

An Interview with Dane Rudhyar

Conducted by William Quinn

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AT: There are those who say that theosophy has little to do with astrology; that there is little or no connection. How would you respond to this?

RUDHYAR: The term "theosophy" as it is understood today, of course, refers to the movement and the teachings or the ideas which were brought to the Western world by H.P. Blavatsky, Sinnett, **The Mahatma Letters**, and all that came in 1875 and thereafter. Now, in **The Secret Doctrine** there are references to astrology — occult astrology — but in a certain sense, it's very difficult to say that one relates to the other. The type of astrology which is mentioned in **The Secret Doctrine** is an occult type of astrology which deals with forces, with cosmic energies said to be related to certain stars — to cosmic factors which are not usually taken into consideration by what is understood today as astrology, including natal astrology. You see, there are all kinds of astrology. There is mundane astrology, which deals with the fate of nations, weather, earthquakes, and such matters; and there is natal astrology, which deals with the chart of an individual person, the time he or she is born and the development of his life and character. These are two very different kinds of astrologies, and they ought to be approached in an entirely different way.

When one is dealing with the occult type of astrology one has to presuppose a number of things which are, to some extent, implied in theosophy, yet which are not necessarily connected with the original teachings of theosophy. However, it might be said that one of the basic ways in which astrology and the validity of astrology has been explained is by the doctrine of correspondence and the so-called Hermetic principle of "As above, so below." Man is the microcosm of the universal macrocosm, and there is a certain equivalence, analogy or correspondence between the universe and man. This can be interpreted in many ways. We can have a direct kind of interpretation in terms of energy, in terms of physical or "astral" influence. But astrology can be seen and used as a symbolic language which can help us to understand what is happening in our lives. So understood, astrology does not need to assume that there are definite influences or energies emanating from Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn or any star. Your question is very difficult to answer because both the terms "theosophy" and "astrology" are susceptible to so many definitions.

AT: What are the basic differences between exoteric and occult astrology?

RUDHYAR: If you mean by exoteric astrology they type of fortune-telling or predictive astrology which we find in the newspapers or magazines, or even in a more serious way as it was used in Athens, Rome, Alexandria and Europe — an astrology dealing with the prediction of events for human beings — then of course it is different from occult astrology; but this doesn't mean that when you are focusing on external events there may not be occult forces operating causing these events. The point is the astrologer may not be dealing then with the essential causes of individual happenings. As to mundane astrology, it deals with collective events, involving nations, business firms, weather, etc.

Actually, there is no such thing as "exoteric" astrology or "esoteric" astrology.

There is an approach which is, in terms of occult philosophy — an occult concept of the universe - and another which simply accepts traditional techniques (one might say

"formulas" or even recipes) which are to be memorized and which tell you what event can be expected on earth when certain things happen in the sky in terms of the "aspects" between planets, etc. The type of astrology that most of the time I deal with is a symbolic type of astrology. It does not essentially deal with forces doing something to something else, so that events happen, but with processes unfolding according to definable cyclic rhythms. We can study and understand these rhythms, the way they operate. We can clock the sequence of the phases of these cosmic, psychic and biological processes in the development of individuals, and also social-political institutions.

If you read **The Secret Doctrine** you will find many references to astrology. One quotation from **Isis Unveiled** is about astrology being an infallible science provided the astrologer himself is infallible. This, of course, is a very peculiar statement from a modern point of view, because no science is infallible, by any means. When HPB in that statement speaks of psychology and its relations to physiology, this also is interesting, because she seems to imply that psychology is completely founded on physiology; and that is of course, rather startling. However, she proceeds to say that in order to understand psychology or astrology one has to look at them strictly from the point of view of the transcendent spirit. Therefore, in order to understand occult astrology and to deal with it significantly, one would have to be practically an Adept. One would have to be able to operate at the level of pure forces and, in the real sense of the term, of the "astral" world — or, the world of "stars."

