

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

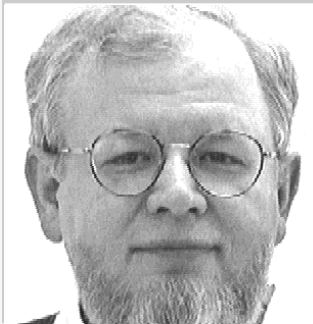
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THE HERBST NEWSLETTER



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,

This month's commentary takes a new tack in my continuing series about the connection of the 1960s to the coming decade through the Uranus-Pluto cycle, laying the groundwork for many newsletters to come.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR AWAKENING

In this series of essays about our collective future, I have thus far focused on the relationship between the decade of the early 1960s to early 1970s with the coming period of turbulence and dramatic change in humanity's evolution, especially in its implications for America. That earlier '60s phase of shocking, radical change in individual and collective consciousness is inherently connected to further revolutionary shifts in the upcoming decade of 2012-2022. Previous essays in the series have explored the parallels, similarities, and some of the possible differences between what happened forty years ago in our history and what may transpire in the years ahead.

Major events are unexpected only by those who are ignorant about or not attentive to past precedents and future portents. The well-known aphorism about history is certainly correct: *"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."* But a similar truth applies to the future: *"Those who are unaware of what lies ahead are bound to be shocked when it arrives."*

Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come, as the saying goes. The past is not static and fixed, nor is the future completely unknown. Only the present is absolutely real and, paradoxically, utterly mysterious. Everything else is shape-shifting: myth, belief, and story-telling. So, given that humanity is on the threshold of another critical juncture, we need to tell ourselves better stories—more accurate, more prescient, and more heartfelt—about who we are, where we came from, and where we're going. The past does not determine the future, but the challenges are cyclical and repetitive. Only expanded consciousness can allow us to transcend the illusion of Maya and step off the Wheel of Sangara.

WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN?

Although intuition deserves a more respected seat at the table of human intelligence, “psychic” predictions about our shared future hold no interest for me. I don’t have a wizard’s pointy hat with stars on it or a crystal ball into which I gaze. In fact, no one—including me—knows exactly what’s going to happen in the years ahead. The best any of us can do is to write generally about what may transpire. I use astrology and history to do that. Basically, this series of essays is my attempt to peer through the fog and discern a little more clearly the shape of what looms out on the horizon.

I consider it part of my task in public writing as an astrologer to avoid if possible both of two extreme positions: One is doom-and-gloom apocalypse scenarios. I am not Chicken Little, and my message is not that the sky is falling. Will disasters and tragedies occur? Of course they will. That is and has always been part of the collective human drama. But *homo sapiens* is a very resilient species. I have no wish to add to the existing fear by predicting singularly terrible events that “might” happen (most readers are already well aware of that list of possibilities). On the other hand, I don’t choose to shrink from discussing some of the more negative possibilities that may trigger change.

At the other end of the scale, I have no comforting spiritual or metaphysical guarantees to offer. I am not a minister or a guru, and my basic perception of humanity is that we’re not very far along yet. No one I know is enlightened, and collectively we’re still petulant babies, responding to the lowest common denominators within human nature. So, if you’re waiting for me to write that “everything will be just fine,” don’t hold your breath.

I write the essays in this series one at a time. Each one refines my thinking. As the series goes on, I may discuss the same elements over and over, but each time with a slightly different slant, because my own understanding is evolving. By the time 2010 or 2012 get here, I hope to be up to speed. Until then, however, we’re just driving down the highway together, looking at the mountains off in the distance, saying, “Wow, there they are, on the horizon. I wonder how they’ll look close up?” Astrology strongly suggests that—whatever our current visions or expectations may be about how the mountains will appear—once we’re actually there, climbing those mountains, we’ll be surprised.

Whether the coming period will unfold as a long, forced march for civilization’s very survival or as the birth portal into an epoch of more evolved consciousness remains to be seen. Realistically, some of the former will probably lead to at least some of the latter. I think it safe to say, however, that what lies immediately ahead is a series of 40,000-volt cosmic cattle prod shocks that will awaken us to two necessities: First, a pragmatic need to discover and implement new means to wield power more wisely, and second, greater universal love for the human family as a whole and care between individuals in particular.

