



Mercury in Sagittarius

M. Kelley Hunter

INTERVIEW WITH GREG BOGART

Guest interviewer Nicholas Champion

Editor's Note: In this issue of the ISAR International Astrologer we are pleased to provide an interview of Greg Bogart by Nick Champion. While Nick conducted this interview on September 7, 2001, we felt that this interview would be of interest to ISAR members. Greg provided us with an "Afterword" from this interview and his current reflections. Thank you Greg for sharing with us.

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Nicholas Champion: This is the interview between Nick Champion and Greg Bogart on Thursday the 7th of September in Cirencester, England. So Greg, we should start with some biographical background on yourself.

Greg Bogart: Sure. When I grew up, my parents were atheist humanists. They raised me with no religion and to doubt all religion and superstition. In my early teens I was gripped by an interest in yoga and a hunger for spirituality. I visited various yogis and got initiated into Transcendental Meditation. I remember wandering around in the Samuel Weiser Bookshop in Lower Manhattan and seeing books on astrology and thinking "what a quaint superstition." I remember looking through the books and not being able to make heads or tails of it. In 1974 I met Swami Muktananda and began meditating intensely.

When I was 20 I went to India and was staying in Muktananda's Siddha Yoga ashram in Ganeshpuri, north of Bombay. And Muktananda's astrologer, Chakrapani Ullal would come and visit there every week, and one of my roommates told me, "The greatest astrologer in the world is here and he is only charging \$25. You would be absolutely crazy not to go to see him." So, I got up my courage and went over to talk to Chakrapani, who was very intense and somewhat intimidating. He had the most amazing magnetic presence; he seemed very mysterious. He said, "You have to come and see me in Bombay. I have no time here. Come after ten days." So after ten days, I took the train into Bombay. Found a humble hotel room. The trip to his house was an education, a journey into Bombay's urban interior. I showed up at his apartment at the wrong time because the telephones didn't work properly and I thought he said 8 am, but he had meant for me to come the previous evening at 8 pm. He was

in the middle of his morning bath and was wrapped in a towel. Then he did his morning puja, waving a candle, Sanskrit prayers to Laxmi, Saraswati, Durga, and Ganesh. There was a customer ahead of me in the waiting room, a very old man wearing a white dhoti. Chakrapani examined the man's planets intently.

When he finally called me to sit down at the table with him he began the reading, most of which was not done from the chart. He glanced at the chart for a few minutes, but most of the reading was done with his eyes closed or gazing upward into the ceiling. He told me all about my father and his life, how he had been injured in the war and had overcome many obstacles in life to become very successful. He told me about my mother and how she had much worse vision in her right eye than her left eye, and that she had broken her shoulder in an accident recently—both of which were quite true. He told me my sister was having problems in her love life, but that she would marry within two years. All of this was spot on. None of it seemed like it really came from astrology, but more from Chakrapani's psychic clarity and inner vision. And he said "You will be an astrologer. You have the qualities of a teacher, a lecturer, a counselor, and an advisor." And I thought, "Hmm, that's interesting because I don't know anything about this and I don't even believe in it." So I found that all very interesting and I took my notes home and continued my life. I studied Jung and psychology of religion at Wesleyan. A couple of years passed and I found myself in a period of confusion after graduating from college and I was traveling and wandering, searching for my life. During that time I met an astrologer in Oregon named Mark McNutt, who cast a Western, tropical chart for me.

Mark turned me on to Michael Meyer's *Handbook for the Humanistic Astrologer*, an excellent book. Current transits to my chart illuminated the fact that I was in a period of confusion. I was having transiting Neptune conjunct natal Saturn, and transiting Saturn in the 12th house. These chart symbols spoke to the fact that I would be experiencing a time of dissolution of former goals and certainties, and that I needed to allow this. This was quite reassuring to me because it told me that I wasn't going crazy. It reflected what I was experiencing, which was that I didn't know what I wanted to

do and I was feeling this deep spiritual longing that I didn't fully comprehend. The symbolism of Neptune conjunct Saturn spoke of allowing a period of formlessness. And so the first contact point for me in astrology was the correlation between a symbol and what I was experiencing. I am confused about my direction and my profession and the chart symbols say, "Melt down. Let go of what your father told you were supposed to become (Saturn), and find your own way."

