

Thomas Paine & Benjamin Franklin by Dane Rudhyar

"Government founded on a moral theory, on a system of universal peace, on the indefeasible hereditary Rights of Man, is now revolving from west to east by a stronger impulse than the government of the sword revolved from east to west. It interests not particular individuals, but nations in its progress, and promises a new era to the human race."

"America was the only spot in the political world where the principle of universal reformation could begin."

Thomas Paine— *Rights of Man*

Benjamin Franklin can be considered the Elder Statesman of 18th century America. By far the vast majority of the men who had a dominant part in transforming the American Colonies into the United States of America were born in the thirties or early forties of the century. Franklin was the oldest delegate to sign the Declaration of Independence; being then over 70 years old. He died in 1790, and, not only because of his life-span, but deeper still because of his character and influence he, more than anyone, can be said to have been the typical "representative man" of the best America had to offer during the 18th century — an idealistic, intellectual, rationalistic century.

"Benjamin Franklin was born January 17 (New Style), 1706 in Milk Street (Boston) and, born on Sunday, was carried that, day across the winter street to be baptized in the Old South." (Carl Van Doren's biography).

This makes quite certain that he was born before noon. Further study of his life and of his characteristic features seems to bring into the sharpest possible relief an Aries Ascendant. **The chart here given** appears to be characteristic and entirely befitting. Among other salient features, it brings Franklin's progressed Sun to his natal Ascendant at the time of his return to America in 1775 and of his most intense participation in the fight for democratic principles in Philadelphia.

Franklin joined, apparently in February 1731, "the earliest known Masonic Lodge in America," the St. John's Lodge of Philadelphia. He was then 25. He had journeyed already to England, had established himself as a printer and had evolved his own life-philosophy. He had gathered (Fall 1727) some friends into a group called "the Junto"; true in this to the organizing spirit of Venus culminating at the cusp of his House of profession and public life. The Junto, or Leather Apron Club of 12 members, lasted for many years and became both Franklin's philosophical laboratory and a contributing factor in the political life of Philadelphia. He had also begun to be known as a writer, as publisher of **The Pennsylvania Gazette** and of a number of books. In 1732 he published his famous **Poor Richard Almanac**. In 1737 he became Postmaster of Philadelphia.

Franklin was soon elected Grand Master of his Masonic Lodge, published the first Masonic book in America and played an important part in Masonry throughout the Colonies. Realizing that "the first drudgery of settling colonies which confines the attention of people to mere necessities" was then "pretty well over" he proposed the formation of an American Philosophical Society to help build an inter-Colonial culture. The plan conceived in 1743 marked the beginning of American unity at the mental-spiritual level. The logic of development of Franklin's work of destiny for America is remarkable. Printer, writer, Mason, postmaster organizer of cultural groups and unconventional scientist with bold foresight — **Franklin became the center of the mind of America-in-the-making.**

The astrological pattern which we find in [Franklin's birth-chart](#) as an expression of such a destiny is one that astrological students should do well to ponder upon. Mercury, symbol of the mental life, is retrograde in Aquarius, opposed by Uranus and squared by Saturn (which is presumably conjunct Part of Fortune). And, granted that its zodiacal degree is exactly correct, we find the operation of Mercury in Franklin's personality most significantly symbolized as follows: ***A barometer hangs under the porch of a quiet rural inn.*** Vantage point in consciousness whence life may be observed and measured in peace. Inner retreat of a soul seeking truth."

Mercury retrograde certainly did not make for a "slow mentality;" nor did the opposition by Uranus and square by Saturn mean in this case the things often tabulated in textbooks! Such a planetary cross gave originality and vision coupled with stability, prudence and temperance — virtues much eulogized by Franklin. Neptune rising combined with Venus culminating gave him charm, fluency in society, and great diplomatic abilities. It made him an agent for group-integration on the basis of broad ideals — social, educational and political.

It was unavoidable that such a man should become a political figure and a powerful factor in the Colonies' struggle for integration on an idealistic basis.

Franklin's Aries Ascendant, and his Capricorn Sun and angular planets are representative of a man, of whom his biographer says "was a man of action, whether in science or morals or politics. He disliked waste and disorder (Saturn conjunct Part of Fortune, and Capricorn Sun). Pennsylvania, with rapid growth and its irregular development, seemed to him disorderly. In that confusion he thought in forms — in forms which life might take." (A typical characteristic of Aries.)

