
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 #111; May 2009

Dear friends,

In contrast to last month's commentary about automobiles, which was a personal memoir and almost entirely non-astrological in content, this month offers the first installment in a two-part commentary concerning a technical issue of great importance to all working astrologers and serious astrological students. This is an abridged version of a longer piece I'm currently working on that I hope to publish later in the year. I'd like to share at least some of what I've written so far. While the essay may hold minimal interest for those readers not well-versed in astrology, the problem it attempts to unravel is personally relevant to the lives of about half the people on the planet.

--Bill Herbst

Commentary: **THE T-SQUARE TRIPTYCH (Part One)**

The dominant theme of the collective archetype field since 2007 and for the next 11 years is revealed in a two-part multi-planetary alignment: first, in the T-square configuration involving Saturn, Uranus, and Pluto (now through 2011), and then in the continuing square between Uranus and Pluto (from 2012 on).

Much has already been written by astrologers about these three planets and their two alignments (this essay is the 27th I've written in my own Uranus-Pluto Newsletter Series.) Even more will be written in the years ahead, because the next decade is dominated by this rare and potent archetype field. The challenges signified by the symbolic push-pull of these outer planets are an ongoing story in civilization and the evolution of our species; however we address the crises in

the decade ahead, our solutions will represent only the setup for the next chapter in the challenges of the 2040s.

When astrologers write about any important multi-planet alignment in the heavens, we usually do so from the perspective of the configuration's collective meaning. But that is not the only way such alignments operate. They also affect individual human charts through the activation of personal transit cycles.

A **personal transit** is a geometric relationship between a moving body in the heavens and a fixed point in a natal chart. That point could be a planetary symbol, an angle (the axes of the horizon or meridian), the nodal axis, or a minor body (asteroids, centaurs, etc.). The most significant transits occur in cycles between slow-moving bodies in the heavens and the most central planets in a given birth chart. Individual transits reveal circumstantial and/or psychological changes along the life-path of any individual, marking the unfoldment through time of the natal mandala. When recognized, patterns of transits show distinct evolutionary chapters in an individual life.

Astrologers learn transits one at a time, which is logical enough. Unfortunately, that method pales during long outer-planet alignments, when a given point in the natal chart may be activated by multiple outer bodies simultaneously, in overlapping fashion, or back-to-back. That is happening now as Saturn, Uranus, and Pluto activate cascades of personal transits in the charts of literally billions of human beings now living on the earth. During such a passage, interpreting transits one at a time is woefully inadequate to the challenge of meaning.

As I've written before, no astrologer I know — including me — truly understands how to interpret the triptych of personal transits resulting from the Saturn-Uranus-Pluto T-square. I assert our ignorance despite the fact that more competent astrologers walk the planet today than ever before in history. Nonetheless, when attempting to explain and interpret the striking transit patterns now at hand, we all struggle. This is especially true among working astrologers, who see this triple whammy again and again in the charts of our clients — clients who want to know what's going on in their charts as the collective world around us comes apart at the seams.

In that light, let me offer two different ways of understanding multiple and conflicting transits to the same natal point. One way is through timing of the transit patterns, including their duration and sequence (the subject of this month's commentary), the other through transit phases (next month's newsletter). Each method provides an extra glimmer of comprehension toward grokking the whole. Each shows the T-square in different dimensions of its operation. They stop short of providing concrete interpretations, however, as that challenge is still beyond the grasp of what can be understood through a

formulaic approach. To get at the core meanings of these triple whammies, we have to examine one chart at a time and synthesize all its associative patterns of signs, houses, and aspects into a coherent whole. Still, the two methods of timing and phase help aim us in the right direction.

Keep in mind that the whole issue of multiple transits to single natal points focuses only on hard angles: conjunctions, first-quarter squares, oppositions, and last-quarter squares. Those are the most dynamic points in the transit cycle. Other transiting aspects — trines, sextiles, inconjuncts, semisquares, sesquiquadrates, and the minor or esoteric aspects, such as quintiles, septiles, and noviles — are excluded.