So my contact point to astrology was not through prediction. It was through realizing the meaning of a particular moment of my life. Astrology illuminated that moment. Thus began my fascination with astrology as I began studying, trying to decipher my chart. I did a lot of learning through books—Tyl, Arroyo, Ruperti, Rudhyar, Liz Greene, Tracy Marks, Zip Dobyns, Evangeline Adams, all of them were fantastic. As I mentioned earlier, originally I didn't go into this as a believer. However, I quickly grasped the unmistakable correlation between planetary symbols and my current life experience. Astrology helps me understand where I am right now. What is happening in my life. What I need to do. So it isn't so much a matter of predicting, "This is going to happen to me." It is more a matter of, "What is asked of me?"

NC: Right. I have got quite a few questions arising out of that. The first one is what year were you in India?

GB: 1978.

NC: Right. And when you first had the first chart reading, you are now describing a way in which the symbols spoke to you. Is that a way of talking about astrology that you have since learned or was that what you actually thought at the time.

GB: Are you talking about when I was in India?

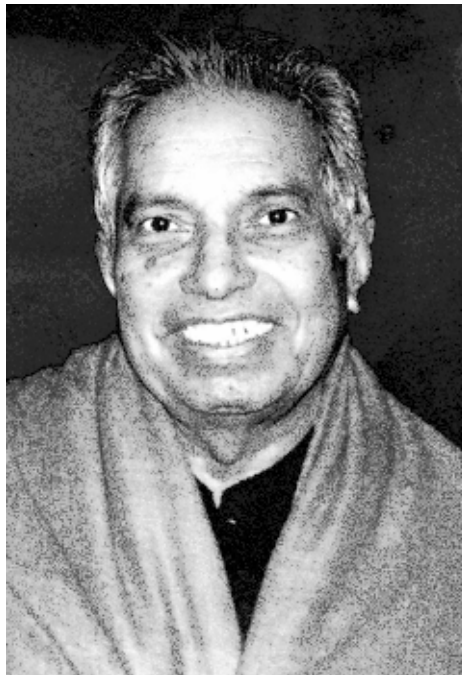
Nick: No, when you worked with Mr. McNutt.

GB: It's what emerged for me during my initial astrological studies in Eugene, Oregon in 1980. It was how it was presented to me, and it was what I gleaned from the first books that I read, which were in the humanistic astrology tradition. I was also very interested in Indian Vedic astrology, which was more predictive and spoke always in the language of prediction, never in the language of psychology. I did learn quite a bit about that, but I realized that you can't make strict predictions from astrology because human choice makes it possible to express the planetary archetypes on different levels. If a person is unconscious or we're not utilizing our free will, the planets are likely to manifest

differently than if we cooperate and choose how to express Mars or Saturn in our life.

NC: It is more possible then to make predictions for somebody who is living unconsciously? Is that what you are saying?

GB: What I'm saying is that the planetary patterns make certain possibilities open to us, and it seems that if we make a prediction about how something will turn out, we may leave out the alternatives, the possibilities. I always view astrology as offering us multi-faceted possibilities. I can either sink under something or I can rise up under the same influence. I can utilize it.



Chakrapani Ullal

NC: So, as part of this teenage reaction against your atheist, humanistic upbringing, did you develop a spiritual path of your own? If you were living in a yoga ashram, presumably you were looking for such a thing, but did you develop a consistent practice or path?

GB: I've been practicing yoga and meditation since I was 14, since my first Saturn opposition, and since transiting Uranus was conjunct natal Jupiter and Neptune in Scorpio.

NC: Did you practice yoga as a spiritual discipline as well as a physical one?

GB: Oh yes, both.

NC: And do the insights that you have gained from your yoga practice inform your views of astrology?

GB: Yes. Yoga means a path of union or integration, becoming whole, and astrology instructs us stage by stage, step by step into how to become a whole, integrated human being. All the different parts of us are lived fully. The emotional Moon part, the mental mercurial part of us, the Venusian interactive heart part of us that seeks love, our Mars vitality, the Jupiter part of us that is cultured and intellectual, our Saturn professional life and occupational concerns, and the higher spiritual evolution accelerated by the outer planets—all are facets of our yoga. All parts of life become our spiritual practice. That's how I approach astrology. I don't generally approach it as prediction. But you asked earlier, what do clients come looking for? They come to a session thinking that I'm going to predict what will happen; and the first thing that I tell them is that the goal of astrology, from my point of view, isn't to predict the future. It is to have *orientation*, to know where you are. The basic structure of the chart derives from setting the four angles, and symbolizes the fact that out of the chaos of infinity we now have a sense of the

four directions. The chart gives us a sense of orientation in space, a sense of direction.

