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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 ---

*Issue #119 – February 2010*

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Dear friends,

Last month's newsletter linked the Uranus-Pluto cycle with the evolving consciousness of humanity. This month's Commentary pushes that meaning further and offers an enlarged timeline to allow a longer perspective on the challenges we face.

--Bill Herbst

## Commentary: **The Evolution of Consciousness**

For most of the two million years that have elapsed since humanity's closest ancestors first appeared among the upper primates, the evolution that led to today's human beings was driven by the engine of natural selection through genetic biology. About 40,000 years ago, however, the evolutionary landscape changed dramatically. The humans that walked the earth then were essentially identical to modern human being—the same big brains, very similar bodies, and a nearly identical genetic blueprint.

The glacial pace of physical evolution through natural selection has been overtaken by a new and more dramatic engine of change, one that alters not the physical structure of our bodies, but the consciousness produced by our biological machinery. Over the past 10,000 years, since we gave up our hunter-gatherer small-group orientation and began the cultivation of crops (agriculture) and settlement into villages, towns, and cities, the evolution of consciousness has become the cutting edge of humanity's growth. That process is driven by society, culture, and civilization through the power of shared beliefs to alter human beings.

Of the various cycles that make up the study of collective human evolution in civilizational astrology, the single most profound and potent cycle, and the one most connected to the evolution of consciousness, is Uranus-Pluto. All the long-term, outer-planet paired cycles refer to consciousness in one manner or another, but Uranus-Pluto stands alone as the only cycle whose three activations

per century carry the implications of possible mass awakenings through social movements that emerge unexpectedly from the collective unconscious to galvanize large segments of the population.

All Uranian cycles (i.e., Uranus-Jupiter, Uranus-Saturn, etc.) include the element of *surprise*. Imprinted habits, behavioral routines, programmed rhythms (such as sleep), and other expectations are up for grabs as the *unexpected* breaks through into sudden manifestation. Uranus brings the revolutionary, the brilliant, the eccentric, and the crackpot. Through Uranus, we are exhilarated with the breathtakingly new, but we may also become nauseous from the wrenching disorientation. Other Uranian elements include breaking away from the past, iconoclasm and anti-authoritarian stances, willful insistence on personal freedom and independence, and an inclusive humanitarianism that believes fervently in natural law and social justice.

All Pluto cycles refer to what is normally hidden from view, either secret or buried beneath the level of awareness. The very notion of an unconscious — an unseen and only dimly felt realm that can influence regular life in profound ways — is a relatively new concept that accompanied the discovery of Pluto. Along with invisibility are other elements: raw power, deep and profound change, endings and beginnings, or death and rebirth experiences.

In mythology, Pluto was a fearsome god who ruled the underworld, and whose displays of power were scarcely sweetness and light, but rather dark, blunt, always extreme, and sometimes violent or cruel. In the physical world, radioactivity is an example of deadly power that is invisible. Destruction is a two-way sword, however. It can ravage and harm, but it can also remove unhealthy conditions, allowing renewal. Chemo- or radiation therapy to treat cancer and other tumors are examples of the healing power of destruction. Psychological therapies designed to unearth buried or repressed memories illustrate the same principle.

Combining Uranus and Pluto, we come up with sudden disruptions to the status quo through eruptions involving massive power from unimaginable depths. Oil carries this symbolism, since we drill beneath the ground to get at the fossil fuel in its unrefined state. Similarly, nuclear power (and nuclear weapons) resonate even more to the Uranus-Pluto archetypes, along with earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. The eruptions of Krakatoa in 1883 and Mount St. Helens in 1980 belong in this category. At the level of human and social psychology, Uranus-Pluto represents unexpected mass movements that alter existing patterns of consciousness, both individual and shared.

