

THE QUESTION OF DESTINY

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Destiny is the idea that the future of one's life is pre-determined and inevitable. It is an idea that is debatable, but unfortunately unproveable, since that destined future would have to reside solely in the Mind of God. But while destiny cannot be conclusively proven to exist, I would like to offer my own evidence for the acceptance of its existence:

The following passages are excerpted from my book, The Supreme Self:

The Celestial Dynamics of Grace

Nearly ten years had passed since my experience of enlightenment in the Santa Cruz mountains, when I began to be interested in the peculiar claims of astrology and came to have an understanding of the "celestial dynamics," not only of my own personal characteristics, but of all the ordinary and extraordinary day-to-day transient conditions of the mind, the body, and the soul. There were, no doubt, some "celestial influences" accompanying that dawning interest in astrological correspondences, but all I knew was that I had become fascinated with the clearly meaningful connections between my own natal planetary positions and my personal characteristics and fluctuating mental states; and as I eagerly consumed what literature I found on the subject, I became more and more convinced of the validity of the astrological principle of correspondence between the planetary positions and the varying conditions of my psyche.

According to the principles of astrology, one can discover the secrets of a soul's unique characteristics (the psychology of a personality) by drawing a map of the heavens as it appeared at the exact moment and place of birth, which serves as a sort of blueprint of that particular soul. But how, when, and in what sequence the events of the person's adventure on earth will take place is told in the *progressions* of the planets (one day in the ephemeris

represents one year in the life), and by the daily *transits* (actual transitory positions) of the Sun, moon and planets as they pass through and relate to the natal map.

All of the planets move (transit) through the twelve signs of the zodiac which comprise the 360° of the ecliptic; some slowly, some more rapidly. The Sun moves approximately one degree per day, and the moon one degree approximately every two hours. The outer planets take weeks or months to move through a degree. But always the overall architecture of this “atom” which we call the solar system is altering its design moment by moment. And we, who are within the confines of this “atom” are continually experiencing the changes in our own energy-patterns according to, and corresponding with, the changes in the angles from which the various planets and stars relate to us.

This implies, of course, that *everything* that happens to us in our lives will be accompanied by a planetary arrangement [that was set in the heavens since the instant of Creation], which, in its relationship to the positions of the planets at the moment of our birth, will symbolize that event. One day, it occurred to me that, if these principles were true, there would have to have been a configuration in the progressed and transiting positions of the planets on the night of my “mystical experience” that was significantly extraordinary. In other words, that Divine experience which we refer to as “*grace*” must also have been signified in the planetary patterns in effect for me on that very night.

This was a mind-boggling concept that was to stand many of my most cherished presumptions on their heads. In order to explain why this should be so, let me take a moment to describe some of those presumptions regarding that mysterious thing called “*grace*,” which is, from the standpoint of its recipient, a new and radical change in consciousness, and, subsequently, in the personality, which arises seemingly from out of nowhere:

From the moment my soul first awakened with “spiritual” understanding, and the love and desire for God first entered my heart, I had attributed that awakening to God’s grace. And there was no question in my mind that my later, “mystical,” experience was the gift of grace, for there was absolutely no denying the fact that this experience had been *given* to me. I had not earned it; I had practiced no technique, no method; by no means could I be

said to have produced it. There was no other word to describe this gift other than “grace.”

Traditionally, grace—the grace of God—was thought of as the freely-given intercession of God to a humbled soul, lifting it momentarily to mergence in the universal Consciousness. In this experience, the false, but insistent, illusion of a separate soul-identity, or ego, is dissolved, and the Divine Intelligence, which is the infinite and eternal Self of all, is revealed. How could the illusory, individual self imagine that it had accomplished this feat? Let those who think they can accomplish it do so. When the Self is realized, that separate self is no longer even there! The eternal Self appears only at its demise. And it has not the ability to slay itself; it is only the divine revelation of God that, in an instant, dissolves that tenacious illusory ego. It is grace.

Listen to what that enlightened 15th-century monk, Thomas á Kempis, had to say about grace:

When spiritual comfort is sent to you of God, take it meekly and give thanks humbly for it. But know for certain that it is of the great goodness of God that it is sent to you, and not of your deserving. And see that you are not lifted up therefore unto pride, nor that you joy much thereof, nor presume vainly therein, but rather that you be the more meek for so noble a gift, and the more watchful and fearful in all your works; for that time will pass away, and the time of temptation will shortly follow after. When comfort is withdrawn, despair not therefore, but meekly and patiently await the visitation of God, for He is able and of sufficient power to give you more grace and more spiritual comfort than you had first. Such alteration of grace is no new thing, and no strange thing to those who have had experience in the way of God; for in all great saints and in all lovers of God similar alteration has often been found.

... If almighty God has done thus with holy saints, it is not for us, weak and feeble persons, to despair, though we sometimes have fervor of spirit, and are sometimes left cold and void of devotion. *The Spirit comes and goes according to His pleasure* and therefore Job said: “Lord, Thou graciously visitest Thy lover in the morning, that is to say, in the time of comfort; and

suddenly Thou provest him in withdrawing such comforts from him.”

...He who knows the comforts that come through the gift of grace and knows also how sharp and painful the absenting of grace is, shall not dare think that any goodness comes of himself; but he shall openly confess that of himself he is very poor and naked of all virtue.¹

What Thomas said conformed to my own experience. The fervor of devotion was not always the same; it came and went, apparently according to its own pleasure. Likewise, the clarity of understanding was sometimes absent, and at other times inspiration seemed to flood my mind with the wisdom of God. One day I might be filled with love and fervor; another day I might be dry or lethargic, or physically energetic, or contemplative. One day I might be bubbling with creative energy; another day I would be dry as a bone. There was no telling what kind of inner state each day would bring.

The experience of union, or Unity, had come to me only once. Why on that day, at that time? I could only explain it, as Thomas á Kempis did, as God’s inexplicable grace. But now I was beginning to understand something of the celestial dynamics of grace, i.e., the principles of astrological correspondence. And so, I drew up a chart for that night of November 18, 1966.

