

The Power Disconnect

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Among what might be termed the “alternative press,” which exists mainly on the Internet, but also in various other forms of media, a question (or meme) pervades much of what is written, spoken, and shown. Why are the elites who rule, otherwise termed the powers-that-be, seemingly so clueless about the various challenges that pose dire threats, not only to America and modern civilization as a whole, but ultimately to the continued existence of our species on the earth? Why are those who determine policy — which includes elected officials in government and executives in every major institution — apparently blind to the most serious problems we face? And if they are not, in fact, clueless or blind, then what factors cause the ruling class to deny or avoid thoughtful discussion of these problems, much less implementation of the action steps necessary to begin creating solutions?

The hue and cry raised around this issue by many pundits and writers who concern themselves with the well-being of humanity, i.e., the evolution of society, vary from mild to extreme, from polite inquiry to angry outrage: What is wrong with the idiots who run things? Don't they realize that we are staring down the barrels of many guns, all of which we have built, put in place, and aimed at ourselves? Of the threats against us, including climate change caused by industrial short-sightedness, economic inequality with massive financial chicanery, and tragic violence perpetrated on so many different but interconnected fronts — war, religion, class, gender, age, and even inter-species cruelty — none happened by themselves. These problems are not acts of God. We humans created the conditions and fleshed out the tragedies ourselves. We invented the problems, and if we don't find a way to either stop creating the conditions or at least limit the repercussions, then sooner or later we'll end up on the trash heap of evolution as another failed experiment.

Now, I don't claim to have a simple or authoritative answer to the question of why those in power seem either crazy or stupid. I don't wish to set myself up as the source of enlightenment for my readers. No, I'm walking down the road with all of you, asking the same questions and wondering what the answers might be. In my case, writing essays/commentaries is one of the ways I explore these puzzles. I sit down, put on my thinking cap, perhaps do a little research to add to the cumulative life-experience I'm already carrying, then I start setting words to

paper and see what I can come up with. What follows in this piece will be produced by that approach, which is not quite like thinking out loud, but not worlds away from that, either. It's not meant to be the final word on any of this. What I offer below will be informed — to a greater or lesser extent — by my understanding of astrology and history as they reveal human nature and describe our collective evolution. I am, after all, a professional astrologer, and while that system is hardly my sole source of information, it provides structure for much of my thoughts and perceptions. On the other hand, while I'm not a professional or academic historian, the study of our past has been an abiding interest of mine for much of my life.

First off, I want to state my firm contention that the problems we face are not recent in origin nor fundamentally different in nature from the historical problems humans have encountered since civilization began around 11,000 years ago with the onset of agriculture. Some people feel that we have suffered a fundamental breakdown in the moral codes of civilized life. While I acknowledge that corruption is rampant in the modern world, I find no evidence that earlier cultures were appreciably more moral or ethical than ours. There was no "golden age" in the past where everything was hunky-dory — no cultures where justice reigned, where peace and love were significantly more in evidence than violence and cruelty.

Exceptions exist, of course, in extraordinary efforts throughout history by certain individuals and small groups to foster more inclusive social harmony, but the results of such examples are invariably temporary. In the main, our affairs are as they have always been, with civilization doling out the terrific and the terrible in roughly equal measure, and usually intertwined.

The belief that humans in groups were once wise, kind, and compassionate, but suffered a fall from grace somewhere along the way (and probably not too long ago) amounts — in my opinion — to an illusion based on idealistic fantasy, much like Norman Rockwell *Saturday Evening Post* cover paintings of happy, loving families clustered around the dinner table at Thanksgiving. Not that such artistic expressions of shared happiness should be disdained. They reflect a basic human yearning, the wish to securely belong in the caring environment of an intimate group. More often than not, however, reality falls far short of that ideal.

From my perspective, humanity has always struggled with the same vexing problems we face today, so the old philosophical assumption of "nothing new under the sun" continues to apply. What made the past different, however, was far fewer numbers and smaller scale. We made all the same mistakes then that we make now, but our errors carried less cumulative impact. Up until very recently, we were effectively children throwing pebbles into a pond. Ripples ensued in the form of intended results or unintended consequences (i.e.,

suffering), but the repercussions were limited in scale. Now our mistakes are gigantic, like sub-oceanic offshore earthquakes that produce huge tsunamis, with correspondingly larger devastation.

In the revisionist ethos of “westerns,” (meaning cowboy mythology, especially in movies) native American tribal cultures are often considered more respectful of the earth. Where once we had the “noble savage” imagery, we now have — at least among certain circles of our society — an idealized picture of native Americans as more spiritually integrated into the great wheel of life. And indeed, some of that may be true. But probably not in every way.

Among the nomadic tribes of the plains Indians, sites for encampment villages were chosen near fresh water streams where game was abundant. We know from anthropology, however, that these encampments were abandoned as soon as trash and sewage became a problem and/or game was depleted. Then the band broke down its teepees, packed up the lodge poles, and simply moved on to more fertile hunting grounds. There was no superfund clean-up among these tribes, no returning the area to pristine condition through programs of water purification or game renewal. In fairness, neither was necessary because the scale of pollution/depletion was small and mild (i.e., no toxic chemicals or radioactive nuclear waste were left behind). Mother Nature took care of renewal in her own sweet time.