The dark side of Uranus-Pluto has many ripe examples: domination based upon the idea of superiority (racial cleansings, sweatshops and other excesses of capitalism, violently forced conformity in socialism) illegitimate control of resources or concentrations of money and power, all abuses of authority (rigged elections, back-room deals, lies, police brutality, political assassinations or imprisonments, kangaroo courts, pogroms, and every manner of corruption). War and impassioned murder are Martian; cold-blooded murder is Uranian-Plutonian. Nothing quite encapsulates the dark side of Uranus-Pluto as neatly as

the famous gag line from Monty Python: "*No one expects the Spanish Inquisition!!!*"

The "illuminated" side of Uranus-Pluto is equally simple, and closer to the dark side than one might think. Only the outcome is changed. Old beliefs, outmoded ways of being, or constricted limits are ruthlessly destroyed through unexpected shocks that provoke us to awaken from unconscious, compulsively-driven, or fantasy-based states of belief or routine. The excitement and exhilaration of new-found freedom erases our habitual fear of imprisonment, pain, or humiliation.

Less becomes more as loss leads to gain. Whether we previously bore no responsibilities and felt no purpose or were saddled with the crushing weight of too many burdens, our awakening leads us to the natural level of our true responsibility, where we carry the concerns that correctly go with our life-paths, and do so gladly, with full hearts.

### **Uranus-Pluto and History**

As a paired cycle, Uranus-Pluto is one of the new kids on the block. In fact, all the cycles involving Pluto and any other moving body are in the group of newest paired archetypes. Why *new*? Because the trans-Saturnian outer planets were discovered so recently (Uranus in 1781, Neptune in 1846, and Pluto in 1930). This means that we began tracking the Uranus-Pluto cycle in 1930, along with all the other Plutonian cycles. We can't track what we don't know exists, and, prior to that year, we didn't know of the existence of the cycle nor the timing of its alignments.

But wait. Does our ignorance of the existence of these astronomical bodies and their shared cycles mean that their alignments cannot be traced back and correlated with historical events in human civilization? No, they certainly can be traced back, and astrologers concerned with humanity's collective history do that very thing.

For instance, consider the American and French revolutions, which occurred sequentially, back to back, and were fomented by radical social ideas that emerged in The Enlightenment concerning the Rights of Man. One of these two revolutions succeeded in the creation of a representative democracy; the other succeeded briefly but devolved quickly into the Napoleonic dictatorship. Tracing back the Uranus-Pluto cycles reveals that the American revolution was waged *between* activations of Uranus-Pluto, during a relative lull. By contrast, the most extreme and violent phase of the French revolution, called the Reign of Terror from 1793-1795, happened precisely during the most exact period of a Uranus-Pluto opposition.

On the other hand, while the signature of unknown planetary archetypes can be found with hindsight in correlations with past historical events, the participants in those events had considerably less potential for integrating the experiences successfully into a pattern of emerging consciousness. Why? Because at the

time, the archetypes were still buried in the collective unconscious. They represented eruptions, like flying fish, who make their presence seen and felt momentarily by leaping out of the water, but who then return just as quickly to their murky aquatic depths. In other words, human beings may compulsively act out many archetypal symbols from unknown or undiscovered realms, but we don't learn much from the experiences. Like unripened fruit, they are difficult to digest and usually fail to nourish us. Like visiting an exotic city or suffering a serious illness in childhood, they leave memories that did not imprint with clarity and are only dimly remembered in later adulthood.

This is not to suggest that quarterly activations of the Uranus-Pluto cycle occurring *after* the discovery of both Uranus and Pluto will necessarily be conscious events. They are not *innately* conscious. By the very definition of these two archetypes, such activations represent sudden and unexpected disruptions of collective human experience that erupt dramatically like volcanic magma spewed from the depths of the unconscious. However, when both symbols are already recognized as part of the lexicon of human psychology, the shared experiences with which their activations correspond are less likely to be mere aberrations that fade afterwards, but instead act as *challenges* to collective humanity to raise our consciousness permanently to develop a new and sustained understanding of our lives and all life on this planet. In short, they offer humanity the chance to become wiser in our consciousness, by shucking old misunderstandings that diminish our fellowship with others and embracing new approaches to improved sharing in both our human and earthly families.

## **Two Centuries, Five Chapters**

In the 80 years since Pluto's existence was confirmed as the tenth largest body in direct orbit around the Sun, two significant Uranus-Pluto alignments occurred, with a third such alignment about to occur from 2012-2015. The initial two configurations, now past, carried global repercussions. The third should out-do the first two in depth of meaning and will be followed by two further Uranus-Pluto alignments before the end of the 21st century.