What a revelation it was when I beheld that chart! The correspondence was undeniable. Here before my eyes was clear and unequivocal proof of the “science” of astral correspondences. Any impartial astrologer viewing the progressions and transits to my natal chart which occurred on that evening would have to acknowledge that this was indeed a night of destiny, an undeniably magical night of mystical vision, a once-in-a-lifetime night of incredible potential for the meeting with God. The extraordinary emphasis on the planetary position of Neptune (known as the planet of mystical experience) at that particular time is eloquently conclusive.

If—as many people think—there is really no correlation between the planets and the human psyche, then what an extraordinarily grand coincidence it was, what a marvelous accident of nature, that at the same moment that I was experiencing the Godhead, the planets were proclaiming it in the heavens! I think any reasonable person with even a little astrological acumen, on

viewing the “influences” in effect for me that night, would have to acknowledge that the significant planetary picture at the time of my “enlightenment experience” does, in fact, seem to provide evidence of the validity of the contents of that experience, confirming that all things do indeed “move together of one accord,” that nothing happens that is not ordained to happen, that the universe is one coordinated Whole. (*The Astrological conditions existing at the time of my “Enlightenment,” appear in the Appendix that follows.*)

But, along with the excitement of discovery and validation which I felt on viewing this chart, there was a nagging question that left me baffled and confused: If this “mystical experience” was described in the heavens since the beginning of time, and therefore entirely predestined, where was “grace”? Where was the freely given gift of God that I had experienced as occurring at just that moment? If everything was strictly predetermined, where was grace and free will and the possibility of spiritual endeavor?

Where was choice or merit or virtue? Where was blame or culpability? And where was the hope or possibility of “spiritual experience” for those in whose astrological forecast the prerequisite planetary conditions were *not* present? If God’s universe is merely the mechanistic unfolding of an undeviating script, then are we all merely mechanical pawns, and our trials and triumphs, our perseverings and defeats, merely dramatic plot-twists in a story that’s already written, typeset and published?

It is important to emphasize at this time that the planets, in themselves, do not have the power to *cause* either good or ill-fortune, though many (including myself) habitually speak of “planetary influences” as though they were *independent causes* determining our fate. In ancient times, of course, as planetary configurations were seen to correspond to definite kinds of psychological and behavioral effects, the naive supposed that planets were therefore independent forces, responsible for the destiny of man. Each planet was fitted out with its own individual personality and was assumed to have independent power to affect events on earth. This was the basis for the myths of the “gods.”

The great Roman mystic, Plotinus, writing in the 3rd century C.E. on the subject of *Are The Stars Causes?* noted that a belief in the independent power of the planets is “tenable only by minds ignorant of the [true] nature

of a Universe which has a ruling Principle and a First Cause operative downward through every member.”² He explained:

Each [planetary] entity takes its origin from one Principle and, therefore, while executing its own function, works in with every other member of that All. ... And there is nothing undesigned, nothing of chance, in all the process: all is one scheme of differentiation, starting from the First Cause and working itself out in a continuous progression of effects.³

This perfectly unfolding progression of effects from the one all-ruling Cause is clearly seen by all who have been graced with “the vision of God.” It is that “vision” which is the experiential basis for the assertion that “all things move together of one accord”; that “assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.” Still, the question of *how* the transiting “planetary influences” operate, i.e., by what process Neptune or any other planet transmits to individual souls its effects, is a legitimate one. And the matter of how *progressions* operate (which are not even present-time events, but “symbols” of planetary events already past) is even more perplexing. These questions cannot be answered by present-day knowledge, but many astrologers guess that something like the following is the case:

As the planets of the solar system change their angles to one another and thus rearrange the structural design of the entire system and its relationship to the design at one’s nativity, there is a corresponding change in the pattern of conscious energy (*Shakti*) which makes up our psychic and phenomenal reality. The energy-pattern (produced by the angular positions of the Sun, Moon and planets), which exists at the time of an individual’s birth, corresponds to the conscious energy-pattern, or aggregation of qualities, of that individual soul. And the subsequent alterations of the planetary positions after that moment spell out in decipherable terms his or her destiny.

It seems to me, however, that the search for a *cause-effect* relationship between the transits and progressions of planets and the lives of individual souls on earth is indicative of humanity’s long-standing mistaken view of reality. Plotinus saw in the 2nd century what is true eternally—that there is *one* Cause, and all else is Its effects. The planets do not focus beneficent or malevolent rays or forces in our direction; they do not put forth any fields of influence that impinge on us at all. In short, they are not *causes* at all, but

merely *signs* of the activity of the one Cause, which is God, revealed to those who can read them.

I believe it is very important to understand that, although the planets *signal* psychic and physical events experienced on earth, they are not themselves responsible; they are not the *cause* but are only coincident effects synchronous with the effects perceived upon earthly life. In short, the “influences” of the planets are really the influences of the unbroken Whole, manifesting locally as specific patterns of relationships. The planets do not determine our fate; they merely reveal it. Our lives are determined by the One in whom the planets move. This is a view consistent with the view of Plotinus, and I believe it will be consistent with the enlightened understanding of the future.

The evolution of the soul occurs over many lifetimes, with its summit being the full openness to self-surrender in the Love of God, and the subsequent realization of its supreme Identity. And because the evolution of the universe reflects the evolution of each soul, the stellar and planetary positions, which signal that soul’s enlightenment, will coincide perfectly with that moment in the soul’s evolutionary summit. And the question of whether it is the soul’s evolutionary struggle or the planetary alignments, which brings about enlightenment must be answered, “Neither.” They are coordinated events in the unfolding of God’s cosmic drama; both events are simultaneous effects of the one Cause, occurring in Himself in the ordered unfoldment of His will. All is one coordinated whole, and all that occurs within it is a manifestation of His grace.