NC: So as we've mentioned clients, tell me a little bit about your current work as an astrologer. You teach at the moment, do you not, you teach astrology.

GB: I teach graduate and undergraduate courses in developmental psychology, Jungian, existential, and transpersonal psychology. I teach some astrology in these courses. I'm also a psychotherapist in private practice, and with some of my therapy clients I use astrology as a reference point. It doesn't become the focus. The person, the client is the focus, but the chart may provide some useful direction. For example, there's a young man I've been working with for several years and we never spoke about astrology. But last week he asked me to do his chart and we suddenly saw mapped out all of the work we've been doing. He has natal Pluto on his Midheaven and the primary event of his life was his father's death at the age of three. We've been working for two years on his grief about that loss, and now transiting Pluto is conjunct his Ascendant and what we've been doing over the past two years is releasing the charge of that event so that he can put his father to rest, differentiate from his father, and emerge as an individual who can create his own life, his own future.

NC: You've raised an interesting point about astrology there in that I think some people talk about astrology in terms of being a language of symbols as if somehow it is rather out there and detached like a book might be, and yet, there still seems to be a sense in which we're on a path that is somehow pre-set. So, if this individual is coping with the death of his father on the relevant Pluto transits, are you suggesting somehow that the death of his father was timed by the Pluto transit in some deep way?

GB: It was timed by transiting Saturn opposite natal Pluto, and solar arc midheaven conjunct natal Pluto. I'm interested in the archetypal principle of having Pluto on his Midheaven and having his whole life up until now, he is 30 years of age, dominated by this loss. His prolonged bereavement has been the dominant theme of his therapeutic work with me.

NC: So you have also then been extraordinarily influenced by Jung.

GB: Yes. To me, planets are archetypes. Moon: The great mother in all her forms. Mars: The hero's quest and tasks of initiation. Saturn: the father, work, the principle of form. Each planet is a universal pattern of human experience.

NC: The planets themselves are archetypes or they represent archetypes?

GB: They represent archetypes.



NC: So with the clients that come to you, would you see any difference between those that are looking for psychotherapy and the ones who say, "Will you do my chart?" Is there something that characterizes the ones who say, "Do my chart?"

GB: The ones who are looking for a therapist want to do deeper, ongoing work to resolve longstanding issues and impasses in career and relationships, in their creative lives, and spiritual unfolding. I like to combine work with transits with analysis of dreams. I also combine astrology with Psychosynthesis—working with subpersonalities, meditation, yogic breathing, and visualization. But other people just want a single session examining their birth chart and transits to gain some

clarification of their life direction. Some want specific predictions, "When will I meet my love? When will I have money?" Very black and white things. "Will I have good luck in this business enterprise?"

NC: How do you deal with somebody who comes to you with questions like that?

GB: I think astrology can shed light on the timing of certain experiences, but I try and bring them to the moment, to the present, to what is happening now. I examine whether or not the chart strongly indicates a new relationship, or a job promotion, or relocation. I try to help clients understand what are they feeling right now. Where are the current areas of stress? I try to avoid saying, "Oh, 8 months from now everything will be better." I try

and steer people away from that kind of black and white thinking. “Well this is bad now, but it will be good then. It will be good at this time.” I assume that even the periods where we are struggling are meaningful phases. During Saturn transits we may be just maintaining structures in our lives, and that may be boring or tedious, but we know that has its place and purpose, too. So astrology helps us affirm where we are. If I see something in the chart that suggests what a person might do to make something happen, I emphasize that. So if you want a better job, what are you doing to make that possible, to make that a viable outcome? I try to focus on action and not just the planets. Does that make sense?

NC: It makes complete sense. So, you describe an astrology which is deeply pragmatic totally designed to help people. You said earlier that you came to astrology not as a believer. Do you think that other people are sort of believers in astrology? Have you yourself become a believer?

