

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

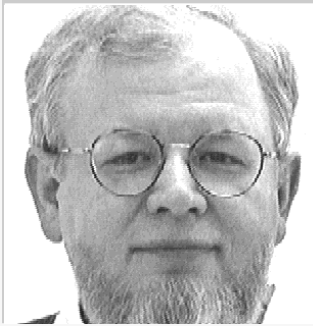
**Issue #70
Sept 2004**

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,

One thing we won't see on TV or hear from any talking-head political pundits on CNN or FOX is an analysis of the life-paths of George W. Bush and John Kerry over the next four years. Astrology, however, is uniquely suited to provide at least a glimpse into the futures of these two men. Though very different in totality, the emerging cycles in their charts do share one striking similarity in 2005. That's the subject of this month's newsletter.

AFTER THE ELECTION

In 2005, both George W. Bush and John Kerry will undergo the activation of the Uranus-Mars cycle in their respective charts. What is the Uranus-Mars cycle, and why should we care that both men will soon experience it?

Discovered in 1787 near the end of what has been termed by western scholars the "age of enlightenment," Uranus is linked to both the American and French revolutions and the rise of science, specifically, the introduction of electricity into civilization. As the first of the "modern" planets (meaning those that cannot be seen with the unaided eye, and whose symbolism is therefore not part of the "natural" world of common sense), Uranus is a wild-card factor, a symbol of disruption to our ordinary, day-to-day expectations of reality.

In astrology, Uranus is indeed the planet of "electric shocks." Its core meaning is the urge to break free from an oppressive and unconscious status quo. Uranus' action is sudden and unpredictable, with the inherent instability of bi-polarity—first one thing, then its opposite. The purpose of Uranus in the matrix of astrological symbols is awakening, jolting us out of the complacency of old habits and unconscious routines. We experience separation and independence through radical change, leaving behind the familiar and known to embrace the new and unusual, even the unacceptable. Like a roller coaster ride, such chaos can be provocatively exciting or sickeningly disturbing, sometimes careening from one to the other.

Uranus has an 84-year cycle around the zodiac. At some point between birth and age 21, Uranus activates Mars for the first time in our birth charts. From then on, the cycle reactivates at another quarter every 20-21 years. Each of these "transits" has an effective period of up to 20 months (although the average length is a year), during which our lives are "pregnant" with explosive energies of desire or aggression. Over the

period of a typical Uranus-Mars transit, three or four major shocks may occur, either out of us or at us, either exciting or traumatic, but always unexpected and a surprise even to ourselves.

When Mars is stimulated by Uranus, the result is willful rebelliousness. Suddenly we cannot stand being told what we can do or not do. We may even look for authorities to challenge. This includes even our own internal authority, which may be challenged by desires from within or radical events from outside. Like the blasting cap on a stick of dynamite, Uranus stimulates Mars wildly, releasing our aggressive tendencies. Calm and detached one minute, we are then filled in the next with the heat of impetuous passion. It is an on-off, all-or-nothing experience

Consider a Clint Eastwood moment. Imagine sitting in a bar, quietly sipping a drink. You are very much at peace. A drunk ambles by and stumbles into you, spilling a little of his drink on your shirt. Without so much as a word of warning, you grab the bottle on the bar and smash it violently over the drunk's head. He goes down like a ton of bricks, bloodied, out like a light. Amidst the horrified stares of other patrons, you return to meditating on your drink. "He provoked me," you hiss with quiet menace, as if that were all the justification needed.

That's one scenario for Uranus-Mars. Another is sudden change that happens TO us rather than OUT of us. Imagine driving home one day to discover that your house has burned down. Everything you own has gone up in flames, consumed by the inferno. Your security is in ashes. All the personal possessions that previously defined your identity are toast. While this may be a tragedy, it is also a new birth of freedom, a cleansing by fire, forceful permission from the gods to start over with a clean slate.