The complexity of such a universe—a universe in which the destiny of each succeeding manifestation of a soul on earth is in synchronization with the ongoing motions of planetary bodies—is indeed beyond our present ability to conceive or visualize. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge that it is impossible to separate the birth of any individual from the cosmic conditions in which it occurs. For the universe is an integral Whole, and every event in it is in interlocking agreement with every other; not even the tiniest, most seemingly insignificant, event may be considered as an isolated phenomenon.

Within this Whole, where “all things move together of one accord,” the division of small-scale events into categories of *cause* and *effect* is imaginary and has no real meaning. For it is the Lord, God, *Shiva*, Self—

call Him what you will—who, by means of His Power of Will (*Shakti*), is the sole Cause of the entire manifested array of the cosmos and therefore of every single event which takes place within it. This truth is seen clearly and unmistakably in the unitive experience of the mystic.

FREEDOM OR DETERMINISM?

This startling empirical evidence of an astrological correspondence to the experience of enlightenment leads us to some unavoidable conclusions: It appears evident that enlightenment, the vision of God—whatever we may wish to call it—is a fated and determined event. This is a staggering thought! “Well,” you may ask, “Can grace be a predetermined event? Is enlightenment merely a matter of fate?” These questions are not easy to answer, but I will try: From our limited viewpoint in time, the experience of unity appears to be a product of instantaneous grace. But *time*, from the viewpoint of eternal Being, is another thing altogether. To It, the entire universal cycle, from “Big Bang” to final implosion, is but the blinking of an eye, the rising and falling of a breath; and the universe, including all our experiences within it, evolves according to the undeviating law of causal progression. All things do indeed move together of one accord; and there is no event, however subtle, that is not determined from the first by God, who is the ultimate Cause.

Frequently it happens that those who commit themselves to a life of devotion and service to God do so at a time when they are newly awakened by grace. That amazing grace is experienced as a suddenly growing intensity of their experience of the Divine presence in their lives and a fervent clarity of their inner vision. No doubt some heavenly body (or bodies) is beginning at that time to enter into a significant relationship with Neptune’s place in the pattern of planetary positions existent at their birth. Perhaps, at the moment that body (or bodies) culminates its relationship to Neptune’s natal position, they will have a profound experience of the One as their own eternal Self.

Then, as time passes, those who once thrilled to the touch of God’s invisible hand and peered into the infinite peace and wonder of God’s eternal Self no longer feel the nearness of His presence nor any longer see with the same clarity. It may be that they will come to feel that God has abandoned them, or that perhaps they have gone astray and are being punished for their infidelity. No doubt, they will long for those earlier days when their

thoughts never strayed from His praise and their hearts were never without the fullness of Divine love, when they were consumed with selfless desire for His enveloping embrace.

But the heavens change, and the earth spins on through endless space, and the celestial influence which God once brought to pass in their lives moves on to affect and inspire another. God has not withdrawn His grace; it was but a momentary opening of the aperture of the psyche, a glimpse into the eternal Source, signified by the momentary arrangement of the ever-changing positions of the planets, stars and galaxies in this fathomless universe as they relate to this one human entity in time and space.

In short, that receptivity, that mysterious opening of awareness, that drawing of the human heart and mind to immersion and complete abnegation in the heart and mind of that universal Being which we call God was coincident with the conditions occurring in the natural unfolding of God's universal drama, of which He is the producer, director, stage, actors, and scenery. In short, it was His gift, His grace. It was He who planted that moment in amongst all the moments, that arrangement in amongst all the possible arrangements of the heavenly bodies in the universe, and that "mystical" experience in amongst all the experiences known to man. What else shall we call it but His grace? And what are all other moments, arrangements and experiences that follow in a lifetime but His grace as well?

As for the question of man's "free will" in a universe entirely determined by the will of God, the nineteenth century saint, Sri Ramakrishna, perhaps the greatest mystic and seer the world has ever known, had this to say:

The Englishman [i.e., the Western materialist] talks about free will, but those who have realized God are aware that free-will is a mere appearance. In reality, man is the machine and God is the Operator. Man is the carriage and God its Driver.⁴

For many, such a declaration implies a strict determinism, which they regard as unacceptable. The prospect of a universe of strict causality appears to them a dismal one, reducing the status of men to that of helpless cogs in a machine whose functioning had been preordained from the day of its creation. Yet most men of science find it necessary to acknowledge that if the universe *is* ruled by the principle of strict causality, then all men's acts,

thoughts, desires are also governed by that principle. Max Planck, the founder of quantum mechanics, once said:

The principle of causality must be held to extend even to the highest achievements of the human soul. We must admit that the mind of each one of our great geniuses —Aristotle, Kant, or Leonardo, Goethe or Beethoven, Dante or Shakespeare —even at the moment of its highest flights of thought or in the most profound inner workings of his soul was subject to the causal fiat and was an instrument in the hands of an almighty law, which governs the world.⁵

We all feel, however, that we have some freedom in our choices, that we are able to do whatever we want. Yet we must recognize that the “wants” which govern our “doing” are given factors, results of precious causal factors. The German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, noting this, remarked: “You can do whatever you want, but you cannot *want* whatever you want.” Many another scientist or philosopher has reflected on the possibility of “free will” in a deterministic universe. Baruch Spinoza, for example, declared:

There is in the mind no absolute or free will, but the mind is determined in willing this or that by a cause, which is determined in its turn by another cause, and this by another, and so on to infinity.⁶

... Men think themselves free because they are conscious of their volitions and desires but are ignorant of the causes by which they are led to wish and desire.⁷

This may indeed appear a “dismal” view to some, but really it is not so dismal if seen in the proper perspective. In the context of the One, the unbroken Whole, men are not “cogs”, but instruments of Divine Will, and expressions of Divine Joy. If the universe is to be seen as a machine, it must be seen that it is a living one, and that the life of the parts is the life of the whole. It is the Creator Himself who is playing out the drama. Who, then, are the victims? And who is the tyrant whose will is being thrust upon us? *Us* is Him. And our willing is His willing. Our dreaming and discovering, our joys and despairs, and even our doubting, is His doing. There are not two.

