

# 1. President Donald Trump?

by Bill Herbst

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Over my lifetime, my personal attitude toward national politics in America has evolved (or rather, devolved) from strong idealism when I was a child to cautious optimism as an adolescent to deep pessimism as an adult to my current outlook as a senior of complete cynicism that borders on despair. Oh, I see and appreciate many wonderful, inspiring efforts occurring in America, with more to come I'm sure, but none of these are in the arena of traditional national politics. How much of the arc of my eroding trust and lost faith in politics is attributable to objective changes in American society over the past half century versus my own particular and cumulative life-experience as an individual? 50/50? 60/40? 20/80? I don't know, but I'm sure that both elements have played a significant role in my changing outlook.

Not only do I profoundly mistrust the political process for a host of different reasons, but I'm extremely dubious about our historical assumption that the choice of President matters as much as popular belief holds. While I wouldn't suggest that the occupant of the Oval Office is irrelevant to the decisions and policies that chart our collective course as a country, I've become disenchanted because of the unavoidable truth that whoever is elected President will be a dutiful servant of the Empire. The fact that America became an Empire over the past century was probably unavoidable, given human nature and the course of world history, but I'm not a fan of the Empire and won't willingly support it.

Politicians, like snake-oil salesman, are brilliant at making statements (and often outright promises) that appeal to the wishes of their potential supporters, but once in office they are constrained by the

extreme complexity of the system. The President in particular is likely to be chewed up and spit out by pressures that are equivalent to being drawn and quartered. Anything the President does will be criticized and excoriated by large numbers of people. The job itself has become virtually impossible for any human being.

How we collectively use our national power and distribute our society's wealth is primarily a function of our institutional culture. That should be OK, since institutions correctly provide the skeletal structure of any large, advanced nation. By and large, however, institutions in America are now corrupt and untrustworthy. Whether political, commercial, or social, too many of our institutions no longer serve the public honorably. Instead, they have devolved into racketeering to maintain the status quo, their own survival, and, most importantly, the iron grip of the ruling elites that run and benefit from them. Reform of that situation seems to me no longer possible through political idealism (i.e., party platforms or campaign promises by any particular candidate for office), but only through the painful necessities that will inevitably follow institutional overreach, breakdown, and failure. I'm saddened to write this, but I believe it to be correct.

Yes, I understand very well that all the major institutional contributors to the propaganda hologram that constitutes the mainstream media are busy reassuring us that "all is well" in America, that we are still the world's premier superpower on every meaningful level, which to them basically means economic wealth and military dominance. That is, of course, their job — to lie to us, in part by cooking the books, and in part by carefully not mentioning all the many signs that our ship is taking on water at an alarming rate that increases with each passing year.

But wait, isn't America a country *"of the people, by the people, and for the people?"* And isn't politics the means through which we exercise our collective will, as well as the natural and correct way to produce reforms to right our ship and stay on course? Well, uh, no, not anymore, especially not on the national macro-level.

Despite the continuing presence in our population of a significant percentage of Americans who are sincere, well-meaning, hard-

working, and at least reasonably honest, our country — and the institutional cultures that should support it — has gone too far down various roads from which there is now no return. Corruption and utter disregard for the truth have become accepted norms. The ubiquitous drumbeat of advertising tells us that all we need to have a wonderful life in America is the latest smart phone, a 4K flat-screen TV, a new car, and prescriptions for miracle pharmaceuticals. This is only the most obvious commercial meme that attests to our delusion and eventual downfall. *"Ask your doctor if Viagra is right for you..."*

Despite my personal disdain, however, presidential campaigns and elections remain a central drama in American culture, most especially in the media — both mainstream and alternative. Even astrologers — who are about as far from mainstream as it gets — are expected to weigh in with their opinions about the major candidates and the outcome of the election.

I want to state right up front that I will make no prediction regarding who will win the November election. We're living through a decade of shocks, surprises, and unpredictability. I don't pretend to know the outcome, and placing a bet would be not merely tantamount to gambling, but more akin to attempting to pin a tail on the donkey while blindfolded and after having been spun around three times. The very idea of predicting the election winner makes me dizzy.

I will, however, write astrological commentaries about at least three of the candidates, the first being Donald Trump. Why? Because both his candidacy itself and his current front-running status among the gaggle of Republican wanna-be-Presidents is in some ways so improbable, yet also perfectly suited to the extraordinary tenor of our times, which numerous pundits in America have characterized as "anything goes, but nothing matters." That's tongue-in-cheek, of course, but it may not be too far from the truth.

In future commentaries, I intend to focus on the charts of Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. Depending on how events unfold, I may add other candidates.

Hillary Clinton, whose most recent job was as Secretary of State, before that U.S. Senator from New York, and before that First Lady

during husband Bill's two terms as President, is the perennial Democratic candidate with a lifetime of political experience (and the scars to prove it, including a recurring historical theme where her integrity has been questioned and is frequently under fire). Hillary sits atop a strongly funded and well-oiled campaign organization to support her longstanding hope/belief that "it's my turn" in 2016.

The other leading Democrat in the race, Bernie Sanders, the junior U.S. Senator from Vermont, previously an independent but now a Democrat, started out as the proverbial symbolic candidate whose chances of winning were considered slim-to-none (in large part because he identified himself as a "socialist," which, given the historical meme in America of "better-dead-than-Red", is still a dicey label for any political resumé). His candidacy was expected to exert at best some leverage to force Hillary a little to the left, presumably to correct and redefine a "center" that has been dragged very far to the right and hasn't reflected the true middle of the bell curve among Americans for some decades. Sanders' early campaign has been so successful, however, that his position in the race is no longer merely symbolic; currently he's challenging Clinton for the lead among Dems.

Curiously, current polls suggest that Trump would stand a better chance of winning against Clinton than Sanders. Go figure. That said, however, the November election is still a long way off, and nothing is yet cast in stone. The arduous process of weeding out the also-rans will begin soon with primaries in Iowa and New Hampshire.

In a crowded Republican field dominated by hard-core right-wingers, Donald Trump started out as the joker in the Republican deck, but recent polls have elevated his current stature to the King of Clubs. Trump has never held any significant elected public office, and his experience in the actual machinery of American politics is limited. His party affiliations have changed over the years from Democrat to Republican to alternative third party and back to Republican again. This is not to suggest that Trump has no political savvy or connections, but merely to establish that his history is not in the arena of what was once called "public service."

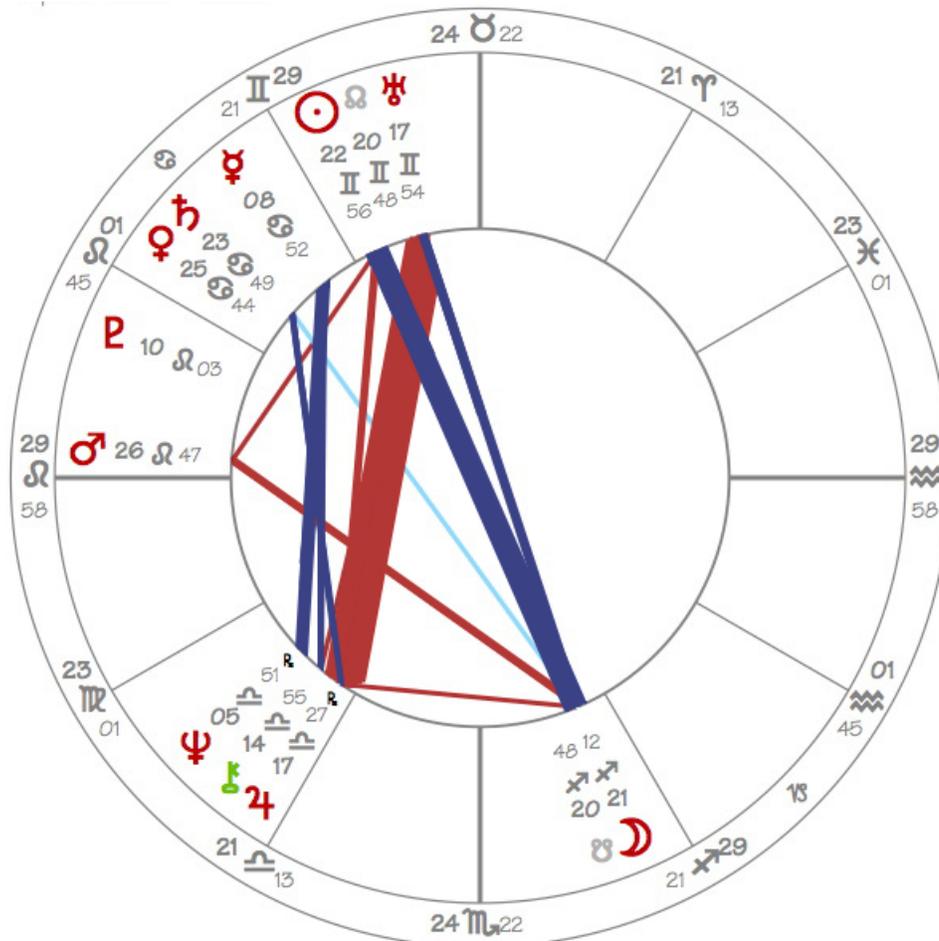
Trump's long business career has been quite diverse, with fingers in many different pies, but his main image in the public mind is as a mover and shaker in the wild west world of Big-Money real estate wheeling-dealing, as a denizen of the social elites, and, more recently, as a television celebrity. Whether or not that history qualifies him to be President doesn't matter, especially these days, when the traditional wisdom is under assault from so many divergent and often extreme directions.