In **The Mahatma Letters** you will find a passage saying that, once he has entered the Path, the Initiate begins to operate in a world of forces instead of objects. The interesting fact today is that, in a sense, science is entering this world of forces and dematerializing objects, seeing it as a dynamic interplay of energies. When one interprets, or perceives the whole universe in such a manner, one can make all sorts of correspondences. One can assume various types of resonances between certain fundamental processes of a galactic nature, and vast cycles affecting mankind as a whole, particularly sensitive persons. But today this is something few astrologers have any concept of, or are concerned with in any way whatsoever.

Elsewhere, HPB speaks to every individual person having a connection with some star; that every Initiate at the last Initiation comes in touch with his "Father-star." To this star, he or she can be said to "belong," in a cosmic sense. This is consistent with a traditional belief that to every human soul on Earth there is a corresponding star in the galaxy; and the galaxy was called the "womb of souls." Such occult concepts in terms of astrology are part of the theosophical outlook on the universe; but this kind of occult astrology has very little relevance to the problems, activities, and development in consciousness of a human being at this present time in our civilization.

AT: How can astrology aid an individual who is seeking self-synthesis?

RUDHYAR: What can be seen from a birth-chart is the general pattern, the general structure of the organization of the total human being as a person, both as a physical organism and as its reflection (or its higher level of activity) in a psychic organism. The planets are believed to represent ten basic functional activities operating within a human being. As the One Life-power emanates from the sun — the center of the solar system - it passes through various concentric spheres. The One Power transforms itself into electricity, magnetism; and at a different level of activity, it takes the form of sociocultural functions. All these activities are manifestations, or rather differentiations of the basic solar power which on earth operates as the one Life-force.

Every human being has a different kind of organization based on a particular set of relationships between the basic functions of his nature. These refer to the nervous system, the heart, the brain, the liver, the glands, etc. In every individual person these functions operate in a different way; they are interrelated in a different manner structurally. Thus the astrological birth-chart can be seen to constitute a kind of blueprint (a kind of x-ray picture)

of the way all the life-centers, energies or functional activities are interrelated — whether they cooperate with each other in an easy, smooth relationship, or they are under tense relationship. When studying a birth-chart a good astrologer should be able, as it were, to "decode" the celestial language of the solar system. He or she should be able to get a picture, or an intuitive realization, of how all those different functions which constitute a total human being operate. The astrologer can see objectively and thus better understand why certain things happen in a person's nature, why we tend to do certain things under certain conditions. Above all, by studying the location of the planets in the zodiac and particular natal houses of the chart, the astrologer could discern **the best way** in which the functional activities of our nature can be used to fulfill our **dharma** — that is, the focal purpose of our life as individual persons. An objective picture is thus available which completes and may illumine our purely subjective feelings.

The great difference between analytical psychology of the Jungian type and astrology is that the Jungian analyst depends completely on concrete physical data — on things which have happened, on the way the person "feels," on (most often) puzzling dreams, and therefore in general on what the person tells him. The psychologist has existential data, but he doesn't know how they are related. If he knows a great deal about human nature and the usual behavior of different types of human beings, he can infer how these existential data are related, but he has no idea how they will develop in the future. He cannot see the entire life of the person with a whole view, whereas the astrologer has before him an abstract picture of the whole life in its **seed potentiality**. He can discern a pattern of relationship between the different factors which concur in building a particular character, and may reveal to the intuitive student the dharma of the individual. In other words the psychologist has **existential** knowledge but doesn't know anything about archetypal knowledge; and I must add that **what Jung calls "archetype" is something entirely different from what I speak of as archetype.**

There are other astrological factors which are just as important as the natal chart per se. I am referring to the "progressions" and "transits." These can reveal how that which is only potential at birth can actualize itself into a complete and fruitful, or possibly unfruitful kind of potentiality. Just as an acorn passes through a process which leads it to become a full-grown oak, the birth-chart passes through a process, year after year, day after day, which enables the person to actualize his birth-potential.

