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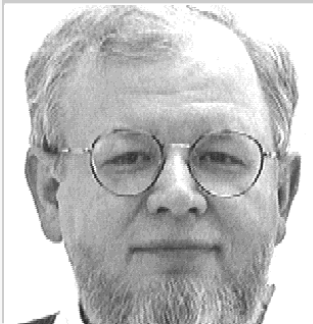
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# THE HERBST NEWSLETTER



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—the third installment of an astrological analysis of phase changes in the most momentous outer planet configurations in the modern epoch—steps into the near future for a closer look at the 2010s.

—Bill Herbst

## SATURN-URANUS-PLUTO (PART THREE)

Simultaneous alignments between Saturn, Uranus, and Pluto occur, on average, twice in each century. These patterns always form through one of four major angular configurations:

1. **Triple Conjunction**—when all three planets come together within a given sign. The last time that happened was in 1850-1851.
2. **Square**—when two of the planets conjoin and the third is located 90 degrees ahead or behind the two that are together. The last time that happened was in 1820.
3. **Opposition**—when two of the planets are conjoined while the third is halfway round the zodiac, opposite both of them. This was the configuration that occurred during the 1960s.
4. **T-square**—when two of the planets are opposed to each other while a third is perpendicular to both, forming a right triangle. The last time that configuration took shape in the heavens was in 1930-1931. The same pattern will recur in 2010-2011 and is the subject of this commentary.

In all four of these configurations, the movements of the three individual bodies—Saturn, Uranus, and Pluto—are interpreted through their three paired cycles—Saturn-Uranus, Saturn-Pluto, and Uranus-Pluto—that activate together at various turning points of major phase change.

## Seasons

What's a "phase change?" In the context of this essay series, a phase change is a quarterly transition in a cycle. Every month, our Moon changes phase four times relative to the Sun: New, First Quarter, Full, and Last Quarter. Each year, as the earth moves around the Sun, the tilt of our poles' axis creates four transitions in equinoxes and solstices that give us the seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

This four-fold sequence—New phase (Spring), First Quarter phase (summer), Full phase (autumn), and Last Quarter phase (winter)—is the essential structure at the very heart of astrology. In our history as a species on the earth, all the way back to our roots as hunter-foragers, an understanding of the changing seasons was critical to human survival. When humanity developed agriculture and settled into farming at the birth of civilization 11,000 years ago, seasons became even more the measure of our activities.

Even the advent of the industrial revolution and the artificial environments of modern civilization cannot do away with seasons, for their meaning is not just *external*—in the obvious influences of climate, temperature, and weather—but *internal* as well, as clocks within the psyche that tell us where we are in the rhythmic flow of cyclic time. Seasons are the musical beats of 4/4 time in our earth-centered cosmos.

So, phase changes are the "nudges" or "shocks" announcing that we are leaving one season and entering another, telling us to change our activities and our emotional orientations. How shocking the announcements are depends on which phase is changing and in what cycle. For collective humanity, the three cycles that involve Saturn, Uranus, and Pluto are among the most important and shocking of all. These three clocks have very loud alarms because they hit us at the level of our deepest collective sleep, where we are most habituated and resistant to change. When their alarms go off together, and in certain configurations, they indicate that humanity and civilization are heading into very turbulent times, where extreme change is inevitable.

### Different Configurations, Different Meanings

In each of the four possible configurations above for the alignment of Saturn, Uranus, and Pluto and the simultaneous activation of their paired cycles, three "seasons" are changing phase together.

In the Triple Conjunction alignment of 1850-1851, each cycle was beginning anew, heading into spring. So that configuration had the "code" of *spring-spring-spring*. At the level of our collective evolution, that period was all about heading urgently into new territory, plunging ahead, and leaving behind everything that was known. The sheer momentum of the Industrial Revolution in the mid-19th century was stunning. The seeds of world commerce (Taurus) and social revolution planted during that time took off like rockets as civilization rushed headlong into modernity.

