
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 ---

Issue #107; January 2009

Dear friends,

Last month, in Part 1 of this three-part series, I wrote about the archetypal sign orientations in President-Elect Obama's natal chart. This month I'll take the analysis further, into the specific house associations, overall planetary pattern, and aspect configurations that correspond to Obama's characteristic interests in and approaches to life.

To download a copy of Barack Obama's natal chart and major transits, click on the link below. (If your email doesn't recognize hyperlinks, cut and paste the link into your browser's URL window and hit return.)

<http://www.billherbst.com/Obama.pdf>

--Bill Herbst

Commentary: **BARACK OBAMA 2: HOUSES & PATTERNS**

Birth charts provide a map of the personal space surrounding each individual at the moment and location of first breath. Many people wonder why birth is used. Wouldn't the instant of conception be a more accurate indicator, since each person's unique genetic makeup is determined in that merging of sperm and egg? Theoretically, the benchmark of conception would be better, but we have no practical way of pinpointing conception in time. Developing a system based on an event we can't measure is simply impossible, so astrology uses birth instead. Even that is problematic, however, since birth is often messy and complex rather than straightforward. First breath is the moment we're looking to nail down, since forcing the fluid out of the lungs and beginning the rhythm of

breath represents the moment when we cease living off our mother's oxygen. We become autonomous at first breath. Now we are *in* the world, where we will remain until we draw our final breath.

Ideally, the birth chart represents our onset into the world as a vital participant in the dance of life. The chart shows us a symbolic mandala of this first meeting between our evolving selves and the larger collective in which we now live by revealing the particular state of the universe in that time-space moment.

More literally, the birth chart is a moment frozen in time and space, a two-dimensional holograph, where the planetary movements that make up the cycles of the solar system are stopped in their action. Nothing really stops, of course. Everything keeps moving. But that moment provides a frame of reference from which to understand the meanings of the many cycles that are evolving within that particular human life and consciousness.

The Angles of the chart---meaning the horizontal and vertical axes---separate our personal space into hemispheres. One hemisphere, that of sky, is above our heads; the opposite, that of the earth, is below our feet. One is eastern, where everything is rising; the other is western, where everything is setting. In the interpretation of birth charts, *above* means social or collective, *below* means personal or private, *eastern* means self-generating and problem-solving, *western* means relationship-oriented and meaning-sensitive.

The two perpendicular hemispheres form four quadrants, which are then trisected into twelve total sections, called *houses*. Each house represents a particular arena or field in life, and every house in the chart has at least one planet (psychological urge) associated with its many activities and experiences.

All the major bodies of the solar system (called "planets" in astrology) are rising in the birth chart of soon-to-be-ex-President George W. Bush. His chart is visually full in the left hemisphere (east) and apparently empty on the right (west). In fact, all major bodies are located within one-third of the chart. This is called a "bundle pattern." Bush's particular bundle (all eastern) implies that his approach to life is extremely self-generating. Even his social interactions with others are seen as necessary roles to be filled (wife, advisor, enemy) or as challenges to be resolved. Despite his Libra Moon, Bush is not generally empathic with others, except for vaguely collective notions, such as "the American people." He sees strangers more as group categories than as individual psyches: i.e., taxpayers or terrorists.

Unlike Bush's "bundle," Obama's chart is more like a "splash," with planets dotted around the wheel. Neptune is the elevated planet, highest in the sky. Both these factors are part of Obama's appeal, in that his personality is

“universalized,” giving others the impression of accessibility and sympathy for their predicaments. Planetary distribution in his chart is not even, however: only three bodies are rising in the east, while seven are setting in the west. This means that Obama is extremely sensitive to the actual reality of other human beings. He is innately relationship-oriented. With his natively setting Sun, four other planets, and the Moon’s north node clustered around the western horizon (meaning the 6th, 7th, and 8th houses), Obama is looking for partners.

In a sense, that’s the bottom line of Obama’s life-purpose, to find suitable associates with whom he can create working partnerships that help restore and heal (Chiron in the 1st house) three distinct but interconnected group levels: family, community, and culture. Aquarius rising with Uranus and Pluto in the 7th imply that Obama is drawn to potential partners who are more radical and revolutionary than he himself is. This allows him to maintain the conservative stability of his Leo Sun while using his Gemini Moon to garner many points of view. Obama’s partners are all expert performers in various and diverse fields, while Obama remains the Ringmaster of the show.

Partnership is not the only theme, however. Parenting is equally significant, in all its many ramifications. Again, the same three levels occur: the personal, where the presence of loving mothers and fathers is critical to raising healthy children; the social, where good parenting holds families together to protect communities; and the cultural, where mature leadership guides nations toward a better future.

A glance at Obama’s chart reveals three major aspect patterns: one Grand Trine in water signs and two separate T-squares, one fixed and another mutable. Let me briefly discuss the two lesser patterns before returning to the parenting meme of the dominant mutable T-square.

The Grand Trine in water signs is made up of Neptune in the 9th, Chiron in the 1st, and Venus in the 5th. Obama’s personal feelings of love and affection are bonded to a universal sympathy and a special heightened sensitivity to suffering. Evolutionary or karmic astrologers might suggest that Obama carries the imprint of lives lived in isolation or separation from beloveds, with much pain and grief over the sense of somehow having lost his way. Such a mythic background might leave one embittered or otherwise heart-damaged. If healing occurs sufficiently to allow integration or transcendence, then a profound maturity could emerge where love of self and others is concerned, deepened by powerful faith in the invisible connectedness that makes us all One.