The fact remains that human beings have never been particularly good at the responsible maintenance of their environments, whether natural or synthetic. We may do so for awhile, but the point usually comes where we say, “Screw it,” and just move on. But then, no individual species on this planet can maintain ecological equilibrium by itself. One person’s trash is another’s treasure. Similarly, one species’ waste is another species’ food, which works beautifully as long as every species participates in the interconnectedness of life, and the whole system remains in balance. With seven billion humans on the planet, though, that balance of everything feeding everything else is difficult to maintain, and we can no longer simply “move on.”

When the present is troubled and the future looks dim, people often turn to the past, sentimentally idealizing what was but is no more. I’m not a Luddite, however. I don’t believe that the answers we need lie buried in a forgotten past, at least not in the collective sense. Sure, any individual or even small group has the option of choosing to leave modern civilization in favor of a simpler or even ancient way of living. The concept of sanctuary has a long and honorable history as a healing refuge for individuals — retreats, monasteries, solitary life in the woods, all are viable options for individuals who desire or need healing sanity. For collective humanity, however, that choice is not available.

Study of the past is certainly worthwhile, for revisiting history may reveal to us ways of being, acting, and interacting that were jettisoned along the way, supplanted by newer structures and technologies, but whose time has come again, so that they can and perhaps should be resuscitated and revitalized. What goes around comes around. So, the past is neither useless nor gone. Understanding the past is paramount to creating the future. A clear rear-view mirror is essential for safely driving forward. Both past and future offer parts of what we will need moving ahead. Still, there is no option to go back.

But back to the central question: Why are our leaders seemingly so stupefied about the serious problems that face us?

Many factors contribute to this. Some are situational and have to do with the particular social games being played. For instance, politicians don't get elected because of their wisdom and perspicacity. They get elected because they manage to appeal to the lowest common denominator of voter discontent. If a politician running for office (whether as a first-time challenger or a long-term incumbent) can divine a small set of issues about which a sufficient number of voters are angry or upset, he or she will then hammer away at those particular issues to the exclusion of everything else.

Now, one might assume that at least some of the lightning-rod, hot-button issues embraced by any given candidate would be of serious importance in our long-term future, but such is rarely the case. Turns out that the electorate (i.e., whatever segment of the population that actually votes) is usually no wiser than the politicians running for office, and often considerably less wise. In the mass, people tend to be either uninformed or misinformed, distinctly immature, and very much like baby birds in the nest with open beaks demanding to be fed by the parents.

Common issues of voter concern may resonate with a certain gravitas, but the "solutions" favored by the public are rarely thoughtful, nuanced, or practical. They are most often knee-jerk, short-term, gimme-what-I-want-so-that-I-win-regardless-of-who-else-loses. Civilization will not be saved because leaders pander to the public's wishes. I understand that the mythology of representative democracy places great stead in the so-called "will of the people," but most often it is simply the passive consent of the population that matters. Much of the time, what the public wants is impossible anyway, and not to be trusted as far as one could throw it. Politicians and power brokers have always known this.

Those and other related considerations lead to the conclusion that we usually get the leaders we deserve, so, if our leadership is inadequate, our being so easily fooled makes us responsible, at least in part, and probably more often than we care to admit.

Most of the other possible reasons that our leaders do not act like mature adults have their roots in human nature, growing out of its various facets, foibles, flaws, and fallacies. In much the same way that illness in the physical body is often caused or worsened by the body's own overly aggressive responses to imbalance and disharmony, so we suffer from analogously lousy programming in our responses to social disharmony.

For instance, the histamines that are responsible for so much suffering among those vulnerable to airborne seasonal allergies are actually the body's programmed defense response to deal with those toxic invaders. That's the immune system's version of the old joke: the operation was a success, but the patient died.

Similarly, practices such as systematic torture, incarceration, or capital punishment are social defenses against presumed criminality that are understandable enough on the surface — I mean, we have to do something in response to those who break the cultural rules in ways that harm others — but such punishments rarely achieve the desired effect of repentance or deterrence. Rather than bringing back criminals into the fold of civilization's family, cruelty activates instead another level of human nature, that of revenge and vendetta. The evidence is overwhelming that harsh incarceration (for instance, prolonged solitary confinement) or other forced suffering creates more hardened criminals who wreak further vengeance on society. Cycles of violence are very real. Yes, some individuals use imprisonment, ostracism, and other forms of punishment by authorities as spiritual incentives to achieve their own transcendent maturity in ways they might otherwise never reach, but these are rare and exceptional cases. In the main, punishment does not inspire people to mend their ways. It causes more damage than it cures.