In the Opposition alignment of the 1960s, with Uranus and Pluto together and Saturn opposite, the code was *spring-autumn-autumn*. One cycle was beginning, while two others were culminating. That's much more complex, referencing both the future and the past at once. During the 1960s configuration, the cycle moving into spring was Uranus-Pluto, the longest and most radical of the three, implying that we were again taking the plunge, this time to understand holistic systems and heal society (Virgo) through scientific advancement and radical mass movements that will take nearly a century to develop. At the same time, the other two cycles culminating at their autumn transitions (Saturn-Uranus and Saturn-Pluto) were of much shorter duration, connected to a recent past in the catastrophic conflicts of global war during the 1940s. As a result, those two "harvests" bore quite bitter fruit. The decade of the 1960s thus encompassed the excitement and passion of new possibilities within a sad legacy of conflict and violence.

In the T-square configuration, two planets are opposite with the third perpendicular to their axis. When the aspects are visually displayed in an astrological chart, this right triangle looks like a draftsman's T-square, thus the name. Of the four possible configurations, the T-square is the only one that does not have a conjunction. This means that none of the three cycles is beginning. Therefore, no springtime, and nothing that is an inherently new development. Instead, all three cycles of the T-square reference the past in one way or another.

The seasonal code of the T-square is variable, depending on the placement of the three outer planets. One cycle will necessarily be at the autumn transition into harvest, since two planets are opposite. The third

planet perpendicular to the opposition may be indicate either summer or winter transitions in its two cycles. So, three codes may exist: *summer-summer-autumn*, *summer-autumn-winter*, or *autumn-winter-winter*. The first combination is the most dynamic, the second the most contradictory, and the third the most wrenching.

### **The Wild Ride of the 2010s**

The extraordinary period we're about to move into, which is defined by the first-quarter square of the Uranus-Pluto cycle, begins in May 2007 and is active all the way through March 2020. That 13-year ride will gear up in fits and starts from mid-2007 to mid-2009, accelerate dramatically in mid-2009 to mid-2011, then achieve critical mass in 2012. What happens after that, in two more significant jolts through 2020, will be the subject of many future essays. All told, the entire 13-year period breaks down into five distinct sub-phases, each of which will cascade into the next.

Here we are concerned only with the second of those five periods: the Saturn-Uranus-Pluto T-square, effective from August 2009 through August 2011.

The **Uranus-Pluto** cycle will still be revving up as the T-square takes shape, but it sets the tone for the entire period of the 2010s. As a first-quarter or summer transition, the cycle is connected to the past, to its beginnings in spring planting. When was that? The 1960s. Does this mean that the 2010s will look like the 1960s? Not at all. In the metaphor of farming, the activities of preparing the fields and planting seeds in spring are quite different from the tasks of tending the growing crops through weeding and watering during summer.

In astrology, the new phase of any cycle is deeply emotional, almost instinctive. Something new is rising into consciousness, welling up from the unconscious, propelled by the primordial momentum of life-force. The process is usually childlike or adolescent in tone, and often passionate, wildly spontaneous, and compulsively driven in behavior.

After the turbulence of birth, however, the pattern shifts. Energy goes underground into rooting. Nothing seems to happen on the surface for quite awhile. All is quiet again. Then, at the summer transition, the root systems have absorbed sufficient energy to push upward and outward into external growth.

Have you ever driven past a vacant lot on your way to and from work each day? One day you notice a sign reading, "Future site of..." In the next weeks, bulldozers and backhoes appear, clearing the ground and digging a big hole. Later, cement mixers show up, and a foundation is poured. All this is slow and may take months. Then one morning you drive by and notice a flatbed truck piled with stacks of 2 x 4s, 2 x 6s, and plywood sheathing. A bunch of guys in work shirts and jeans wearing toolbelts are standing around drinking their morning lattes. Ah, the framing crew. You don't think much about it, but when you pass the lot again on your drive home that evening, lo and behold, there's a building there! After all those months, bang! In one day, a building. Certainly, the building isn't finished yet. It's just an external structure, little more than a hollow shell. But it wasn't there yesterday.