Will everyone awaken to these gentler realities? Not a snowball’s chance in you-know-where. The bell curve of human experience will always include narrow minds, closed hearts, damaged psyches, violence, megalomania, greed, narcissism, crime, deceit, and every other shadow expression in the panorama of human frailty and delusion. That’s a given. And even those who mature will continue to struggle with core human experiences: marriage, raising children, making a living, illness and loss, self-awareness, and getting along with others in communities and nations. Discord, difficulty, and pain are part of the human condition, no matter how transcendent one may be. Life in bodies is hard, you know?

Despite that, sufficient numbers of people may awaken in the coming revolution to allow us to reach critical mass, to evolve past humanity’s historically disturbed adolescence into a saner young adulthood for this species. Until recently, our cumulative impact on ourselves and the planet did not require us to grow up. Now it does.

WHICH ASTROLOGY TO USE?

I’m fairly new to mundane or political astrology. Oh, I dabbled in it during my first three decades as a professional astrologer, but I focused mainly on the astrology of individual human lives using natal charts and personal transits in sessions with clients. That remains my day-to-day work and livelihood. Over the

past four years, however, I've waded into the more oceanic realm of collective astrology. I'm about up to my neck in those waters now.

Some astrologers search for special configurations that occur in moments of time—eclipses, grand sextile patterns, whatever. When written about by a sufficient number of astrologers on the internet, these events—such as the so-called “Harmonic Convergence” in 1989 and the similar “Harmonic Concordance” of 2003—may galvanize the astrological community or even make a dent in the larger public awareness, at least for a day or two. As I've written in a previous newsletter, I'm not personally drawn to these types of astrological indicators, in large part because they are usually brief and passing.

What I find revealing, however, are longer events that unfold over years or decades, especially those that involve the slower, more stately progression of the outermost planets—Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. The cycles around our heavens of these planets are very extended: Saturn takes 29 years to orbit around the Sun once, Uranus takes 84 years, Neptune 165 years, and Pluto 250. Within those long passages, their paired cycles (Saturn-Neptune, Uranus-Pluto, etc.) and the timing of quarterly transitions in those cycles are extraordinarily revealing about the course of collective events and challenges to human evolution.

So far, I have used one main cycle in two different phases as the basis for my essays in this series. The first configuration was the Uranus-Pluto conjunction opposed by Saturn in 1965-1966, and the second is the first-quarter transition of the same Uranus-Pluto cycle in 2012-2015, when Uranus will reach a point exactly 90° ahead of Pluto.

Much more deserves to be said about this cycle and its two connected periods than I have so far, and I will no doubt write more later, along with many other astrologers. For now, however, I want to expand the astrology and begin discussions of the other paired outer-planet cycles that are relevant to our past, present, and future.

In addition to Uranus-Pluto, five more cycles should be added to our discussion: Saturn's cycles with each of the three outermost planets, the Jupiter-Saturn cycle, and the Uranus-Neptune cycle. Over the coming months, I intend to focus on the timing and meaning of significant transits in these additional cycles. My intention will be to establish a progression for the sequential series of astrological changes that have accompanied us to the present and will take us to the critical mass of the next consciousness revolution beginning in 2012.

Below is a list of the major outer-planet transits and their effective periods. The dates were calculated using 10° orbs. Within some of the periods listed below, more complex multi-planet alignments occurred or will occur (examples include the recent Fixed Grand Crosses involving Saturn opposite Neptune that were the subjects of my Nov-Dec 2005 newsletters). Multi-planet configurations represent critical triggers amidst the longer flows of cyclic emphasis on the list, and in future newsletters I will discuss in detail those that are upcoming from now until 2012.