This is where Uranus and Pluto become relevant in the evolutionary journey. Whenever they are in alignment — as they were during the 1930s, the 1960s, and now the 2010s, to cite the most recent decades of major activations of the Uranus-Pluto cycle — their combined symbolism indicates a welling up of some of the worst impulses in human nature. Depredations that have been chugging along for awhile, unseen but still potent and causing much damage, suddenly break through the surface and emerge in all their horror. With fresh eyes, as if for the first time, we "see" how wrong we have been. We see that because the transgressions, misunderstandings, and wrong-headedness are expressed in exaggerated form in the body politic (Pluto). They become plain as day. Pluto's correspondences are akin to the colored stains used in micro-biology to selectively reveal parts of a cell's structure that were previously invisible, highlighting them in bold relief.

For instance, corruption is a crime typically conducted in secret, behind closed doors. The 2010s are a decade where institutional corruption is not only pandemic, but exaggerated, as if those who are corrupt have a harder time hiding their misdeeds in the shadows. Time and again during this decade, a spotlight is suddenly turned on corrupt practices, illuminating them for all to see.

And we are shocked awake (Uranus) by this sudden trigger of critical mass. These potent triggers aren't new — they've been happening for quite awhile, for decades or centuries or forever — but suddenly comes the revelation of their true meaning. Misdeeds are made visible to our eyes, minds, and hearts. Whether we react with outrage or the determined commitment to make life better, the shocking crudeness of whatever we see that is clearly wrong galvanizes us to action, in the case of Uranus-Pluto, into group action in organized rebellion against a cruel and habitual status quo. Something bad needs to stop, and something good needs to begin to take its place.

The problem here is that the "bad" parts of human nature have to get incredibly bad for them to reach critical mass and become triggers to our new awareness of the need for change.

And that's what's happening as we move into the second half of the 2010s. The set-up phase of the Uranus-Pluto transit has ended. We are now approaching readiness to see the changes that must be made to keep civilization intact and the evolution of our species moving forward. But in order to see this, the bad things in our midst have to get really, really bad. So, we're in for a period of time where leadership, having now degraded to the point where nearly all our leaders appear to be idiots, has to become even more egregious for us to see finally that we, the people, must stand up and be counted.

In the midst of this ongoing negativity, individuals will appear on the scene who represent the "new" leadership to come. We have only to think back to the 1960s, however, to ask, will these new leaders succeed, or will they be martyred, stopped in their tracks by those who will resist change or loss of their power at any cost?

On the other side of the coin, other, less exemplary individuals will emerge from the pack to grapple for spots in the limelight of power and leadership who are little more than demagogues and pied pipers. What they offer may sound good to some people, but their proposed remedies to what ails us are never viable solutions. These types are always in evidence on the fringes of society, but every so often they well up in number and congregate much nearer the center of society. This is happening now.

If any of these people manage through hook or crook to galvanize enough support to achieve power and authority, then our situation could worsen quite seriously, perhaps even to the point of major internal or external strife. The breakdown and reformulation of modern society may occur slowly and in piecemeal fashion over a long period of time, or it might happen with spectacular suddenness, like dominoes falling in a cascade. Viewed from a disinterested or detached perspective, the kind of further and more precipitous fall from grace that might ensue from irresponsible leadership may be an inevitable stage in things getting bad enough to finally cause us to awaken out of our collective illusions and self-deceptions. I hope this is not the case, but we are already pretty far down that road, and the overall quality of would-be candidates next in line to lead doesn't inspire confidence (at least in me) that we have turned a corner.

Considered in light of astrology and history, we can expect a profound struggle for many years to come between well-entrenched falsehoods — which, to reiterate, will be seen in their most exaggerated forms, rather like the last-gasp brilliant colors of leaves in autumn just before they die and fall to the ground — and saner, more balanced truths, which may frustrate us by not offering simple solutions, but instead only the hard, sustained work required to find a better way forward.

At the level of leadership, all this is made even more complex and paradoxical by the likelihood that both qualities may at times be found in the same person. Individuals, especially those vying for the power of authoritative leadership, are not simply angels or demons. They may embody both the worst and the best of old and new ideas. It will be up to us to hold their feet to the fire, to make these people accountable, and to insure that brilliant but flawed new leaders don't devolve into the dark side and drag us down into hell with them. This effort is already underway, but how well we do with it may not be obvious until the mid-2020s.

Our work is cut out for us in the hard and daunting task of achieving adulthood by learning to do what is truly necessary (Uranus in Aries square Pluto in Capricorn). This includes all of us, not just our leaders. I hope we do better at climbing that mountain in the 21st century than humanity did during the 20th, because the stakes are even greater now. We will have two further chances, in the 2040s and the 2070s, but those will be built on what we do over the coming years. The 2010s are the pivotal decade where we have to seriously decide to begin undoing some of the harm we've done.

I have no doubt that costly and perhaps tragic mistakes will be made along the way, since reforming our essential programming is a more daunting task than anything previously taken on by civilization. But that is the challenge that lies

ahead of us — learning to embrace our human nature in ways that are less toxic to ourselves and to the world in which we live.