The universe *is* determined; it is determined by the One who is manifesting as the universe. But though a man's life is destined, still he is free. Man's true and eternal freedom lies in his eternal Being; he may do only what lies in his destiny to do, but he is always free in his Being. He may be glorified or vilified; he may be crowned or nailed to a cross; but as the One, as the unchanging sky of pure Consciousness, he is ever free, untouched by the raging storm of the world.

Still, you may object to what is seen as a world of strict determination, and ask, "If every event in our lives is determined by God, where, then, is our freedom of choice? Where is the possibility for virtue, for choosing the path of righteousness over the path of evil? And how is it even possible to progress spiritually by one's own efforts if all is in God's hands? How can we be held responsible for our acts if every sentiment, emotion, thought, or act is determined by God?"

These are questions, which must occur to anyone who thinks deeply about such matters. But these questions are framed on a presumption of duality where none in fact exists. For *we* and *God* are ultimately not two. And it is only a linguistic quandary that we fall into when we regard ourselves and God as separate entities and consider one to be determining the other. There is only One in this universe; it is *He* who, *as us*, is freely making all the choices.

Each individual being (soul) chooses according to his or her evolutionary development, but it is He alone who is manifesting as each individual at every step on the evolutionary scale. Therefore, we must admit that everything is determined by God's Will. And ... we must also see that, since we are Him, we are free to choose. When these two, man and God, are recognized to be one, this question of whether we are free or determined in our willing is easily resolved: Determinism and free-will are *both* true; they are "complementary" truths, each representing one aspect of a dual-sided reality. As the one eternal Consciousness, beyond time, we are forever free; as individualized souls, in time, we are determined by the law of causality, and are therefore under the decree of fate.

Thus, the question, "Are we responsible for our acts?" must be answered, "No," from the standpoint of our individualized souls; and "Yes," from the standpoint of the Self. For, as the one Consciousness, we are the witness of

all the thoughts and impulses of our nature and are free to grant or withhold consent to her promptings. Therefore, ultimately, we *are* responsible for our acts. It is on the basis of our Divinity that all civil and criminal law intuitively recognizes the culpability of the individual. For, if we were not the eternal Self in essence, if we were not absolutely free from causal necessity, but merely unwitting, mechanical pawns, we could not be held responsible for what we do. But our Self *is* God, we *are* free; and therefore, we *are* responsible.

The question of “free will” is one which has fascinated the minds of men since first man looked to the heavens and deduced a Creator. And, though the answer to the problem is very simple, it is difficult for most minds to assimilate, which have not gotten into the habit of allowing for two answers to be true which contradict each other. Such an attitude is required of physicists for whom light, and energy itself, must be seen as both a particle (quanta) and a wave, whose respective qualities are mutually exclusive. What is required is the ability to freely shift one’s viewpoint from one frame of reference to another.

The answer to the question, “Do I have free will?” is determined by who *I* is; in other words, to which “I” you are referring. If you are identifying with the body, mind and soul, the answer is, “No, you do not have free will.” Nothing happens in this drama that was not in the original script. Omar Khayyam has rightly said: ‘The first morning of creation wrote what the last dawn of reckoning shall read’. The Will that flung forth the universe is its only Cause, and all that follows is effect. All effects are implied and contained in their cause, as the tree is contained in its seed. Even your apparent choosing is *His* choosing; even the choosing is Him. In short, there is no escaping Him, for He is ‘even that which thinks of escape.’

On the other hand, if by *I* you refer to the one and only true Self, the one universal Consciousness; if by *I* you mean the eternal Lord and Witness of all this drama, then you already know the answer: “Yes, you have free will. Your will is the only will; You are Freedom itself!”⁸

NOTES:

1. Abhayananda, Swami., *Thomas á Kempis, On The Love of God*, Atma Books, 1992; pp. 74-75, 78
2. Plotinus, *Enneads*, II:3:6
3. *Ibid.*, II:3:7

4. Nikhilanda, Swami, Nikhilananda, Swami (trans.), *The Gospel Of SriRamakrishna*, New York, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1942; pp. 379-380
5. Max Planck, *Where Is Science Going?* London, George Allen & Unwin, 1933.
6. Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, II.48.
7. *Ibid.*, I. Appendix
8. The above passages and the Appendix that follows are excerpted from Abhayananda, Swami, *The Supreme Self*, Atma Books, Fallsburg, N.Y., 1984.

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APPENDIX

This Appendix is added for the benefit of those who have some familiarity with astrological principles and are able to understand the significance of the following charts:

The first chart, chart A, is the chart of the *transiting* planetary arrangement in effect at the time of my “experience of unity.” The lines connecting those planets in *opposition* (180°) *trine* (120°), and *sextile* (60°) aspects to each other show the angular relationships between these transiting planets. This, in itself, is a remarkable configuration. But to fully appreciate the significance of this transiting planetary arrangement, it must be seen in relationship to the positions of the planets at my birth.

This may be seen in chart B. It is a composite chart, showing the positions of the planets in my natal, progressed, and transiting charts, shown in consecutive wheels. In the center wheel, my *natal* chart, calculated for 6:01 P.M., August 14, 1938, at Indianapolis, Indiana; in the intermediate wheel, my *progressed* chart for 9:00 P.M., November 18, 1966, at Santa Cruz, California; and in the outer wheel, the *transiting* chart for the same time and place.

CHART A

Stan TroutTrans.

