

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

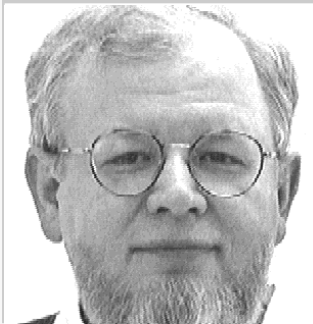
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THE HERBST NEWSLETTER



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,

On May 1st, 2005, I will be closing my life in the Twin Cities, leaving Minnesota, and relocating to the Pacific Northwest, to a new home in Olympia, Washington. I love Minnesota and am sad to leave, but we follow our path as we can see it, and sometimes the path leads us to a different or even unimagined future.

To my many dear friends and loyal clients in the Twin Cities area, I bid you all a fond adieu. I hope to return from time to time for happy visits. I will continue to be professionally available to my Minnesota clients, but by telephone rather than face-to-face.

All moves are disruptive, cross-country moves especially so. As I post this notice at the end of March, I have a month to pack, close up my affairs, and say goodbye to my beloveds.

My new address will be:

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THE ACCELERATED PLUTO FACTOR

Some of the many realizations that emerge from the serious study of astrology are easily accessible; they leap into our awareness, virtually shouting to be recognized. Other astrological insights are more subtle, requiring either a well-developed eye or, just as often, prolonged technical digging to unearth. I want to write in this commentary about one significant astrological phenomena that lives in this less obvious realm.

“Death and rebirth” is a simplified catchphrase in astrology for the symbolism of the outer planet Pluto. Pluto represents the raw power that waits unseen in the dark underworld of human existence, either in the personal unconscious or the collective unconscious. This is ruthless, raw power that can, on occasion, transform our lives by “burning away” old conditions and paving the way for a renewed and enlarged perspective.

The mere fact that any individual life may be dramatically altered by external events is not, in and of itself, necessarily Plutonian. Throughout history, human lives have always been subject to unpredictable changes, wild-cards that arise either from acts of nature or developments in the social collectives of which we are a part. Our individual destinies can be altered, sometimes irrevocably, by events we did not personally create and cannot control. That does not, however, always mean that we ourselves are changed. Many people go through dramatic external changes in without a corresponding shift in their internal understanding.

What differentiates Plutonian transformations from the more mundane intrusions of life—however major these may be in altering our course—is that Pluto’s effects cut right to the heart of our core beliefs about life and, more critically, our assumptions about ourselves. Whatever our perspective was on the meaning of life in general and our personal identity within it, Pluto destroys the context of our former understanding, as if the floor beneath our feet had given way. Everything we think we know is challenged as massive forces overwhelm us. This process often begins externally, through unexpectedly dramatic and intense circumstances, but the result—the final impact—is necessarily interior.

In other words, some events are just things that happen to us, which, one way or another, we take in stride, adapting as necessary. No matter how dramatic or life-changing they seem at the surface, these experiences do not alter who we are. Plutonian events, however, are transformative. We cannot take them in stride. We cannot adapt. We go down for the count. We die. Order is replaced by chaos. And, if we’re lucky, we are then resurrected, born anew, but with an enlarged perspective, a higher sense of order.

As a planet, Pluto is so far away that it exists in perpetual night, with the Sun appearing to be merely one more tiny star in a black sky. On average, Pluto takes about 248 years to make one complete circuit around the Sun.

Most planets in our solar system have nearly circular orbits. Comets, on the other hand, move in elliptical orbits that slingshot around the Sun at relatively close distance, then shoot out very far toward the fringes of our cosmic neighborhood in orbits that are extremely flattened and stretched out. Pluto is almost more like a comet than a planet in that its orbit is elliptical rather than circular.

At aphelion (farthest distance), Pluto is about 4.6 billion miles from the Sun, while at perihelion (closest distance), it is only 2.8 billion miles away. For a short time during its cyclic “year,” Pluto actually moves inside the orbit of Neptune and is closer to the Sun than the gas giant. The last time this Plutonian penetration occurred was from January 1979 to February 1999. For those two decades, Pluto was not the most remote major body in the solar system.

For purposes of this essay, the most relevant and striking feature of Pluto’s elliptical and uncentered orbit is that it does not move through the 12 signs of the zodiac at regular intervals. From our vantage point, Pluto speeds up and slows down dramatically as it moves through the heavens. In the flat section of its orbit when passing closest to the Sun, Pluto appears to move through the zodiac much faster than at the extended “ends” of its orbit.

By contrast, the other outer planets, with their roughly circular orbits, show very regular passages through the signs. Jupiter is quite dependable with its 12-year orbit, moving through each sign—Aries, Taurus, Gemini, etc.—in a single year. Saturn spends a tad more than 2 1/3 years in every sign, Uranus takes 7, and Neptune 14.

Pluto is different. Since it has a 240+ year cycle, an “average” passage through a sign would take about 20 years, IF it had a circular orbit. Given Pluto’s elliptical orbit, however, it takes more than twice as long to pass through some signs than others.

Here’s the breakdown for Pluto’s current run through the zodiac, with the date of entry into each sign and the number of years required to pass through that sign:

1822 Aries—29
1851 Taurus—31
1882 Gemini—30
1912 Cancer—25
1937 Leo—19
1956 Virgo—15
1971 Libra—12
1983 Scorpio—12
1995 Sagittarius—13
2008 Capricorn—15
2023 Aquarius—20
2043 Pisces—23

Note the difference: 31 years in Taurus versus only 12 in Scorpio.

How is this relevant to your life? Well, that will take a bit longer to establish, but bear with me.