By having a picture of the process as a whole, and seeing how that process develops, phase after phase, through a series of turning points — which usually implies some sort of crisis or reorganization of consciousness and life activity — one is then able to get an entirely different perspective on one's life. Such a perspective can even transform what has happened in the past, because an event remembered as a terrible traumatic shock may be reinterpreted as having been a necessary condition for the development of some new faculty on whose development the whole life afterward has depended in a highly successful manner. Indeed, we cannot say that any event is good or bad; only whether or not it served the purpose of the life or dharma of the person. In a certain sense, traumatic events always do serve the purpose of the dharma, but the individual may not be able to see it is so. He may be so completely shocked and depressed by the event that he simply is not able to use it constructively.

AT: How might astrology be used in determining the most effective means for a concerned individual to serve humanity?

RUDHYAR: That is to some extent the consequence to what I have been saying. It is not enough, from my standpoint, to achieve some sort of personal integration, to see yourself as a whole, and to be able to live as a more or less integrated human being. Real integration and the realization of one's whole being never has its full value unless it is seen with reference to a larger frame of reference, the nearest of which to us is humanity, or at

least the community in which one is born and one operates. There is always the possibility — a relatively frequent one — that the person who is "integrated" becomes so enamored of his own selfhood and his own integration, and is so self-satisfied and blissful in his own personal kind of nirvana, that he becomes an unrelated cell in the body of humanity. And unrelated cells are potentially cancerous.

We can take as an example what occurred in early Buddhism — among Hinayana Buddhists. In those days the Buddhist mentality was often entirely geared to the attainment of nirvana for the individual, regardless of what happened around him. Another example would be the lives of certain Stoics in ancient Rome who lived beautiful lives in the villas around Rome; they were very nice to their slaves and perhaps had become Christians, yet they allowed the Roman empire to decay, because they felt there was nothing they could do about it; they were perhaps satisfied with living happy lives at home, without sullyng their feet with the mud of the Roman Establishment.

We sometimes have to make a very crucial decision: How much will we serve by achieving a sort of inner perfection, a personal perfection which might radiate to a few people around us; or will we accept another alternative which means that, though we might not be perfectly at peace or must cope with great tensions, we nevertheless could use these tensions to produce certain transformations in society or to help revolutionary movements which can constructively transform society — or even "destructively" sometimes, because God is as well the destroyer as the builder.

What you can see to some extent in the horoscope is how you can best use the transforming power which is associated with the planets beyond Saturn — Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. You can see in what natal houses they are located and, therefore, what kind of experience will best provide the means for you to transform yourself and to help as a transformative agent. It may be in a matter of service; it may be in a matter of creative activity; it may be in a matter of finance; it may be in a matter of reform. You can see to some extent the most definite line in which you can operate with the best advantage to fulfill your particular dharma in this particular life. But, of course, what I have just said is very general and it has to be interpreted in terms of the particular situation which concerns the person.

This is why an astrologer should also be a psychologist, and to some extent a philosopher and seer; he can help the person to get a more objective picture of the possibilities inherent in his life-situation. As a psychologist he might be able to point out to you with an authority based on his experience of human nature: "This is really your best line." It may be that family or friends say you must "feel," and that too much thinking is not good for you; yet your chart might show very clearly that you should develop your mind more, and that, while there is a certain blockage in your feeling nature, this is quite significant because it may help you to go in the direction which is truly **yours**. The trouble is that we are not allowed to be what our dharma is: we do not live spontaneously according to our "fundamental nature." We are part of a family, part of a school situation, part of society; all of which impose images upon us that may not be congruent with the pattern and schedule of fulfillment of our destiny. Thus astrology can sometimes help to clarify and make us understand better where we stand, and at least to some extent, what we are here for. But, of course, interpretation is needed — a decoding of the symbolic hieroglyphs of the sky.

AT: In your opinion, what will be the evolution of the socio-economic structure of the Western world in the next 100 years?