Or imagine that you're in a stable, long-term marriage. You love your partner, but sometimes you wonder whether the exchange of freedom for security might have been a Faustian bargain. One day you meet someone new. Quite unexpectedly, passion roars up from inside you like a freight train. You must have this new person, regardless of the risk, and at any cost. Do you act on that impulse? Do you toss away many years of marriage for a mere fling? Under the influence of Uranus-Mars, odds are much greater that you might just do that. The new relationship may not last, and your marriage may not end, but any stagnation you felt about intimacy will definitely be over.

You could find yourself wanting a new car that's way beyond your budget. Hell, you don't even need a new car, but you see one on the highway, and suddenly you want it. Every day for four months, you tell yourself that it's silly to want a car you can't afford it, and that you must not even think about buying it. All the while, however, desire is percolating up from your unconscious like volcanic magma looking for a way to break through the crust. Then one day, BANG. You drive to the dealership, walk in, make a deal in ten minutes, and drive out with your new car. A wise decision? Perhaps not, but wisdom has nothing whatsoever to do with Uranus-Mars, where taking action represents relief from unbearable stress.

PRESIDENTS' CHARTS

George W. Bush was born with Mars in early Virgo, while John Kerry's Mars is in early Gemini. Astrologically, their respective Mars are at nearly exact right angles to each other (called a "square"), implying that their masculinities are in alchemical conflict. These two men rub each other the wrong way, with little love lost between them.

Uranus is currently moving through early Pisces. From April 2005 through January 2006, Uranus will be opposite Mars in George W. Bush's chart. Almost simultaneously, although in a longer event, Uranus will be square John Kerry's natal Mars, from May 2005 all the way through November 2006.

Were these men simply private citizens living ordinary lives, the simultaneous Uranus-Mars transits about to activate in their charts would be provocative certainly, but of much less concern. If Bush and Kerry were regular guys having astrological sessions with me, I could discuss the possible meanings of their transits with a fair degree of equanimity. Based on their individual charts, we could talk about possibly radical changes of career direction or health, the tendency toward rash action, or even sexual rejuvenation. Whatever the symbolic levels indicated in the charts, my analysis of "positive" versus "negative" manifestations would be roughly equal.

But these are not regular guys. They are candidates for the highest elected office in America; one of them will become the most powerful political figure in the world. More to the point, either Bush or Kerry will be Commander-in-Chief of the largest military force in human history. Either one or the other will have his

finger on the proverbial button of nuclear annihilation at a time of serious geopolitical instability. That alters the astrological dynamics and potential meanings of their Uranus-Mars transits in profound ways.

So, given that one of these men will be our next President, what might happen during his Uranus-Mars transit?

With Uranus as the leading planet in Bush's chart and with Kerry's natal Mars-Uranus conjunction, these parallel Uranus-Mars transits imply a greater likelihood of some sort of unexpected explosion. Many possibilities exist for different specific scenarios, but it's hard not to imagine their expressions involving conspicuous and sudden violence, with personal implications for whichever man is then occupying the White House and—more onerously—collective ripples for the country as a whole.

Considered from the standpoint of “textbook” interpretations, many obvious triggers leap to mind—strikes on U.S. soil by Islamic militants, Iraq's disintegration into full-scale civil war, a meltdown involving Israel and Palestine on the West Bank, further American military invasions of foreign countries (Syria, Iran, or North Korea are already stated targets), presidential injury or assassination, even the possible death of the president's spouse. Oddly enough, these unpleasant scenarios may be too crudely linear to satisfy Uranus' wily *modus operandi*. By definition, Uranus eschews the obvious and takes us by surprise from areas where we have not been attentive, shocking us awake from our slumber. That lobbies for new and unprecedented developments as yet unforeseen.

Specific transits in any chart must be interpreted within the larger context of the chart's overall pattern of active cycles. So, before discussing how each candidate might respond as President to his Uranus-Mars transit in 2005, let me lay out those patterns.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Along with his coming Uranus-Mars activation, George W. Bush is now in the midst of a series of very heavy Saturn transits. Our current president has already been through his Saturn-Sun conjunction last June (the most significant event in all of astrology), so a new understanding of his life-purpose is now settling into place inside, slowly taking root in Bush's emotional core.

