

*astrological-cultural-spiritual-political
views & commentary...*

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THE HERBST NEWSLETTER



Thoughts, dates, & reminders about our lives as members of the craziest species on this lovely planet. Like a message in a bottle washing up on the sandy shores of consciousness...

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Dear friends,

I wish I had something profound to offer here in the Centennial 100th edition of the newsletter commentaries, but the truth as I see it is that there's little to say that is obviously uplifting. So, I'll re-hash a subject already discussed earlier in various newsletters over the past year, in part because these issues are even more relevant now than when I first wrote about them, but also to offer a more personal view into the experiences I believe so many of us are having. As is often the case with my commentaries, the effort here is to reach out in sympathy, to let us know that we're not alone.

—Bill Herbst

THE SUMMER OF OUR DISCONTENT

On June 25th just past, Saturn moved exactly opposite Neptune in the heavens (from our perspective) for the third and last time. This Saturn-Neptune period of reality clashing with fantasy and facts on the ground duking it out with illusions, spin, airy-fairy beliefs, and outright lies initially geared up in the summer of 2005, came to full-bore shadow boxing in 2006, and has now peaked, with roughly one more year to gradually spin down the other side.

By June of 2008, this confusing three-year phase of enervation, exhaustion, and disillusionment will have passed, replaced by the increasing jolts of awakening to the need for radical reform that will have begun to roll in like sporadic waves crashing onto the beach. That shift has already started, but it will be awhile before we can see clearly that the tide is indeed turning. The power of shocking change is just starting to gather strength.

At this point, however, in the summer of 2007, talk of reform is still premature, and any semblance of truth or justice is hard to find, especially among the ruling powers. We are still mired in quicksand, now even deeper than in the two years previous, caught in the quagmire of our own impotence and bewilderment, aghast at the way things are in the world around us but lacking both the clarity and the will to do anything about it. All that will change over the coming years, but for now we are collectively (and, for

many of us, personally) stuck like bugs on flypaper, struggling helplessly and mostly hopelessly to free ourselves from the sticky glue, wings buzzing fruitlessly in the droning but lackluster efforts to escape our many predicaments.

We are sick to death of corruption, false ideals, flagrant greed, and callous neglect that are taken for granted, all of which provoke many small and some large humiliations of daily life in a culture that has lost its way. And yet, here we all are, swimming in that poisoned ocean, or, at least, trying to stay afloat to paddle through the toxic waters, almost like Bogey and Hepburn manhandling *The African Queen* through the reeds and muck of that leech-infested slough.

This is the full spiritual whammy of “dis-illusionment,” the palpable sense that social policies that once seemed if not true or virtuous then at least only partially tainted have turned out to be utterly bogus, totally corrupt, and insanely ignorant, as so many of us feared. We have been deceived, fooled, seduced and betrayed, violated and abandoned, and taken for a ride. When the con artists whispered to us from the darkened alley, we went in willingly and metaphorically plunked down our hard-earned money for fake Rolex watches, hot DVD players, and illicit cartons of cigarettes heisted by Tony Soprano’s minions from the back of some delivery truck. Then too, there’s that swamp land in Florida we invested in for sure-fire condo development, and that bridge we bought in Brooklyn.

Those of us who saw what was happening all along were ignored, since we had long ago taken refuge out on the social fringes of the bell curve, shaking our heads in disbelief at the deranged loonies running the asylum. Vietnam, the Cold War, Reaganomics, religious fundamentalism, “free” markets, NAFTA and globalization, Clinton’s sell-out, corporate welfare, big money’s kidnapping of the government, the healthcare fiasco, agribusiness, the military-industrial complex, the free-for-all to rape the environment for profit—all of it was clearly madness.

Collectively, we have acted like thieves for much longer than a decade. Go back as far as you like to find the roots of our depravity—30, 50, even 100 years. The painful revelation of finally discovering our amorality is a bitter pill for some, especially since America is now circling the drain of spiritual, economic, and political bankruptcy. We sold ourselves down the river for what are turning out to be unsustainable fantasies of material wealth (unsustainable for the masses, of course; the privileged few still profit handsomely).

Meanwhile, American government and business have stomped around the world messing with everyone and making enemies, who now rise up as blowback to haunt us in our nightmares. That those consequences are even now unseen and misunderstood by so many “regular” Americans is testimony to the grip of a national mythology that is largely self-congratulatory fiction. Our lofty ideals are too often a paper-thin wrapper that hides the harsher facts of our history.

All these manifestations of loss and disillusionment are lessons implied by Saturn opposite Neptune. Given sufficient time and the cumulative effects of gargantuan size and inevitable corruption, shared beliefs that once seemed shining and true are perverted into falsehoods. Only dreams and fantasies grounded in reality have a shot at long-term fulfillment; everything else turns out to be image rather than substance.