Nov 18 1966 9:00 PM PST
 Santa Cruz California
 38N00 121W53
 Nov 19 1966 05:00:00 GMT
 Tropical Placidus True Node

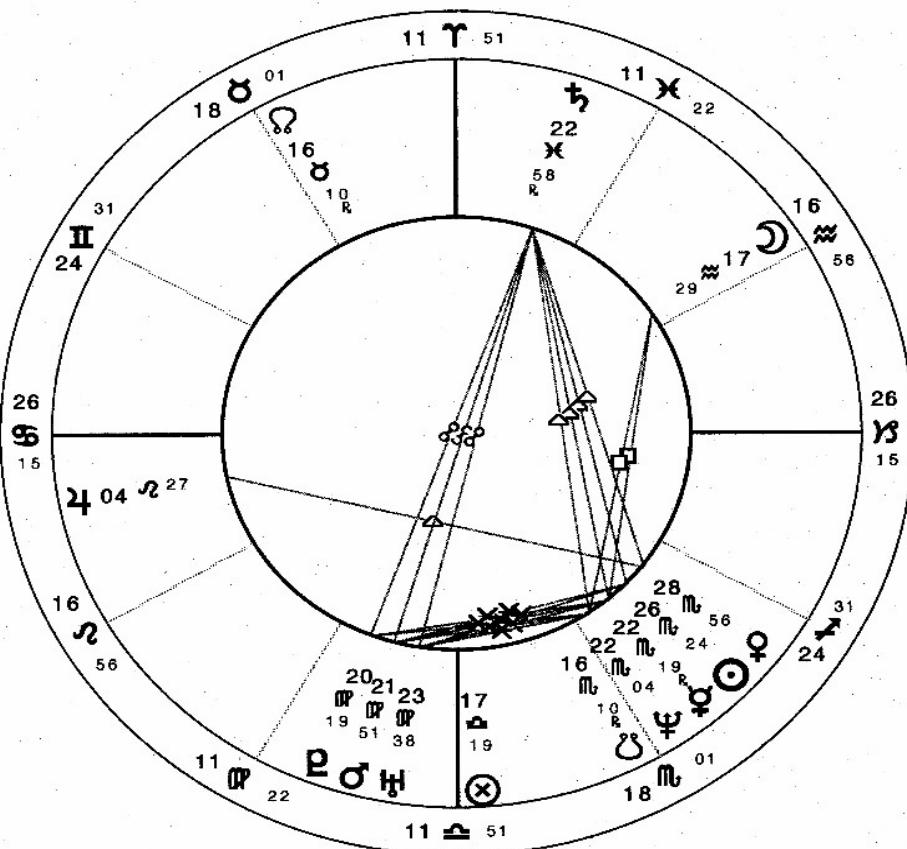


CHART B

Stan Trout

Aug 14 1938 6:01 PM CST
 Indianapolis Indiana
 39N46 86W09
 Aug 15 1938 00:01:00 GMT
 Tropical Placidus True Node

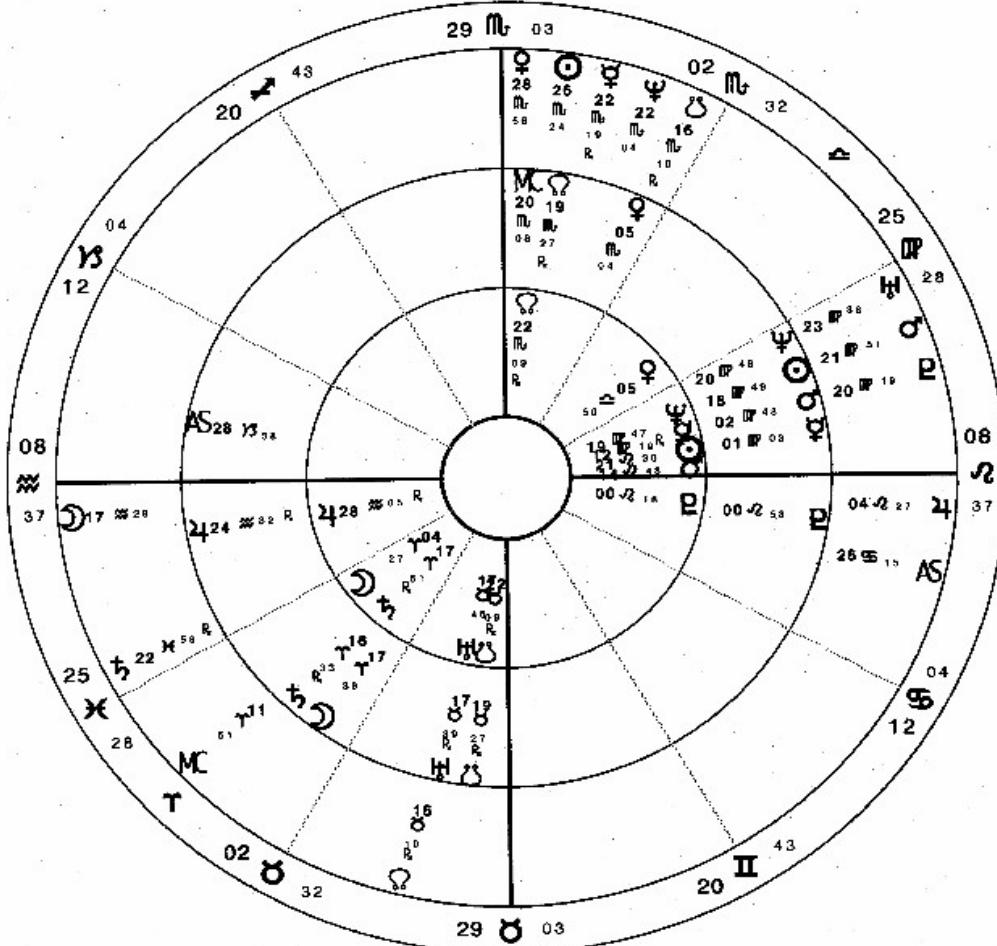
Second Chart Solar Arc Progression
Stan Trout SAP

Nov 19 1966 05:00:00 GMT

Third Chart Natal Chart

Stan TroutTrans.