In western astrology, the basics of every chart include ten major bodies—the Sun, Moon, and eight planets other than the earth—plus two axes (the vertical and horizontal, called “angles”). Many other bodies can and are often used, but these twelve comprise the fundamentals.

As bodies move through the heavens, they activate cycles with these twelve symbols. Each cycle has various trigger points, the most important of which are at the quarters. So, to keep things simple, let’s focus on those twelve cycles and their 48 trigger points (called “transits”).

Every year, the Sun appears to move through the entire zodiac, going around your chart once. Over that year, it will activate all 48 critical transits for about two days each. Each of these periods introduces a particular emphasis of meanings, feelings, attitudes, and possible events into your life. Sun transits are about vitality, pride, and basic life-energy.

Jupiter transits are about opportunity, buoyancy, and optimism, among other qualities. Every twelve years, Jupiter activates all 48 critical transits, an average of four per year. In a full life of 80 years, you’ll experience every Jupiter transit six to seven times.

Now consider Pluto. Plutonian transits carry the meaning of confrontation with overwhelming power in experiences of death and rebirth, profound watershed periods where protean forces well up from within the unconscious depths of our psyches or come at us from the outer world. Not every Pluto transit actually brings psychological death or rebirth, but that potential exists in all 48 of the critical events. A hierarchy of power differentiates the transits: Some are inherently more significant than others, but all 48 matter.

How many critical Pluto transits will you experience in your lifetime? How many different deaths and rebirths might you have to go through? The answer to those questions depends on three different factors:

1. How long you live
2. Mathematical distribution of the 12 points in your natal chart
3. The generation into which you were born.

In this commentary, I’m focusing only on the third variable. The reason that third variable is significant is because it tells us how far Pluto will travel through your chart. Since Pluto takes 240+ years to get around your entire chart, no one lives long enough to get all 48 critical Pluto transits.

Let’s assume a life span of 80 years. Some of us won’t live that long, others will live well past that, but 80 is close to the current average expected longevity in industrialized countries with adequate diets and halfway decent healthcare.

This is where Pluto’s elliptical orbit and varying passages through different signs becomes meaningful—in sub-generational groups.

For a person born in 1840 who died in 1920, Pluto was moving at its slowest. It traversed only 79° of the heavens during those years, less than three signs of the zodiac or one-quarter of the chart. So people of that generation activated—on average—only **11** of the critical 48 Plutonian transits. Twelve death and rebirth possibilities in a full lifetime.

Next, consider that a person who lived from 1890-1970 would have seen Pluto moving faster, this time traversing about 126° of the zodiac, four full signs or about one-third of the chart. A person of that generation would have activated, on average, about **17** of the 48 possible critical Pluto transits.

Now for the coup de grace: For someone born in 1950 who will live until 2030, Pluto has been moving at its fastest speed of the whole cycle, traversing a whopping 172° of the zodiac, almost six signs and nearly HALF of the chart. This means that, on average, a person of that particular generational cohort can expect **23** critical Plutonian transits, literally **twice** as many death and rebirth confrontations as someone born from 1840-1880.

For clarity, I need to insert here the caveat that these are group averages. Different individuals, even those born in the same year, can have very different mathematical distributions of the 12 points in their respective charts, so the numbers of critical Pluto transits will vary dramatically from person to person.

Viewed from the standpoint of age-linked population demographics, however, these averages reveal that some generations will be inherently subjected to greater impacts of eruptive power, more profound endings and beginnings, and the pressures of surrender to death and rebirth.

If you want to know how far Pluto will travel in your lifetime or your children's, here's a breakdown based on decade of birth and presumed 80-year lifespan:

1900-1980—126°
1910-1990—142°
1920-2000—155°
1930-2010—165°
1940-2020—170°
1950-2030—172°
1960-2040—168°
1970-2050—160°
1980-2060—148°
1990-2070—134°
2000-2080—121°
2010-2090—109°
2020-2100—100°

Notice that the peak is right in the middle at 1950. Those of us born between 1930 and 1970 will, as groups, experience the greatest number of personal or collective confrontations with irresistible power. No, we didn't fight in two world wars, nor did most of us live through the Great Depression. Nevertheless, considered psychologically and even spiritually, we are the generations of both the dark night of the soul and the possibility at least of redemption.

I do not mean to denigrate the existing seniors born before 1930 or younger individuals born after 1980, who comprise more than half the world population. This is a gradual curve, not a black-and-white distinction. Those older and younger generations also have somewhat elevated Plutonian impacts. But people born from 1930-1970 now occupy the primary positions of power in civilization and will continue to do so through the next 20 years, which will represent the most critical crossroads ever seen in human evolution. The decisions we make over the next two decades will determine the shape of the world.

As individuals and groups, we may refuse to recognize the darkness within ourselves and doggedly cling to the past. That means continuing down the road of manipulation for personal gain and the use of force to get what we want. That path, so common throughout history, leads to ruin.

On the other hand, we may finally start to get it as we reap the toxic harvest of our own unconsciousness and narrow perspectives. We might actually begin to give up our obsession with violent power and repressive control, outgrowing finally our species' deranged adolescence as we learn to channel those aggressive energies in more graceful ways.

Pandora's Box has been flung open. In poetic simile, it's like living on a fault line, where earthquakes are an ever-present possibility, or waiting for the next tsunami to wipe away the entire village, or existing in the shadow of nuclear armageddon, where The Bomb could go off at any minute.

For those of us with accelerated Plutos, that existential insecurity is part of our spiritual inheritance and our psychological condition. How we deal with power and change, death and rebirth, will determine in large part our legacy to the future of humanity.



Bill Herbst resides in Olympia, Washington. To schedule an astrological session, either in-person locally or long-distance via telephone, send an email to bill@billherbst.com, or call 612-207-4486 and leave a voicemail.

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