Nov 1986 – Jan 1990	Saturn conjunct Uranus
Jan 1988 – Jan 1999	Uranus conjunct Neptune
Oct 1988 – Dec 1990	Saturn conjunct Neptune
Nov 1992 – Jan 1995	Saturn square Pluto (waxing)
Mar 1998 – Apr 2000	Saturn square Neptune (waxing)
Jun 1998 – May 2001	Saturn square Uranus (waxing)
Aug 2000 – May 2003	Saturn oppose Pluto
Aug 2005 – Jun 2008	Saturn oppose Neptune
May 2007 – Mar 2020	Uranus square Pluto (waxing)
Oct 2007 – Aug 2011	Saturn oppose Uranus
Nov 2008 – Aug 2011	Saturn square Pluto (waning)
Nov 2014 – Oct 2017	Saturn square Neptune (waning)
Dec 2018 – Jan 2021	Saturn conjunct Pluto
Jan 2020 – Jan 2023	Saturn square Uranus (waning)
Feb 2025 – Mar 2027	Saturn conjunct Neptune

This list is a symbolic code for the archetypal fusions, collisions, and confrontations that flow through our collective reality over three decades. Their schedule is fixed in the heavens, a done deal, but their manifestation is not. That depends on us, on how we respond individually and collectively.

To round out this month's commentary and give readers some substance to chew on, let me offer a brief overview of the Uranus-Neptune cycle that activated from 1988-1999. I'll take this further next month.

URANUS – NEPTUNE

Average cycle length: *172 years*

Typical effects during the active phases of each cycle:

Radical faith and religious reformations

Utopian philosophies and idealistic social movements

New visions, ideas, and beliefs in culture that reshape the world

New cosmologies, theories, and applications in science

Paradigm shifts in technology, art, or aesthetics

Holiness jousting with irreverence; the numinous and the absurd

Industrial Revolution and Spiritual Mysticism

1817-1826	New Phase
1865-1875	First Quarter
1903-1915	Full Phase
1949-1960	Last Quarter

Technological Revolution and Religious Fundamentalism

1988-1999	New Phase
2035-2045	First Quarter
2073-2087	Full Phase

As anyone familiar with astrology might expect, Neptune's impact on human consciousness occurs not through blunt or direct force, but rather by gradual, subtle, and almost invisible processes of infusion, disintegration, dissolution, osmosis, seduction, infection, or interpenetration. Neptune's action resembles the slow wearing away of rocks on a shore as they are washed over by the waters of rhythmic waves and surf. At any given moment, the rocks appear solid, permanent, and impervious to the water's effects. Over time, however, even massive boulders can be dissolved, reduced finally to nothing by erosion. What is solid becomes liquid, then vapor. Everything returns from physical differentiation back into ethereal oneness. This is the human longing to surrender to something larger than the small self, something grand, divine, and holy. Whether that quest for transcendence bears real fruit or bitter disillusionment is often not revealed until late in the game.

Add Uranus to the equation, and an element is introduced of "capturing lightning in a bottle." An electric air of expectancy cuts through the usually nebulous atmosphere of Neptune, like the shock of baptism in a cold river. One is suddenly born again, refreshed and renewed. During active phases of this two-planet cycle, new philosophies or ideas that would ordinarily be challenged or at least tested before acceptance suddenly infuse the collective, sweeping through culture like a flash flood. They transform magically from mere concepts into beliefs that carry the stamp of unquestioned faith and are embraced with an evangelical fervor, whether or not they are true in reality. Sometimes the ideas are, in fact, truly visionary; other times they are sadly delusional.

The zodiacal sign in which two planets come together and start their shared cycle sets a tone for the unfolding of the entire cycle. Uranus-Neptune cycles progress through the zodiac, usually advancing one sign at a time. The last two cycles, however, began with Uranus and Neptune conjoined in Capricorn, so the effects of both have been centered in the arenas of economics, business, government, and social institutions. Patriarchy and Big Authority are central themes here.

