

*astrological-cultural-spiritual-political
views & commentary...*

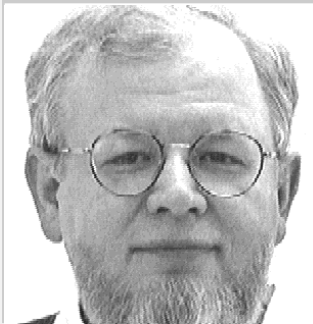
*Issue #49
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THE HERBST NEWSLETTER



Thoughts, dates, & 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,

Rather than offering a single main dish, this month's newsletter will be a quartet of smaller servings, like a smorgasbord of hors d'oeuvres, a sampler of appetizers, or perhaps a potpourri of tasty insights. Hopefully you'll find at least one that hits the spot.

So welcome to the New Year's Grab-Bag.

1. MERCURY RETROGRADE (December 17th - January 22nd)

What? Another one? So soon after the last one?

Well, yes, that's how it works. Mercury retrogrades occur, on average, three times a year and are effective for more than five weeks each time, which amounts to almost a third of our lives. For relativity, however, consider that we spend one-third of every day sleeping, yet no one complains about that as wasted time. So think of Mercury retrograde as another pause that refreshes, a natural sabbatical from the ongoing struggle to move forward, to be productive, to push the boulder up the mountain.

Take a break from all that damned effort. Think of Mercury retrograde as recess from the hard work of rationality, planning, and decisions. Like a Calgon bath for your mind. Sink into the bubbles. Don't fight it, flow with it.

We've been in this current Mercury retro effect since December 17th, which was when the two-week setup phase began, so we're already almost halfway through the whole period, which will end officially on January 22nd.

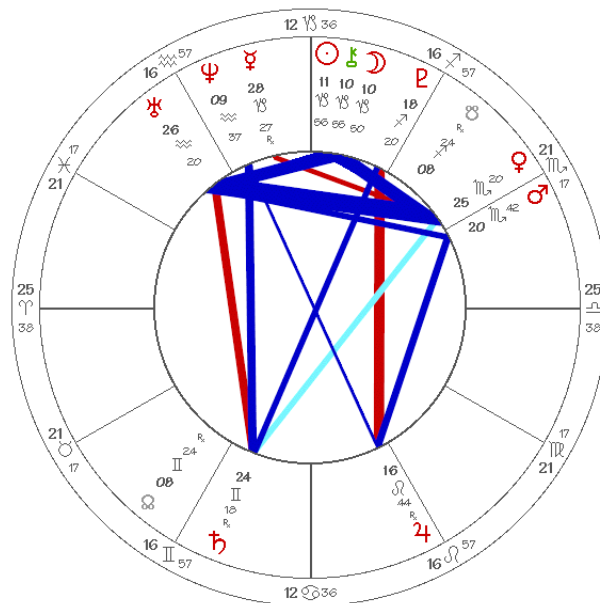
This one's in Capricorn, which means (among other things) that we should slow down in our ambitions and career drives. Let the rat race go on without you right now. Think about your father and chew on what his life means or meant to you. Meanwhile, get off the interstate, slow down, and take the scenic drive.

Reconsider all the duty and discipline in your life. Do what you have to, but let go of the rest. Go back and clean up old, unfinished messes at work. Don't bet the farm on any big financial decisions. Take a sick day or two to go out and play in the crisp winter air. Yeah, John Henry was a steel-drivin' man, but look what it got him. Put down that hammer and go get a massage.

OK, so schedules will get screwed-up and communications will misfire. So what? That's just Mother Nature's way of telling us to slow down and smell the roses.

Yes, our fears, doubts, and pessimism will tend to rise to the surface. Let them. It's all part of the emotional cleansing, like a psychic colonic. In alternative medicine, that's called a "healing crisis," where symptoms worsen because toxins are being released. Well, fears and doubts are psychological toxins. Acknowledge their passing through and let them go.

Take a deep breath. Now slowly let it out, all the way. Feel the emptiness for a second or two, then take in another breath. See? That's not so hard. During the Mercury retrograde, spend a little time each day being conscious of your body. Sit with it, walk with it. Listen to what it's telling you. And don't worry about what's going on in your mind.



Mercury Retrograde Station

2 January 2003, 12:20 pm CST

Minneapolis, Minnesota

This particular Mercury retrograde occurs just two hours before the January 2nd New Moon (at 2:24 p.m. CST), with the Sun and Moon tightly conjunct Chiron at the focus of a mini-square pattern involving Mars and Venus in Scorpio square Uranus in Aquarius. Wow! The implications are provocative, especially for friendships and intimacy.

