

Uranus-Neptune: The Technology Revolution *Part One*

by Bill Herbst

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Author's Note

Over the past ten years, most of my public writing has centered on the activation of the Uranus-Pluto cycle that provides the dominant astrological themes of the 2010s. Of the more than 100 essays/commentaries I've written over that time — all of which are archived and available on my web site — the vast majority have been about Uranus-Pluto.

Using a 10° orb, the effective period of the first-quarter square of Uranus to Pluto is from early 2007 through early 2020, a period of 13 years. So, as of mid-2017, we still have almost three years to go, and I expect much more to occur in real life that corresponds to the symbolic implications of that transit. The repercussions are likely to extend through the 2020s and beyond, but the primary period of upheaval and social revolution described by this seven-pass activation of the Uranus-Pluto cycle will probably lessen after 2020, or at least take a back seat to other emerging cycle activations and the various crises for humanity that will accompany them. (The next time Uranus and Pluto activate powerfully will be at their opposition during the 2040s. I doubt that I'll be around to witness it, but that decade should reveal a lot about the shape of humanity's future.)

Despite the three years left in the effective period of Uranus-Pluto, I feel that it's time for me to turn my attention (gradually) to the astrology of the remainder of this decade and the upcoming 2020s. The next decade won't be as symbolically dramatic as the 2010s, but significant nevertheless in long-term correspondences and potential impact.

This commentary is a first step in that direction — a halting and awkward step, perhaps, but an initial presentation of an important cycle that corresponds to certain critical themes that will command much more discussion as the years progress.

Background

Of the ten outer-planet cycles that comprise what I call "Civilizational Astrology," the four that include Uranus as one of the two planets are all provocative.

Two of those cycles — the 13-14 year Jupiter-Uranus cycle and the 44-year Saturn-Uranus cycle — where Uranus is the slower-moving planet through the zodiac (the plane of the earth's path around the sun, called the "ecliptic"), chart the development of predictable shocks to social and economic/governmental institutions that occur on fairly regular and frequent schedules.

Activations of the Jupiter-Uranus cycle indicate openings and opportunities for reform of society's structures in ways that are forward-moving, but not particularly radical. The Saturn-Uranus cycle, by contrast, specifies periods where dissatisfaction with existing institutions, laws, or authoritative practices comes a head, and a struggle ensues over whether to keep the old structures or throw them out in favor of the new but unknown. That cycle is somewhat more extreme and often results in one side vanquishing the other (either the old or the new). While challenging, transit activations in those two cycles are not particularly surprising within the body politic. Both cycles are part of the ongoing dance between stability and change within a general framework of continuity.

The other two Uranian cycles — the 172-year Uranus-Neptune cycle and the 113-142 year Uranus-Pluto cycle — where Uranus is the faster-moving body through the zodiac, are a different matter entirely. They are much more revolutionary and potentially significant in their ultimate correspondences, coming as they do less often and seemingly "out of the blue," like wild-cards or jokers in the cosmic deck.

Of the two, the Uranus-Pluto cycle is much more dramatic and overt, while the Uranus-Neptune cycle tends to be subtle and less obvious.

The major quarterly phase-shifting transits in those latter two cycles occur at significantly wider intervals in time. They are still "scheduled," but their onset, duration, and symbolic correspondences are much more surprising, because they upset the applecart of the status quo. In general, we are a species with a relatively short-term collective memory. The past is quickly relegated to ancient history or forgotten entirely — how many young people today know much, if anything, about the social turbulence of the 1960s or the Vietnam War?

So, when the Uranus-Pluto cycle activates in effective periods that last for almost a decade or more (as it did in the 1930s, 1960s, and now the 2010s), the real-life correspondences that emerge are often considered unexpected, as if we assumed that the shape of life in recent civilization would go on unchanged forever.

On the other hand, the Uranus-Neptune cycle activates less frequently than the Uranus-Pluto cycle, and its symbolic correspondences are less dramatic. That doesn't mean, however, that manifested events and changes in civilization will be any less far-reaching in their ultimate effects. They may be even more sweeping; it's just that their repercussions aren't as apparent at the time of their initial onset. When the internet was developed in the 1970s, how many people foresaw the tremendous impact an electronic global network would eventually have? Some, but not many. When the first bulky cell phones appeared in the 1980s, did anyone suspect that the virtual interactions of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) would become as important and ubiquitous as they have? Both of these examples are part of the techno-dream symbolism of Uranus-Neptune.