That is the summer transition: the sudden challenge to physically manifest something that was gaining strength internally and invisibly for a long time. The shift is back into urgency again, this time not in the passion of birth, but in the hard work of building durable structures in real life. Time itself seems to speed up.

The emotional eruption of mass movements that challenged the established culture during the 1960s will need to be grounded in reality during the 2010s. What were then free-form ideas or inchoate emotions must soon take concrete and workable forms. It's all well and good to say, "Power to the People," but how should that power be distributed and expressed in working communities? If ecology is so important, why do we collectively continue to ravage the environment? Those questions could not be answered in the 1960s; they *will* be addressed in the 2010s, because real crises will force our hand.

Overthrowing the old order requires a new order in its place, and that takes discipline rather than exuberance. Youthful rebellion gives way to more mature pragmatism. Controlled chaos may be a contradiction in terms, but it's part of the challenge of dealing with Uranus and Pluto at first quarter, especially as they interact with Saturn.

Just as occurred with the framing crew, time will seem to accelerate dramatically. Crises of survival will arise that require us to get on with the building of a new world, and do it right now, *immediately*. The challenges will be pragmatic, not philosophical. We'll know what needs to be done. The question is whether we can collectively marshal the will and the strength to accomplish the necessary tasks.

The second cycle in importance is **Saturn-Uranus**, which will be at its halfway point or autumn transition, with the two planets in opposition. This is the same phase that occurred during the 1960s, so we have another connection to that decade. The similarity is in the challenge to authority, shocks to institutions, and disruption of the status quo. Revolutionary coups will again attempt to overthrow faltering old guards on many levels and in numerous ways.

Unlike the 1960s, however, whose Saturn-Uranus cycle referenced its beginnings in 1941-1943 during World War II, the Saturn-Uranus opposition that's coming will represent the harvest of seeds planted in late-1986 to early-1990. What happened in the late-1980s that was significant in terms of the symbolism of this cycle? The most important series of events centered around the unexpected breakdown and eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union, out of which 15 new and independent states emerged. That extraordinary collapse was provoked not by assaults from outside, but by a combination of economic bankruptcy, longstanding corruption (essentially rot from within), and an upwelling of persistent grassroots reform movements that gnawed away like termites at the foundation.

What we are likely to see as we move into the 2010s is a culmination of similar forces at work in seemingly powerful nations throughout the world. Economic decay, corruption, and reform movements will coalesce. First world societies, especially America, could crack and crumble. Institutions will collapse, sometimes quietly in small steps, other times noisily and all at once.

This process will start as Saturn and Uranus move within 10-degree orb in October 2007, deepen as Pluto moves into Capricorn in 2008, and then quake in various pre-shocks as the T-square activates from 2009-2011. Political and economic structures may hold on tenuously through 2012-2013, but the full monty arrives by 2014-2015, when Uranus and Pluto form a grand cross in cardinal signs with the USA chart's Sun-Saturn square. Just as the Soviet Union went through four years of attempted adjustment with Glasnost and Perestroika before the full collapse, global stability will likewise give way in stages as the shocks accumulate.

The third of the three cycles is **Saturn-Pluto**, which will enter its last-quarter phase at the winter transition from November 2008 to August 2011. That cycle charts the ebb and flow of our collective fears—especially at the level of nation-states—and our aggressive-defensive reactions to real or imagined threats.

In many astrological cycles, the last-quarter shift into winter is the easiest and least consequential of the four quarterly transitions, since it represents detachment from the results of the previous three phases. Farmers plant in spring, tend in summer, and harvest in autumn, but they stop farming in winter to mend fences, fix machinery, and go to the bank to arrange loans for next spring's planting. Winter brings a pulling inward to recover and lie fallow in preparation for the next birth at spring. So, the last-quarter winter transition is symbolically about letting go of the past.

