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# THE HERBST NEWSLETTER

astrological-cultural-spiritual-political views & opinions

--- Thoughts, dates, and 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,

This month's commentary is the first of three newsletters where I will examine the astrology of President-Elect Obama's birth chart (August 4, 1961, at 7:24 p.m. AHST, in Honolulu, Hawaii). This initial installment explores a recent and continuing theme in American Presidents---the differing expressions of Leo as a zodiacal archetype. Future installments will address the house associations and aspect patterns in Obama's natal chart, as well as the provocative outer-planet transits that will shape his turbulent first years in office.

--Bill Herbst

Commentary: **BARACK OBAMA 1: ARCHETYPES**

Of the four underlying technical structures that comprise the systems of western natal astrology taught in textbooks---planets, signs, houses, and aspects---the zodiac of sign archetypes is both the most universal and the least significant component. Even people who know nothing about the planetary principles of Solar purpose, Lunar need, Martian desires, or Saturnian restraints are likely to have at least a smattering of knowledge about certain of the zodiacal signs. Houses and aspects are even less familiar to the general public. But signs of the zodiac float somehow throughout the public consciousness.

Witness the impulse-buy-type products that line the checkout stands of grocery stores. Beside the usual tabloids with their headlines of Hollywood gossip, one may find such tomes as "The Year Ahead for Gemini" or "Love and Romance for Libra." That linkage---of tabloids with Sign-based astrology---reveals much about

the zodiac. Signs represent a lowest-common-denominator approach to astrology, the bottom of the barrel in astrological sophistication, and every bit as lurid as the tabloids. And yet, Sun-sign columns continue to appear in newspapers and magazines, and millions of people who have never seen their own natal chart nonetheless know "their" sign and some of its supposed qualities of personality.

I don't generally write or even talk about signs, because they tend to be generic rather than individuating in their symbolism. In my work with clients, I use signs mainly as indicators of "chord structure" in the music of persona, and as connective tissue for the technical complexities of planetary influence through the houses. At times, however, certain sign archetypes can reveal much about conditions in the collective, especially when those archetypes are expressed through the charts of public figures.

Such is the case with the last three U.S. Presidents, each of whom has the strong signature of the Leo archetype in their respective natal charts. Though everyone's birth charts contain all twelve sign archetypes, usually only a few of the twelve are emphasized in the broad makeup of personality. Bill Clinton was born with the Sun in Leo, but he was also Libra rising with five planets in Libra, so Clinton resonates to a Leo-Libra archetype. George W. Bush has Leo rising with Mercury and Pluto in Leo on the Ascendant and the Moon, Jupiter, and Neptune in Libra, but the addition of the Cancer Sun alters the archetypes mix away from Clinton. Like Clinton, Barack Obama is another Leo Sun, but without any Libran sign emphasis. Instead, Obama adds the air qualities of Aquarius rising and Gemini Moon, and the earthiness of Mars and Pluto in Virgo.

Before heading into the "compare-and-contrast" section of the commentary, however, I want to define the Leo archetype through a slightly extended metaphor you may not have read in astrology texts.

Leo is the star of the zodiac---not "star" as in heavenly body, but "movie-star" as in Hollywood-type celebrity and fame. Leo is the quintessential performer, in essence an actor who creates a character, then performs that character in real life. Leo is always and finally the hero or heroine of the drama, the star of his or her own movie. Unlike numerous other signs, Leo loves the limelight and blossoms at center-stage.

In astrological elements, water always finishes a phase of growth, whereas fire always initiates a new growth process. So, the quest for personal security reaches its apex in Cancer and is followed by Leo, which begins a new quest for social security. In other words, Leo is *personally* secure, but *socially* insecure. That paradox may seem to contradict much of the traditional astrological literature about how Leos are confident to the point of bravado, but this is why

performing a role is so critical. Leo is unconcerned with private, inward identity. Instead, Leo is completely obsessed with social image reflected in the eyes of others. By creating a character to perform and writing himself the lead role in an heroic script, Leo achieves the impression of social security for us, the audience. He appears completely confident in who he is (or wants us to believe he is). This goes far beyond the approach of "fake-it-til-you-make-it," all the way to "fake-it-until-you-believe-it-and-forget-that-it-was-ever-fake."