At the election and all the way through the first half of 2005, Bush has his second Saturn Return (meaning that Saturn will “return” to its birth position, a chronological event that occurs for all of us at ages 29, 58, and 87). His physical and emotional health will be under continuing stress as Bush's beliefs, visions, and dreams are challenged by hard, cold reality. He is being forced into introspection, which is for Mr. Bush an uncomfortable state of mind.

An old axiom of politics is that the only concern for a politician greater than getting elected is that of getting re-elected. If Bush wins a second term, so the conventional wisdom goes, he will be freed from the constraints of pleasing voters. Many Democrats and progressives view that possibility with grave concern.

It's hard to imagine George W. Bush acting more rashly or with greater willful aggression than he did during his first term. If re-elected, we can expect Bush to continue his economic deconstruction and his belligerent stance toward nations that he regards as threats. Another major attack on U.S. soil would no doubt provoke major retaliation. That he might pull troops out of Iraq to mount a new invasion is not inconceivable.

But Saturn will not let up on Mr. Bush. From late August 2005 through July 2006, during the second half of his Uranus-Mars transit, Saturn crosses Bush's Leo Ascendant and passes over his Mercury-Pluto conjunction close by in the same sign. Any overweening pride or ego will hit a wall, and the power of Bush's self-expression may be severely limited by somber responsibilities and external challenges to his authority.

Bush already has one albatross around his neck with Iraq. The Pottery Barn rule (“you break it, you own it”) has already come into effect, and the situation there could worsen over time. Bush staked everything on Iraq, and—though it may not cost him the election—the dead weight of that tragedy may cause his boat to ride dangerously low in the water. The danger does not come from the anti-war left, nor even from the Democrats, but instead from the very base of Bush's support. Most Americans don't give a damn about Iraqi dead, but they will abide a continuing stream of red-white-and-blue-draped coffins for only so long.

In addition, various potential scandals continue to simmer in the background: Abu Ghraib, Cheney's secret energy meetings, the Valerie Plume outing, etc. Investigations into all these are ongoing. So far, the

President has been insulated, but any one of them could reach into his second administration with chilling effects for Mr. Bush (remember Nixon and Watergate?).

These are only some of the Saturnian hobbles already constricting the President. Others may emerge. As a result, I expect President Bush to exercise restraint if he is re-elected to a second term. Ever since October 2003, when Saturn started its long run of major transits in his chart, Mr. Bush has grown increasingly cautious. Both his rhetoric and his actual policies shifted toward more measured and careful stances.

Yes, the Republican convention was triumphant, and yes, the party platform is the most reactionary in one hundred years. But that was all show, pure Hollywood. The reality is quite different: an economic “recovery” dangerously imbalanced toward corporate profits without jobs, a federal deficit that grows more monstrous with each passing month, health care costs that continue to spiral as more Americans lose insurance coverage, the travesty of public education, and blithe dismissal of the public’s environmental concerns. Bush’s dreamy visions and ersatz policies cannot improve any of those problems. The reality of Two Americas has not yet penetrated the corridors of power, but it might.

Given that his ponderous Saturn transits continue for the next three years, forcing greater humility and moderation, I think Mr. Bush might just rein himself in.

JOHN KERRY

The overview of John Kerry’s chart for the next four years is very different from President Bush’s. Though Bush shares with Kerry a volatile Uranus-Mars transit, Kerry’s chart as a whole is altogether more provocative.

2005 represents a pivotal year for Kerry. It culminates a four-year period of life-changing Plutonian cycles that started in 2002, during which Kerry thrust himself into the limelight and went through numerous death-rebirth experiences, including cancer surgery and his surprising rise, fall, and phoenix-like resurrection among Democratic presidential contenders. The last of that series of dramatic transits is Pluto opposite his natal Saturn throughout the entire year of 2005.

