

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

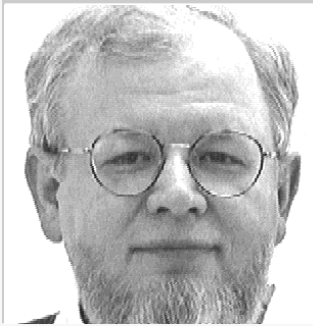
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THE HERBST NEWSLETTER



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,

Since the Democrats have finished their dog-and-pony show in Boston, where they spent millions of dollars trying to appeal to a tiny number of swing voters, it seems a good time during the shadow phase of Mercury retrograde to air my thoughts on John Kerry and the question of what to do in the coming November election.

—Bill Herbst

THE KERRY QUESTION

John Kerry is a study in contradictions.

As the privileged scion of a wealthy Boston family, Kerry was educated at exclusive private schools in Europe. After graduating from Yale (where, like George Bush, he was a Skull and Bones member), Kerry enlisted in the military and fought in Vietnam, where he was wounded and decorated for bravery. Upon returning to civilian life, Kerry morphed into an anti-war activist, participating conspicuously in protests and even testifying somewhat famously against our military involvement in Vietnam before a Congressional Committee.

After serving a stint as a prosecutor, Kerry was elected to the office of Massachusetts' junior Senator. There he straddled many fences, supporting both defense spending and environmental protection. Ranked by some Congressional watchdog groups as having the most liberal voting record in the U.S. Senate, Kerry nonetheless lives like a rich patrician, flying private planes, sailing luxury boats, relaxing in sumptuous vacation homes—a lifestyle made possible in part because of his back-to-back marriages to extremely rich women.

Kerry was the clear frontrunner among early Democratic candidates for President, but his campaign was upstaged and nearly demolished by Howard Dean. Written off, Kerry fired his closest advisors and hurtled back into the lead after Dean's meltdown in Iowa. Having secured nomination as the Democrats' candidate, President Bush's Republican campaign has gone to great lengths (and spent tens of millions of dollars in advertising) to paint Kerry as an indecisive waffler who changes his positions with the winds of public opinion.

So, is John Kerry anti-war or pro-war? Is he a liberal or a centrist Democrat? Is his populism authentic, or is he just another ambitious, rich member of the Beltway elite?

What can astrology tell us about these apparent paradoxes? Who is the “real” John Kerry?

That Kerry was born on December 11th, 1943, in Denver, Colorado, is certain. His birth time, however, is less sure. Astrologers have used two different birth-times: either 7:10 a.m. or 8:03 a.m. MWT. The latter time has recently come into favor, so I will use that chart for this essay.

The salient attributes of John Kerry’s birth chart are listed below. For those newsletter readers who are non-astrologers or otherwise bewildered by astro-jargon, feel free to skip this section. If you are a student of astrology, however, this list summarizes the factors of Kerry’s chart in what I regard as the order of their importance in shaping his character:

- *Sun conjunct Ascendant in mid-Sagittarius/1st house*
- *Full moon birth with the Moon in mid-Gemini/7th house (two hours before the exact moment of the full moon)*
- *Saturn also in Gemini/7th conjunct Moon and opposite Sun*
- *Neptune in Libra elevated one degree from the Midheaven*
- *Mercury in Capricorn/1st house tightly square Neptune*
- *Jupiter (the ruler of Kerry’s Sun and Ascendant) in late Leo/9th house nearly unaspected (only a distant sextile to Saturn connects Jupiter to the rest of the chart)*
- *Mars conjunct Uranus in early Gemini/6th house, trine Neptune*
- *Chiron in mid-Virgo/9th house forming a potent T-square to the Sun and Moon*
- *Venus in early Scorpio/11th house, square Pluto in Leo/8th house. (Venus is also tensely connected to the Sun-Moon opposition by semisquare and sesquiquadrate)*
- *Pluto conjunct Moon’s north node on the 2nd/8th house nodal axis*
- *Finger of God configuration involving Mercury sextile Venus, with both inconjunct to Uranus*

John Kerry is motivated by two fundamental and contradictory drives. First and foremost is the urge for spontaneous self-expression that is kinetic, optimistic, and socially idealistic. Kerry intentionally wants to be everyone’s friend and to do good in the world. He is driven to win all the merit badges he can, a true boy scout helping old ladies across the street (whether or not they want to go).

And yet, Kerry’s spontaneity is juxtaposed to (and often blocked by) equally powerful needs for recognition and acceptance by others. This is not so much an overt fear of rejection as it is a more subtle insecurity that influences his style. The zestful enthusiasm of Kerry’s basic ebullience is held down, limited dramatically by an unconscious push toward gravitas. Kerry feels that he must impress others with his prodigious authority. The ponderous weight of that “fatherly” responsibility slows Kerry’s self-expression, rendering it heavier and more somber.