Below is Donald Trump's natal chart. His birth-data (the time of birth is from Astro-Databank) is apparently dependable as a matter of public record:

## Donald Trump

Friday, June 14th, 1946  
10:54 a.m. EDT  
Jamaica, New York

Tropical Zodiac  
Placidus Houses  
Moon's True Node



## **Character**

Donald Trump's natal chart is anchored by an elevated Sun-Uranus conjunction in Gemini. Like all emphatic Uranians, the very core of his personality represents a challenge to traditional wisdom and the status quo. Trump gives no particular respect to typical authority. This doesn't mean that he is ignorant of the existing power structures, just that he doesn't genuflect to them. In fact, he sees himself as a rebel.

He loves power, of course — Trump's long career in the seven-league boots world of financial speculation attests to that. In addition, he has no aversion to notoriety, as shown by his eager pursuit of fame through television, playing himself. Trump does respect the traditional institutions of culture, if not the more tender mercies of polite public comportment, but his candidacy represents something of a crusade for radical change, for which he sees himself as the ideal leader.

How does this differ from the gaggle of Tea Party, knee-jerk right-wing candidates, most of whom also engage in relentless provocation? The difference is that Trump sees himself as an outsider with no group allegiances. Though obviously a Republican and a dyed-in-the-wool committed capitalist, his actions as President wouldn't fall neatly into the playbook of any single political camp. Trump loves nothing better than to see himself as absolutely unique and original.

I wouldn't call Trump fearless (mostly because I don't know the astrological signature for fearlessness), but I think it's safe to say that he isn't afraid to piss off people, in part because---unlike someone like Bill Clinton---he doesn't shy away from giving offense. Trump counts more on a talent for boldness and persuasion than on personal charisma. Leo Rising implies that he can be gracious and friendly in interpersonal socializing, especially one-to-one, but in his public performances, shock effect "trumps" charm, as befits his Sun-Uranus conjunction. He seems to relish his own outrageousness, and that persona hasn't softened with advancing age, remaining his characteristic approach to the public arena.

Trump was born with his Gemini Sun in very close opposition to the Moon in Sagittarius (he was born on the day of that month's full moon, two hours before the exact opposition). The Gemini-Sagittarius axis in charts indicates interest in everything, inherent optimism, quicksilver spontaneity, and quick mental facility.

That axis in Trump's chart is near the 5th/11th house cusp, implying that he is — by temperament — an enthusiastic gambler. He likes taking risks by betting on himself. As stated above, the addition of Uranus to the Sun-Moon opposition adds an element of intentional provocation to his public performances (where, with Leo Rising, he displays an affinity for the limelight; he likes being center-stage as the star). Trump enjoys shocking people, courts controversy, and doesn't shrink from personal eccentricity. He epitomizes the quote attributed to various well-known Americans including P.T. Barnum, Mae West, Will Rogers, and W.C. Fields, among others: *"I don't care what the newspapers say about me as long as they spell my name right."* Aggressive self-promotion has always been part of Trump's stock-in-trade, and his love of media attention is obvious and well-documented. None of that is surprising, given the factors in his chart noted above.

He has a Saturn-Venus conjunction in Cancer at the end of the 11th, beginning of the 12th house, implying that his friends and lovers tend to be "fantasy archetypes" selected with a certain cold calculation. Other associations of that pairing imply that personal friendships are a significant factor in his social stature, and that he cultivates these relationships to enhance his public image. Trump can be sincerely heartfelt with his friends, but this doesn't neutralize the strategic sense of feathering his own nest. While the Sagittarius full Moon indicates a spontaneous and friendly attitude of *"Hail, fellow, well met,"* where even strangers can become instant friends, Trump has another, quite different side. Mars just above the Leo Ascendant, combined with the Venus-Saturn and Sun-Uranus, imply that he often behaves as a take-no-prisoners warrior with a marked streak of cruelty. That may seem paradoxical, but in astrology contradictions don't cancel out — they co-exist within the personality. Which facet of self comes to the front for expression in a given moment depends on many variables, among them context and situation. Trump is nothing if not unpredictable.

With Neptune in the 2nd house square to his Cancer Mercury, Trump's intellect is strongly influenced by emotion and intuition, which is sometimes very acute. He is likely to play fast and loose with the facts to support an argument. Very quick on his feet mentally, Trump has an uncanny sense for what his audience wants to hear.

The 2nd-house Neptune also implies that Trump's self-judgment is based on an idealized image of his self-worth. Combined with Leo Rising, his self-esteem is very high. He has little reserve in assessing his own value, often overstating it with exaggeration. However, Trump believes that to be an accurate evaluation, since he relies so heavily on a self-created image. This is an advantage when it becomes necessary to re-invent himself after failure, which he has done often in his life. Failure causes him to change strategy and/or tactics as quickly as possible to recover, but otherwise leaves very little impression on his psyche, since confidence and bravado are essential traits of his self-expression.

I think it safe to say that humility is not Trump's strong suit, although there's no telling what he might feel in his most private or vulnerable moments.

The "truth" does not dwell for Trump in factual reality. Instead, he puts his faith in what I could call "creative possibilities." He does have a strong and savvy feeling for the bell curve of opinions held by any particular audience for whom he is performing and seeking to win over, however, and his ability to read people's beliefs is potent.

In general, Trump feels that he is the author of his own destiny, and while he considers the opinions of others, he doesn't really care what they think. That may not always be true behind closed doors or in serious deliberations, but it's always the case in his public persona.

From October 2015 through March 2016, Trump's chart is riding a wave of opportunity. Those who loudly proclaimed his candidacy to be a joke are sorely mistaken. Given the early disdain in the media regarding Trump's candidacy, the surprise is that he might be able to win the candidacy of the Republican Party. His chances of winning the election are a different matter, of course. Trump is the darling of

a particularly disaffected and angry segment of the voting public that spans the right side of the political bell curve. These are mainly Republicans, but the demographics are dispersed over a wide range of political leanings. The lack of a coherent ideology in his campaign doesn't endear Trump to the far right wing, however, nor to the Republican establishment. Trump's supporters are aggressively activist and very likely to vote, and they are making their presence felt in no uncertain terms, but the question remains whether their numbers will prove sufficient to carry Trump all the way to the nomination and then into the White House.

Trump's current pattern of long-term, outer-planet transits in the mid-2010s confirms the opportunistic timing of his candidacy without providing certainty about its ultimate success. In fairness, no transit ever indicates that a positive outcome is assured. Astrology, like life, sells no insurance. Four planetary symbols comprise the primary archetypes that are dominant in Trump's chart during the campaign: Uranus, Pluto, Chiron, and Jupiter. By contrast, cycles activated by Saturn and Neptune are relatively minor in 2016, remaining quietly in the background.

## **Uranus**

In this period, Trump's chart contains two successive back-to-back Uranus transits: first, an opposition to his natal Jupiter from April 2015 through March 2016, followed by a last-quarter square to his natal Saturn from May 2016 through April 2017. Jupiter and Saturn are the symbolic pair most associated with participation in the social realm, so both transits indicate the likelihood of major (if temporary) changes in Trump's social stature.

The first transit — Uranus oppose Jupiter (which is in Libra near the cusp of Trump's 3rd house, ruling his 5th house — implies dramatic and sudden shifts in risk-taking inspired by willful optimism. Trump has long coveted becoming President; he gave it a go briefly Party in the 2000 campaign as a candidate for the Reform Party, where he won primaries in Michigan and California before bowing out. 2016 feels very different in America, however, and this Uranus transit implies that Trump believes that his time has now come. It also indicates strong feelings of privilege, confidence, and the increased possibility that his message will find a receptive audience. At the very

least, whatever Trump talks about in the campaign is likely to be a lightning rod for public discourse.