RUDHYAR: At this particular time, which is obviously a time of crisis, when a culture is breaking down, it is absolutely impossible to ascertain to what extent there will be a radical and difficult breakdown; or whether a relatively smooth transformation from the old to the new is possible. I don't believe anybody can predict, certainly not by any rational

knowledge, what the condition of humanity will be in 2050. I feel certain that we will witness some basic transformation of society and of mankind as a whole probably before 2000, and perhaps quite soon. Some definite change can be expected around 1990. Exactly what those changes will be, I don't think anybody can say. It is more than socio-economic; it refers to the very structure of our civilization and of mankind in general. There may be a big nuclear war which for a while may destroy or pervert life in two-thirds or nine-tenths of the earth; there may be some cataclysm which will change the shape of several continents. If the ice of the poles melted suddenly, or even gradually within ten years of so, all the big cities on the coasts would be flooded, and practically everything depends on those cities at the present time. It's impossible to say.

AT: What do you perceive to be the *major* symptoms of the current "apocalyptic" transition period through which the planet is moving?

RUDHYAR: Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the shape of human life has changed all over the world except for extremely few places which have remained more or less the same. Dramatic changes have occurred in social and interpersonal relationships, in the way people live, in the way they think, behave, and feel about so many things — in the education of human beings, in their mobility, the fact that they are no longer limited to closed localities and ancestral areas but move constantly from one place to another. TV and radio have enabled every human being to be more or less aware of what groups of human beings all over the earth do. This is what I mean when writing about the planetarization of consciousness; we have moved from a local frame of reference to at least a potentially global frame of reference.

We don't really understand too much what that global frame of reference is, and we certainly don't like it too much. **We are still clinging desperately to our own little frames of reference, whether it is our community, our class, our nation, our language, our culture, our religion, or any particular type of organization.** We are bound by them; but they tend to break down rather fast, to lose their meaning. More and more people begin to see that these old frameworks have not much meaning at the present time; they begin to grope and to look for something else. They don't know what it is, and they certainly don't like too much what most people tell them it should be, because that would mean a complete change of behavior and attitudes, and hardly anyone likes to do that.

AT: What do you know about the "relocation" of the Tibetan brotherhood — and its work — to the Andes Mountains of South American?

RUDHYAR: What I have heard from some sources is that, a number of years ago, the great beings who can be considered the guides of humanity moved as a whole from the Himalayan region to the Andes, probably foreseeing what was happening in Tibet and central Asia at the time. That, of course, probably does not affect the Adepts or Masters who are definitely concerned with a particular region like India, or China, or Tibet, or Persia; but only the ones who deal with humanity and the planet as a whole. Some people have talked a great deal about the vicinity of Lake Titicaca in Peru. The Andes, next to the Himalayas, are the highest and most impenetrable mountains in the world. They are not too

impenetrable today, but still there are probably sections which can be easily, or more easily, protected. The man who was the first to say this was a man by the name of Landowne who had a group in Florida and used to publish a little magazine. He was the one who started the rumor, let us say. Then there was a book that came out, entitled **The Secret of the Andes** by Brother Philip, which purports to give all sorts of information about that center; but I would take this information with a large grain of salt. I once met and was close to a person who seems to have some direct knowledge of those matters, and who confirmed the fact that the move to the Andes was true, but that's not my personal knowledge.

AT: In what *specific* form do you perceive the new Impulse from the Hierarchy during the last quarter of this century?

RUDHYAR: There are certain things that one can say, for instance, from an astrological point of view. If we look at the astrological relationship between Neptune and Pluto and Uranus — the great transformative agents that act as intermediaries between the limited, small solar system and the large galaxy of which it is a part — we can see that this relationship, and other related factors at work during the last quarter of this century, are very different from those which prevailed during the last quarter of the last century. In 1891-2 there was a conjunction of Neptune and Pluto which open a 500-year cycle. This was the time of the discovery of X-rays, radium and radioactivity; practically all the concepts upon which a new type of physics and a new type of psychology have been based had their roots during the 1890's. This was obviously the start of a planetary cycle which astrologically, can be said to last about 500 years, the length of the Neptune-Pluto cycle — or the time separating their successive conjunctions.