This is a profound test, symbolizing the welling up of one’s worst fears so that they may be purged, finally and for good. Like chemotherapy, Pluto oppose Saturn is harsh medicine used to achieve a positive result, but that doesn’t make it any easier to go through. All the work Kerry has done in his life will seem to have been for nothing. He may experience betrayal or loss in personal and professional relationships in which he has invested a great deal. His public image may be tarnished. The simplest way these trials could take shape would be through Kerry’s losing the election and feeling crushed in the aftermath, but life does not always take the simplest route. Should he win the presidency, the transit will signify very powerful forces arrayed against him in a crisis of authority. Kerry will need every ounce of fortitude he can muster.

In the same year, Kerry begins another major period, this time overwhelmingly Uranian in tone. Over the five years from 2005-2009, Kerry undergoes TEN Uranus transits, more than twice the number in an average chart. The list is impressive, gaining intensity over time:

- * *Uranus sextile Mercury (2005)*
- * *Uranus inconjunct Midheaven (2005)*
- * *Uranus inconjunct Pluto (2005)*
- * *Uranus square Uranus (2005)*
- * *Uranus square Mars (2005-2006)*
- * *Uranus square Ascendant (2007)*
- * *Uranus square Moon (2007)*
- * *Uranus oppose Chiron (2007)*
- * *Uranus square Sun (2007-2008)*
- * *Uranus square Saturn (2009)*

Wow. Read that list to any astrologer and watch the reaction on his or her face.

As these successive and overlapping Uranus transits begin to unfold in the late spring of 2005, Kerry moves into major Saturn transits soon thereafter, meaning that—like Bush—he will feel conflict between action and restraint. If elected, Kerry must survive the pressures of a supremely challenging first year in office. From the summer of 2006 on, however, the lightning willfulness of Uranus predominates, taking center stage in his chart.

By his second year in office, John Kerry would be nothing like the candidate of the campaign trail, where accusations of stiffness, flip-flopping, and overly nuanced responses have dogged his heels and blunted his impact. That caution will be replaced by the deep commitment Kerry displayed in 1971 with his passionate and eloquent testimony before a Congressional subcommittee in protesting the immorality of the Vietnam War. The careful politician of recent years gives way to the principled fighter for justice of earlier decades.

Two extreme and contradictory options emerge for a Kerry presidency, should he be elected. If world events take a turn for the worse, as they could, threatening America's security or actively harming us again, John Kerry will turn to the warrior side of his nature with a ferocity and resolve that would make even George Bush envious. If such unpleasant circumstances occur, Kerry will not hesitate to use all necessary force.

The other option is more hopeful. If the geopolitical situation can be stabilized, then Kerry might articulate a striking new vision for America, challenging the nation to move in a radical and progressive direction. Given the current quagmire in Iraq and the intense polarization in American politics and culture, it's hard to imagine that such a shift could occur. Nonetheless, Kerry's chart suggests that the possibility exists. Realistically, I have to believe that some severe crisis would need to occur in Kerry's first two years as President to provoke a galvanizing reunification. I don't relish the notion of another trauma like 9-11 (nor its sad aftermath), but that might be what it takes to wake us up in time to change our collective future for the better.

CONCLUSION

I don't claim to know who will win the election. At this point, Bush has a lead, but the debates are yet to come. Both men are fighters when the chips are down, and Kerry closes well. Given what's coming in each of their charts, Bush is definitely the more predictable of the two candidates. Not surprisingly, his chart reveals a continuation of previous policies, but with an unexpected sense of sobering and perhaps increased pragmatism. Kerry, on the other hand, is a true wild card, and very likely to shock everyone.

2005 is a dangerous year for whichever head wears the crown. Beyond that immediate challenge, the larger question facing our next president is whether he can shape the future by the force of his will or find himself backed into an uncomfortable corner by events quite beyond his power to control. For George W. Bush, this means choosing reality over sincere but misguided fantasies. For John Kerry, it means stepping up to the plate and swinging for the rafters.



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