Nov 19 1966 05:00:00 GMT

*Natal Aspects:*

- Sun conjunct Mars
- Sun trine Saturn
- Sun square Uranus
- Mercury trine Uranus
- Mercury conjunct Neptune
- Mars square Uranus
- Saturn semisextile Uranus
- Uranus trine Neptune

Progressed Aspects (to natal planets):

Moon conjunct Saturn (exact)
 Moon semisextile Uranus (exact)
 Sun conjunct Neptune (exact)

Transiting Aspects (to natal planets):

Moon sextile Saturn (exact)
 Moon square Uranus (exact)
 Sun conjunct Midheaven
 Mercury square Sun (exact)
 Mercury conjunct North Node (exact)
 Venus conjunct Midheaven (exact)
 Venus square Jupiter (exact)
 Mars conjunct Neptune
 Jupiter trine Moon (exact)
 Uranus conjunct Neptune
 Neptune conjunct North Node (exact)
 Neptune square Sun (exact)
 Pluto conjunct Neptune (exact)

Note: planets within 1° aspect are considered to be exact.

In examining this composite of charts, the first thing that stands out to the trained eye is the highly significant progression of both the Sun and the Moon (middle wheel) to exact conjunctions with natal planets (center wheel). The Moon's progression to an exact conjunction to my natal Saturn is a conjunction which occurs only once every twenty-eight to thirty years; while the Sun's progression to the natal position of Neptune occurs in one's chart only if one's Sun position is natively within 60° or so, clockwise, of Neptune's position—and then, only once in a lifetime. The likelihood of both the Sun and Moon forming progressed conjunctions to (major) natal planets simultaneously is obviously very remote, and when it *does* occur, is highly significant of an extraordinary event.

Neptune, to which the progressed Sun is conjoined, figures quite prominently in my natal chart, as it forms there a conjunction to Mercury and a trine to Uranus. In my early deliberations about my own chart, I had come to look on it as a representation of a certain mental receptivity to poetic inspiration. But Neptune represents much more than that; with beneficial aspects from other planets, it can represent an access to the very

sublest of spiritual realms. One astrologer, Robert Hand, who is a recognized authority on astrological symbols, says about Neptune:

Neptune symbolizes the truth and divinity perceived by mystics. (*Keep in mind that the planet is an agent or a representation of an energy, not the source of the energy.*) At the highest level, Neptune represents Nirvana, where all individuality is merged into an infinite oneness of being and consciousness.¹

Notice that the massive conjunction of transiting Mars-Uranus-Pluto (outer wheel) is precisely over my natal Neptune, along with the progressed Sun, and that the conjunction of transiting Mercury-Neptune is precisely over my natal North Node of the Moon. There were, on that night of November 18, 1966, two exact conjunctions of *progressed* planets to natal planets, and ten exact aspects of *transiting* planets to natal positions, five of which were conjunctions. The concentration of energy over my natal Neptune position was clearly intense—intense enough for even a thick-headed person like myself to catch a glimpse of God.

If it could be shown that, in all cases, the mystical experience of Unity coincided with progressed solar and/or lunar aspects to Neptune in the charts of the experiencers, we would be in possession of a neatly consistent formula for anticipating mystical experience. However, that does not seem always to be the case. When one examines the charts of known mystics of the past progressed to the date of their transcendent experience, one encounters a very inconsistent collection of varied influences, although aspects to the natal Neptune position do seem to figure strongly.

For example, in the chart of Sri Aurobindo (born August 15, 1872), at the time of his reported enlightenment (January 15, 1908) the progressed moon is exactly conjunct his natal Neptune, and the progressed Sun is exactly quincunx Neptune's position. In the chart of Sri Ramakrishna (born February 18, 1836), progressed to the date of his first *samadhi* at the age of twenty-nine (February 1, 1865), the progressed moon is exactly sextile his natal Neptune's position, while there are no major aspects from the progressed Sun. And in the progressed chart of Sri Ramana Maharshi (born December 30, 1879), who became enlightened at the age of sixteen (September 15, 1896), the progressed moon is 3° past a conjunction with natal Jupiter, and the progressed Sun makes only one aspect: a trine to natal

Pluto. Even with so brief a sampling, it is clear that there is a wide range of variation in the progressed solar and lunar aspects occurring at the time of enlightenment.

Strangely enough, the one modern mystic whose progressed aspects at the time of his enlightenment most closely resemble the planetary aspects present in my own enlightenment chart is someone who was personally known to me—Swami Muktananda.

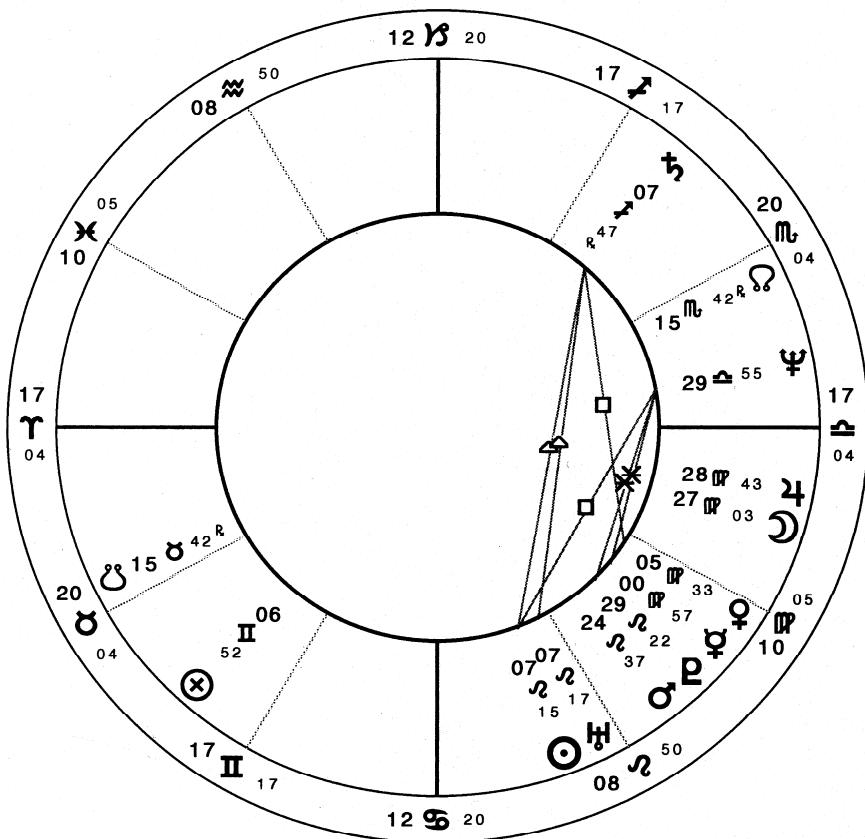
Muktananda's natal horoscope reveals him to have been an immensely powerful personality, but it only hints at the tremendous personal power he came to possess through the legacy of *shaktipat* transmitted to him by his guru, Nityananda, and through his lifelong retention of that power. He was totally unique in his masterful attainment, and his life of sharing his spiritual realizations was also amazing and unique; but *his experience of the Self was the common experience of all the enlightened.*

