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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 #121 – April 2010*

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Dear friends,

Many earlier commentaries in my Uranus-Pluto series of newsletters dealt with the history of the past two centuries. Having just recently established a longer time-line for Uranus-Pluto activations, I now want to gradually turn my attention to a discussion of the work the lies ahead of us over the next century. I know no better way to initiate that turn than by writing about Pluto.

--Bill Herbst

## Commentary: **PLUTO: Rooting Out Our Deepest Problems**

When I began to study astrology in 1970, the existence of then outermost planet Pluto had been known to astronomers for only 40 years. Its symbolism in astrology, however, was already well-established, if not yet fully refined. Pluto's astrological meanings included emotional intensity, psychological extremism, behavioral dominance or submission, absolutist attitudes or fanatical beliefs, radical change, profound endings and beginnings, and death-experiences followed by phoenix-like risings from the ashes. Plutonian disruptions emerge usually after a long period of invisible development. They are provoked by confrontations with irresistible power — either psychological disruption, as eruptions from the personal unconscious, or literally circumstantial challenges, when force majeure in the collective is arrayed against an individual life.

One example of such a confrontation could be the state dictating confiscation through forced sale of an individual's home under the eminent domain laws concerning private property requisitioned for public works. A less tangible example might be the long-term repercussions of obsessive-compulsive drives and habits in a person's life, where we meet the seemingly insurmountable enemy of ourselves. The most classic Plutonian events involve the end of a path of experience through the death of a relationship. Sometimes that means the actual death of a partner, family member, or beloved, but more often it takes the form of symbolic rather than literal death through dissolution of the partnership and formal separation of the partners.

Any significant ending involving a radical change in status can apply: retirement from a career, last visit to a cherished vacation spot, emigration to a new country, even release from prison. The method here is not invariably the deterioration of good situations to bad. The change could just as easily be from bad to good, for improvements can be as disorienting as downturns. The piously puritanical minister caught with the hooker in his hotel room is certainly a Plutonian fall from grace, but so is the trailer park single mother lottery-winner whose life is turned upside down overnight. What Pluto assassinates is our habitual expectation that reality will be — and stay — a certain way. The prisoner who has adjusted to years of incarceration with all its regimented rules may be profoundly disturbed by his parole or release back to the relative freedom of outside society, where the rules are unclear and freedom may be felt as nauseating chaos. In these ironic twists, Pluto reveals its love of the strange and perverse. Normalcy is not a Plutonian realm.

Now, another 40 years has passed since 1970. Sweeping advances and innumerable discoveries in astronomy have resulted in Pluto's demotion from a full planet to the reduced status of a "dwarf" planet, while elevating Pluto's moon Charon to the same level of dwarf. The two bodies are often considered a binary object or double dwarf. This change in designation was chosen for various reasons, including more accurate assessments of Pluto's mass (only 1/20th that of Mercury) and the presence of a whole class of other similar Kuiper Belt Objects (KBOs), now called *Plutinos*. Turns out that Pluto is not the final planet in the system, but the doorway to a whole new class of planetary objects.

Similarly, 40 years have refined my understanding of Pluto, largely through the direct experience of doing 11,000 astrological sessions with individuals. Such anecdotal experience may not be scientific, but it gives me a unique professional database that goes far beyond the typical textbook recitation of Plutonian meanings.

For instance, I know now that in natal astrology Pluto often operates as a psychological blind spot. Individuals frequently cannot "feel" their own Pluto positions, although others outside the individual feel and see the expressions of that person's Plutonian intensity. It's a kind of hide-and-seek where the ego doesn't acknowledge expression of the unconscious directly into the outer world without the ego's mediation. We know intellectually through study of our charts and conversation with those who know us well that we are more intense or dominant in certain arenas of life (houses occupied or ruled by Pluto)

Similarly, major Pluto transits do not manifest uniformly in the lives of individuals, especially in youth and young adulthood, when they may not manifest at all, or, at least, not with the sheer force of eruptions later in life. In addition, I have found no chart factors that accurately and reliably predict when Pluto transits will manifest fully, partially, or not at all. While I may have a hunch about this with some clients during certain Pluto transits, with other clients during other transits it's a complete crapshoot.