He took his seat in the Assembly for the city of Philadelphia on August 13, 1751 and almost immediately became a political force. His first diplomatic mission came about when in 1753 he was one of the commissioners to renew a treaty of peace with the Six Native American Nations known as the Iroquois confederation. Pertinently he remarked that if savage Indians could unite in such a great confederation, why could "ten or a dozen English colonies" not do likewise? The seed of the United States of America was perhaps then planted in Franklin's mind. In 1754 his "Scheme for Uniting the Northern Colonies" found

favor with delegates at the Albany Congress — this on July 10 — but was ignored by the Colonies themselves.

It would be too long to speak of Franklin's life in the years that followed. As an agent of the Colonies he went to England, then back to America, later to France and again to England. Cultural circles, Academies, learned Societies gave him honors as a scientist and a thinker in many fields. To Europe he meant the very best the New World had produced. For many years he attempted to make the English Government recognize the need to deal generously and wisely with the Colonies, while exhorting the American radicals to bear "a little with the infirmities of England's government, as we would with those of an aged parent." He was thinking then of a great English-speaking Empire in which the united American colonies would function under the general authority of the King but with a large amount of self-government.

In September 1774 the First Congress of the Colonies met. Franklin remained in London, hoping to the last for a peaceful solution. While he was on his way back to America, the battle of Lexington occurred. The day after his arrival he was chosen to be a deputy to the Second Continental Congress. Younger men were in the lead, but Franklin was appointed as Postmaster General, President of the Committee of Safety, and to many other committees, one of them dealing with foreign contacts (the origin of the State Department). The Resolution of Independence, proposed on June 7 by Lee of Virginia, was passed by the Congress on July 2; the revised version of the Declaration of Independence carrying a number of corrections by Franklin was adopted on July 4, probably late in the afternoon. Thomas Jefferson, the American figure of the period most similar to Franklin, though 37 years younger, is said to have written the first draft of the Declaration. Back of Jefferson's words, however, stood the powerful pronouncements of Thomas Paine, who, born in England, had arrived in America on November 30, 1774 with a letter of introduction from Benjamin Franklin.

No personality of the Revolutionary Era has aroused as much antagonism as **Thomas Paine**, an impetuous man who having espoused at the outset the cause of American Independence wrote pamphlets, articles and books which stirred the Colonists to action at the most crucial time. He was a true Aquarian, with Sun, Mercury and Jupiter in that sign; born at Thetford, England on January 29, 1737, probably around 11.30 A. M.

Evidence for his having an early degree of Gemini rising seems conclusive, astrologically speaking. This brings his progressed Moon to his Ascendant at the time of his arrival to Philadelphia, and particularly of the beginning of his public work there for **The Pennsylvania Magazine**. It also brings his progressed Mars to his Ascendant at the time the pamphlet **Common Sense**— a powerful call to arms — appeared. Mars at birth in the twelfth House (hidden enemies) squares the Sun, a configuration which characterizes well Thomas Paine's work and which fits in with the campaigns of defamation which were waged against him, particularly by the Churches. As for Saturn rising in Gemini: being retrograde

and ruler of the Midheaven and of the Moon's sign, Saturn symbolizes here the power to reform and to change the structure of things. Moreover the violent star Antares on the Descendant refers accurately to Paine's difficulties with his associates and his two wives. If, as I believe, Sagittarius is indeed the true Ascendant of the United States, the position of Antares on the cusp of the house of partners and public enemies is particularly significant.

Paine was born in a Quaker environment, but his adventurous spirit never quite adjusted itself to Quaker pacifism. In the English war against France (1756) he went to sea for a brief period. Returning to London he established himself as a master stay-maker; later he became an exciseman (revenue officer). His first wife died after a year of marriage. As an exciseman he attempted to champion the cause of these underpaid servants of the State, appealing to the Parliament and finally being dismissed. Of his mental and spiritual life, then, little is known. He frequented philosophers and he met Franklin, who apparently recognized his great gifts and introduced him to friends in America. He may have been a Mason; but there seems to be no record of it. It is interesting to note that he left for America as his progressed Sun came to his natal Venus; also that the arc of his natal Sun to natal Uranus is 39 1/2 degrees, which also measures, according to degree-to-year directions, the time of the Declaration of Independence in Paine's destiny.

Thomas Paine in America became an entirely new man, as far as his outer life was concerned. He at once attracted attention by his articles in ***The Pennsylvania Magazine***. He soon became its editor, writing a vast number of articles under various pen-names. As his biographer, Daniel Conway, writes:

The Pennsylvania Magazine, in the time that Paine edited it was a seed-bag from which this sower scattered the seeds of great reforms ripening with the process of civilization. Through the more popular press he sowed also. Events selected his seeds of American independence, of republican equality, freedom from royal, ecclesiastical and hereditary privilege, for a swifter and more imposing harvest: but the whole circle of human ideas and principles was recognized by this lone wayfaring man. The first to urge extension of the principles of independence to the enslaved Negro; the first to arraign monarchy and to point out the danger of its survival in presidency; the first to propose articles of a more thorough nationality to the new-born States; the first to expose the absurdity and criminality of dueling; the first to suggest more rational ideas of marriage and divorce; the first to advocate national and international copyright; the first to plead for animals; the first to demand justice for women". — (*Life of Thomas Paine*)

Paine was born a reformer while Franklin was a builder. He had the violent and intellectual fervor of an Aquarian; exaggerated by square Mars. Franklin fulfilled the social order; Paine envisioned a really "New" World. He saw in America the possibility of a new departure in world affairs.