The Uranus square to Saturn is a very different animal, but with similar impacts. Normally, Trump's social success is limited in the collective realm. He may have many friends in high places and be admired by some people, but the public as a whole has tended to regard him as a curiosity and something of a loose cannon. The Uranus-Saturn transit implies that his public popularity could increase significantly, since he's expressing the frustrations of a fair number of Americans. Current polls confirm that new approval.

At their best, Uranus transits — which occur at roughly 20-year intervals in any particular Uranus cycle — are like free "sneak previews" of results in life that we want but previously couldn't achieve. The effects are sudden and sporadic, and they tend to stop happening when the transit ends. The "gift" of the transit is that now we know how certain experiences actually feel, which can act as inner motivation to later build that goodness into our lives by diligent efforts and sustained work.

At their worst, Uranus transits are marked by a number of sudden and unpleasant shocks over the duration of the transit, rather like being stuck repeatedly with a 400-volt cattle prod. We are taken completely by surprise, jolted seemingly out of the blue by nasty developments we didn't expect and for which we weren't prepared.

Over a one- to two-year period, any given Uranus transit will contain elements from both sides of that duality. All the "spikes" will be relatively sudden, unpredictable, and probably brief, whether as tasty carrots in front of our donkey, or as unexpected, disagreeable shocks to our expectations. The point to all of these manifestations is disruption of our habitual rhythms of unconsciousness. To whatever extent we're living on auto-pilot, Uranus shocks us awake. With transits in the Uranus-Saturn cycle, these short lightning bolts — whether in the form of gifts or curses — are particularly powerful in their impact on us. We aren't likely to sleepwalk through them.

## **Pluto**

Then, from early 2016 through the end of 2017, Pluto moves into first-quarter square to Trump's natal Jupiter. This transit indicates that Trump is moving into a new and expanded experience of opportunity for greater social impact. More than any of his other transits, this one lends considerable symbolic support to his chances of a successful candidacy. His campaign has rapidly gained traction after an initial period of media disdain, and his popularity among voting Republicans has soared, according to the polls. The Pluto-Jupiter transit indicates that Trump is in the right place at the right time. For better or worse, he is now a political force to be dealt with by friend or foe.

Interestingly, the Pluto-Jupiter transit indicates a strong possibility that certain of Trump's long-held philosophies will change over the course of the campaign and beyond. However didactic and fixed his pronouncements may sound, Trump could find himself shedding old beliefs and espousing new ones. He wants to change the world, but the world may change him.

## **Chiron**

Chiron is a minor planet, sometimes considered a comet, associated in astrology with our unconscious beliefs and assumptions, especially those that are in conflict with reality and tend to undercut our intentions, decisions, and behaviors without our realizing that our own self-programming is leading to outcomes that backfire on us.

Chiron transits act to bring to the surface these unconscious and illusory assumptions, giving us the chance to change our own beliefs and attitudes to bring them into harmony with reality. We may or may not "realize" the fantasy-basis of our beliefs during Chiron transits to natal positions (and transits of other planets to our natal Chirons), but we have the opportunity through events that bring our unconscious assumptions into bold relief, giving us the chance to make the "ah-ha!" linkages.

In 2015-16, Chiron moves through a perpendicular relationship to the axis of Trump's natal Uranus-Sun/Moon opposition. He's likely to get ample opportunity to see the repercussions of too much careless spontaneity in "shooting from the hip" by saying whatever he's

thinking without any social filtering. Whether Trump will “get it” or not remains to be seen, since his identity is deeply invested into the notion that blunt generalizations are somehow more “truthful” than careful or thoughtful diplomacy. After all, Trump is seeking the Presidency, not pontificating in some neighborhood bar.

## **Jupiter**

Finally, Trump’s chart contains major Jupiter activity from November 2015 through early August 2016, with significant transits to his natal Sun and Moon. These indicate that Trump feels a strong sense of inner permission and supreme confidence to expand his influence into new social realms, and also that external circumstances will tend to cooperate with these intentions.

These Jupiter transits to his natal Sun and Moon will end more than two months before the election, however, so whether or not his luck will hold until November is uncertain. Two other brief Jupiter transits occur in October (conjuncting Trump’s natal Neptune and first-quarter square his natal Mercury), but his ongoing Uranus-Saturn transit is an unpredictable wild card that can cut both ways, to his advantage or disadvantage. Overall, the pattern in Trump’s chart around the time of the election is buoyant but also prone to sudden and unexpected reversals.

Of course, this is moot if Trump doesn’t become the Republican nominee. Having the lead right now in January is no guarantee of success in November, since the primary season will soon start to pare down the field.

## **Beyond the Campaign**

If Trump wins the election, what does his chart indicate about his life during the years of his term, 2017-2020? Immediately following the election, in December, prior to the inauguration, the chart moves from a phase of low Saturn impact (only two relatively minor Saturn transits in 2016) to an entire year of dramatic Saturn influence (six Saturn transits, two of which are as major as they come).

Contrary to certain simplistic and incorrect popular beliefs about astrology, Saturn is not a “negative” symbol, and Saturn transits aren’t “bad.” Astrology has no negative symbols. Every symbol is

dualistic, with expressions that our egos like, and expressions that our egos hate. In the case of Saturn, that means long-term ambitions and the gumption to fulfill them, but also obstacles, delays, and failures along the way.

In fairness, major Saturn transits are typically difficult in actual experience. We feel stressed and "heavy," with an increased tone of seriousness under increased burdens of responsibility that may push us to our limits. Saturn transits are usually characterized by obstacles and frustrations that must be carefully managed by pacing ourselves. Saturn teaches us about delayed gratification as an important facet of maturity.

From January through October of 2017, Saturn conjoins Trump's natal Sagittarian Moon and opposes his natal Gemini Sun. These transits are critical, representing respectively the beginning of a 29-year cycle of finding ways to satisfy our own or others' needs and the halfway point of a 29-year cycle of developing and expressing the central purpose and core meaning of our lives. These are extraordinarily significant events, and potentially quite positive in their long-term implications. The actual periods of each transit at the quarters of most Saturn transits are trying, however, as transitions from one approach to life to another that requires very different strategies and tactics.

The Saturn-Moon transit is a conjunction, meaning that it's the beginning of a cycle, symbolically representing the birth of something new. Every woman knows that birth is hard — the new baby is pushed out from the warm comforts of the womb into the harsher realities of a cold world. The beginning of every Saturn cycle involves going back to square one and starting over. No one likes that.

In the Saturn-Moon cycle, this means that habits and routines we've developed over the previous three decades to help us feel comfortable and satisfied on a day-to-day basis are suddenly stopped, no longer ineffective, or made irrelevant. Imagine that you always loved peanut butter sandwiches, but one day your PB-and-J sandwich either didn't taste good or didn't satisfy you. So you ate another one the next day, but the result was the same. Eventually,

you'd stop eating peanut butter sandwiches and looking for some other food to give you the comfort you wanted.

So, in the 10-month period of the Saturn-Moon conjunction, when needs go unmet and comfort is nowhere to be found, we resolve to set out on the long path to find new and more effective ways to take care of our needs. The point here is that what satisfies us in one phase of our lives may not provide the same satisfaction decades later. We have to update the ways we fulfill our own needs and respond to the needs of others (Moon) by finding new activities, behaviors, and approaches to fulfillment. This is both natural and inevitable. What makes us feel happy and content at age 10 will not be identical to what we need at age 40, or at age 70.

Trump's other major Saturn activation in the Saturn-Sun cycle is not a conjunction, but an opposition, meaning the halfway point in a cycle. At the middle of every cycle, we move from the summer season of tending to the autumn season of harvest. If you've ever built a house, you know that it starts out as a vision (initially a dream, but then a plan), moves into manifestation by acquiring the site and digging out then pouring the foundation, becomes exciting as the framing crew puts up the shell, then settles into a long period of finishing work, which seems to last forever. Very few newly built houses are actually finished when we move in, but that often becomes necessary, whether or not we feel that the house is "ready."