At the present time, Neptune and Pluto have come to a sextile aspect — which is to say that they are 60 degrees apart in the zodiac. During a few years, at each of its cycles of revolution around the sun, Pluto moves closer to the Sun than Neptune can ever be; thus it penetrates for a short time the orbit of Neptune and it moves faster than Neptune during that period. If at the time this happens the two planets are in a particular aspect, this aspect will remain the same for a long time. This situation began when the first controlled nuclear reaction occurred in Chicago, in December 1841. Neptune was entering Libra and Pluto just entered Leo so they were approximately 60 degrees apart. From that time on and until about 2035 — about a 90-year period — these two planets remain practically in sextile aspect. The most distance they go from forming a perfect 60 degree angle is about 8 degrees. Pluto being faster than Neptune while closer to the Sun overtakes Neptune; but when it gets out of Neptune's orbit, it is overtaken by Neptune. In fact, they keep changing speed (geocentrically) many times during those 90 years, but so slightly that they remain in sextile aspect.

In a certain sense the sextile aspect in the cycle between two planets marks a period of concretization (or practical application) of what was released at the time of the conjunction.

What we are now seeing is the actualization of potentialities which were released in humanity during the 1890's . . . and, of course, in a certain sense prepared by the theosophical movement on one hand, by the Baha'i movement on the other, and even by the Communist movement, all of which occurred between 1844 and 1875. It is always said that with the death of an Avatar — a Divine Manifestation in whatever form it takes place — a new cycle begins, because then the energy which was impersonated or locked in that

being becomes released. Jesus said, "I must die so that the Holy Spirit can pervade you." Blavatsky died in 1891, Baha'u'llah died in 1892; the people who started Communist movement died in 1883 [Marx] and 1895 [Engels]. Those are all movements which deal with the promotion of the principle of the unity of mankind at different levels and in radically different ways. The Baha'i movement is a purely spiritual, religious movement; the Marxist Communist movement is materialistic, but also in a very real sense a religious movement, even if atheistic in principle. Both deal with humanity as a whole; so does the theosophical movement. It was the first time that movements were begun which dealt with humanity as a whole, definitely, purposely. We might say that in the 1890s, something started of which theosophy and other movements were the prelude. Now what was only potential is becoming actualized, and to some extent popularized; but unfortunately popularization sometimes means materialization. What becomes popular to some extent loses something of its integrity; but it may regain it later on when a new generation comes in. At the present time, therefore, during these 90 years of the sextile from the beginning of the Second World War to the middle of the next century, we should witness the actualization of what was released as potential just before and after 1890.

The growing ideas of **community** which we see in some New Age philosophical groups is another way of trying to bring the concept of brotherhood and humanitarianism into a concrete type of application. One of the troubles with many of those groups is that they depend too much on personalities, and lack a sense of principles, a sense of purpose. They come together because they like each other or because it is convenient to live communally; but this is not enough of a basic purpose for effectively cementing matters of interpersonal relationships. What is needed is some really essential purpose, an evident, convincing experience of presence of unity. The "Presence" of the divine being, or force, ensouling the group should be constantly felt as a living thing.

It may be that, this century, there won't be any single particular Avatar. It may be that it is the mysterious presence of the Christos or the Masters that will be experienced in a few significant groups. In some cases it may possibly be that Adepts will take incarnation in some of the leaders of those groups or "over-shadow" them. Those are all possibilities, but when they will occur, or whether they will occur . . . is too hard to say.

AT: How relevant are [The Secret Doctrine](#) and [The Mahatma Letters](#) to the New Age movement of the 1980's?

RUDHYAR: If I want to be consistent in what I said a moment ago, then this period of the [waxing] sextile of Neptune and Pluto is, in a certain sense, the final prelude which could precede the definite, practical actualization of many of the things which were released in the last 100 years. But one thing of great importance has to be realized. **Any kind or form of knowledge depends on the knower. You cannot teach someone something that he has absolutely no response to.**