As with every astrological interpretation, some truth from each level of symbolic possibility is likely to be carried within the native’s consciousness or habitual programming. In Obama’s public persona, we see none of the pain and loss, although he may carry scars from such experiences internally. What we see is

the intention to live and love in supreme good faith, even to the point of slight exaggeration. Here, as in his Leo Sun and Aquarius rising, Obama tends to be more archetypal than personal.

Neptune is also significant in the fixed T-square as the perpendicular apex of the natal opposition between Mercury in Leo/6th and Jupiter in Aquarius/12th. From the beginning of his ascent to the national political stage, Obama's oratory has been dazzling and charismatic. He is a riveting speaker, broadly inspirational, often brilliantly so, using universal themes of goodness and compassion to call forth the better angels of our natures. In this, Obama is as much preacher as politician. Predictably, given Neptune's occasionally grandiose dreams and Jupiter's sometimes unfounded optimism, Obama has been criticized for lack of hard content in his public speeches. He is frequently accused of offering comforting platitudes without specific plans or practical implementations. Whether true or not, this too is part of Obama's character.

That brings us back to the most important aspect pattern, the mutable T-square between Chiron in the 1st house, Pluto in the 7th, and The Moon on the Lower Heaven in the 4th. To these planets we could add the axis of the Moon's nodes in late Leo/Aquarius and the Midheaven in late Scorpio (ruled by Pluto).

Whereas grand trines are smooth, insular, and self-protective, T-squares are highly energetic, innately imbalanced, and extremely vulnerable. Think of a T-square as a bow (the Mercury-Jupiter opposition) with the bow-string pulled back taut (mutual squares on both sides to Obama's Moon). The orientation of the T-square in time and space indicates a target for release of the pent-up energies at the missing fourth point of the box. That bull's-eye for Obama is the Midheaven and 10th house.

In other words, to productively use the dynamic energies of the T-square, here made volcanic and subterranean by Pluto's presence in the 7th, Obama must climb the ambition ladder as high as he can go. One may well wonder why any sane person would want to be President. In Obama's case, he had no choice, or rather, the choice was already made and fated in his make-up. Whether he succeeds or fails as a visionary leader is less important than Obama's living the experience of ambition and executive power with every fiber of his life-energy and in times of radical collective transformation, which our times are and will increasingly become. Will Obama radicalize himself with the rapids that lie ahead, just around the bend in the river? That may well be the \$64 trillion dollar question.

Obama's Moon, so near his Lower Heaven underfoot in the 4th house, and the release point of the T-square overhead at the Midheaven/10th house tell us in no

uncertain terms that *parenting* is the companion to *partnering* as the two key elements in understanding Obama's psyche.

The Moon *is* the mother's symbol in astrology, and the 4th house is the maternal arena---home, family, and early-life circumstances. Chiron and Pluto square Obama's Moon imply a childhood that was powerfully mother-dominant. This view is given extra weight by the father's symbol, Saturn, occupying the 12th house in Obama's chart (as it is also in George W. Bush's chart). Saturn in the 12th is an indication that the father was somehow missing during childhood imprinting. This could mean literally absent, as in death or divorce, or psychologically neutralized by inaccessibility.

Obama must find a way to climb the mountain all the way to the top. The Midheaven and the 10th house are not only the arena of ambition, career, excellence, and respect. Crucially, they are also the *father's place* in the chart. That is Obama's goal and desination---to occupy the father's place.

While all the brief interpretations in this commentary could be enlarged at length, the ramifications of the dominant-mother/missing-father meme in the charts and lives of George W. Bush and Barack Obama are particularly ripe for further exposition---the obvious meanings and profound subtleties, the similarities and differences in personal reactions, their roles as real fathers of respective pairs of daughters, and the importance of parental mythology in each of their presidencies. All I have space for here is to say that Obama's path toward reconciliation with fatherhood is more straightforward than Bush's. Put very simply, Obama must become for others the strong father figure he did not have in his own childhood.

I don't claim to know what Obama is thinking as he prepares to take office. As an astrologer, I can assert that Obama's presidency will likely begin in maternal mode---with millions of Americans expecting (or at least hoping) that the new President can protect them from harm or loss, fulfill their needs for safety and comfort, and nourish their spirits with magical words of consolation. Assuming that his term of office is uninterrupted by fate or circumstance, the next four years should be for President Obama another layer of his life-journey toward parental balance, from motherhood to fatherhood, from providing reassurances of safety to teaching acceptance of austerity, encouragement toward self-reliance, and inspiration for America to grow up and begin again.

Next month in Part Three of this series, I'll discuss the provocative outer planet transits occurring now in Barack Obama's chart, as well as the mundane cycles unfolding for us all as his administration takes office. Both these astrological levels imply dramatic energies and serious dangers.

This newsletter is free. No subscription fee is charged. Donations are accepted with my gratitude, but making a donation is entirely voluntary, not mandatory.

If you'd like to make a donation, the quickest way is via PayPal. You can send money from a checking account, credit card, or debit card. To make a PayPal donation, click on this link:
<http://tinyurl.com/2n7h3x>

If you wish to send a check by mail, here is my mailing address:
822 1st Street, Florence, OR 97439-9346.

My heartfelt thanks to the many subscribers who have donated. Your support is very much appreciated.

To unsubscribe from the newsletter, simply respond to this email and type the word "unsubscribe" in the header.

My web site -- <http://www.billherbst.com> -- has information about my professional work with clients---fees, scheduling, content, etc.

Please read "Sessions Intro" and "Sessions FAQ." The links are in the upper right corner of my home page.

[© 2009, by Bill Herbst, all rights reserved. Permission is granted by the author to forward this email, but only in its entirety, without additions or deletions of text.]