

Rage: The Authoritarian Dark Side

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I've written a great deal about the 2010s, a decade that is dominated in astrological symbolism by the perpendicular alignment between the outer planets Uranus and Pluto. In more than 100 newsletters, essays, commentaries, and articles, I have approached this period of Uranus-Pluto "influence" in every way I can think of, since the symbolism is not only potent and critical, but amazingly diverse in manifestation. Like all major transits within this particular paired planetary cycle, and indeed all transits in every astrological cycle, the meaning is not simple or singular. No, the manifestations that somehow take shape in real life from these archetypes extend throughout a myriad of different activities, events, and developments in society, many of which may seem on the surface to be unrelated in any obvious way, but turn out on closer inspection to be connected by deep threads that are consistent with the Uranus-Pluto combination, in all its paradoxical expressions.

Throughout this now book-length body of writing — an ongoing effort in which I've been engaged since 2005 — I've tried to maintain a balance in the writing between discussion of the positive possibilities for humanity's evolution, on the one hand, and, on the other, acknowledgment of the negative potentials that scare the shit out of nearly everyone in one fashion or another. Maintaining the detached, disinterested neutrality of a "reporter" has never been my goal. So-called "objective journalism" may be all well and good, but that has never been what I'm about, nor something to which I aspire.

I think back to some of the courageous reporting done from war-torn Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These print and television journalists sent their written articles and broadcast live reports from the actual fields of conflict, often putting their lives in danger to do so. Those seat-of-the-pants news stories were not only informative, they were often shocking in their revelations. That style of journalism continued throughout wars around the world, right up to Desert Storm in the early 1990s, by which time the U.S. military had gotten savvy about the need for censorship to cover their own asses. The result was "embedded" journalists, who were chosen to accompany the troops in part for their willingness to cheerlead and not rock the boat. Many

of those who might have inadvertently revealed unpleasant truths were effectively muzzled.

In writing so often and so much about this Uranus-Pluto shaped decade, I've striven to rekindle that rogue and partisan journalism of the late 1960s. I intend many of these commentaries to be my equivalent of "live reports" from the trenches, in real time, as we are all living the events together. While I do my best not to lie by playing fast and loose with the facts and try not to discount or disrespect other points of view, I want my writing to reflect my personal feelings about what we're all witnessing (and, to one degree or another, co-creating) in the 2010s.

In August of 2015, a mere eight months ago, I wrote a commentary entitled "The Power Disconnect." In it, I explored the phenomenon of climate change denial, especially among the power brokers of our society. Toward the end of that essay, however, I shifted gears slightly and wrote about one particular dark-side manifestation of the Uranus-Pluto transit. Allow me to quote certain sections of those concluding paragraphs below:

"Whenever [Uranus and Pluto] 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.

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. 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."

Those ideas are part of the background for what might be called "The Trump Phenomenon" in this year's campaign for the coming presidential election in November. I call it that not because Donald J. Trump is the only candidate who embodies the ideas — no, this year's race for the Presidency is chock full of contenders who reflect in one way or another parts of what I wrote above, with Bernie Sanders' "revolution in politics" being the second most obvious. Nevertheless, Trump is the candidate of choice for the segment of the American voting public that longs for an authoritarian "savior." Trump is a fierce, outrageous, charismatic, often crude demagogue who "calls them as he sees them," "shoots from the hip," and boldly promises to rescue us from our troubles by his savvy as a deal-maker. His confidence in that set of business skills is so absolute and unshakeable that he doesn't just promise success, he *guarantees* it.

I'm reminded of the prescient 1977 movie, *Network*, written by the brilliant Paddy Chayefsky, which won the Oscar for Best Picture that year. The most famous line from movie, delivered by Peter Finch, who portrayed the film's protagonist, Howard Beale, a deranged-but-inspired newscaster, was: "*I'm mad as hell, and I'm not gonna take it anymore!*"

That tagline from a movie made 40 years ago could easily be considered the mantra of the 2010s. The groundswells of various grassroots social movements that arose or gained traction during the 2010s — the Tea Party, Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and protests against domestic violence, rape, or head injuries in sports — all share this dynamic. They began as spontaneous alliances formed by individuals who were fed up, angry, and “not gonna take it anymore!” and who demand social justice from institutions that have abused their power. That, in a nutshell, is a core manifestation of the astrological symbolism of Uranus in Aries square to Pluto in Capricorn — not the only manifestation, by any means, but certainly a central one. This year’s presidential campaign is yet another prime example of that symbolism in action.