I think this was made very clear in some of **The Mahatma Letters**, for instance. In one of them, KH says to Mr. Sinnett, "Don't forget that all those words like 'cycle,' 'round,' 'race,' 'rootrace,' I got from **your** mind;" or something to that effect. These words which KH could find in Sinnett's mentality seemed **then** to be the most apt to say something about what the Master was trying to convey to his correspondent's typically English mentality. People today so often think of such a kind of transcendent communication **between two worlds**

of mind as "dictation." But even if the Master can be said to dictate, he does so not only in the language of the person to whom it is dictated, **but according to what the recipient can comprehend**; therefore that person is indeed a collaborator with the person who does the dictation. He is partly responsible for what he receives. An interpenetration and interplay of consciousness occurs. Therefore if today Blavatsky, or anyone like her, were in a body and active in public, **The Secret Doctrine** would certainly not have many of the long discussions and arguments about science and theology which was necessary to include last century. In that sense some passages in **The Secret Doctrine** have become relatively obsolete; because, while the **principles** stated are as correct as ever, the form they were given 100 years ago was determined by the mentality of the people of the period, particularly the Anglo-Saxon mentality of Western Europe during the Victorian Era. For this reason and in this particular sense, **The Secret Doctrine** or **The Mahatma Letters** cannot be understood entirely if you take them away from the context of the mentality of the nineteenth century.

I think that much in these book could be reformulated in terms of a philosophical approach, which would be a little different from the one that they had to adopt at the time because of the mentality of the people. And, don't forget that, essentially, an **occult** approach was necessary. It had to be brought to a humanity, especially to Western humanity, which being so proud, so full of itself, and thinking that it was superior to everybody else, had to be **fascinated** by mysterious phenomena. These books tried to bring a completely new view of mankind as a whole and of knowledge as a whole. They claimed the existence of a primeval Revelation having come from another planet (or another plane of existence, however you want to interpret it). They asserted that this Revelation, or cosmic connection, had been kept alive ever since; that its power was operative now as always. Such claims could only be made convincingly by mans of striking occult experiences or phenomena. And this produced a **situation** which we find embodied by HPB.

All the essential values of these original theosophical writings could be reintegrated and reformulated in terms of a basic philosophy of existence that would be responsive to the new human mentality, yet not bound to the latter's limitations and new biases, whether these are scientific, religious or sociocultural; and ethical. What is needed is a basic philosophy, a philosophy of occultism, stressing the essential rather than occult facts, personifications and names. Whether someone will come to do this kind of work or whether one or several groups of people will perform it, each one in a different way, I have no idea.

AT: If you were solely responsible for determining policy for The Theosophical Society, what would you emphasize — in what direction would you proceed?

RUDHYAR: The only thing I would say is to try to see the need of the present time and to try, not on the basis of a popularization of theosophy but on the basis of the essential, archetypal concepts to be found in the **earliest** writings of the movement, to see how much all of it can be used and reformulated in order to help change the mentality of our present period. Blavatsky said that the great task of the Theosophical Society was to change the mind of the twentieth century. It has done a little of that, but not too much of it. We are still faced with the same situation. We have to prepare for the change of mentality that is needed for the twenty-first century, and we find a tremendous interest in psychology, consciousness integration, psychic phenomena, parapsychology, parapsysics, and all these

areas. These areas of modern thought are now chaotic, very confused. On the basis of what one can find implied in **The Secret Doctrine** one should be able to present a in new form the essential principles HPB sought to reveal and to apply them to our present day movements, just as in 1875 Blavatsky tried to use spiritualism because this was the only way she could get a foothold in the mentality of the race. The "foothold" became very slippery, and she fell on it. But in some way, recent movements like the consciousness and human potential movements, and also astrology, can be used to try to bring in a new type of consciousness, a new sense of archetypal order and practical organization. In Blavatsky's time, Western thinkers were beginning to be interested in various cultures and religions of the past. But she brought them to a focus by giving this interest a completely solid basis. The same principles she applied can be used in relation to the concepts and ideal which are popular today in our modern world. That, to my mind, would be the most creative approach. Of course, the idea of preserving the original doctrine intact is very valuable. There is room for various kinds of groups — some are purely preservers and do very good work, except that they usually tend to become highly dogmatic and difficult to deal with; nevertheless they serve a particular purpose. But there are also the more creative people who can re-create (we never create, but we formulate), who can give a new formulation to archetypal truth, and this could well be the creative destiny of the new theosophical movement of the twentieth century, whatever form it may take - and perhaps is already taking, whether or not we are aware of it.