

Your Dangerous Age

by Dane Rudhyar

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Are you passing through the dangerous age?

Or, if you have been touched by continental sophistication, are you disturbed a little, at least by *l'age critique* and its emotional uncertainties?

You may not have heard that there is such an age, dangerous and critical. If so, you must not have read many short stories, novels, or popular psychology magazines, for so much of this literature, highbrow or popular, is concerned about what happens to the hero or heroine when he or she crosses some more or less mythical line in middle life.

A woman looks at herself in the mirror, discovers that youth is fleeting, that she has experienced so little, that she really has been waiting always, for something, someone, to do something for her, to dissolve her fears, her resistances, her neat little compartments within which she built a nice home, a lovely family, a good husband.

It seems to take a long time for most people to realize that they have lived in neat little compartments, or perhaps even big and sumptuous ones, and actually that they are caught in them. They are, so to speak, in a rut.

Life in these compartments may be quite happy and comfortable, by all conventional standards. You may even move them around, like trailers; so that when you are tired of one situation, you can go to the next. But they are still, they always remain, compartments. When you know they are that, then the dangerous age begins.

The Fear of Change

This can happen anytime, under certain conditions. But human beings are so constituted that they are deeply afraid of change. They cling to whatever seems to give, or to promise them, security; whether it be financial security, or spiritual or emotional security. However, at the times when some deep-seated process of biological and psychological development begins or comes to an end, the disturbance this produces backs up, as it were, any tendency the person has to be dissatisfied with things as they are.

It is then that small annoyances, or the pressure of frustrating home or conjugal situations, are, as it were, lifted sky-high by the big swell of the sea of our *unconscious* biological and instinctual nature in process of change. The little waves made up of the *conscious* petty irritations or the half-conscious sense of emptiness and failure gain thus a momentum completely out of proportion with their actual causes. They are thrust upon the conventional structures of our routine living, in which our usual activities, our feelings and our thoughts have been fitted rather skillfully, often charmingly.

Then two things happen, often simultaneously. We realize that, in a way, these conventional structures of our life have carried us along and sustained us; so we do not quite dare to picture what we would have been without them. At the same time, they now have been forced upon our consciousness. Wherever we turn, they are there.

We know now we are compartmentalized, bound by patterns; and it gives us a sinking feeling in our heart. We are caught, yet we don't want to be caught. Aren't we young yet? From within our emotional depths a yearning arises; its voice says: "There is time yet. It is not too late."

Before you know it, you are now looking out of the window. And by some peculiar circumstances of fate there is always somebody on the outside passing by.

Perhaps this person appears sad and forlorn; perhaps the stranger's whole body sings. Somehow, the passerby looks up and sees you—and there goes your heart. Poor human heart!

Actually there is not one dangerous age. Danger arises when something deep within us becomes radically dissatisfied with things-as-they-are in our lives. This dissatisfaction may be caused by what we have done, *or failed to accomplish*—or by what others, closely surrounding us, have done or failed to do. Dissatisfaction can be glorified into what poets and mystics have often called divine discontent; but more often perhaps it should rather carry the name of devilish restlessness. But we must not forget that even the devil ultimately serves God, even if he does not know he does, and even if it takes a long time for you to find it out.

How Saturn Helps You

When we speak of things-as-they-are (i.e. of the *status quo*) the astrologer at once says to himself: "Ah, Saturn." Poor old Saturn usually carries the blame when things-as-they-are get dull. But it is not quite fair. Saturn simply helps *you* to arrange your life the way *you* want it, even if you do not know precisely that you want it that way.

Saturn gives you the cardboard and the glue, the cement and the wooden-forms to build your life-compartments. If you hand these Saturnian tools to someone else, because you are tired or you do not want to dirty your hands, that is not Saturn's fault.