Moving in represents a huge symbolic change, from "building a house" as a project separate from our regular lives to "living in the house we built" as the fulfillment of our original intention. And so it is with the Saturn-Sun cycle. Whatever we've been working to develop as central themes in our lives over the previous 14 years to provide a continuing source of coherence and meaning changes after the halfway point from a project to the primary vehicle for our self-expression. That's wonderful, actually, especially if we've built a good house within our means that suits our purposes. But, as everyone knows, moving is hell. "Moving" is metaphorically the ten months of the actual transit, when Saturn jockeys back and forth opposite our natal Suns. And that's what Trump goes through in 2017, a transition that's positive in meaning, but no fun at all to go through.

It's safe to say that, if he becomes President, Trump will immediately run into unforeseen responsibilities that are likely to feel overwhelming. However well-prepared he believes himself to be from a long-term perspective, settling into the saddle of the Oval Office and actually being President will push him to his limits (and sometimes past those limits) and feel immensely difficult.

*[Note: These transits will occur in Trump's life in 2017 whether or not he is President, of course. Charts don't change because of circumstances, but the correspondences of what happens and how we feel are always tied to the conditions of our lives at the time. As President, Trump would probably experience the Saturn transits as serious challenges to his new status. If he isn't elected, then he might experience the transit as disappointments and frustrations about the failed run for office and regrets about what might have been. Either way, the transits indicate significant shifts in his life-journey that will require substantial re-calibration.]*

Later, Trump's chart moves into a long and powerful outer-planet transit as Pluto arrives at the first-quarter square to his natal Saturn for two years, from March 2019 to January 2021. If elected, that would mean almost the entire the second half of his term. This is *exactly* the same transit that President Franklin Roosevelt's chart was undergoing when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entered World War II.

As an astrological symbol, Pluto is the ultimate wild card. Sometimes it is quiet, coming and going in our charts seemingly without so much as a whisper. Other times, Pluto transits are apocalyptic, like a violent volcanic eruption that wipes out everything in the landscape. Both of these expressions fit Pluto's symbolic meaning of "death and rebirth," a purging that clears out the old to make way for the new. The difference is that sometimes the transformation occurs invisibly, beneath our awareness, completely contained within the unconscious, while other times the obliteration that opens up possibilities for new growth occurs right at the surface, at the visible, tangible level of our real lives.

The experience of an eruptive Pluto transit in an individual life is a confrontation with immensely powerful forces beyond our control

that we can neither defeat nor resist. These forces may come from inside ourselves as disruptions within our unconscious programming, or they may beset us from outside through challenging circumstances caused by literal events. Sometimes both occur simultaneously.

The transits of the Pluto-Saturn cycle, which occur these days usually twice over a full lifetime, offer the possibility of removing the shadow fears of failure from our psyches by confronting us with situations where we cannot possibly be "responsible" or "successful." All we can do is surrender. Later, after coming out the other side of what can be a terribly dark tunnel, we may discover that capitulation has brought a newfound sense of humility to simply do the best we can and not expect ourselves to be superhuman. So, paradoxically, we rid ourselves of the neurosis of failure by actually failing.

The old saying that "what doesn't kill me makes me stronger" is often not true, in part because "strength" is not the sole measure of recovery. Enhanced flexibility and greater understanding can also be positive outcomes after loss or travail. And I'm not suggesting that any renewal is *guaranteed* after a meltdown. Not everyone recovers. Many factors affect individual renewal, and they go far beyond mere circumstance.

But Pluto is not merely one side of an equation. It isn't *only* destruction. Yes, major Pluto transits often correspond to an ending through the death of something in our lives, but they also carry the seed-potential for renewal. That's the way life works on this planet. Without volcanic eruptions, we wouldn't even be here, since the land we walk on is created from magma. Everything is food for something else. Endings and new beginnings. Goodbyes and hellos.

How this Pluto-Saturn transit might hit Trump if he were President we can only speculate and hope that it wouldn't manifest as something disastrous for the country. At this point, however, future disasters may be inevitable, regardless of who occupies The White House. I would like to believe otherwise, but the signs aren't encouraging. American Exceptionalism, long a bulwark of our national mythology, is an assumption that may finally be proven false in the decades ahead. All empires imagine themselves immortal even during the decline of their powers, but they all crumble. Ironically —

depending on future events and how they unfold, of course — the end of our run as an Empire might turn out to be a surprisingly positive outcome for America.

**Update, 3 March 2016:**

In this commentary on Donald Trump, and my two other recent essays on presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders as well, I have attempted so far to keep my own political beliefs and opinions out of the writing, in order to prevent the essays from becoming polemics. My intention was not to convince anyone of the correctness of my personal beliefs about society and politics, but instead to reveal the roots of the candidates' personalities as illuminated by astrology through their natal charts and major transits now and in the years ahead. Recent events in the campaign, however, mainly on the Republican side of the race, have made all but impossible any continuing efforts to stay on the neutral side of the line. From this point on, my opinions about the candidates will necessarily take their place alongside whatever further astrological insights I can offer.

Trump has tapped into the powerful sentiment among Republican voters who are not merely disaffected, but downright apoplectic about government. Obviously, progressives, liberals, and even centrist Democrats are the primary focus of their ire, but their dissatisfaction extends across the political spectrum to include even mainstream and conservative Republican office-holders and party insiders. Basically, these voters see all government and everyone associated with it as the enemy. Venting this barely suppressed rage is more important to them than policies or programs, and Trump is the perfect iconoclastic demagogue for that release of steam.

Trump has spent much of the campaign up until now trashing his Republican opponents with crude insults and character assassination. Meanwhile, his various confident promises about what he will achieve as President — bring China to heel with trade sanctions, build a wall to keep out illegal immigrants from Mexico, get tough on terrorism, rebuild the military, reform healthcare, etc. — have absolutely zero chance of coming to pass. Apparently Trump assumes that immediately upon his election, he will be crowned King or Dictator.

He seems to have no understanding of the built-in divisions of power in American government that intentionally limit the power of the President. Either he's flat-out lying to get votes or he believes himself to have magical powers. That's no problem for his supporters, however. They love Trump's over-inflated self-esteem and constant pose as a "winner." The Pied Piper nature of his candidacy doesn't concern his supporters in the least.

But then, nothing is out-of-bounds in politics. Impugning a candidate's motives, character, lineage, or sexual morality through insults based on innuendo or outright fictions are commonplace in American elections. I suppose I could give us credit for stopping short of murder, but even that is uncertain. Throughout American history, numerous candidates for elective office have died unexpectedly or tragically during campaigns, which always provoke immediate suspicion of conspiracy.

Political campaigns marked by civility between the candidates in their public pronouncements are the exception rather than the norm. And this year's presidential election circus is proving true to form. If the election comes down to Trump versus Clinton, increased insults and innuendoes are virtually guaranteed.

The dirty politics of schoolyard bullying has a longstanding if less-than-illustrious history in American political life. If we think that the circus of this year's presidential campaign is somehow unusual, we need only turn to history to refute that. Lest we forget, it was a brief 16 years ago that a presidential election in the U.S. was contested after some rather obvious corruption and the winner decided (or rather, anointed) by a Supreme Court whose votes were cast according to party loyalties.

A little farther back in time, during the Democrats' 1968 nominating convention, party bigwigs blocked the anti-Vietnam war candidate Eugene McCarthy, who had won clear voter approval in six state primaries, and — in what is politely called a "brokered convention," but actually means back-room skullduggery and manipulation of rules — gave the nomination instead to standing Vice-President Hubert Humphrey. Heaven forbid that anyone who opposed that illegal, immoral, and idiotic war should have been allowed even possible

access to the White House. Well, the Democrats paid for their eleventh-hour shenanigans by losing the subsequent election, which gave us Richard Nixon as President, and in turn led to the Watergate scandal, followed by the first-ever resignation in disgrace of a sitting President. Remember all that? It may seem like ancient history, but it was less than half a century ago.

The Republican establishment and donor class are currently engaged in similarly desperate scheming in the aftermath of the Super Tuesday primaries to come up with a way to deny Donald Trump their party's nomination. Will we see another "brokered convention?" I doubt it, since Trump's lead in the delegate count may soon be insurmountable, but I can't entirely dismiss the possibility of a conspiratorial derailment of Trump's triumphant march to the nomination. Lord knows, stranger things have happened. This is, after all, another Uranus-Pluto period in our history — as were the late 1960s — so unexpected twists and turns are not only possible, but also probable. Odds are, however, that Trump will become the Republican nominee.

If that comes to pass, it will quite probably insure the formal disintegration of the Republican Party, an event that in hindsight appears more and more to have been inevitable. For the past 40 years, Republicans have given up, step by step, any idea of "governing," and adopted instead the sole and sorry strategy of obstructionism. If they couldn't have things their own way, then the Republicans settled for making it impossible for the supposedly evil Democrats to have theirs.