GB: Am I a believer? I can say I have been consistently awestruck at the power of it. At the meaningful connections that I draw from it. So yes, I do draw upon astrology for guidance to help me map out my life and its phases. In that sense I’m a believer. But what I try to emphasize with clients is for them to believe in themselves and to believe that if they take the right steps, following the guidance of Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and the gang, they have every chance of reaching a desirable outcome. So I’m a believer in the law of karma. Action leads to reaction.

NC: Okay. So. What about the whole problem of astrology and causality. We’ve been talking very much in terms of archetypes and symbols. Do you think that that the planets ever act as causes or influences as, for example, many people say, “I am having a bad time because I’ve got Saturn on my Midheaven”?

GB: Do I think planets cause problems? I think what causes a problem is if you have Saturn on the Midheaven and you’re not in alignment with it and you’re not doing anything to build your life structures or achieve anything. In that case you feel like you are not getting anywhere. But I don’t think the planet causes that. I think there’s a planetary clockwork and when it isn’t lived with consciousness we don’t reach our goals and so we say “Oh, the planet caused me to fail.” But that’s not how I view it.

NC: How do you know when you are conscious?

GB: You are reflecting on the transit in a receptive frame of mind, hoping to receive some illumination of your path and willing to do your part to fulfill the purpose of the planet. Does that make sense?

NC: It makes sense.

GB: Does Pluto crossing an angle, does that cause you to have a near-death experience? I don’t know that it causes it. When I

had Pluto crossing my Ascendant in India about a month after that first reading from Chakrapani, I nearly died from typhoid that I contracted at Agra when I visited the Taj Mahal. I don’t know that the planet caused that, but there was a remarkable correlation of that time in my life when I ended up in the hospital.

“One person having transiting Saturn conjunct the Sun will be falling apart and their life is a mess and they say “Oh, the planets are doing bad things to me.” And another person is reaching the heights of success in their life enterprises at the same time, having the same transit.”

NC: And what about the chances then of proving astrology statistically or scientifically?

GB: Well, I think it could be proven that there are correlations with certain kinds and qualities of human experience. I think for those who are statistically minded, it’s a wonderful idea to study astrology in relation to financial markets or to attempt to predict outcomes of elections. I don’t do that myself. In terms of individual natal astrology, can we make predictions? I think longitudinal studies, follow-up studies could be done to demonstrate that yes, certain planetary transits correlate with certain types of experiences, broadly defined; but whether it could be statistically proven that specific predictions were correct I don’t know. It’s one thing to predict that when transiting Saturn is conjunct Mars in the 3rd house you might tend to feel feisty, angry, impatient, or have testy interactions with siblings and neighbors, or a desire to drive faster or more assertively. It’s another thing to make a definite prediction: “You will have a car accident.” I think good studies could be done as long as the astrology was done with accurately cast charts, with accurate birth times, not just using sun sign astrology or solar charts.

NC: Would not, though, the issue of the different levels of manifestation of an astrological factor automatically invalidates any statistical study?

GB: Possibly. You know, when I talk about this I’m thinking in terms of how I do astrology with individuals, which is that when I delineate a transit, I try and walk around it from many different points of view and not focus only on one level of it. So that if I’m talking about a Saturn return in a particular house and sign, I can give a general sense of the themes, the qualities of that time and the area of life in which it may be focused. I think if you followed up with those people and asked them about what happened at the time of their Saturn return or a big Uranus or Neptune transit, it could probably be shown that yes, the themes that were depicted by astrology, were actually lived by that person. That’s because I don’t often say, “Oh, two days from now a distant relative will contact you and offer you a large

inheritance.” Or, “Two weeks from now you will have an accident.” I think that if we’re doing that kind of astrology, those statistical analyses would be likely to fail because it doesn’t take into account that there can be many different manifestations of transiting Saturn conjunct the Sun, or of solar arc Saturn squaring Venus. And I’ve been amazed at how often my own catastrophic expectations of particular contacts proved to be totally wrong.

NC: Yes. I don’t know if you have experienced this, but there is a lot of doom and gloom amongst astrologers. I hardly ever hear an astrologer making an optimistic prediction. I don’t know if that is your experience?

GB: Yes, it is. That’s my whole workshop this weekend: how do we go beyond fear in astrology? My major workshop theme of the last couple of years has been astrology as the fearless contemplation of change. Now that doesn’t mean that only good, wonderful things happen to us, but it means that our contemplation of those events can be from a place of dispassion, a place of wisdom, a place of knowing that in the cycles of life there are changes of fortune and changes of emotional experience that can be expected. They are predictable phases of life.