Personally warm and sincere (to a fault, almost embarrassingly so), Kerry can seem downright cold in his public persona. His unconscious need to project seriousness can reduce him to wooden pomposity. Kerry’s nature is inherently much friendlier than President Bush’s, yet George W. comes off as “down home” and socially engaging—a real “good ole boy.” By contrast, John Kerry is stiff and formal. Bush’s less attractive defenses are hidden and reside within, while Kerry’s are right out front.

While neither President George W. Bush nor John Kerry are particularly introspective individuals in their psychological makeup, Bush has an inner dream world of archetypes so compelling that he has trouble distinguishing subjective fantasy from objective reality. Also, President Bush cares little for the opinions of others, except his small cadre of personal advisors. Kerry, on the other hand, lives almost entirely in the external world of real facts and debate, where he constantly weighs others’ opinions against his own. In short, Kerry represents “decision by committee,” whereas Bush is a law unto himself.

Born near dawn with both Sun and Ascendant in Sagittarius, Kerry wants to pursue, discover, and tell the truth (qualities conspicuously lacking in President Bush). This quest for truth, however, is complicated by other factors in his chart. Though Kerry values honesty, the Gemini stellium and Mercury-Neptune square undercut the clarity of his speaking. Simple, direct verbal expression is not Kerry's forte.

Curiously, the fact that Kerry is almost certainly smarter and harder working mentally than President Bush does not win him points in the campaign. For all the jokes made about George W.'s confused mangling of language and apparently dulled intellect, Bush is finally a more effective communicator. Astrologically, the President disregards facts and appeals powerfully to the emotions of his audiences by hammering buzzwords, while Kerry struggles to overcome a debilitating academic distance. Too often, Kerry's attempts at lofty inspiration come off as platitudes or pontification. Neither candidate has anything even remotely resembling verbal charisma, but—amazingly enough—Bush is actually the less boring of the two. (Personally, watching either of them speak causes me pain. I dive for the remote and change channels as quickly as my fingers can press the buttons.)

The accusation of "flip-flopping" that's been leveled against Kerry by the Republican machinery is an obvious astrological trait of the full moon Gemini birth. In my opinion, however, that attribute is not a failing but a strength, and one of the saving graces of Kerry's candidacy. If elected, he will listen to other opinions and change his positions and policies to reflect a consensus.

When Bush says, "You're either with us or against us," he means it, and thus his administration is correctly characterized as unilateral. When Kerry speaks of restoring our international partnerships, he means it, and thus foreign policy under a Kerry administration would be a horse of a very different color. This alone lobbies strongly for Kerry's election, since America is now largely hated around the world, and that dangerous condition would no doubt worsen under four more years of Bush's cowboy diplomacy.

Where Bush and Kerry are the same, however, is in their total devotion to the dominating power of the American empire. The endless flap over Bush's questionable service in the National Guard versus Kerry's status as a decorated Vietnam veteran is essentially bogus, just political in-fighting. Neither man has any intention of pulling our troops out of Iraq, nor of limiting the global shadow of 192 American military bases in 87 countries, nor of reducing our \$500 billion annual budget to feed the gaping maw of the military-industrial complex. In this, both Bush and Kerry are hardcore hawks. Kerry has already stated his intention if elected to send more troops to Iraq "if necessary." He has also said that he will significantly increase the number of permanent standing troops in the armed forces, presumably to allow America to continue stomping around the planet in seven-league boots.

That's what most impresses me about John Kerry's chart, and it's not a positive impression. While one can easily see in the chart the signature of liberal leanings toward protecting the environment and maintaining some semblance of social equity through progressive taxation or national health care, there's no getting around the fact that Kerry's chart reveals him to be essentially a conservative who supports the status quo.

Astrologically, Kerry's wish to be President is long-held. With Neptune on the Midheaven, we might conclude that his ambition is altruistic, but other factors (Pluto on the north node and Jupiter unaspected in Leo) make that doubtful. His impulses toward honor and integrity have some authenticity chart-wise, but they are leavened against smarmier self-aggrandizing through whatever means possible. Kerry's desire to be top dog and the center of attention is well-documented. In itself, the crassness of his ambition doesn't disqualify Kerry for the job of being President, but it leaves something of a bad taste in my mouth.

Unlike George Bush, whose megalomania grew out of the misguided but sincere humility of religious inspiration, John Kerry is a certified egotist. In his own mind, Bush is merely the guy God chose for the mission of "good crushing evil." Kerry has always been his very own mythic hero, someone who never misses a chance to feather his career nest and pad his resume. The probability that Kerry offers at least relative sanity (which cannot be said with certainty about President Bush) does not ennoble his coveting of collective power and personal privilege.

Is John Kerry a man who will stand up to the big-money lobbying of special interests and challenge the further corporate domination of our government and society? Hardly. He is one of the prime beneficiaries of that elitist plutocracy, and—like most of the elected representatives in Washington—Kerry is unlikely to bite the hands that feed him.