That nihilistic and primarily sour grapes effort to block legislation has been at least partially responsible for provoking the current voter rebellion, since Americans of all political stripes expect, at the very least, that government will actively look out for their interests through policies with which they may not always agree, but hope will be effective nonetheless. The Republican playbook of blocking the Democrats at every turn by the refusal of their majorities in Congress to compromise has not reduced the size of government (presumably a Republican goal), but has instead resulted in our suffering through a federal government hamstrung by gridlock, which satisfies no one.

Observe for example the current threat by the Republican-controlled Senate to block, by tactics of refusal and delay, *anyone* President Obama nominates for the Supreme Court seat vacated by Justice Scalia's recent death. No surprise there. The Constitution clearly mandates that a vacancy on the Supreme Court shall be filled by the President's appointment of a new Justice, but with the "advice and consent" of the Senate. Oh well, screw the Constitution. Winning is all that matters to these Republicans, and if they can't win, they'll make damn sure that no one else wins.

While "all or nothing" may reflect a certain passionate ferocity of devotion to principle, in the real world of necessary political compromise, it's a recipe for failure in the short term and extinction in the long term. Like the Whigs of the mid-19th century, the Republican Party may soon find itself so splintered that it cannot survive intact and will end up consigned to the scrap heap of history.

Conservative principles and beliefs won't vanish, of course, since they are undeniably embedded in the crazy quilt programming of human nature, but they may need new institutional forms and structures in American culture and politics if they are to find renewed and meaningful expression.

**Update, 11 March 2016:**

Trump's brash performance style in the campaign has resulted in increasing polarization. While his choice of an Us-Them strategy has worked to solidify support among his core followers, Trump has alienated various minorities: blacks, Latinos, Muslims, and — although they could hardly be called a minority — women.

The upshot is that his campaign rallies have become arenas of tense conflict. His supporters at these events are increasingly interspersed with larger numbers of protestors, most often minorities, who attempt to disrupt the proceedings. Trump has chosen the dubious tactic of verbally taunting the protestors from the podium and inciting both law enforcement and his supporters to expel the protestors with rough treatment. The result has been a sudden explosion of violence at rallies in St. Louis and Chicago.

Apart from what this implies about the deep anger and rage that is once again coming to a head in America, as happened during previous Uranus-Pluto transits, including the 1930s labor conflicts and 1960s race riots, it is a very dangerous development for Trump's candidacy.

So far, reaction in the media to this outburst of violence between Trump's supporters and anti-Trump protestors is divided along predictable political lines. Fox News puts the blame squarely on the protestors, while MSNBC indicts Trump himself, because of his crude and repeated comments during the disruptions. For some of the Trump faithful, the trip from suppressed rage to active violence is a very short trip, indeed, and Trump seems to be intentionally inflaming their passions.

Similar incidents occurred at Trump rallies throughout the earlier primary season, but they were sporadic and limited. Critical mass has obviously been reached, however, and no one can predict where this will lead over the coming weeks. So far, Trump accepts no responsibility and plays down his role in the escalation.

If the violence continues past the Florida and Ohio primaries (which are critical to the hopes of Cruz, Rubio, and Kasich, as well as the movement among the establishment Republican leadership to stop Trump from gaining enough delegates to insure his nomination), all sorts of unpredictable consequences might ensue. Not the least of these would probably fall at the feet of Trump himself.

As dramatic expression of the Uranus-Pluto symbolism of this decade, events in this election are heating up in ways that are both ugly and fascinating. Honestly, I don't have a clue where they will lead.

## 2. Hillary Clinton: Is it Really Her Turn?

by Bill Herbst

*Version 1.2 (21 January 2016)*

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Hillary Clinton is the perennial Democratic candidate with a lifetime of political experience (and the scars to prove it, including a history of questions about her integrity). Clinton sits atop a well-funded and well-oiled campaign organization to support her longstanding hope/belief that “it’s her turn.”

While the date and place of Hillary’s birth — October 26th, 1947 in Chicago, Illinois — are definite and easily verified, much uncertainty surrounds her *time* of birth. Numerous times have been claimed by various sources. The two most frequently put forward are 8:00 p.m. and 8:02 a.m. As an astrologer, I’m immediately a little suspicious of “whole hour” birth times, such as “8:00 p.m.,” because of people’s tendency to guess by using an approximate, rounded-off figure. Without question, some babies do take their first breath exactly on the hour, but there’s only a 1-in-60 chance of that. In addition, I’ve never felt that the 8:00 p.m. birth time fit well with what I know about Hillary’s character and life. Looking at that chart invariably leaves me scratching my head.

By contrast, the 8:02 a.m. birth time yields a chart that, in my opinion, corresponds well to my perception of Hillary’s whole life — personal, professional, and public, at least to the extent that events in those arenas are documented and publicly accessible. So, that’s the chart I’ll use for this commentary.

Still, the uncertainty is uncomfortable. I don’t like writing about anyone’s life — especially someone I don’t know personally — when I’m aware that the time of birth may be incorrect. I don’t worry much about the likelihood that a fair percentage birth times are probably off by at least a couple minutes and are therefore technically

incorrect. The astrological systems I've chosen and developed over 40 years don't depend on a birth time that is *perfectly* accurate. Shoot, astrologers don't even agree on what phase of the birth process should constitute the "true and correct" moment from which to erect the natal chart. Is that moment exit from the womb? cutting of the umbilical? first cry? first breath? Philosophically, I lean toward the moment of first breath, since that marks the biological separation from the mother's life-support and the beginning of true autonomy. Once the fluid is forced out of the infant's lungs and the rhythms of breathing begin, we are effectively on our own.

But who can assert with certainty that any particular phase of the birth process is universally correct in all cases? Perhaps the moment of "entry into the real world" varies from one baby to the next?

We might reasonably ask why astrologers even rely on the moment of birth as the basis for our system of personal astrology. Wouldn't conception be a better moment to use? Perhaps, but that time is almost never known with any certainty or precision, and building a system on the bedrock of an event that can't be pinpointed with accuracy is simply impossible.

In part, we use birth because we can. Also, while much is determined at conception and through the nine months of gestation spent in the womb, we are not autonomous through those initial phases of physical, neural, and perhaps even temperamental development.

Finally, there is the vexing question of using "natal" charts to define the core identity of any human being. Where is it written in stone that we all get one chart? Nowhere. Astrology holds, however, that beginnings are critical in understanding the meaning and purpose of any cycle, including the life-cycle. How are we to explore personhood without a reliable reference point? Using a single "natal" chart as a stable anchor that then evolves continually throughout the entire life gives astrologers an elegant way of revealing both the essential character and the changing circumstances of an individual life. While many philosophical or otherwise abstract arguments can be put forward to support that idea, all I want to say in this essay is the pragmatic fact that, time after time, natal charts work quite well to accurately describe how individuals perceive reality, and to reveal the

changing arc of our life-journeys through evolving cycles that activate at particular times.

Critics of astrology (and by that I mean those who believe that astrology has no inherent validity and is nothing but fantasy-based bunk) are fond of asserting that astrologers simply prey on people's susceptibility, and that anyone who "believes in" astrology must be unintelligent, vulnerable to suggestion, or otherwise profoundly gullible. Almost invariably, however, those critics have not studied the astrological system seriously or in depth. They reject astrology out of hand, believing that it's not worth thoughtful study or research. Obviously, those people aren't reading this essay.

Critics/deniers also insist that astrologers "cheat," i.e., that we use known information about people or cues from our clients to shape the interpretations we offer. They seem to believe that if astrology had any validity at all, it *should* and *must* provide *all* the information we need, without recourse to any external references. That's so absurd a requirement as to be laughable.

I've stated publicly for decades that, while I consider astrology a brilliant method for revealing significant truths about human beings and their lives, it never was and never will be sufficient as a stand-alone system. For one thing, charts contain no context. If we don't have a name on the chart, we don't know what we're looking at — a person, a nation, an event, or simply a moment in time and space. Charts offer little, in any, useful information about social circumstances and nothing at all about the consciousness and maturity of the individuals they describe. All those factors are critical to know, at least a little, if we are to interpret the chart meaningfully (i.e., "correctly") for the subject, which, in this commentary, is a person — namely, Hillary Clinton.