NC: So do you find people come to astrologers when they are at a particular phase?

GB: They come at all phases. They come on highs and lows. Astrology looks at the wheel of life, the entire wheel of human life, so clients have every human concern. I think one thing you can say about astrology is that it’s not restrictive in what it can address. It can address the whole range of human experience.

NC: Just to get a bit quantitative for a minute, how many clients would you say that you see say in a month?

GB: Usually about 8 to 12 clients a month. I usually work with a couple of astrology clients every week, in addition to my practice as a psychotherapist.

NC: And so say you are doing two, three charts in a week, that’s new clients and maybe there’s some of your time going into dealing with return calls and so on.

GB: Yes. I will say that my business is very correlated with writing articles. When I have an article published I get more calls from new clients for a month or two.

NC: And you write for?

GB: *The Mountain Astrologer; The International Astrologer; Considerations.*

NC: And that’s actually quite a good way of getting business?

GB: That’s the only advertising that’s ever done anything for me, writing articles and books. And giving talks.

NC: If people contact you through *The Mountain Astrologer*, presumably they often live a long way away so they can’t come and see you personally. So, in that case, do you then record?

GB: I do the session on the telephone and record it. I never any more just make a tape and send it to someone. If we can’t meet in person I do a conversation over the phone. I don’t believe in just doing “blind readings.” To me, astrology is interactive. It’s a dialogue to elicit the meaning of the chart. I can’t know the meaning of the chart without talking to the person because I need to know who I am talking to. Astrology is neutral. One person having transiting Saturn conjunct the Sun will be falling apart and their life is a mess and they say “Oh, the planets are doing bad things to me.” And another person is reaching the heights of success in their life enterprises at the same time, having the same transit.

NC: And so.

GB: That’s why the statistical part of it, the predictive part of it, it could be done. Those studies should be done but it has to be done, in connection to a live encounter. You don’t just look at a chart blind and make predictions and expect those to come true. I can never see that this approach would work. But the method of true conversation to assess the level of consciousness or life path of a person, then to follow up with that person later and ask, “So, how many of the themes, the specific things covered in your consultation that were recorded on tape; how many of these things panned out pretty much as delineated? Did the astrology reading accurately describe some facet of your life experience?” That research approach I think could work.

NC: In other words, individual case studies. Just to look at the broader context of astrology in society, I’d be interested in your opinion on the fact that both skeptical scientists on the one hand and evangelical Christians on the other see astrology as a rival and so mainstream churches see decline in their attendance figures as being partly due to a rise in belief in new age ideas and so on. Do you think there is a necessary rivalry between astrology/the new age and science and religion or not?

GB: No, not at all. Astrology can be interpreted in many ways by many people. The language is universal and I think there are certain symbols in astrology that speak of our religious lives. For example, everything connected to Neptune and the twelfth house of the chart are very important for understanding our spirituality. Prayer, the church, meditation—that’s an important dimension of our lives. Each dimension has to be lived on its own level. Astrology illuminates the fact that we are both beings of the spirit (Neptune), we are also beings of the flesh with Mars and Venus in our charts. So some people may be turning away

from traditional religions, feeling that religions are not providing a living, viable worldview that helps them make sense of their lives and find meaning and an experience of the sacred. But I don't think that there is anything antithetical about astrology and any facet of Christianity or any other organized religion. I think to understand the symbolism of Neptune and what it means in our lives, one needs to adopt some kind of a religious viewpoint, whether it is Jewish, Christian, or Hindu, or not; but it has to do with the relationship of the individual with the creator, the Absolute, the source. Neptune symbolizes self-surrender, ego transcendence, devotion and compassion—all significant components of many religious traditions. It represents the archetypal experience of transformation through suffering and self-sacrifice, which are central to Christianity.

NC: So if one wanted to understand Saturn, would you need to adopt a materialistic perspective?

GB: One would need to adopt a pragmatist perspective of learning to deal with the world on its own terms and learning to adapt to one's social environment. I don't think that's necessarily materialistic, it's just realistic that you have to sustain your form and to sustain your social existence. I believe that to neglect our earthly lives is misguided, just as I think it's misguided to ignore the presence of the Spirit. And so I think that what people find in astrology is something that affirms all facets of their lives and sanctifies all aspects of existence, for example, Cancerian home and family life, Taurus appreciation of nature, Sagittarian travel and education, and Aquarian group consciousness and Uranian mischief.