Timing, Duration, and Sequence

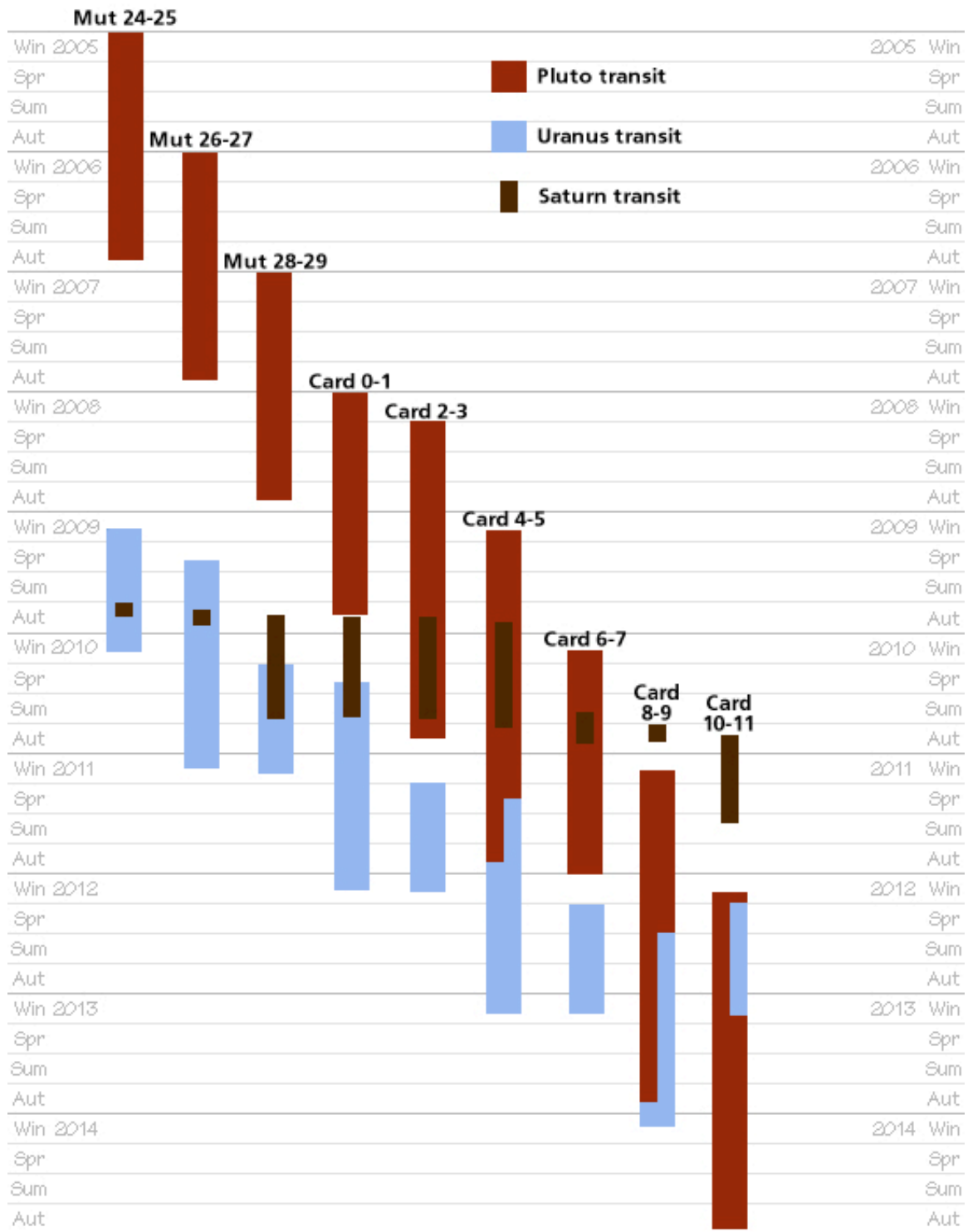
Using the 10° orbs that are standard in Civilizational Astrology, the Saturn-Uranus-Pluto T-square is effective from August, 2009, through August, 2011.

Spans of the zodiac in individual natal charts that are activated by the T-square range from about 24° of mutable signs through 11° of cardinal signs. This includes late Pisces through early Aries, late Gemini through early Cancer, late Virgo through early Libra, and late Sagittarius through early Capricorn. All told, that's 68° (17° times four), or just over 1/6 of the zodiac. Anyone with a natal point anywhere within those four spans gets a triple whammy. Many people get two or three.