Many of us will experience changes in our affections this month. Existing relationships carrying unhealed wounds between partners may erupt into pain, perhaps even breaking, while new contacts could emerge that bring the promise of healing. Both these changes will tend to occur suddenly, without warning, and with surprising intensity.

Try not to dwell on your past troubles with others, and don't struggle to restore lost harmony. This is a time where relationships either work or they don't, with precious little middle ground. Instead, put down confusion and difficulty with others. Move away from blocked sharing and flow toward wherever new love beckons. Disengage your rational mind and let your heart guide your healing.

2. GEOPOLITICS (Mars Square Uranus)

On the collective front, things are heating up again. What began last August when the Sun passed Mars in Leo while both of them opposed Uranus is now coming to the next phase. On January 12th, Mars will be 90° from Uranus (which astrology calls a “square” relationship—a crisis of conflict), with both planets aligned within one degree of the axis of November’s lunar eclipse. This means that the extremely aggressive, radical energies whomped up last summer will reach the point of expression into the physical. Something’s got to give soon.

A lot more is on the way in this geopolitical Gunfight at the OK Corral, and it’s fairly drastic astrologically. Every month from now through next August (with the exception of March) has significant and further triggers for the energy that emerged last August. I’ll write about each trigger as it happens (sort of like live reports from an astrological CNN).

This particular trigger in January—Mars square Uranus—means that the setup is done, the preparations are finished, and the people with their fingers on the literal triggers are getting itchy. Impatience and a desire for sudden, rash action are likely to be felt. While we can hope that cool heads and warm hearts will prevail over the next weeks and months, escalation can be expected.

This doesn’t mean that anything big will happen on January 12th—that’s not how cycles work. The trigger points themselves aren’t that significant, but the tone of the force field changes as we pass through the triggers into the next phase. So from mid-January on, we’re no longer just calling up the energy from the well. The bucket is now full enough that somebody will want to do something with all that explosive potential by directing it into concrete form. The Mercury retrograde may delay the physical manifestation, but this month is like lighting the fuse.

The world can ill afford another apocalypse of violence, so I continue to stand for sanity and compassion while I pray for peace.

3. ASTROLOGICAL ANSWERS

Can astrology provide answers to our questions? Yes, it can—sometimes with breathtaking simplicity. But these are not usually the “easy” answers that some people seek. If such easy answers existed, we would have found them already.

No, the deeper value of astrology does not lie in “answers” at all. The value comes from the way astrology describes the paradoxes and contradictions of our lives and of human life in general, and the clarity it offers in helping us discover who we are, how we’re built, and where we’re similar to or different from others.

In the journey toward self-understanding, astrology is a map to guide us through the maze of our own inner highways, past the cacophony of conflicting inner voices we all have, to reach a deeper place inside ourselves, closer to our mysterious core, where the voices are calmer and more quiet, and the road we’re traveling stretches out to infinity.

Astrology provides eloquent, tantalizing clues to the riddles over which we all puzzle. It shows what’s connected to what in each of us, how those connections operate, and when the meanings will manifest themselves in our lives.

And *that* can be very valuable information to know.

4. ON FANTASY

Fantasy is make-believe.

For children, fantasy is essential, part of their basic inner mechanism for constructing a grid to perceive the outer world.

For adults, fantasy is any escape from the harsh realities of life—from pain and suffering; from boredom; or from the fact that ultimately we cannot answer any of our fundamental questions about life. Fantasy eases the despair of our not being able to know who created this universe or understand what it is for.

Fantasy is what we use for solace from our overwhelming ignorance. Like all pain relievers, it is best used judiciously, during emergencies, and for temporary relief only. Do not exceed the recommended daily dosage, and do not operate heavy machinery during use.

Religion is fantasy, as are all systems of metaphysics. Philosophies are fantasies, including justice, morality, and ethics. Movies and television are fantasies. Just about everything ever written is fantasy, including what I'm writing here. Romance is obviously a fantasy, as illustrated by countless Country-and-Western songs.

These and other fictions provide us with momentary comfort, necessary hope, and blessed relief from the more dreadful aspects of life, which are altogether more than any of us can bear.

Fantasies are not true, of course, but truth and lies are relevant only to reality and have nothing to do with our dreams, which exist in the realm of imagination. If there are rules, our fantasies don't pay any attention to them.

The occasional and limited use of fantasy complements reality quite nicely, softening its sharp edges and opening up its possibilities. On the other hand, the habitual abuse of fantasy leads back to an inevitable and unpleasant confrontation with jagged, jarring reality.

So honor your fantasies, enjoy them, use them to cross-fertilize reality and make it better, but, like all the rest of your toys, put your fantasies away when you're finished playing with them. Otherwise, someone may trip over them.



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