The voter sentiment this year represents a marked departure from the way Americans typically approached previous elections for our highest office in the past. Historically, different political philosophies shaped the competition along dualistic left-right lines, i.e., liberal versus conservative. Over the past 25 years, however, American politics underwent significant shift to the right as a more extreme ideological brand of conservatism emerged, making its presence felt in the Republican Party with Tea Partiers and Libertarians. That shift has reached its zenith during President Obama’s two terms in office, as an obstructionist Republican Congress dug in its heels to try and block all Democrat initiatives. To say that conservative Republicans loathe Barack Obama is no understatement. Gridlock in government has resulted, and neither party has been able to put into practice any comprehensive policies. Movement in either direction is always bitterly contested at every turn. While each party blames the other, the voting public has become disenchanted with both parties, to the point where frustration turned into anger.

Americans are hard-working, but in my view we are somewhat spoiled in expecting government to help us as individuals in whatever specific ways we want or need. Rather than seeing our troubles as the result of collective decisions for which we all bear at least some responsibility, many Americans assign all the blame to forces beyond themselves. Different factors are blamed according to left, right, or centrist orientations, but anger about the ineffectiveness of government is felt by a significant segment of the population, regardless of political/economic leanings. For some, that anger is so deep that it has morphed into rage.

Rage against others in general but government in particular is a primary reason why a sizable percentage of Americans are now vulnerable to the lure of an authoritarian savior, someone who offers the seductive promise to solve our problems, exonerate us from personal responsibility, and end our troubles by re-establishing all that is good in our country and ourselves.

To some degree, most politicians make such promises. I could easily assert that *all* politicians do, but that might be too sweeping a generalization, so I'll stop short of the absolute "all" and stick to the relative "most." I think, however, that exceptions are few and far between among those who seek the mantle of power and the burden of responsibility as our elected representatives in high office. Politicians, like most of those who have an entourage, often invoke the royal "We" in their pronouncements and speeches. "We will do this, and We will do that." What the public hears, however, is almost invariably "I will do this, and I will do that."

That's one of the reasons that Donald Trump has been so successful thus far. His narcissism is so complete that he doesn't mince pronouns or try to fool us. No, Trump comes right out and says, with brash egotism, that "I will do this, and I will do that." No wonder he appeals to the longing for an authoritarian savior among angry adults who still want a Daddy. Trump's supporters don't care that he has formulated no comprehensive slate of policies. They don't care that he pads his business resumé by presenting failed ventures as ongoing successes or that he contradicts himself time and again. None of that matters to them.

What matters is that Trump is the anti-politician who speaks to their rage and their fears of loss. All Trump has (and all he needs apparently) is absolute certainty that he is always right, and complete, utter confidence in his own ability to fix everything through the magical force of his ego-driven personality, his amazing street savvy as a deal-maker, his total belief in himself as a "winner," and his dominant will.

No one knows what a Trump Presidency would look like, because that's completely unpredictable. If any of the other candidates were elected, we'd have at least some reasonable expectations — either as anticipation or anxiety — about what they would try to achieve as President. Not Donald J., though. He's a total wild-card.

But that doesn't matter to his millions of supporters. They need to know only that Trump feels like one of "us" and not one of "**them**." Who are *they*? Why, the people who caused the mess we're in, of course. For some Trump supporters, that's Obama or the Democrats. For others, it's the government in general. For still others, it's foreigners — Mexicans or Muslims who threaten our country, our safety, our economic well-being, and our "American way of life." For still others, it's businesses that have moved their headquarters offshore and exported all the good factory jobs to Asia or Mexico. Trump has promised to neutralize all of *them* and return us to our "greatness," which means restoring our status as the combination 800 lb. gorilla, biggest badass on the block, and the richest country in human history. The fact that this is a ridiculous fairy tale

doesn't matter. What matters is rage and fear — expressing the former while banishing the latter.

To be fair, I could say that Bernie Sanders' supporters tend to see Wall Street and its out-of-control lust for monetary profits as the main culprit in what ails us. Still, there's a critical difference between Sanders and Trump. Bernie Sanders isn't a demagogue, he actually has policy proposals, and his constituency is coherent within a definite segment of the political spectrum. Trump's appeal is nearly universal, cutting across both demographic and political lines. Sanders' populism is traditional. Trump's is radical.

