — but I would rather not go beyond actual, concrete facts; that is, this "cross" is simply the **framework which defines the unique individuality of the person**. However, by "individuality" I do not mean anything transcendent and "spiritual," but simply the fact that each newborn is in some way different from other newborns and that he has within himself the potentiality of becoming also, mentally and emotionally, an "individual self," distinguishable from other people by a character that is truly his own.

As astrology uses the signs and degrees of the zodiac to characterize all the elements of a birth-chart, the sign and degree of the Ascendant, plus the sign and the degree of the other angles, gives us information concerning the basic individual character of the person whose birth-chart we are considering. These four angles are, thus, the basic factors describing the individual uniqueness of the person. The greatest problem in astrology is that these factors depend on the precise moment of the first breath — the act which establishes the individual rhythm of this particular human being. As such a precise moment is in most cases only approximately known, the most important fact in astrological interpretation remains imprecise.

What is known quite accurately, whenever a good record of the birth has been kept, are the zodiacal degrees of the Sun, the Moon and the planets. Popular or magazine astrology, because it can only refer to the zodiacal sign of the natal Sun — i.e., you are a "Leo" or a "Taurus," etc. — does not and cannot deal with the truly individual factor in a person. What it deals with is **the basic type of vital energies** which operate within the body, and to a lesser extent the psyche of the person.

I have often said that the Sun in a birth-chart indicates the kind of "fuel" on which the engine of the personality runs. It makes, of course, a fundamental difference if the engine burns wood, coal or gasoline, or uses steam and, more recently, electric current or atomic power. These different modes of releasing energy determine the basic character of an engine; and so does the Sun Sign determine the basic character of the vital energies of a person.

This, however, simply means that a person's basic vitality is related to his season of birth. There are many modifying factors though — heredity factors, environmental factors, and others which we can hardly define and which presumably astrology cannot describe, though it may suggest their presence indirectly. The Moon is very important because it is the one satellite of the earth, and by circulating rapidly around our globe, "she" may be said to collect and distributed the "influences" of planets which are located both **inside** Earth's orbit (Mercury and Venus, and of course the Sun) and outside of the orbit (Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto).

The Moon refers thus logically in astrological symbolism to all kinds of circulatory systems, to the constant ebbs and flows of the vital forces, to the rhythm of glands and organs of metabolism which so deeply affect a person's feelings and his or her moods. What we call the psychic life of an individual has much to do the Moon, because such an inner life is in most cases conditioned, and very often entirely determined, by the constantly changing interplay of biological processes, which in turn have psychological processes or overtones.

THE NATAL HOUSES

The Sun and the Moon in an exactly calculated natal chart are located not only in signs of the zodiac but in houses as well. There are twelve houses, which are produced by dividing into three sections each of the four quarters of the chart defined by the "cross" of horizon

and meridian. Traditional astrology has been so hypnotized by the zodiac and the Sun factor that it has made the houses subservient to the zodiac. Actually natal houses have nothing to do with zodiacal signs. They are simply twelve equal sections of the space surrounding the newborn. Six of the houses are above the horizon; the six others divide the ace below the earth surface — which of course includes the entire half of the universe that is invisible to us at any time. To say that each house contains an equal 30 degrees of the zodiac is to misunderstand totally the meaning of the houses. It makes it impossible to define accurately the individual character of a chart.

The position of the Sun and the Moon with reference to the four angles of the birth-chart (i.e., their house positions) is essential in the determination of the potentialities of individual development of a person. Each house refers to a basic type of experience. Through these experiences a human being is able — or fails — to reach individual fulfillment. He must meet again and again these twelve essential types of experiences. The position of the Sun in a house indicates the type of experience which will most contribute to the person's self-fulfillment, if he concentrates his vital forces on it.

The house in which the Moon is located tends to indicate in which realm of experience the most basic Karmic problems have to be overcome, for the Moon is normally connected with the past. It shows how one can emerge from the past — and "the past" includes the family, culture and tradition in which one has been born — and, one might add, "past incarnations" or karmas, if one believes in these transcendent factors. Such an emergence is the condition for the realization of one's true individuality — one's deepest rhythm of existence. What has been said in the last part of this article barely suggests how the three most important factors in a birth-chart, the Sun, the Moon and the Ascendant, can be interpreted in terms of a philosophy of life and a psychology which differs from the more traditional approach. Alan Leo's interpretation was mentioned at first because it is still very widely accepted by astrologers. From, a certain point of view, derived from a religious or esoteric tradition, such an interpretation, I repeat, is assuredly valid. However, and this is what I have tried mainly to convey in these pages, there are various possibilities of astrological interpretation. Each type is actually derived from a particular philosophy (or worldview); and it is my belief that new times demand a new philosophy. Therefore a reformulation of most of the traditional concepts of astrology is imperative.