Memory can be more selective than manifestation. I've asked many clients what happened in their lives during important Plutonian periods. Admittedly, these

periods are sometimes decades past, and people can be forgiven for not having instant recall of specific years. Still, when I ask clients what happened during say, the three-year period of 1991-1994, the response of silence on the other end of the phone is slightly disconcerting. Even more disconcerting, however, is to receive an email the next day from that same client, informing me that once she thought about those years for awhile, she remembered some major events: death of both her parents, one after the other, a miscarriage followed by a divorce, and then finally a move from one coast to the other to begin a new job. And, let me assure you, men are as likely as women to forget.

Curiously enough, while that hypothetical example may be particularly extreme, it is not rare. About one in four of my clients has some trouble recalling periods of profound Plutonian change. Apparently, something in us does not like cataclysmic change in our lives, which are better banished from instant recall to the cold storage of deep memory banks.

The last special insight I'd like to include here is critical: In some textbooks, Plutonian change through the death-rebirth process is made even more important through the addition of at least the sense of *finality*, as if Pluto were the ultimate step in life's rich drama, the last stop on the journey of evolution. But, as we saw in the astronomical revision of Pluto's status from last planet to doorway into a new class of objects, that is not true. Plutonian change may *feel* final during the death phase, where the devastation to one's identity can seem total. Even the rebirth phase is not infallible, and when it does occur may take longer and progress slower than most people would like. In reality, Plutonian transformation is only one more phase in the evolutionary chain. A big one, obviously, but hardly a final one.

This idea is relevant to civilizational astrology in a direct way that immediately opens to fan across a broad spectrum of realization. Pluto is not the end of the road, but is instead a gateway into new and kaleidoscopic possibilities for consciousness to operate. Welcome to the Kuiper Belt. Rather than our last chance to get something right, Pluto may indeed represent our first chance to shine light into the darkness to illuminate what's been buried in our unconscious, both personally and collectively, in the form of simplistic misunderstandings and wrong-headed assumptions, whether they were coded in our genes or shaped by our social beliefs.

Like a truffle-rooting pig, Pluto finds and reveals the most powerful facets of human potential. Like a Geiger counter, Pluto registers our radioactivity. Unconcerned with morality and human conceptions of right and wrong, Pluto searches only for potency, affirming whatever it finds — good or evil, light or dark, beautiful or ugly. Unlike other, more circumscribed or civilized planetary symbols, Pluto is uniquely endowed to teach us about ourselves by revealing what we are capable of doing — to ourselves, to each other, and to life around us. Society, which has taken over from bio-genetics as the engine driving human evolution, must then use that knowledge to encourage or reevaluate different parts of the human psyche. For instance, we need no further encouragement of human aggression, since civilization already expresses more than we can handle of that quality.

As we teeter on the brink of self-annihilation, I daresay that not one of the inherent, core problems of humanity has yet been addressed in our evolution as a species. In partnership with Uranus, Pluto will change that. While we wait for Pluto and Uranus to reach critical mass in 2012 and "officially" begin the process of revolutionary transformation (as opposed to the ruling elites' current doomed efforts to resuscitate a failed and comatose status quo), I intend to devote a number of upcoming commentaries to the effort of identifying the specific nature of at least some of these as-yet-unaddressed core problems of humanity.

I feel confident that readers will resonate positively and in agreement with many of the problematic issues and solutions I put forth. On the other hand, some sacred cows are likely to be sacrificial victims of my pen, so not everyone will be likely to approve of all my changes. In addition, I invite readers to email me with changes you feel are essential to humanity's making it through the 21st century at least relatively intact. I'd also appreciate any thoughts you have about how such changes might be put into place. (I can't promise to respond, since health and energy are in short supply for me, but if I receive enough emails that are thoughtful and interesting over the coming months, I will publish a "Best of... Reader Solutions to What Ails Us" edition of the newsletter.)

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