The previous cycle began with a Uranus-Neptune conjunction from 1816-1827 and corresponded to the birth of the Industrial Revolution in America and England. Through the 19th century, western societies

reshaped themselves as commercial mechanization took hold. Over time, for better and worse, factories replaced farms. Pastoral village culture was gradually supplanted by urban industrialization. Cities grew exponentially, with both wondrous and dreadful effects for the people drawn to seek gainful employment in these beehives of industry and social stimulation.

The cycle came to its halfway point of culmination from 1902-1915, when unbounded European optimism about modernity and the benefits of industry and science that had ushered in the 20th century came crashing down in the apocalypse of World War I. That horrific conflict cast a long shadow over the rest of the century, leading directly to World War II and the Cold War that followed. Such a waxing-waning sequence of exuberant optimism followed by bitter disillusionment is not unusual for any cycle involving Neptune.

For instance, the Saturn-Neptune opposition now fully upon us in 2006-2007 carries as part of its symbolism a collective feeling of psychological exhaustion, deep confusion, and helpless impotence. We are tired to our bones of the propaganda, false promises, subtle deceit, and outright lies that poison our society. And EVERYONE feels that, regardless of cultural or political leanings. (I will write more about this in an upcoming newsletter.) In the case of the much longer Uranus-Neptune cycle, eight decades of enthusiasm for a new cultural ethos and a better life for all are frequently followed by another 80 years of unforeseen consequences and repercussions in the real world that may be quite different from what was expected and substantially less wonderful than hoped.

The current Uranus-Neptune cycle began in 1988-1999 and included Saturn in a triple conjunction in Capricorn. Among its various dimensions are the economics of globalization and free trade. Remember President George H. W. Bush's announcement of the "New World Order" in 1991 and President Clinton's sales pitch for NAFTA in 1993-94? The dream was big business—really big business.

This period saw the collapse of totalitarian communism, the end of the Cold War, and the subsequent elevation of capitalism to the status of a religion, where products are the wafers and wine, profit the holy grail, and multinational megacorporations the churches to which we genuflect in worship. And you thought Best Buy was just a store, eh? Well, it's not. It's the Temple of Mammon, along with Wal-Mart, Home Depot, OfficeMax, and all the other big-box retailers. Exxon is the new Jerusalem, Halliburton is Mecca, and we're not supposed to think about the disgraced cathedral of Enron.

If Jesus was angry enough at the money lenders to overturn their tables in the Temple, just imagine the rage He would feel about modern-day corporate America.

In the fall of 1987, the stock market suffered a serious and sudden downturn. The Uranus-Neptune conjunction eased in shortly thereafter, and the markets started their long climb to the heights of fantasy. Through the technological innovations of the 1990s, which included the rise of the Internet and its "New Economy," the stock market acquired the glamorous allure of easy, quick riches that gradually seduced a large percentage of the American public into equity investments that seemed at first a sure thing, but eventually distorted into extreme risk.

By the peak of the bubble in 1999, speculation had grown into a manic stampede of wild gambling. People turned off soap operas to watch CNBC all day long. Millions of investors ignored traditional due diligence or diversified portfolios to buy tech stocks on margin from Internet companies with no profits at all, or whose valuation was 300 times sales. Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan's now-famous quote about "irrational exuberance" is a near-perfect keynote for the pairing of Uranus and Neptune. Fat cats got out as soon as the bubble burst in spring of 2000, but talking-head pundits continued their glowing predictions of a quick correction, and many Americans lost their shirts as the rose-colored glasses of the Uranus-Neptune alignment came off.

Other manifestations of this Uranus-Neptune cycle's initial phase include the dramatic influence of conservative religious fundamentalism in politics and culture, plus widespread faith in technology (rather than in the industry of the previous cycle) to streamline society, cure disease, and counter environmental destruction. Though the two developments are often at odds, they are both faith-based beliefs for many people.

Will religious fundamentalism shape the 21st century and remain a dominant force for the next 150 years? Will the Internet grow into the wireless nervous system of the whole planet? Can science and technology save us from our own excesses? Or will all these beliefs be shockingly overturned by the more potent and drastic Uranus-Pluto cycle looming just ahead?

Those questions await reality's answers in the years to come.



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