With Saturn-Pluto, however, the shock of detachment during the winter transition sometimes leads to escalation. The defeat of Custer's 7th Cavalry by Sioux, Cheyenne, and other Indian tribes at the Little Big Horn occurred during a last-quarter Saturn-Pluto transit (1874-1876). That so-called "massacre" (actually a defensive battle) provoked the U.S. Army into more aggressive retaliation and open genocide of Native Americans. More ominously, World War II began under a last-quarter Saturn-Pluto transit (1939-1941) as the German blitzkrieg progressively engulfed western Europe. Emboldened by his early successes, Hitler's eventual overreach led the "thousand-year Reich" to ultimate and total destruction after only 13 years.

So, potential violence is the wild-card in the volatile mix of the T-square, along with probable retaliation and escalating warfare that backfires massively on the attackers. Meanwhile, draconian measures to tighten internal security through repression and lockdown are the shadow effects, but governments buckling under stress will be hard-pressed to give more than lip-service to such controls. Creative anarchy may be too strong to suppress.

## Unintended Consequences

Because the T-square configuration focuses the powerful stresses of its three active cycles at the point of the triangle, where Pluto enters Capricorn, the predictable range of possible triggers—ecological disasters, social unrest and political revolt, terrorism and war—are very likely to provoke unpredictable and quite unintended consequences, namely, governmental collapse and economic meltdown.

The geopolitical map of the world has been in turmoil for the past two centuries. Nations and governments have come and gone, emerging and passing away, to be replaced by new nations and new governments. Such disruptions signal periods of instability and turmoil, but they are not necessarily disastrous to ordinary human beings in the mass. While chaotic, the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s was remarkably peaceful by comparison to the mass violence that had taken such a dreadful toll on humanity earlier in the 20th century. In fact, the relocalization of government by smaller communities that band together is likely to be one of the silver linings, a rainbow that shines forth even in the midst of the storm.

Economic collapse is an altogether different story. As we saw in the 1930s, when the last Saturn-Uranus-Pluto T-square occurred, great depressions are world-changing catastrophes, adversely affecting the day-to-day lives of billions of people around the globe.

The increasing globalization of the world economy—along with the fiscal agencies and mercantile markets that centralize commerce—has created a matrix of such complex interdependence that localized economic failures are no longer isolated events, but instead quickly ripple around the world. So far, that has been the strength of global capitalism, to act as a shock absorber when market fissures open or small financial or currency eruptions occur. But in economics as in politics and warfare, overreach is an invitation to disaster, in this case, through a sequential economic collapse and subsequent global depression of staggering proportions.

Numerous factors have brought us to the brink of the economic precipice, including massive speculation—where monetary currencies themselves are the products being traded—as well as the huge expansion of fiat money and leveraged debt, plus the exponential growth of financial derivatives and hedge funds. Markets now react to changes with such speed that those in charge of steering the global ship cannot make adjustments in direction nimbly enough. So, in the parlance of what is probably the single most ripe parable for modern civilization, the “unsinkable” luxury liner Titanic cannot avoid its impending collision with the iceberg.

In a more painfully accurate scenario, *our* Titanic has *already* hit the iceberg and is rapidly taking on water below decks. Some passengers and crew have not yet been informed, while others simply refuse to believe that the glorious ship is sinking. Both ignorance and denial, however, will be swept away in the 2010s, and a melee of scrambling for the lifeboats will follow. The majority of passengers—those in Third-Class steerage—will not be pleased when they find out that there are no lifeboats for them, only for the privileged few in First Class.

Paradoxically, the coming decade is also the best opportunity humanity will get to begin cleaning up the mess we’ve made. The last 150 years have been like a drunken party that turned into a barroom brawl. Over the past 30 years, the small segment of humanity that remained well-off and unwounded has collectively swigged down the contents of the last remaining unbroken bottles behind the bar in a final orgy of intoxication. The 2010s will be the morning after, the hangover to end all hangovers, and the shock of sobering up.



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