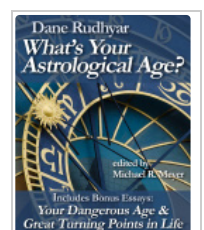
Compartments are obviously useful, and in most cases required by society as well as by your own ego-desire for security. A house is a set of compartments. Of course, you can camp outside; but you may not want to. So, you build a house. If it is not a physical one, then a psychological one—a set of habits and of thoughts—in which you and your mate, and perhaps your progeny, live.

The Rise of Frustration

It happens often that you build the compartments of your daily existence too narrow, too drab or oppressive. There may be no variety in them, hardly any windows for the light to come in. Your house—physical or psychological—is just like thousands of other houses nearby; and once you really come to *feel* it is so, then you cannot forget this fact. You begin to see the house as a barrack. Your urge for self-expression feels stifled. Frustration pervades all your thoughts, whether you quite admit it or not.

But it may be also that the type of house you have accepted is too big, or too austere, or too much of a public meeting place where activities are pursued with which you cannot become familiar—or you do not care to become familiar.

The compartments of your home-life may be grandiose and filled with all kinds of wealth: psychological, cultural and spiritual. Yet you feel unable—perhaps distressingly so—to *use* these contents. The purpose for which these contents have been gathered by your wife or husband—either means nothing much to you, or it scares you somehow. After a try or two, you lose your real interest in both the contents and the purpose, or having failed in



This essay is taken from Dane Rudhyar's book "What's Your Astrological Age?" which can be ordered at [amazon.com](#)



your efforts, you keep yourself uneasily distant.

This means *also* frustration—and what more, perhaps an unconscious, if not conscious, sense of guilt or failure. Here Saturn comes up again! Saturn has been too hard on you; you feel caught under his pressure. You must open the window—so you think. Whether it is a beautiful warm spring day, or a melancholic poignant autumn evening, the one thing you see is the stranger who walks by, sadly yearning or buoyant with all that you feel has had no chance within your nature.

I spoke already of several dangerous ages. According to my psychological experience with many types of people, two periods of life stand out as very likely to spell danger for women, and a third one is usually more distressing to the male sex. The first period comes at around thirty; the second, around

forty-two to forty-five, or it may begin earlier under special conditions. The third one comes between ages fifty-six and fifty-nine.

Danger at Thirty

Sometime during your thirtieth year the planet Saturn returns to the degree of the zodiac it occupied at birth. It will return once more to this same place in your fifty-ninth year, or in the sixtieth.

Such cyclic returns of Saturn, the great astrological symbol of limitation and bondage, the lord of form and pattern-making, mean primarily one thing only. It means that the opportunity is presented to you to move from one Saturn-level to another; therefore, to change the type of forms or life-compartments with which *you have identified yourself, your ego and your sense of security or maturity.*

It may sound simple, but it is not. It is not simple even if you live alone. It becomes often extremely difficult if you are married or vitally committed to a certain line of action—that is, if you have permanent responsibilities. The difficulty is still more acute if change would mean giving up whatever security you have, physical, financial or spiritual.

As a result, when this occurs, you shut your mind tight against the change, perhaps after having tried without success to talk to your spouse about the need to face life together in a more mature way. If you married quite young, you may have two or three children, and expect or plan for more. A phase of youthful, biological life is ending. You know instinctively it does. But you do not know —perhaps you do not *want* to know—what phase is beginning!

Because you do not want to know and are afraid to find out what change might mean *inside of you*, you are going to the window. And there, walking along the road, is the passer-by!

The Challenge

Now you may only think it would be fun to see a different face, and hear a different life-story. Or you may feel already that change has knocked at the door—outer change. An outer change may be, it is quite true, needed to compel an inner transformation, if the life-pattern has hopelessly settled into dreary ruts. But often the need is not there; it is just that you do not dare to be transformed *where you are*. The transformation would most likely affect and renew as well, to a degree at least, those around you.