As a result, Leo's acting is not "pretend" or "make-believe." It is the Actor's Studio School of Method Acting. It is Paul Newman or Marlon Brando early in their careers. It is definitely NOT Sir Lawrence Olivier (who was always aware of himself behind the performance). The Leonine person "becomes" the character. There is no one behind the mask, since the entire sense of selfhood is invested into making the persona vital and the mask "real."

At every moment of shared interaction, the Leo archetype is on-stage, giving a command performance (and a commanding one, as well). The audience is never granted access to the backstage dressing room where the makeup comes off. Total commitment is promised to the on-stage performance.

If that's true, how does it square with George W. Bush's verbal buffoonery and ham-handed awkwardness in public performance? Well, we need to remember that Dubya sees himself in part as an anti-hero. The "character" Bush chose and scripted is an anti-intellectual, someone disdainful of pointy-headed professors and effete snobs. The immense pride Dubya takes in his intellectual inadequacies and verbal gaffes is almost perverse in its stubborn defiance. His snobbery is about wealth rather than intellect, especially family wealth. Bush is the Machiavellian Prince, but the role he performs for the public is the affable, folksy, dude rancher who clears brush and loves being a War President and Commander-in-Chief. For Bush, family and the inner circle of dutiful friends and loyal supporters are everything---the public be damned---and that's where the Cancer archetype dominates the script for his movie.

By contrast, Bill Clinton, with his 11th-house Sun, would sell his soul to be liked (or, better yet---loved) by everyone. God, how Clinton wanted to be loved as President!! And that urge got him into very hot water. With Bush, the opinions of anyone outside his personal circle didn't matter. With Clinton, *everyone* was inside the circle, and all opinions mattered, at least when those opinions were about Bill himself.

Compared to Clinton and Bush, Barack Obama's chart contains a broader distribution of sign archetypes, with less extremism in emphasis. Eight signs contribute to Obama's archetype mix: **Leo** Sun, Mercury, Uranus, and North Node; **Aquarius** rising, Jupiter (12th), and South Node; **Gemini** Moon, **Virgo**

Mars and Pluto, elevated Neptune and Midheaven in **Scorpio**, **Cancer** Venus, **Capricorn** Saturn, and **Pisces** Chiron. So, in real life, Obama will demonstrate a complexity that reflects this multi-faceted nature. For our purposes, however, in establishing the zodiacal factors that reveal the essence of what he brings to the presidency, we need only the first two signs: Leo and Aquarius.

As opposite signs, Leo and Aquarius form an axis in the zodiac, so they share many qualities. Both are active and fixed signs, extroverted in temper and definite in orientation. (Clinton's Leo nature wandered all over, Bush's was implacably stubborn, and Obama's is likely to be firm but malleable when necessary).

A primary issue of the Leo-Aquarius axis is individuality versus collectivity--- goodness for oneself weighed against the greater good for the group as a whole. A related issue is the evolution of egalitarian societies and governments emerging out of monarchies justified by "divine right of kings." Much of the Enlightenment in the 17th-18th centuries pushed forward the politics of freedom and social equality, and the 19th and 20th centuries carried that struggle into the streets. Only baby steps have been taken thus far, however.

We can add the spiritual level to the sociopolitical and assert that Leo-Aquarius struggles to deal with the idea of "the cult of personality," where one charismatic individual leads many followers who believe that person to be if not totally infallible, at least savior-like in the sense of a cosmic parent who will protect and do for us what we cannot seem to do alone. At the very least, people hope for inspiration from such individuals.

The precessional shift of the tropical zodiac's 2,200-year Ages from Piscean to Aquarian implies that this and other conflicts concerning faith or belief giving way to reason are ripe targets for challenges faced by humanity in the 21st century. Both religious fundamentalism and the cult of personality will likely continue, given human nature, but more as backlash and last bastions rather than the cutting edge of human endeavor.

Obama embodies the karmic burden of these struggles, and his time in the White House will inevitably be branded by it, for better and for worse.