Individuals who have these two planets in hard aspect in their natal charts are learning those lessons over an entire lifetime, alternating small delusions with small realizations, working slowly to reconcile hard reality with soft illusion. That process is very different from the exhausting letdowns that occur collectively when Saturn and Neptune align, especially here at the opposition, which occurs only once in more than three decades for a sustained period of about three years each time. The last time that happened was 1971-1973 during the grinding down of the Vietnam War and the revelations of Watergate.

Now we are in the final, culminating year of another Saturn-Neptune opposition, marked by endless scandals and the seeming impossibility of doing anything to make life better. Hurricane Katrina and the drowning of New Orleans kicked off this period in 2005, and the agonizing death throes of that American city, which still continue, remain the best symbol for how lost we are collectively. I don’t know what the odds are, but we may yet witness another impossible-to-fathom slow-motion calamity before this last year

is out, especially with the Middle East lurching toward a more encompassing meltdown. Or perhaps what transpires in this final year of Saturn-Neptune will be less visible, such as the further eroding of our massive financial debt to the Chinese and the rest of the world, who may gradually pull away from investment in American treasury bonds, weakening us further and setting up an economic collapse further down the road. No one can say with certainty precisely what disillusionments may still await us.

Or maybe what we've had over the past three years is sufficient to drive home the point. Maybe we've already suffered enough to teach us a lesson, and now the cosmos is just letting us sit and stew in our own mess while the truth slowly sinks in. I don't really know.

What I do know is that we are tired of the bullshit, ALL the bullshit—not just other people's but our own as well. Perhaps I shouldn't speak for any of you, only for myself. I am certainly fed up with my own denials, escapism, and silliness, all of which I see too clearly for comfort. That doesn't mean that I can change much of it yet, but I'm less and less able to delude myself about it. My guess, however, is that many of us are saying, if not to others then at least privately to ourselves, "How did I ever go so far down these dead-end roads?" and "Have I really sunk so low?"

I'm not sure what to think about hope as a part of human nature. Apparently, hope is a basic human need—to look forward to something better, even if that contradicts everything we see in and around us. And just as sure as God made little green apples, many of us are suffering through hopelessness right now. Not necessarily in an agonizing way, but more as a dull discomfort or vague unease, somewhat like a minor toothache, with occasional or sporadic sharp spikes of momentary pain. Sure, a certain percentage of people are happy no matter what is going on, even in a disaster. But most of us—including the temperamentally upbeat optimists—feel a pervasive discontent. Doesn't matter what set of beliefs we embrace or what like-minded groups we belong to—we all feel that something is really rotten in Denmark. All seven of Snow White's dwarves are now named Grumpy.

Thus Has It Always Been and Always Shall Be

What's really curious about Civilizational Astrology—tracking the slow, grand, panoramic procession of certain combinations of planetary archetypes; studying their timing, and seeing the correspondences with real life in the collective—is that, when we're flowing through the thick of a specific tonal period, we have trouble even imagining that life could ever be different. In periods of dramatic change, that's all we can envision. Disruption forever. In phases of stasis, such as now, that's all we can see. Entropy, where nothing will ever change, except to get steadily worse.

This is akin to the way we feel when we're hungry and can't imagine ever feeling full or satiated. And then, after we gorge and our hunger vanishes, leaving us in bovine stupefaction, we can't imagine ever being hungry again. Can't even remember how our ravenous hunger felt mere hours before. Same with being tired or angry or depressed or horny or just plain bored. No possibility of any other state exists—UNTIL it changes.

Right now, almost none of us can truly envision what lies ahead over the next, say, seven years. We may know intellectually quite a lot about what possibilities could emerge. We might even think about those possibilities often. But we can't FEEL them yet. All we can feel now is the malaise, the sucking quicksand, the slogging through jello, which seems like forever.

And so we come to the point of this newsletter—the simple, blunt, unsophisticated point that may be so obvious that you'll wonder why I bothered to even write this commentary. Here it is:

THIS TOO SHALL CHANGE.

And not too far away, either. Just another year or so. And with profound acceleration in each year after that. Even over the upcoming twelve months, the tide will be turning, sometimes imperceptibly, other times in sudden fits and starts.

So, maybe we should make the most of this period. Let the Saturn-Neptune archetypes take us fully. Roll around in the disillusionment like pigs in slop. See what real hopelessness and despair feel like. Or perhaps you'll choose to resist those feelings, to keep your optimism in spite of the archetype field. Whatever. Do as you like.

But know that this is not permanent. This here-and-now is not the same as the here-and-now that's coming. Not even close.

When it's time to wake up and smell the coffee, we will. Millions, even billions of us. That's not to suggest that the awakening will be easy or pleasant, but it will be provocative, vital, and urgent.

So bide your time. Change is coming. And when it does, we'll have our shot to make things better.



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