The strength or acuity of this confrontation of the thirtieth year or thereabouts depends greatly on whether there has been an early marriage and children, or a delayed adolescence without marriage, or a strong self-commitment to a life-task as demanding as marriage, and as binding! The life-conditions differ greatly in every case; but the challenge to become more honestly, more deeply, more maturely and more effectively *yourself* and to meet the basic problem of your life is usually to be faced, at that age, by men and women alike.

The challenge meets you in your bedroom or your office, in the nursery with an ailing child or in your clubroom filled with gossip about somebody's affairs, or driving your car recklessly just to let off steam. The challenger—life—does not tell you to get out and find a lover or propose to your secretary, or to take a trip to calm your nerves or wear yourself out playing tennis with a foreign instructor, male or female as the case may be. All what life, alias Saturn, says is: "One round is ended—now to the next. It's time for you to grow up!"



If the challenge is not met, you go on with things-as-they-are, then you have only postponed the day of reckoning. It will come in your early or mid-forties *when Saturn reaches the opposition aspect to its natal place.*

Danger During the Forties

This time the situation becomes more complex. Astrologically, Uranus, the Rebel and the Destroyer of Idols, reaches also then the point of opposition to its natal place. And a multitude of other factors, which we cannot consider in a necessarily general presentation, intervene. What is essential, however, is that what was not done around thirty, or not done *thoroughly enough* then, is now to be met with the added tensions produced perhaps by years of repression, frustration, or lies to oneself, if not to others!

Many times what oneself considers a happy life, a happy marriage, is only a well compartmentalized attempt at not facing the crucial issue. Then something happens to disturb the equilibrium of this highly varnished status quo; the mask of conjugal tranquility falls, or that of professional success collapses, to show under the masks a great depth of insecurity, immaturity and pain.

Friends and relatives are often startled. Yet, what is startled is, first of all, their own sense of security. "Why, I could almost have done the same thing, if . . ." *If they had dared to throw away the masks.*

Opposition Aspects

In a great many instances the masks *could* have been relinquished without tragedy or public show of excitement, if the meaning of the astrological "opposition aspects" of Saturn and Uranus to their natal places had been understood. Opposition aspects ask of you that you become *fully aware*. In the situations we are now discussing what is necessary is to become fully aware of what one failed to do some fifteen years before or even thirty years before, at and after puberty. One must as well become aware, and even more so, of why one failed, or only partly succeeded.



a change of level.

This is why so many of the people who come to psychoanalysts and religious or lay counselors are around age forty or in their late forties. They sense, more or less acutely, the need to become more aware. What precipitates the crisis may be some innocent enough flirting, or a seemingly unexplainable breaking-down of mental and emotional barriers so carefully erected to keep away intruders.

"The evening was so lovely; he was so charming! I needed so much some nice, warm words that day! . . ." Circumstances are blamed, more or less. But actually the occurrence has far deeper roots in a past, either long forgotten, or carefully interpreted away by the ego that was unable or unwilling to face fully life's demand for

"If you do not move upward," says life, "I shall strike you from your lower depths." The forgotten or despised *root-energies* of human nature can and do take their revenge, usually at the most inopportune moment, when the pain and anguish they inflict can be most acutely felt, most upsetting.

Upsetting Experiences

It must be so, simply because life itself—and all spiritual progress—brings you essentially most upsetting experiences! They try to set you up. Your reluctance, your fears, your refusal lead to the upsets.

So, what occurs when Saturn *opposes*, around age forty-five, its natal place (that is, the type of order and stability which is individually your own) is practically always a result, direct or indirect, of what you did not do—or of what you allowed to become deviated—when you were around thirty and Saturn was *conjunct* its natal place. The upset is "Uranian," but the urge to move "up" at thirty was really "Saturnian." It was the urge to be *your* Truth, to demonstrate effectively what *you* are as an individual—and not merely as a social type, or as the son or daughter of your parents.

When the upset comes, what is there to be done? Essentially, you should welcome it as a sign that you are still really alive, or that you have not settled hopelessly into a rut, that you can still grow up. But to welcome an upset without fear, guilt, shame or emotional dramatics does *not* mean to rush blindly into the new path and the new direction outward it may present under most fascinating mirage-like forms!