While our paths to enlightenment, our visions, our circumstances, personalities and destinies (as symbolized in our individual horoscopes) were very different, the enlightenment experience which revealed the eternal Self to Muktananda was identical (by definition) with that which I experienced. What's more, the planetary signifiers of enlightenment were nearly identical in both our cases.

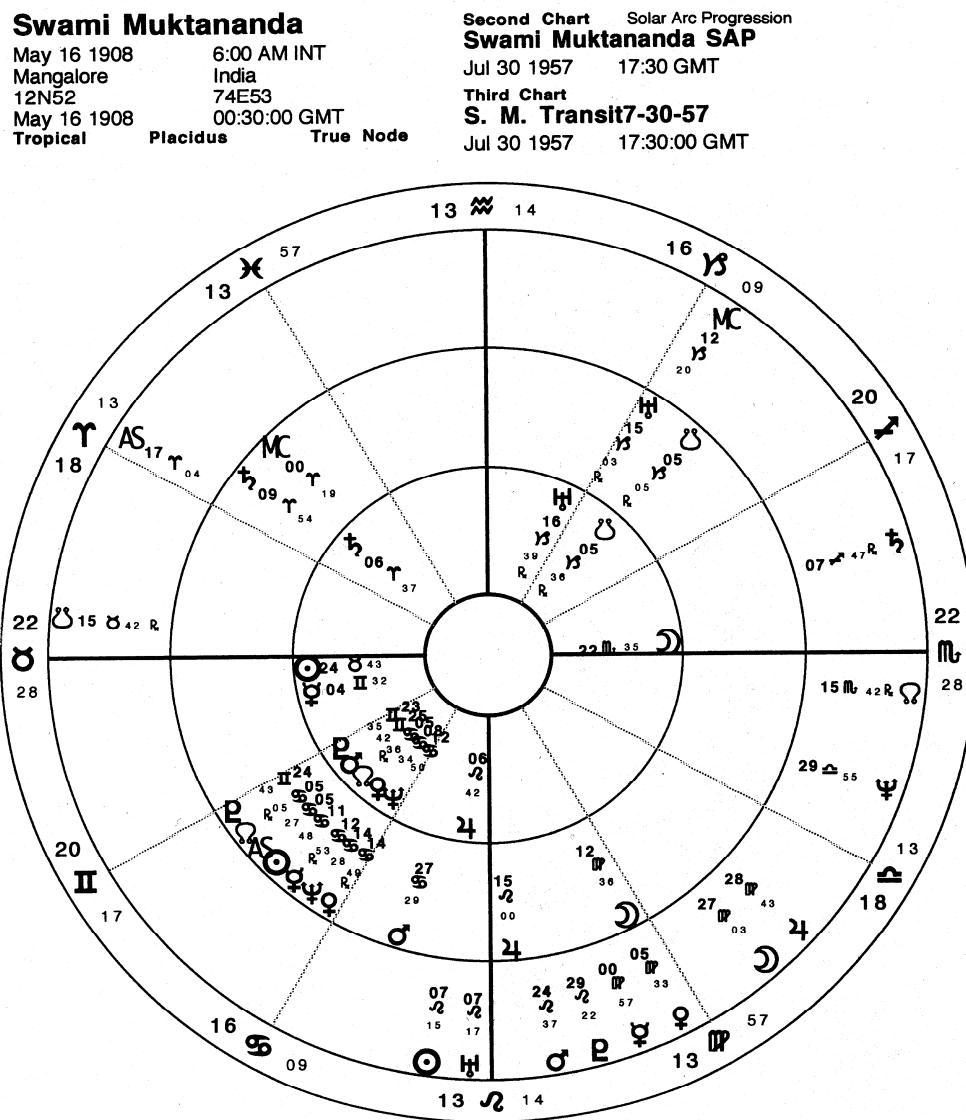
Despite the unique elements of Muktananda's *sadhana*, which differed considerably from my own experience, both of our actual enlightenment experiences, though nearly ten years apart, coincided with a strong aspect of the progressed moon to one of the outer natal planets, at the same time that *the progressed Sun was forming an exact conjunction with the natal position of Neptune*. There was also, at the time, an extraordinary and significant array of transiting planets in the heavens in both cases. Here is a chart showing the positions of the transiting planets on the day of Muktananda's enlightenment (determined to be July 30, 1957):

S. M. Transit7-30-57

Jul 30 1957	11:00 PM INT	
Yeola	India	
19N00	72E50	
Jul 30 1957	17:30:00 GMT	
Tropical	Placidus	True Node



And here, on the following page, is a composite chart for the time of Muktananda's enlightenment (the inner wheel is his natal chart (May 16, 1908, at Mangalore, India; 6:00 AM INT); the middle wheel is the progressed chart; and the outer wheel represents the transiting positions of the planets on that day, July 30, 1957:



Natal Aspects:

Sun conjunct Ascendant
 Sun opposite moon
 Mercury sextile Jupiter
 Venus conjunct Neptune
 Venus square Saturn
 Mars conjunct Pluto
 Jupiter trine Saturn (exact)
 Uranus opposite Neptune

Progressed Aspects (to natal planets):

Sun-Mercury conjunct Neptune (exact)
 Moon sextile Neptune (exact)
 Jupiter quincunx Uranus

Transiting Aspects (to natal planets):

Sun-Uranus conjunct Jupiter
 Sun-Uranus trine Saturn
 Moon-Jupiter trine Sun (moon exact)
 Mars-Pluto square Sun
 Saturn trine Jupiter
 Saturn trine Saturn

Note: Planets within 1° aspect are considered to be exact.