Those omissions (context, circumstance, and consciousness) do not, however, invalidate either the essential truth of astrology nor its usefulness as a tool in understanding. I don't know of *any* system — either in "science" or regular life — that stands alone and complete unto itself. For example, archaeology relies on geology, chemistry, and biology. Physics is crippled without mathematics, and architecture is simply doodling on a napkin without an understanding

of geometry and the forces of gravity. Artists don't insist that their creativity operate in a vacuum; they call on every resource in their experience to make their art. Astrology is similar. Marc Edmund Jones, one of the godfathers of astrology's resurgence in the 20th century, defined astrology as "the study of the relationship of everything to everything else." Amen.

Anyway, the issue that kicked off this whole rant was the uncertainty about Hillary's birth time. I cannot be sure that I'm using the correct chart. So, when you read this commentary, please take that into account. I've been a full-time astrologer for more than 40 years, so I'm well aware which statements I make might be dicey (i.e., based on inaccurate data), and which are dependable astrologically (because they come from a level within the system where time of day is not a significant factor, such as most planetary positions in the zodiac or interplanetary aspects, to offer two examples among many). House positions are always time-dependent, as are certain major transits. Because I have studied and practiced astrology for so long, I always know when I'm on solid ground astrologically, and when I'm taking pot shots based on an iffy birth-time.

A reader, however, may or may not have a sufficient level of astrological savvy and sophistication to pinpoint which statements are which. So, what I want to say is this: Take this entire essay about Hillary with a grain of salt. I'll try to make the writing informative and entertaining, but please understand that not everything I write about Hillary may be accurate.

On the next page is the natal chart I've chosen to use:

## Hillary Clinton

Sunday, October 26th, 1947

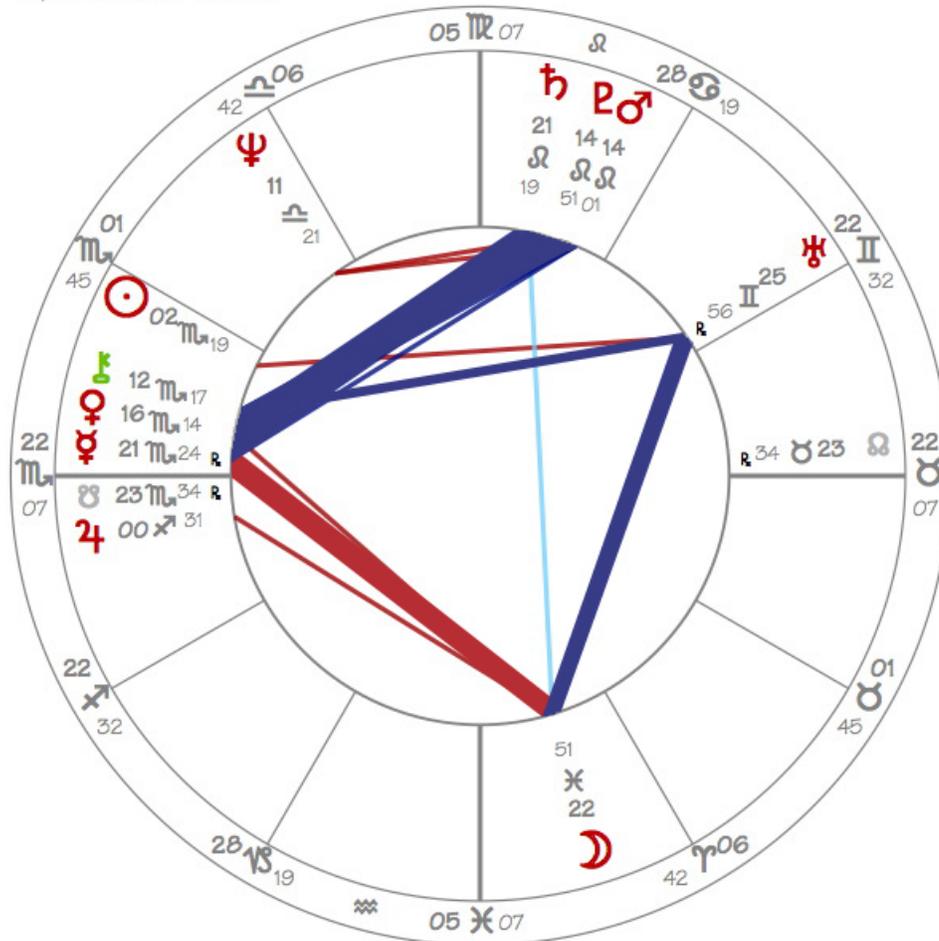
8:02 a.m. CST

Chicago, Illinois

8:02 a.m. CST

Chicago, Illinois

Tropical zodiac  
Placidus houses  
Moon's True Node



After President Barack Obama's surprising win in 2008 and his subsequent re-election in 2012, Hillary Clinton became the presumptive front-runner of the Democrats for 2016. She has remained in the lead position ever since. When she resigned from her post as Obama's Secretary of State in 2013, she may have done so in part to focus on preparations for the 2016 campaign, which include the ongoing efforts of fund-raising and refining the hierarchies of an organization necessary to mount and run a successful campaign.

This is not to suggest that Hillary's road to the presidency has been easy. No, Republicans have been typically aggressive and dogged in attempting to paint her as incompetent, corrupt, and unethical,

mainly in the context of two “scandals” that occurred when Hillary was Secretary of State: first, the 2012 attack on the American diplomatic compound at Benghazi, Libya, and second, the controversy that arose in early 2015 over alleged improprieties years earlier in Hillary’s use of a private email server for official government communications.

Whether justified or not, these attacks on Hillary’s character and performance are clearly indicated in her chart through the multi-planet square between her Mars, Pluto, and Saturn in Leo and the 9th house, and her Chiron, Venus, and Mercury in Scorpio and the late-12th and early 1st houses. That is an immensely powerful and important configuration implying a lifelong pattern of legal and ethical difficulties shrouded in mystery and confusion, with truth and lies intertwining in a swirling dance of innuendo (which quite likely applies to both the accusations against her and Hillary’s responses as well).

The legal and ethical emphasis of that monster square make it obvious why the early foundations of Hillary’s career were laid with her education at Wellesley College and Yale Law School. *[Note: Just because a certain area of our charts is problematic or difficult doesn’t mean that we avoid it. To the contrary, such conflicted configurations usually draw us as compelling arenas of serious investment and significant accomplishment, however checkered they may reveal themselves to be in our lives. But then, such are the paradoxes of duality in the Tao.]* In her early career, Hillary was a skilled, passionately determined, and very successful lawyer, working on social issues that extended from the rights of migrant workers to the welfare of children, interests that resonate powerfully with a 9th house-12th house square and a 4th-house Pisces Moon, where nurturing and protecting those who are disenfranchised is a natural concern.

The difficult correspondences of the square have plagued Hillary at various points of her public life, however, often pulling her marriage into question. One example from the early 1990s was the Whitewater real estate controversy that both she and then-President Bill Clinton suffered through concerning illegal loans for land and development

deals from decades earlier in the 1970s and 1980s (for which the Clintons were accused but never prosecuted).

Another very telling difficulty was Hillary's tendency to remain in denial about her husband Bill's recurring pattern of covert extra-marital affairs, which finally exploded in the Lewinsky scandal that sullied Bill Clinton's second term and eventually led to his impeachment by the House of Representatives (although he was acquitted by the Senate). Hillary stood by her husband staunchly during and after the ordeal, all the way through publication of her 2003 memoir, *Living History*, but her personal reputation suffered from that willful, stubborn denial, which didn't pass the sniff test for many people. A certain naïveté surrounding love is expected in Hillary's chart, however, for reasons I will detail later in the essay.

All in all, that powerful square in her chart represents the major stumbling block to fulfillment of Hillary's longstanding ambition to be President. I write about that configuration in Hillary's chart first because it is so boldly provocative in symbolizing Hillary's major strengths and weaknesses.

In terms of core personality, Hillary's natal chart has a Scorpio Sun in the 12th house, a Pisces Moon in the 4th, and Scorpio Rising with Mercury on the Ascendant. On the one hand, Hillary Clinton is an immensely powerful and passionate woman, a tough-minded and tireless worker in her commitment to make the world a better, safer place. The underpinning to that commitment comes from a deep empathy with the sufferings of others and broad sympathy for those who are least able to protect themselves from the world's cruelty.