We might say that the Uranus-Neptune cycle shares certain similarities with the Jupiter-Uranus cycle, since Jupiter and Neptune co-rule the sign Pisces. But the similarities in the two cycles are only skin-deep. The Jupiter-Uranus cycle is politically and socially progressive but traditional, while the Uranus-Neptune cycle is truly radical and revolutionary in ways that go far beyond politics and social policy. Of all the paired civilizational cycles that include either Uranus or Neptune, the Uranus-Neptune cycle is in a league by itself.

Unlike three of the four cycles that include Uranus — Jupiter-Uranus, Saturn-Uranus, and Uranus-Pluto, each of which is bold and brash in its own particular way, depending on the other planetary symbol of the pair — where the corresponding pre-shocks that lead to real-life changes are obvious and out there for everyone to see, the Uranus-Neptune cycle tends to correspond to developments that are subtle, surreptitious, and invisibly subversive to the status quo. On their surface, those developments seem to reinforce the existing narrative and support (or improve) continuity, but all the while they are actually undermining it, gradually dissolving the underpinnings of old structures, weakening the foundations.

Considered from a purely symbolic standpoint, Uranus and Neptune are an odd couple. Uranus is mental, detached, and stubbornly individual. Neptune is emotional, empathic/sympathetic, and universally inclusive. Unlike pairs such as Saturn and Uranus or Uranus and Pluto, no conflict results. Neptune invites Uranus to play, softening but not banishing Uranus' iconoclastic, willful individuality. Instead, Neptune uses the brilliant clarity of Uranian genius (or eccentricity) to further its own aims of reunion into oneness.

Below and on the next page are the effective transit periods for the current Uranus-Neptune cycle, through both the waxing and waning hemicycles.

Waxing:

Jan 1988–Jan 1999 Conjunction (0°, New Phase, 10° orb)

Jul 2016–May 2021 Semisquare (+45°, Crescent Phase, 5° orb)

Sep 2023–Apr 2029..... Sextile (+60°, Crescent Phase, 4° orb)
Nov 2034–Aug 2045..... Square (+90°, 1st Quarter Phase, 10° orb)
Oct 2048–Sep 2057..... Trine (+120°, 1st Quarter Phase, 8° orb)
Nov 2056–Sep 2062..... Sesquiquadrate (+135°, Gibbous Phase, 5° orb)
Feb 2062–Oct 2068..... Inconjunct (+150°, Gibbous Phase, 3° orb)

Waning:

Feb 2073–Dec 2087 Opposition (180°, Full Phase, 10° orb)
May 2093–Feb 2101..... Inconjunct (-150°, Full Phase, 3° orb)
Jun 2101–Mar 2109 Sesquiquadrate (-135°, Disseminating Phase, 5° orb)
Jun 2107–Mar 2118 Trine (-120°, Disseminating Phase, 8° orb)
Aug 2120–Jun 2131 Square (-90°, Last Quarter Phase, 10° orb)
Oct 2135–Jun 2140 Sextile (-60°, Last Quarter Phase, 4° orb)
Dec 2141–Aug 2145..... Semisquare (-45°, Balsamic Phase, 5° orb)

beginning of the next Uranus-Neptune Cycle:

Apr 2159–Jan 2171 Conjunction (0°, New Phase, 10° orb)

Needless to say, the effective transit periods of the current cycle in the 22nd century are not relevant to any of us now, since we'll all be dead (barring some medical immortality miracle...). I seriously doubt that my writings will survive past the 21st century, and probably not even that long.

Two transits early in the cycle are of concern now and over the years ahead. The first is the waxing semisquare between Uranus and Neptune that signifies the beginnings of the Crescent Phase of the current cycle. That transit has already begun and has an effective period from mid-2016 through med-2021. The other activates from mid-2023 through early-2029, when Uranus will move into a long sextile transit with Neptune.

[However important those two transits turn out to be in setting the stage for future developments, they will both be dwarfed in significance, impact, and repercussions by the very potent waxing first-quarter square between Uranus and Neptune in the signs Leo and Taurus, which will be effective from late-2034 through mid-2045. That seminal event is still a long ways off, relatively speaking. All three of the transits will eventually factor into my later commentaries in this new Uranus-Neptune series.]

End Part One

*In Part Two of this commentary series — **The Uranus-Neptune Cycle: The Technological Revolution** — I'll discuss some of my opinions about our nearly religious faith in technology to continue developing in the way it has over our lifetimes to this point.*