For those who believe as I do that the juggernaut of big business has kidnapped America and represents a more serious threat to our culture than Islamic fundamentalism, Kerry would be just another in the continuing line of Presidents—from Reagan through Bush the elder through Clinton to Bush the younger—all of whom have willfully served up a feast for corporate pigs at the trough. Carving up America for profit alone, our multinational behemoths with their offshore tax havens and branded sports stadiums are sucking the soul out of this country. They now own the government. No President or Congress will stand against that dark tide.

So we must face unpleasant facts. John Kerry has been certified by the Democratic party as the “Anybody” in “Anybody But Bush.” Don’t be fooled, however—it’s not just Democrats who want Bush out of the White House. People from across the political spectrum disdain the radical-reactionary policies of the current administration: True conservatives loathe Bush’s profligate spending and budget-busting deficits; libertarians are shocked at the dismantling of personal freedom by the draconian, police-state Patriot Act; and anyone with a beating heart is saddened to watch the dismantling of the middle class through rising costs of housing, healthcare, and education, not to mention tax cuts that overwhelmingly reward the wealthiest minority of our society.

Those who oppose Bush also include people:

- * who are for peace—not only true pacifists, but anyone opposed to immoral, unjust wars of aggression and domination, most especially by our own government*
- * who are pro-choice—favoring a woman’s right to control her own body*
- * who stand for something other than the continuing megacorporate mantra of “profits over people” and who long for a government that is at least slightly responsive to the will of the public rather than the deep-pocket cash of corporations*
- * who feel that human nature is sufficiently flawed and corruptible as to make the “free market” ideology of wholesale deregulation and privatizing of every resource formerly held in commonwealth a prescription for ecological and cultural disaster*
- * who believe that laws should apply to everyone equally and that at least some leveling of the playing field is necessary to safeguard our society from returning to the feudal state of the ultrarich owning everything and lording over an increasingly impoverished population*
- * who think that government should be secular and that religion or spirituality are rightly private concerns rather than governmental public policy*
- * who see clearly that the exclusively military pursuit of the “war on terrorism” is wrong-headed and destined to fail without substantive reform of the last 50 years of bullying American foreign policy*
- * who feel that the struggle to tell the hard truth, however difficult, is preferable to settling for easy lies and comforting illusions*

The problem for many of us is what to do come Election Day on November 2nd. The political options are, shall we say, less than thrilling...

1. Vote for John Kerry
2. Vote for Ralph Nader or another third-party candidate
3. Don’t vote

I’m not pleased with any of those choices. Let me briefly discuss why:

1. Even considering voting for Kerry makes me nauseous. Yes, I’ve read the arguments by Michael Moore, Howard Dean, Arianna Huffington and so many others who are not happy with Kerry’s nomina-

tion, but who feel that removing Bush from office is a national crisis of such unprecedented urgency that we simply must hold our noses and band together to elect John Kerry, since he is the only viable alternative. Even though Kerry is essentially Bush-lite, so the argument goes, he will be more receptive to progressive public pressure than Bush was.

I understand the realism of that argument. Nonetheless, when I envision myself standing in the voting booth and pulling the lever (or pushing the touch-screen, whatever) to vote for Kerry, I am seized by a sudden urge to vomit my guts out.

2. I love Ralph Nader. Every time I read one of Ralph's columns or see him speak on TV, I find myself nodding in agreement and shaking my fist in righteous support of the truths Nader unfailingly tells. I reject the silly accusations by disgruntled Dems that he cost Al Gore the election in 2000, and I also question the argument that Nader shouldn't run in 2004.

That said, Nader is a symbolic candidate only, with no chance of being elected. Even worse, at this point Nader isn't the head of a third party with a slate of candidates. No local offices will be won, no seats in state legislatures or Congress—nothing of practical value will be gained in terms of changing government. That bothers me.

3. Some commentators, notably Libertarians, urge not voting at all. They argue that presidential elections in modern America have lost all meaning, that these quadrennial circuses simply glorify the power of the state, and that we are better off not buying into it at all.

Despite some reservations, I have to admit that I'm emotionally drawn to this position. Let those who seek collective power play their games while I just get on with my life. I try to minimize the impact of government on my affairs, going after no personal benefits and taking considerable pains not to run afoul of the state's restrictive powers. I tend to equate my partial invisibility with relative freedom. That's a compromise, of course, and not a perfect trade-off, but I do what I can to maintain my independence.

Still, not voting is an unsatisfying choice. I care about our collective society and the larger world, and I want to participate in a meaningful way. So I may vote after all. Pragmatically, however, my newsletters probably have more impact than any vote I've ever cast (or not cast) in an election.

Whatever I end up choosing, I won't presume to tell anyone else what to do on November 2nd. Vote for whomever you want or don't vote at all.

I trust that you can make up your own mind on that.



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