On the other hand — and quite paradoxically — Hillary can also be very naïve and even gullible, especially with regard to those she loves. The exact Venus-Saturn square in her natal chart implies her long marriage to Bill Clinton has been both a powerful alliance between two deeply ambitious people and a source of long suffering for Hillary. I doubt that Hillary regrets the marriage, since it fits her chart so well, but I'd wager that Bill has been the primary beneficiary, and that Hillary has too often been left out in the cold.

In fairness, her marriage is not the center of Hillary's chart or life. Personal family is more important, especially through her love for her daughter, Chelsea. Symbolically, however, personal fulfillments take a back seat to more transcendent concerns. At the core of Hillary's chart is the 12th-house Scorpio Sun, indicating a central life-journey that is transpersonal in nature. The most fundamental arc of meaning in Hillary's life is to transcend her own ego, becoming more and more selfless in her motivations, so that she considers the greater good before her own wants and needs. In very real ways, Hillary is a servant of the collective who seeks to correct the injustices of civilization. She starts out as an idealist, however, and ends up as a pragmatist.

The downside of a potent 12-house emphasis in a natal chart has many possible expressions, among them isolation involving loss of personal identity, either forced (such as in imprisonment or hospitalization) or by choice (such as in spiritual retreat to an ashram or monastery). If the 1st house in natal astrology represents our entry into the earthly world through natural and spontaneous self-expression outward into the external environment, with each successive house enlarging the arenas of experience, then the 12th house symbolizes the final level, that of universalization and transcendence — leaving behind the personal ego and identity. Viewed from the opposite perspective, the 12th house represents the experience that naturally *precedes* birth into selfhood, metaphorically implying life in the womb. Both unconsciousness (as in sleep and dreams) and super-consciousness (as in pure, receptive intuition through psychic abilities or meditative states) are included among possible 12th house experiences.

This is immersion into the realm of archetypes, whether as myth and fantasy, "spiritual" realization, or loss of coping abilities, such as can occur in mental illness. The 12th house often corresponds to literal or emotional isolation, as well as the presence of factors in the life that are hidden from view, sometimes kept from personal awareness, and other times as masked from public view. The 12th house includes possibilities for inspiration, heartfelt devotion, and illusion (as self-deception, intentional deceit, or gullibly believing the lies of others).

People with a strong 12th house emphasis may appear normal, but they're not. They straddle very different worlds, with one foot "in reality" and the other foot "somewhere else." That somewhere else may be literal and tangible, or it may be metaphorical and largely invisible. In the extreme, 12th house types can be saints or martyrs, profound truth-tellers or compulsive liars, and the chart itself won't confirm which. Finally, 12th house people are difficult to know well or accurately, since they are often not what they appear to be.

A common perception of Hillary is that she's something a cold fish, with a personality that lacks warmth. Besides the 12th house Sun, that comes from the Venus square to Saturn and Pluto in Hillary's chart, which implies a certain cool reserve in expression, and sometimes a stodginess or lack of grace. Under the surface, however, affection and personal love are even more important for people with strong Venus-Saturn connections than for those without them, but the extra weight carries a seriousness that is not free flowing. Venus-Saturn types may *seem* distant or unfeeling and perhaps less charming than many other people because they are not light-hearted or easy-going where love is concerned. Much rides on success or failure in love, so they play their cards closer to the vest. Still waters run deep, however; Hillary's involvement with anyone she cares for is powerful and possessive. Where love is concerned, she doesn't let go easily.

Hillary's Scorpio Mercury, located less than 1° away from the Scorpio Ascendant in the 8:02 a.m. chart, and in exact square to her 9th house Saturn in Leo, indicates deep ambition around development of rational faculties, in part because of insecurity surrounding intelligence and a high sensitivity to failure. In matters of intellect, Hillary is the classic overachiever. Her Mercury-Saturn square is not a configuration of natural brilliance, but instead an indicator of dogged persistence and the willingness to work overtime at mentality. Hillary always does her homework to make sure that she is well prepared. As with the Venus condition surrounding love, however, Hillary's mental and verbal self-expression may often seem more calculated than spontaneous.

What do the significant transits in Hillary's chart over recent years tell us about where she's been prior to this election campaign?

In late 2012, Saturn conjoined the Sun in Hillary Clinton's natal chart (for the third and presumably last time). This transit — the Saturn-Sun conjunction — signaled the beginning of her third cycle of life-purpose definition, development, and expression. Typically, that transit indicates a period of extreme inner pressure. Soon after, in March 2013, Neptune conjoined the nadir of Hillary's chart (the lower part of the vertical axis, called the *Imum Coeli* — Latin for "lower heaven" — the point in the chart that is directly underfoot). The vertical axis in natal charts describes our status and security. Neptune passing over either end of that axis is a once-a-lifetime event of great significance. In Hillary's chart, that transit lasted through January 2015, defining a period of significant vulnerability for Hillary in both the public and private sphere.

During those two years, the controversy surrounding the attack on Benghazi gave the Republicans a lot of ammo. Then another controversy arose in early 2015 concerning Hillary's use of a private server for official emails years earlier when she was Secretary of State, but Hillary has weathered the continuing storms and remained the front-runner for the Democratic Party nomination. With the exception of Bernie Sanders, whose presence in the campaign was largely symbolic, at least initially, Hillary has no other effective opposition among Democrats. She will presumably be her party's nominee, although Sanders is now mounting a serious challenge.

What does Hillary's chart tell us specifically about this year's campaign and her chances in the November election?

2016 is a year in Hillary's chart marked by a very low-key pattern of active cycles. Only one Chiron transit and one Jupiter transit (both to her natal Moon in Pisces) could be considered energetic indicators, but neither of those is particularly strong or critical. Both fall in the moderate and middling ranks in the overall hierarchy of planetary activations. All her other long-term transits active in 2016 are either minor or relatively smooth and stable.

This is markedly unusual and doesn't happen very often in people's charts. In a normal year in anyone's chart, a certain number of cycles will activate through long-term transits that are provocative,

powerful, and challenging. The numbers vary, of course, from just one or two such critical indicators that take center-stage in the interpretation of that year's journey for the person, all the way to ten or more such potent transits whose overall implication is the inevitability of altered energies and circumstantial challenges.

The current condition of Hillary's chart is at the other end of the scale, where the lack rather than presence of powerful influences is the critical fact from an astrological perspective.

Among the serious questions for anyone assessing Hillary's chart in this election year is whether the current low-key and "quiet" pattern of active cycles in her chart enhances or diminishes her chances of winning the presidency. That question has no clear or easy answer, and it could conceivably lean either way.

People who know a little bit about astrology are often anxious regarding the activation of powerful cycles in their charts. They're typically fearful that the onset of such transits will bring difficulties that upset their lives and limit their happiness. I try to reassure my clients that, while this is sometimes true, it is often not the case at all. No one really wishes for a life where nothing happens, and provocative outer-planet transits, including even those of that notoriously harsh taskmaster Saturn, bring opportunities for positive change in the form of "help from the universe." Sure, such transits may feel "uncontrollable," but then, so much of life is actually well beyond the limited ability of our wills and egos to dictate events and shape outcomes. That fact alone does not imply that we will suffer disaster or other negative consequences when powerful major transits fill our charts.

How do I consider those rare periods where our transit patterns are quiet? I think of it this way: Life is allowing us to chart our own course, to test ourselves and find out how much we've learned. Have we integrated our life experiences and become at least relatively conscious about how to conduct our lives? If so, then a period of no provocative or challenging transits is the perfect time to confirm that.

Another, more poetic way of looking at this is to assume that the Gods are stepping back, taking a break from their all-too-frequent

manipulation of our lives to see just how well we can do on our own. That's mythic rather than literal, of course, but you get my drift.

From either of those perspectives, Hillary's chart indicates that 2016 is a year when she is in charge of her own fate. Hillary may be less than the perfect Master of her Destiny (at least that would be my guess, given human frailty), but she will operate within her own powers and limits.

The lack of significant planetary activity doesn't imply that Hillary will be bullet-proof (metaphorically) or immune from gaffes and other difficulties. She isn't immune from any of life's twists and turns. But Hillary has prepared for this election for a long time, and her transits don't indicate any built-in wild cards to alter her plans.

Could the quiet pattern of her transits indicate that she will have diminished impact or be passed by another candidate who's riding a super-charged rocket? Maybe, but that's a wild card that no one can predict with certainty.

