

Uranus-Neptune: The Technology Revolution *Part Four*

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Version 1.4 (posted on 15 August 2017)
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In the earlier three essays of this commentary series about the Uranus-Neptune cycle (all of which were written and posted in July), I discussed its structure in time, some symbolic meanings of the cycle, and my concerns about technology. Now, in Part Four, I want to detail the timing and meanings of the current Uranus-Neptune transit and the next one in the mid-2020s.

The current Uranus-Neptune cycle began in 1993. 24 years later, Uranus has moved ahead of Neptune and arrived at an arc of 45° (or one-eighth of the ecliptic/zodiac beyond Neptune. This is called a semi-square in astrology. It's not generally considered a major aspect, but it does represent the first significant phase change following the conjunction that kicks off the cycle. If we divide the circle into eight parts or phases (as we do in the soli-lunar monthly cycle), this passage represents the transition out of what's called the *New Phase* and into the *Crescent Phase*.

This is a five-pass transit, meaning that it will be exact five times from August 2017 until May 2019. Using an orb of 5°, the *effective* period of the transit is from July 2016 through May 2021.

The New Phase of every astrological cycle is the time of getting the cycle underway. To use a gardening or farming analogy, it's the time of planning the garden and setting it up in the spring: roto-tilling, fertilizing, and planting seeds. In real life, the New Phase of a particular astrological cycle may be a time mainly of preparation or setting the stage, but it might also be a period of urgent and passionate new developments. It's a time where a blueprint for the future is being put into place.

In the New Phase of this young Uranus-Neptune cycle, we've already experienced a sea change in our lives because of a dramatic surge in technological development. We've seen nearly everything in our world change because of microchips and computers. For instance, to say that the rise of the Internet provoked a global revolution is an understatement.

The Crescent Phase of every cycle is the second half of the initial quarter. Unlike the New Phase, which is characterized by intensity and passion to generate and build momentum for something new, the Crescent Phase moves the cycle in a different direction. During the Crescent Phase, development turns inward rather than outward. Doubts arise from within and must be vanquished or reconciled for the cycle to keep moving forward. These demons are usually not external forces, but rather internal inconsistencies and vexing psychological questions about the value of what's being developed and our abilities to develop it. In short, the Crescent Phase is a pause for reassurance. Can we actually do what we're planning? Should we do it?

I'm not suggesting that the pace of technological development will slow, nor that new whiz-bang product roll outs will stop, but (according to my understanding of astrology and this cycle) technology will hit speed bumps in the road. During the five years of the semi-square transit, we are likely to encounter setbacks in the implementation of new technology, as well as serious questions about the wisdom of allowing technology to further shape and control our lives. The downsides of technology will become more apparent, and people will wonder about their own safety as new and unforeseen problems are revealed, problems that come with the way new technologies are being developed and implemented.

Smart cell phones are now used by an estimated two billion human beings. Are smart phones and wi-fi infallibly safe to use? Some organizations say yes, others say no.

Apart from the physical risks of EMR radiation and other possible negative effects are the psychological and social downsides. Questions about what constitutes viable community are central here. Are "virtual" communities online equivalent to (or at least moderately effective replacements for) actual, "real" communities? Serious doubts exist about this. Especially now, social media (Twitter, Facebook, and the like) have become immensely popular and powerful means of nearly instant self-expression into the cyber-social world. The burgeoning future of social media seems guaranteed, at least for the foreseeable future, but many people are not so sure that's an entirely good thing.

Another issue is social alienation. More and more, people live in their own customized virtual realities rather than interacting with other human beings. Is this individuation dismantling the very fabric of shared culture and our ability to live with each other? Social alienation is certainly not new, but it is noteworthy and increasing.

Equally worrisome (although perhaps less obvious) is the "echo chamber" effect of technology. The Internet is certainly an amazing technological development, providing easy public expression for every conceivable viewpoint, but the current state-of-the-art in algorithms that shape the way marketing works on the Web — literally determining what we see when we go online — tends to limit us

dramatically. Basically, we get endless variations of where we've already been. That may be a boon to advertisers of products looking to target-market potential customers, and the fact that videos are selected for us may make surfing on YouTube more convenient, but all that is potentially very dangerous to society. It encourages the illusion that everyone is interested in what interests us and believes what we believe. Such an echo chamber diminishes our ability to get along with each other, despite our differences.

Rather than re-unifying us and providing a way to move back comfortably toward the center of the bell curve (and feel that we belong to the overall human community), the Internet splinters us into special interest groups. We may feel a stronger bond with like-minded individuals (even if that bond is merely virtual), but our empathy for people in general is not enhanced and may even be diminished.

Another problem with the Internet is that, as perhaps most significant tool ever invented to facilitate a "meeting of the minds" between individuals with similar orientations and beliefs, the Internet also lets those who are disaffected on the fringes of society more easily find others who share their extreme minority viewpoints and organize into radical alliances. Some of these groups espouse violence and have successfully recruited new members in surprising numbers. Censoring points of view on the Internet is fraught with ethical and logistical difficulties and is antithetical to an open technology. We live with this paradox at present, but the debate between security and freedom is ongoing and could change that.

Over the next four years, the current semi-square transit of Uranus and Neptune may correspond to these and many other issues emerging into sharper focus, which is likely to result in technology companies having to alter either their products or their public relations. I don't imagine that any internal questioning will slow very much the juggernaut of technology, but many serious questions need to be considered. The astrology of the Uranus-Neptune Crescent Phase waxing semi-square suggests that such questions will arise, whether or not people want to deal with them. Many (or even most) of those questions may eventually be minimized, dismissed, or rationalized away, but they won't be easily ignored.

Later, during the 2020s, Uranus will reach a point 60° (or one-sixth of the circle) ahead of Neptune. This is called a sextile and represents the next activation of the cycle. The waxing sextile transit occurs within the Crescent Phase, as did the semi-square activation, but the sextile represents a period of smoother consolidation and forward-moving productivity.

The sextile is another five-pass event, from mid-2025 through mid-2027. Using a 4° orb, the effective period is from September 2023 through April 2029.

Unlike the 2010s, which have been astrologically dominated by a single event — the 13-year activation (from 2007-2020) of the Uranus-Pluto cycle — the 2020s reveal no such focus. Numerous meaningful cycles will occur throughout the 2020s (that's always the case in every decade), but no one cycle will predominate. The waxing sextile between Uranus and Neptune will be a meaningful event in the overall matrix of the coming decade. In fairness, that sextile transit during the 2020s won't carry anywhere near the symbolic potency of the Uranus-Neptune first-quarter square that will occur from the mid-2030s to the mid-2040s, but it's likely to be a period of preparation for that much more assertive event.

Assuming that other factors do not derail us — an assumption that may be difficult to guarantee, given our looming economic, political, and environmental problems — the Uranus-Neptune sextile in the 2020s should indicate consistent progress and perhaps another leap forward for technology. Such a leap, if it happens, probably won't be astonishing to the companies developing new technology, since they are already working full-time to make the techno-future a reality, but it could easily astound the public and once again change the face and fabric of modern civilization in ways that will be profound.