Not every dominant theme, proclivity, or conflict in Obama's chart is revealed by reference to sign archetypes. House associations and aspect patterns play an even larger role in development of personality and life-unfoldment, dramatically influencing the way Obama shapes his sign archetypes and is mutually shaped by them. I'll discuss his chart's houses and aspects, as well as his provocative long-term transits, in depth in coming newsletters. For now, let's just add to the archetypes by filling in some relevant specifics.

With most of his planets on the western side of the chart, including five in the 6th, 7th, and 8th houses, Obama is extremely sensitive to relationships with others. His wife and daughters are clearly the most important people in his life, and he depends on them not only for love, but to protect and maintain the core sanity in his life.

The same factors imply that Obama IS "the other"---i.e., a natural partner. His multi-racial background and international history increase that sense of "otherness." In essence, Obama is an alien presence, but a friendly alien here to help rather than a scary alien here to do harm. People sense his good intentions and are moved to embrace him. Obama can partner with anyone, and everyone is invited to become his partner. This might at first seem problematic, given the star quality of Leo, the need to be in the limelight at center-stage, but Obama is clearly comfortable with the apparent paradox, turning it to his advantage. He is able to make others feel special while continuing to gravitate toward center-stage.

Much of these qualities are provided courtesy of the Aquarian half of Obama's archetype mix. Friendly, humanitarian, yet striving toward individuality through differentness or eccentricity, provided here through the apparent otherness of his mutt-like background in the great melting pot. Obama is unique *because* he comes from nowhere and everywhere simultaneously, and because he is driven toward visionary service (two T-squares in his chart provide that drive: a powerful Chiron-Pluto-Moon T-square in the lower hemisphere makes Obama sensitive to our need for healing, both collectively and individually, and an expansive Mercury-Jupiter-Neptune t-square in the upper hemisphere indicates clear status as a visionary who wants to bring us all together.

In a sense, the particular blends of sign archetypes characteristic for each of the last three Presidents were naturally suited to the periods of their administrations. Bill Clinton's Leo-Libra vibe presided over the wild party of excess that was the 1990s. He played gracious host to the proceedings, but proved guilty of numerous serious errors in judgment, despite consistently high approval ratings. During the first decade of the new century, George W. Bush's Cancer-Leo archetype had his own, more private party in office, a party to which you and I were not invited. Bush's king-like reign steered the country hard right, toward unquestioned authority and into equally unquestioned wars of vengeance and vendetta.

Barack Obama's Leo-Aquarius takes over the Presidency during a time of profound crisis, when old visions have failed and are collapsing, and new visions are demanded.

What I find most important about these Leo-inspired archetypes is that the three Presidents in whose charts they occur are not regular human beings. They may be transcendent in that they are all transpersonal agents; or they may be curiously empty, something less than truly human, almost ghostly by comparison.

Clinton's personal life always cast a shadow over his public persona. He performed best when he limited his charisma to enhancing his career. Invariably, though, when he used his charisma privately, his legacy suffered. Bush recovered from a difficult and escapist early life in mid-adulthood only to find himself in office at a crossroads of history, and he didn't hesitate to grab the mantle of power.

We don't yet know how Obama will deal with the cascading crises to come over his term in office. We know only that the initial emergency is fiscal and economic, and that it is probably not "fixable," no matter what the President does. We see in Obama's choice of cabinet and advisors a centrist who is surrounding himself with "the best and brightest" (a term used by pundits and administration spokespeople with apparently no hint of the harsh irony of its origins, given how the Kennedy/Johnson brain-trust whiz kids completely blew Vietnam...). The question is not whether Obama can lead, but whether he can continue to inspire faith and hope through one catastrophic collapse after another. If he does, Obama will become a mythic figure. If he doesn't, he will be revealed as merely human.

Obama's rise to the Presidency was unexpected and spectacular, much like the decade of the 2010s will be. He now has a tiger by the tail. We shall all soon see how he rides the whirlwind.

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*Next month in Part Two of this series, I'll discuss the house associations and aspect patterns in Barack Obama's natal chart, and their implications toward profound community/family healing and dedicated service to humanity.*

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