NC: Do you think that astrology is part of a new age movement?

GB: Well, it is as old as any organized religion. It goes to the origins of religion. It was practiced in many ancient civilizations. But the revival of interest in this ancient wisdom, along with many other doctrines, teachings and practices, is part of what is often called the new age.

I want to go back to the prior question for a minute because you asked me "is astrology antithetical to traditional religion?" and, you asked about Jung. The problem that Jung found with Christianity had to do with the fact that it focused on a one-sided deity with a spirituality that was going only for the light, only for purity, only for peace and heaven and it neglected the dark side, the shadow, it neglected the problem of evil or found an unsatisfactory solution to that. And what Jung arrived at was a recognition of the need to recognize the eternal co-existence of good and evil. The coexistence of Neptune and Pluto in our lives speaks to this, the fact that as much as we reach for the light we also have to grow in consciousness into the underworld. We have to know the darkness that lurks within all of us and make efforts to root it out. We have to accept and integrate the unacceptable, the shadow.

But is astrology part of a new age movement? Clearly, there's a

growing interest in this ancient and eternal knowledge. I can understand why some people within traditional religious institutions or denominations feel threatened, but I think they should open themselves to the universal knowledge that astrology has to offer and see that it encourages a spiritual way of life not antithetical to a Christian way of life or that of any other faith. Muslim, Jew, or Buddhist can all find affirmation of their fundamental principles in astrological principles. But astrology definitely provides something that isn't in those religious teachings. Astrology provides understanding of the cycles of time, of the multiple, interpenetrating cycles that construct our lives. That isn't found in Christianity or Buddhism.

NC: I think actually that we should leave it there because I think that this has been incredibly fruitful.

GB: Okay. Thanks for your questions.

NC: It has been very, very illuminating. Thank you.

Afterword:

GB: This interview took place ten years ago, a few days before the 9/11 attacks changed our entire world and led to a decade of American investment in war that continues to weaken our society and economic resources. Four days after this interview, after leaving the AAGB conference in Cirencester, I stood inside the Rollright Stones, the oldest megalithic stone circle in Europe. I was transfixed at the center and experienced the focusing and intensification of space created by the circle of stone pillars. I sat in the middle and felt that I could not move from the spot. Upon returning to my car I felt an unexplainable urge to turn on the radio, where the first thing I heard was the announcement that the World Trade Center had been attacked by airplanes. Recalling that moment reminds me to always adhere to the center at the moment of crisis. For me, astrology is a path that conveys the magnetism of the center at every moment. That includes the difficult experiences too. To me, astrology is the distillation of meanings through the ordeals of a life constantly subject to the turbulent, sometimes paradoxically mismatched vibrational influences carried by the planets.

For example, my body really took a pounding this year while transiting Saturn has been conjunct my ascendant. Two interconnected events occurred within 24 hours at the Full Moon in April. On April 17, I was at a friend's birthday party. I reached down to pet his dog, which, apparently startled, bit me on the arm below my wrist. The following day April 18 was the Full Moon in Libra, conjunct Saturn, opposite Sun and Mars in Aries. Transiting Mars and Saturn were in an exact opposition, with Saturn near my ascendant and Mars conjunct my descendant. I took my dog Kona for a walk in a local park. Suddenly Kona started behaving aggressively toward another dog, snarling, showing her teeth, running rapidly in circles, and lunging toward the other dog. I tried to break up the fight but, bearing my fresh bite wound, I was somewhat tentative and frightened (Saturn-

ascendant), not commanding and confident and decisive. In the scuffle I fell to the ground and reached out my left arm to break my fall. Suddenly the other dog's owner intervened, pulling the dogs apart, but in doing so he hit the back of my arm, hyperextending the elbow, fracturing my arm in four places. My doctors informed me that this break takes several months to heal and about a year to rehabilitate the elbow until the arm can regain a full range of motion.