Both men are perfectly suited to the Uranus-Pluto tenor of our times, and each represents a challenge to mainstream institutions and the status quo. Trump, however, is by far the more unpredictable of the two, in that he embodies the built-up rage against government that simmers like a pressurized magma chamber just beneath the surface of the collective unconscious. He feeds on it with an exuberance that is either inspiring or embarrassing, depending on where one stands.

I've already stated my opinion in numerous essays that no one person can save us from ourselves, and that we are likely to go through significant suffering — as a nation, as a population, and (depending on personal circumstances) as individuals — before we awaken from our disturbed and adolescent dreams of escape from reality. I won't embellish that view here, except to say that I hope we awaken sooner than later, and that our collective and personal suffering is minimal.

Update, 15 March 2016:

In the wake of the this past week's dramatically increasing protests and suddenly escalating violence at Trump rallies, many opinions are being tossed around concerning "First Amendment Rights." These include the accusation and defense that disruptive protestors are violating others' "Constitutional" rights to free speech. I'd like to weigh in on that discussion with my own two cents.

Here's the actual text of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

The Amendment is intended to protect freedom by prohibiting government interference in limiting citizens' expression through "the establishment of

religion" (i.e., formation of churches) or any "speech" by individuals and the press. In other words, no censorship by the federal government. Americans can worship as they please and say or publish whatever the hell they want without fear that our national government will come down hard on them.

Nothing is mentioned or implied in the First Amendment about citizens' interactions with each other regarding free speech or gathering in assembly. The Amendment is *completely* about what government cannot do, and — conversely — utterly *silent* about what private citizens do with each other.

Conflicts between individuals are about civility and legality, but **NOT** about violation of any presumed Constitutionally-guaranteed "rights" to free speech.

If you don't like what I say or stand for and decide to protest, the Constitution steers clear of any rules or regulations. If you shout me down, that is an issue of civility, not law. It may be rude, but it's not illegal.

If you hate what I say or stand for and try to shut me up by physically beating the crap out of me or even killing me, that's *illegal*. You become a criminal, liable to arrest, conviction, and fines or incarceration by court judgment, or more informal social censure (ie., shunning) by your fellow citizens. But even that has nothing to do with violation of "First Amendment rights to free speech."

The Declaration of Independence refers to *self-evident truths* and *certain inalienable rights*, among which are *life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*.

Life is fairly clear (except in the case of an unborn fetus), but *liberty* and *the pursuit of happiness* are considerably more murky. Their precise meaning, extent, and limits are left unstated.

If you kill me because you don't like what I say, stand for, or believe (or for any other reason, including revenge for real or imagined transgressions I may have perpetrated against you), the accusation that you violated my *right to life* would be reasonable. If you silence me in lesser ways, however, by shouting me down or physically harming me (short of death), does that violate my rights to *liberty* and *the pursuit of happiness*? Perhaps, but those rights aren't guaranteed by the Constitution, which is America's formal legislative reference about what the federal government must, can, and cannot do.

So, while the whole concept of "rights," at least here in America, is a large tent that encompasses much of our experience, the specific complaint of "violation of my right to free speech" applies **only** to the Constitution and thus to the *government*, **not** to the actions of other people.

That may seem to some people like nit-picking or an unimportant distinction, but I do have a reaction to the Constitution being invoked in ways that are incorrect.

Interacting with other people is not always a cakewalk, not in one-to-one relationships, families, or society. Relationships involve civility, diplomacy, power dynamics, pleasure and duty, equality or dominance/submission, and inevitable conflicts surrounding dignity and pride, not to mention all the subtleties of attraction/repulsion through the complex emotions of affection, love, friendship, competition, co-creativity, work, indifference, disdain, loathing, and hate.

All the various rules we have in place — from tacit and understood as common sense to specifically codified in legal terms — cannot remove conflict or violence from human interactions. The best we can hope for from rules or laws is limiting the conflicts and violence, which (as we all know) frequently fails, sometimes spectacularly. The whole 20th century was pockmarked by wars, pogroms, and purges that prematurely ended the lives of at least 100 million human beings from violence or its disruptive collateral effects.

Human relationships offer the heights of ecstasy and the depths of tragedy. Most of us would choose ecstasy if given a choice, but even our best efforts are insufficient to guarantee that. Both ecstasy and tragedy are experiences that overtake us, often by surprise, and while we may look back in hindsight and see how each one developed in any particular relationship, they remain profoundly mysterious and far beyond the realms of will and intention.