In the 18th of October, 1775, issue of the ***Pennsylvania Journal*** a brief article, undoubtedly written by Paine sets forth many of the arguments embodied in his friend Jefferson's Declaration, including the one against Negro slavery which Congress refused to pass. That same Fall, as his progressed Jupiter squared his natal Saturn, Paine's pamphlet ***Common Sense*** "burst from the press with an effect which has rarely been produced by types and paper in any age or country" (said then Dr. Benjamin Rust). It was followed later

by a series of pamphlets, ***The Crisis***, which also were most influential in uniting soldiers and vacillating citizens in the realization of what they were fighting for. They were written while Paine was serving in the Revolutionary Army.

If Patrick Henry was the "Orator Of The Revolution," Thomas Paine was its arousing Mind. But Paine reached much deeper than the patriot who served with passion the sacred cause of Liberty. He did not belong to America, but to Mankind. He was fighting for a new order of human relationship and a new consciousness. He had therefore to strike at the very roots of all forms of tyranny. After the United States had won their national freedom, he fought for a "New Europe" and a Commonwealth of Man. His book ***The Rights of Man*** was a passionate cry against political tyranny. His later work ***The Age of Reason*** denounced all forms of religious dogmatism and tyranny. For that he was not forgiven; and persecutions and slanders were heaped upon him.

In Paris he founded in 1797 the "Church of Theophilanthropy;" a rationistic, ethical, deistic and humanitarian group. Indeed he was one of the greatest Humanists the world has known and his noble enthusiasm kindled many flames. He was a true Aquarian, with all the virtues and all the failings of that sign; and **his birth-chart** is a real "signature" of his character and his destiny. His influence in England and America throughout the 19th century has been very deep indeed. As President Jackson once said: "Thomas Paine needs no monument made by hands; he has erected a monument in the hearts of all lovers of liberty." He has been called **the Father of Democracy**. He was the transition between the intellectual 18th century represented by a Franklin and the fervent, emotional 19th century represented by a Lincoln and a Walt Whitman; and in France by St. Simon, Auguste Comte, Victor Hugo. For him Democracy was the "Religion of Man" and the United States the virgin field into which the seeds thereof were being planted. But he worked for the whole of Mankind. His motto was: "The world is my country. To do good is my religion."

Astrological Correlations

One of the most significant contacts between **Franklin's birth-chart** and the chart of the **Declaration of Independence** is between his Jupiter (retrograde in the fourth House) and the Mercury of the Declaration Franklin's personality and prestige typified for his contemporaries, especially in Europe, the "mind of America." He was a symbol, a teacher, and inspirer (his Uranus is also conjunct the U. S. chart's North Node). Just as important is the conjunction between Franklin's Sun and the Declaration's Pluto. Pluto is a symbol of integration and cohesive power (of one type or another). Franklin thus appears in the role of chief Integrator for the nascent Union of the States — and one of the first, typical "American business man," insofar as the growth of his financial status and his political prestige was concerned.

In terms of Franklin's "progressions" it would be significant indeed if — as seems probable — his progressed Sun reached his natal Ascendant in 1776. His progressed Moon was then in the House of service and work, just past the Neptune of the U. S. chart and (if

Sagittarius is accepted as the U. S. Ascendant) on its Mid-Heaven during the Spring of 1776.

The main contact between Thomas Paine's horoscope and the Declaration's charts is the former's Jupiter and Mercury in Aquarius on the latter's Moon. It shows that the full power of Paine's mental activities focused upon the "common people" (Moon) of America. It pictures him as vitalizes and instructor of the very substance of the "New World"; as the teacher of democracy. His Saturn-Ascendant conjunction and his Neptune however are close respectively to the Uranus and Mars of the Independence's chart, and this tends to show that the contact was not fated to be very smooth. Paine's Moon is also in conjunction with Pluto in the **Independence's chart**, Pluto — clear symbols of the difficulties the Reformer experienced from those to whom he brought his courageous message of political and spiritual freedom. But such is the destiny of personalities who focus for mankind the power of evolutionary events causing men to be reborn!