Power to Control

What is to be welcomed is the challenge—and not at all necessarily the apparent challenger, who is perhaps only a mask which life had to take in order to wake you up. Even if the apparent challenger presents you with a constructive life-path which has, for you, truth and value, then, you must see *beyond and through him or her* the essential challenge. You must use the upset as a kind of jet-propulsion method! It may make a great deal of noise, but it goes very fast.

The point is: Can you use and control the power? Can you go, thus, better and faster *where* you are going according to your innate destiny—or will you come to some tragic crash-landing, or a landing in a strange country which is not *your own home*?

The value of modern psychology is that it helps us in some way to face the issues raised by these upsets of the various dangerous ages in a more individualized way. Modern psychoanalysis assists us to be aware, not only of the trouble and its causes, but also of the deeper roots of the perhaps seemingly superficial or chance confrontation.

Yet, that is not enough! The real issue is not the root of a problem, but the purpose it should fill in our personality unfoldment—its seed. A plant whose roots are eaten up by a mole or decaying in swampy soil will not produce seed. More than this, we must be sure that the plant even though most healthy, will produce *the kind of seed it is meant to produce*. There are such things, alas, as weeds. Most of them seem to be very healthy indeed as plants!



Spiritual Discrimination

Psychoanalysis may often help you to distinguish wheat from weed. But fine grass for grazing is of not much value in a wheat field, if we are after a seed-harvest! And the type of discrimination required to see and evaluate the difference is not easily obtained from mere analysis, or by psychological testing. This kind of discrimination is essentially spiritual—and not merely social or moral.

A spiritual discrimination demands of you the power to know *who* you are—and not merely the code of right and wrong of your family, class and society. The "who" is, spiritually speaking, always far more important than the "what," or even the "how."

Saturn is the Tester; but his tests are directed toward you, the individual. Their one single aim is to reveal your true *Self* to yourself. Uranus is the Rebel; but the crisis and revolutions he induces have only one single purpose: to set free the real *You* in yourself.

Both these planets mark by their cycles the basic times when danger strikes in the clock of your personal evolution. Hear the bells, in due time, and you will grow step by step, as the impulse for growth within you directs. But if you refuse to hear, or hearing, slump back in your arm chair, wondering fearfully how you can protect all you have and avoid trouble, and dreaming up a variety of escapes and rationalizations for not getting up, then, watch for the tornado!

It may begin as a gentle, perfumed breeze to catch you unaware. Before you know it, it will shake loose your walls and your foundations. It may be exciting. Is it worth the cost?

The Last Step

It may be worth the cost. If so, you have to prove it to be so. Then, you will perhaps be asked once more, by life within your soul, to show forth the new harvest—the harvest which comes from sowings on the soil renewed by the storm and made more fruitful by the disintegration that followed the storm. You say that the storm renewed you, made more abundant the fruit of your true Selfhood. "Prove it," says Saturn as you approach your sixties, and Saturn for the second time returns to his place in your birth-chart. That, too, can mean crises—a new dangerous age.



For the traditional woman, it may mean a subtle test of identification with her mature children and her grandchildren, or a last fling before youth departs altogether. For the worldly man, it may mean the proofs of his works (what value have his social or professional activities produced?) or a desperate attempt to cheat the aging body.

It can be also the time of a serene acceptance of limitations and of past failures. Out of it may emerge, then, the pure flame of the hidden spirit, the clear tone of Self-within calling down upon the personality the transfiguring power of the Holy Spirit.

Where there is no danger, there can be no victory. And there is no truly *human* growth and fulfillment except through and *beyond* victory. If I say beyond victory, it is because victory of *itself* means very little indeed unless it be the victory of that which, in us, is forever secure, permanent, dynamic yet at peace.

That is the *You* which alone counts, the *You* which all dangerous ages strive to fully reveal.