Because the outer planets move at different relative speeds through the zodiac, the shaping of the T-square alignment changes over time. Technically, the T-square never achieves a perfect triangle, because Uranus and Pluto don't arrive at their first partile square until 2012, by which time Saturn will have moved well past the orb of triangulation.

The graph on the following page (page 4) shows the timing and duration of personal transits activated by the T-square's outer planets at various degrees of the zodiac.

I'll offer three examples below to illustrate what the graph can reveal.



Example 1: Let's say that John's natal Sun is located at 25° of a mutable sign, which is near the beginning of the affected zodiacal range. To see when his Sun is activated by transits from Pluto, Uranus, and Saturn, we look to the first column on the left side of the graph, which has the header "Mut 24-25" (meaning 24-25° of any mutable sign). We see that his Pluto-Sun transit is effective from about January 2005 through November 2006 (the crimson block). Two years go by. Then, in 2009, both the Uranus-Sun and the Saturn-Sun transits occur, fulfilling the triptych. The Uranus transit is about a year in length, which is standard for three-pass Uranian transits (direct-retrograde-direct). By contrast, the single-pass Saturn transit in September 2009 is only about three weeks long.

Astrology can help John to understand that he's undergoing a four-year transition in his essential life-path. Starting in 2005 and 2006, Pluto destroyed all obstacles in John's way (including perhaps his old life-path itself). That purging was followed by a two-year period, a time of either lying fallow or making progress toward a renewed life-path. Now, in 2009, John is experiencing the crescendo of an electric awakening of his will via the Uranus-Sun transit, either by a revolutionary awakening to a very different and path or by a period of unexpected isolation and singularity, during which he has a chance to feel his own "higher will." As that is happening, Saturn will transit his Sun in September of this year, forcing John to realize what is pragmatically necessary in the seeding and eventual construction of a new life-path.

In terms of three stages, John's Sun at 24° mutable undergoes destruction and purging first, followed by awakening/revolution and pragmatism/necessity, which occur simultaneously.

Example 2: Imagine that Jane's Ascendant is located at 3° of a cardinal sign (Aries, Cancer, Libra, or Capricorn). We find the column in the graph defined as "Card 2-3." Like John, her first transit is from Pluto to the Ascendant. Something about her habitual patterns of self-expression or self-awareness is ruthlessly purged. This destruction is like knocking down a wall and can occur from either of two directions — from outside pressures that cause her defenses to buckle, or from inside as a volcanic eruption of self-expression that blows out the old definitions of self. That occurs in a very long Pluto transit from March 2008 through November 2010.

In the final year of the Pluto transit, 2010, Saturn will transit her Ascendant. Whatever has occurred up to that time will then be countered by the force of reality and necessity. Her challenge then will be to channel the volcanic energies into a constructive direction. Passion may be constrained by Duty.

But wait, a third transit awaits. In spring of 2011, Uranus transits her Ascendant, shocking her awake in ways she for which she may be unprepared even after three years of transformation. Surprise! She may discover that both her Id (Pluto) and her SuperEgo (Saturn) are secondary to the calling of a Higher Will (Uranus).

Example 3: Consider Judy's Jupiter, which is located at 11° of a cardinal sign. We find the column at the far right side of the graph headed "Card 10-11," and we see that here Saturn initiates the three-fold transits, from late 2010 through early summer 2011. This Saturn-Jupiter transit puts a damper on Judy's sense of optimism and limits her opportunities for a full nine months.

Then, six months after Saturn has moved on, Uranus and Pluto will simultaneously transit her natal Jupiter throughout 2012. Suddenly, and without warning, Judy's sense of social propriety will undergo a shocking and profound transformation. Her entire experience of socialization, including her sense of place in society, might explode overnight, robbing her of her former position, but also opening up new and never-before-considered possibilities for social movement.

The Pluto transit to Jupiter will then continue for another two years, through the end of 2014. Judy's basic philosophy of life might be undermined, collapsing to be reborn phoenix-like. She might find a new religion or a passion for social reform. Or she might trade a familiar culture for one more foreign.

The sequence for Judy (and anyone else with a significant natal position at 10-11° of a cardinal sign) is Saturn, then Uranus-Pluto, or constraint and restriction followed by revolution and extreme transformation.

Next month: In Part Two of **The T-square Triptych**, I'll discuss *Phases* as the second illuminator of any trio of the T-square's outer-planet transits.

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