There will be none of my usual handstands or headstands or guitar playing in my immediate future! But I have resumed running and swimming and getting lots of physical therapy and orthopedic massage. While transiting Saturn is near the ascendant we have to come to terms with the life of the body; it is often a challenging time when one is bound to face some adversities, or stress involving the body. Several people have asked whether as an astrologer I could have predicted these incidents. My answer is I could not have predicted it, but that what is more important is the meaning I derive from the events once they have happened. For example, my transits suggested a need to encounter in others a strong measure of fierce, aggressive, impulsive, abrupt Aries energy (Mars in Aries conjunct my descendant). Astrology was so valuable to me during the weeks of recuperation with my arm in a splint and my ego totally crushed. It helped me understand the power of the moment of impact with the Saturnine Full Moon opposite Mars on my descendant. I thought of Charles Carter's book on the astrology of accidents, which teaches us to contemplate and understand those intense moments in life when forces collide. What has grounded and steadied me is my work. I haven't missed a day of work and always derive satisfaction from my work as an astrological counselor and psychotherapist. I feel fortunate to have such interesting and inspiring clients and to be involved in their transformation and striving for freedom, integrity, creativity. I learn from everyone I work with. Those of us who do this work are so blessed.

Each of us carries our own measure of "dukkha"; each of us is suffering something. This injury has reminded me to soften, breathe, accept what is, and generate compassion. It makes me want to pay more attention to what others are going through, and to extend the ray of my care and concern. This seems especially important right now with the passage of Neptune into Pisces. Flooding in the Midwest along the Mississippi river; the mass displacement of Japanese residents in the vicinity of the Fukushima nuclear facilities after the recent tsunami; the budgetary crises causing cuts in social programs and closing of state parks in California and elsewhere; melting of arctic glaciers; the hundreds of thousands of people affected by recent tornadoes and flooding; the ongoing mortgage foreclosure crisis that has lowered housing prices and put many homeowners "under water"—all of these are manifestations of Neptune in Pisces. So is the instruction that we become liquid, fluid, sinewy, light, fishlike, yielding, and flowing like water.

Nonetheless, other forces are gathering, most notably the lineup in cardinal signs of Saturn, Uranus, and Pluto. This alignment

requires strength, flexibility, adaptability, composure and self-mastery in the face of an unstoppable storm. Structural changes are afoot everywhere as we pass farther into our planetary kundalini awakening. All of us in the astrological field will be talking about this a lot for the next five years. It's important for us to meditate and reflect deeply and look forward to whatever the next transit and the next moment will call forth. And this reminds me of a final story.

On New Year's Eve, January 1, 1980 I sat by myself at midnight on a park bench in New York's Central Park. Snow was falling in blankets on my wool coat and long hair. I was feeling very alone and somewhat sad and afraid. I also felt expectant; I knew I was on a journey but the way forward in my life was shrouded in snowy darkness. I remember looking up at the sky and asking for some guidance on my path. After I sat out in the blizzard for a while I returned to my parent's apartment building at 135 Central Park West, where I was visiting. As I waited for the elevator to arrive an amazing thing happened. John Lennon walked into the lobby and down the corridor directly towards me. Lennon lived in the Dakota, across the street, so it was not unusual to sight him in the neighborhood, but I had never seen him so close, and there was not another soul around. As he walked past me to the staircase, John gave me a sincere and direct look that silently said Hi. Respecting his privacy, I nodded back without words. It felt like it all happened in slow motion, and it was like a dream. This was one of the most amazing things that has ever happened to me. And it reminds me that sometimes, even at the moment of darkness, when we are feeling at our lowest, something totally fantastic happens! One week after this John Lennon I left on a road trip to the West Coast where I would be introduced to astrology by a number of wise teachers in Eugene, Oregon. 31 year later, I'm still all lit up by astrology. What an amazing expression of cosmic wisdom, providing so much nourishment and guidance, helping each of us become a unified ray of the divine.

I hope you enjoy my 2001 conversation with my esteemed colleague, Nick Campion.

Greg Bogart, Ph.D, MFT is an astrologer and psychotherapist in the San Francisco Bay Area. He teaches in the Counseling Psychology and East-West Psychology programs at the California Institute of Integral Studies. He is also a lecturer in Psychology at Sonoma State University. His books include *Astrology and Spiritual Awakening*, and *Astrology and Meditation: The Fearless Contemplation of Change*.

Nicholas Campion, Ph.D is director of the Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture and senior lecturer in the School of Archaeology, History and Anthropology at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. He is course director of the University's MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology. His many books include the two-volume *A History of Western Astrology* (London: Continuum 2009).