### **1930s – Uranus square Pluto**

last quarter square (3/4 through a 115-year cycle)  
Uranus in Aries 90° behind Pluto in Cancer  
5 exact passes from Apr 1932 to Jan 1934  
affected zodiacal degrees: 21-25° cardinal  
Apr 1928 to Jan 1937 – 9-year effective period (10° orb)

### **1960s – Uranus conjunct Pluto**

new phase (beginning of a 139-year cycle)  
Uranus and Pluto together in Virgo  
3 exact passes from Oct 1965 to Jun 1966  
affected zodiacal degrees: 17-18° mutable  
Oct 1961 to Jul 1970 – 9-year effective period (10° orb)

### **2010s – Uranus square Pluto**

first-quarter square (one-quarter through the 139-year cycle)  
Uranus in Aries 90° ahead of Pluto in Capricorn  
7 exact passes from Jun 2012 to Mar 2015  
affected zodiacal degrees: 7-16° cardinal  
May 2007 to Mar 2020 – 13-year effective period (10° orb)

### **2040s – Uranus oppose Pluto**

full phase (halfway through the 139-year cycle)  
Uranus in Virgo opposite Pluto in Pisces  
5 exact passes from Sep 2046 to Jun 2048  
affected zodiacal degrees: 4-8° mutable  
Sep 2043 to Jul 2051 – 8-year effective period (10° orb)

### **2070s – Uranus square Pluto**

last-quarter square (3/4 through the 139-year cycle)  
Uranus in Capricorn 90° behind Pluto in Aries  
5 exact passes from Feb 2073 to Oct 2074  
affected zodiacal degrees: 6-9° cardinal  
Jan 2070 to Nov 2077 – 8-year effective period (10° orb)

Considered together as a group, the five alignments tell a story of monumental reform and radical change in the ways humanity approaches its own life and all life on earth. The story revolves around renewed definitions of freedom and responsibility, most especially in the arenas of economics and wealth, and carries the challenge of increased empathy as a necessary basis for greater wisdom in human activity and impact on each other and the world of which we are a part.

In the 34 previous Commentaries I've written since 2005 in the Uranus-Pluto series, this is the first time I've given details about Uranus-Pluto alignments beyond the 2010s. I include the two additional configurations of the 2040s and 2070s now for three reasons.

The first is the need to establish a template for coming challenges in collective consciousness, both near and further off, to which I will refer time and time again in newsletters of the next two years and beyond. This template allows discussion of the present not merely as a natural outcome of past events, but also as the logical precursor that will provide background and shape for future eruptions of necessary human change. The present — meaning specifically the emerging crises of the 2010s — is determined not only by what has come before, but also by those as-yet-unfelt challenges that are scheduled to arise further out in the future.

Another reason I include the 2040 and 2070 Uranus-Pluto alignments is that they represent the second half of the 139-year cycle that started with the 1960s conjunction. An interior consistency exists within and between all four quarters of the current Uranus-Pluto cycle, and I need to begin including all four in my writing.

My final reason for adding Uranus-Pluto alignments that will form much later in this new century has to do with the benefits of longer-term perspective to

counter the debilitating power of emotional fears. A little knowledge can easily become a very slippery slope. As increasing numbers of people become more aware of the extent and seriousness of the mess we humans have made, especially over the past two centuries' Industrial Revolution, the likelihood increases that a percentage of those people have already fallen or will fall into dreadful anxiety about the future. Some of them feel despair about humanity's collective future; others succumb to despondency concerning their own personal futures.

Civilization is not coming to an end, just the mistaken and childish directions we've been on for quite awhile. The challenging, difficult, and sometimes agonizing work to reform and rebuild healthier families and societies, to create better, more sustainable models for commerce and finance, and to evolve into responsible shepherds of the ecosphere that supports us and all life begins in the 2010s. The decade we have just entered will serve us notice that our collective childhood and disturbed adolescence must end.

The Uranus-Pluto conjunction of the 1960s brought our species' first baby steps toward a new and better world. The 2010s are only the second step, where we leave adolescence and accept the enlarged responsibilities of young adulthood. The 2040s and 2070s will take the work further, into full adulthood and senior maturity. Our collective performance throughout the century will reveal whether we are indeed operating with sufficiently enlarged empathy and wisdom, as well as renewed reverence.

One step at a time.

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