In Muktananda's *natal* chart, notice the powerful stellium of planets in the 2nd House, along with the Sun-moon opposition closely conjunct the 1st-7th House cusps. Mars conjunct Pluto, and Venus conjunct Neptune give some indication of his spiritual evolution and the great forcefulness of his personal energy. Jupiter in the 3rd House shows his learning and speaking ability, and Uranus on the 9th House cusp relates both to his advanced philosophical views and his amazingly broad travels. (For a thoughtful and thorough examination of his life from an astrological point of view, see the excellent treatment by my good friend, Greg Bogart, in his book, *Astrology And Spiritual Awakening*, published by Dawn Mountain Press.)

The *progressed* chart shows the progressed Sun and Mercury in exact conjunction with his natal Neptune, and the progressed Moon in exact sextile to natal Neptune. In addition to these highly significant aspects, Jupiter is progressed to an exact quincunx to natal Uranus.

The *transiting* aspects are equally notable: a transiting Sun-Uranus conjunction is conjunct natal Jupiter, and forming a trine to natal Saturn, while transiting Saturn is forming a grand trine with natal Saturn and Jupiter. A transiting Moon-Jupiter conjunction is forming a trine to the natal Sun, while transiting Mars, Pluto, and Mercury are in close square to that natal Sun position. All in all, it is a remarkable set of circumstances, signaling a remarkable occurrence. Clearly, it is *as* uniquely powerful a set of progressed and transiting aspects as those which occurred in relation to my own chart in November of 1966.

It is my opinion that this discovery of the correlation of celestial dynamics and Divine grace is a breakthrough in knowledge comparable to those brought about by Copernicus and Galileo and has the potential to revolutionize our understanding of “spiritual” experience. However, it requires so bold a departure from traditional ways of thinking that it is unlikely to have a great influence on the understanding of any but the most discerning. In fact, many so-called “spiritual teachers” will find this information embarrassing and will reject it, for it makes a folly of their contention that it is practices and techniques which bring about Self-realization. For without God’s celestial grace, without the timing of God’s heavenly motions unfolding in one’s life, no illumination will come.

The present-day understanding of how astrology ‘works’ is as far from a comprehensive resolution as is the science of microphysics. It was a mystery to the ancients, and it is a mystery today (although David Bohm’s concept of the immediate interconnectedness of everything within “the unbroken Whole” hints at the way ahead). And while “the science” of the astrology of enlightenment is in its infancy today, I am hopeful that the data that is here provided will point the way to greater exploration and understanding of the relation of astronomical phenomena to mystical experience in the years to come.

NOTE:

1. Hand, Robert, *Astrological Symbols*, Rockfort, Mass., Para Research, Inc., 1980.

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A Carrier Pigeon?

I have come to understand that I am without any power to initiate or affect even the tiniest event in this world. The One who is manifesting and directing this entire array of phenomena in time and space and orchestrating every event in it is our transcendent Lord, the divine Author of this world. And if we are observant, we will find all around us many clear signs of His authorship and His efficacy. Here, for example, is a plausible sign of pre-determination that appears in the astrological lore from the writings of the legendary twentieth-century Astrologer, Dane Rudhyar, whose “Sabian Symbols” give meaningful interpretations of each of the 360° of the Zodiac.

My August 14th birthdate puts the Sun at my birth at 21 degrees, 30 minutes of the constellation of Leo in the Tropical zodiacal arc. This, rounded to the next full number, becomes Leo 22°. Rudhyar’s Sabian Symbol for that zodiacal degree reads:

“A CARRIER PIGEON FULFILLING ITS MISSION.
“KEYNOTE: *Spirituality in terms of training for service to mankind.*

“In contrast with the intoxicated chicken (pictured in Leo 21°), we now have the successfully trained carrier pigeon delivering the message it was its function to carry. Here, the domesticated bird is seen endowed with a special significance and purpose. This refers to spiritual energies which are being used constructively and which bring to the consciousness messages from other realms. Individual realizations acquire their true meaning only as they fulfill a collective function.

“This second stage symbol clearly presents a contrasting alternative to what the preceding picture revealed. The ‘release’ of higher energies becomes effective and valuable to the extent to which it serves a

higher, but concrete and definite, purpose. This is the ideal of the WORLD SERVER.”¹

All these many factors that I have listed point to the fact that my destiny was cast in the very second that I was born. (You may be assured that this is true of you as well.) My natal astrological chart shows clearly that, on November 18, 1966, my progressed Sun would reach the position of my natal Neptune, corresponding with the occurrence within me of a significant “mystical experience.” And, according to Mr. Rudhyar’s symbolic interpretation, the prayer that was planted in my heart on that November night in 1966 was an inevitable event in God’s already scripted drama, signaling the imparting of the message I was destined to deliver. God’s revelation to me and my sharing it with you is clearly His doing, and not mine. And if I am indeed a metaphorical ‘carrier pigeon’ as the above passage suggests, it should be understood that the message I carry originates with Him and was revealed by Him; I am only the carrier of the message, and I am fulfilling my mission by delivering that message to you. That is my destiny. May *your* destiny also lead you to the direct knowledge of God in yourself.

NOTE:

1. This quote is from *An Astrological Mandala: The Cycle of transformation and its 360 symbolic phases* by Dane Rudhyar, Vantage Books, 1973, pp. 144-145.

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