Early on during husband Bill Clinton's first term in 1992, Hillary took charge of his healthcare initiative, and it turned into a debacle. Many people in important positions on Capitol Hill didn't respond well to Hillary's sometimes blunt ways of trying to influence them, and they torpedoed what could have been a triumph for Bill Clinton's Presidency and a feather in Hillary's cap. I don't know if Hillary simply ran into the sclerotic attitudes of a Good Ole Boys club that wasn't inclined to respond favorably to a powerful woman in charge, or if she was feeling her oats prematurely and assumed more authority than she'd earned, thus alienating Congress and the health insurance industry by trying to ramrod change with bull-in-a-china-shop tactics. Both factors may have been at play to some extent. Whatever the combination of factors, however, the whole endeavor was shot down rather quickly.

The country was probably not ready in 1992 for serious reform of the healthcare system to something as sensible as single-payer (obviously, it still isn't, since *everything* in America seems to be about profits, more now than ever before). But Hillary certainly didn't succeed in moving the powers-that-be even an inch in the direction

of an overhaul. Quite the opposite. Resistance stiffened into entrenchment. That was more than two decades ago, however, and Hillary has learned a thing or two since then. This year, Hillary gets to discover whether she's learned the right things in the right ways during the intervening two decades.

*Is Hillary ready to be President?* Yes, without any doubt. *Is America ready for her?* I don't know. Time will tell.

If Hillary is elected, what can her chart tell us about her life in the years of her initial term as President? Two potent Saturn transits in 2017 and one critical Uranus transit in 2018-2019 highlight Hillary's next four years.

Very soon after the November election, in mid-December 2016, the period of calm and relative ease in Hillary's chart comes to an end. Two major Saturn transits begin at that point, both of which indicate serious pressures on her psyche for nearly the entire year to follow, all the way through mid-November 2017. Saturn will form a last-quarter square to her natal Moon, while simultaneously opposing her natal Uranus.

The Saturn-Moon transit is the three-quarter mark of Hillary's current Saturn-Moon cycle. That 29-year cycle is about providing need-fulfillment — literally, by building ways to extract from the environment whatever we cannot create from within ourselves but must have if we are to survive and prosper. Food, clothing, shelter, air — these are all human needs. Symbolically, the Saturn-Moon cycle includes defining and addressing one's own needs, but also responding to the needs of others. Hillary's Pisces Moon in the 4th house implies that she sees the world as one large family and feels deeply that protecting the young, the weak, and the helpless is our responsibility. This is where her deepest, most profound feelings merge with her power and passion.

From 1996 through 2009, during the first half of her current Saturn-Moon cycle, Hillary built certain structures in her life designed to fulfill her own and others' needs. She worked to shape the power and privilege she had achieved by mid-life so as to maximize her abilities to protect others who were at risk of deprivation or harm. This

included accepting the post in Obama's cabinet of Secretary of State during this anxious epoch of America's post-911 sensibilities, where "homeland security" has become an enlarged factor in government's role. Hillary didn't shirk those responsibilities.

From 2010 through 2016, her Saturn-Moon cycle has been in the full phase, which is analogous to autumn with its harvest of whatever was planted the previous spring and tended through summer. 2017 represents the transition in that cycle from autumn into winter. Astrologically, that means letting go of the past. Whether one's efforts to meet personal needs and respond to the needs of others were successful or not, the transition at the last-quarter phase change tells us that it's time to detach from the past by letting go of concerns about what we did over the previous 20 years to fulfill needs and how well we did it.

In some ways, this is about the ego attachments we feel about our achievements. It can also mean letting go of any frustrations we feel about what we didn't achieve or remorse about mistakes we made along the way. If a farmer grows a successful crop, he may bask for a while in the satisfaction, congratulating himself on his skill as a farmer. Conversely, if he suffers crop failure for whatever reasons, he may feel remorse. At some point, however, the time comes to let go of those judgments and get on with the inner preparations for next spring's planting. That's what winter is for symbolically — letting go of the past, recharging batteries, and preparing for the coming spring. Every astrological cycle conforms to this sequence: plant in the spring, tend in the summer, harvest in the fall, then let go of any judgments concerning the past seasons during the winter so as to create a clean inner slate for dreaming up and concretely planning next year's crop.

The last-quarter transition is the notification that it's time to let go of the past, which involves identifying our attachments to whatever happened and cutting loose those judgments. During the last-quarter Saturn-Moon transit, all our successes and failure around need-fulfillment over the past two decades parade before our eyes. Circumstances may provoke memory and awareness of our attachments, or inner prodding may illuminate them. Either way, our work becomes clear, however difficult it may be, given the very

human tendency to associate self-judgments with identity, and thus cling to them as if they were the measure of who we are. To move forward on our life-journeys, however, we must let go of those judgments and attachments.

Like all major Saturn transits, the last-quarter transition is likely to be a challenging process for Hillary, in part because of the pressure to emotionally revisit all her successes and failures from earlier in the cycle, but the outcome is intended to free us from the past so we can prepare for the future. In fairness, last-quarter “notifications” are the easiest of the four major transitions within any Saturn cycle. Recognizing that some part of our lives is worn out and blocking our growth makes it easier to let go.

Simultaneously, Saturn will move into opposition with Hillary’s natal Uranus. This is as contradictory as it gets: Saturn is steady and stable; Uranus is unpredictable and changes suddenly. Saturn is conservative, tied to traditional wisdom and the status quo; Uranus is radical, revolutionary, and iconoclastic to the point of willful defiance.

The Saturn-Uranus cycle symbolizes many experiences, among them the hard work of fleshing out and earning our individuality, so that our independence is visible and effective in the world. The halfway point in the cycle is the transition into the full phase (or harvest) after working for 14 years to establish our identity as a unique and independent person. From this point on, we are no longer *establishing* our independence by practicing at it; we have to *be* independent.

The ten months of the transit are characterized by little support from others and usually corresponds to situations where forces that support the status quo confront and challenge our personal authority, especially our power to act freely. We feel constrained. Should we surrender or fight back? Conform or defiantly resist? In one situation after another, we find ourselves challenged and on our own. The astrological advice is clear: Don’t give in. Don’t surrender. Fight for your independence and success.

If Hillary is President during these two Saturn transits, she will have to prove her mettle all over again as conservatives mount fierce

resistance to her leadership. That's not surprising — power struggles will be unavoidable for whoever is elected — but Hillary's chart highlights that confrontation throughout 2017 as very meaningful in her life-journey.

Later, from June 2018 through February 2020, Uranus will oppose Hillary's natal Sun in Scorpio/12th house. Of all the many hundreds of transits that occur in our charts, this one is in the very top rank of most important astrological events. The Uranus-Sun cycle activates for the first time somewhere between birth and age 20. After that, it re-activates about every two decades. This will be Hillary's third major Uranus-Sun transit and perhaps her last, unless she survives into her late 80s.

The Uranus-Sun opposition corresponds to sudden, unpredictable, and surprising changes of direction in our life-journey. We realize where we have sold out our integrity to conform, where we have "gone along to get along." We must stand up and become who we truly are. Compromise with others is a natural and correct part of life, but not always. As with all Uranian transits, the provocations toward independence may come at us from outer circumstances that require us to change strategies or tactics or from within us as willful decisions to radically alter our course. Typically, both directions will apply over the period of the transit, in this case, about 20 months.

For Hillary, with her Scorpio Sun, the question will be how to use her power — at what levels, in what ways, to what extent, and for what purposes. If she is President at the time, the transit will almost certainly correspond to major events for the country, although the particular manifestations of what might happen are impossible to foresee, given that Uranus is, by its nature, unexpected and unpredictable.

Over the course of America's history as a nation, ten Presidents among the 43 who have served underwent one of the four major Uranus-Sun transits while in office — four first-quarter squares, four oppositions, two last-quarter squares, but no conjunctions. I'll include the list of all ten below to illustrate some of the various ways that Uranus-Sun transits can correspond to real-life events:

- In 1806, after a successful first term that saw America nearly double in size by the Louisiana purchase, President Thomas Jefferson underwent a Uranus-Sun opposition during a factious and conflicted second term that was beset by difficulties, so much so that he effectively retired from public life following the end of his Presidency.
- In 1825, President John Quincy Adams underwent a Uranus-Sun opposition. Extreme opposition to his policies from a hostile Congress marked his single term. His presidency was considered unremarkable, and Adams' legacy was shaped more by endeavors later in life, after he departed the White House.
- In 1839, during the third year of his single term, President Martin Van Buren's chart had a Uranus-Sun first-quarter square. He lost his bid for a second term and remained fairly obscure in the pantheon of American Presidents.
- During his one truncated term as an unelected President who inherited the job after Lincoln's assassination, Andrew Johnson was undergoing a Uranus-Sun opposition when he was impeached by the House of Representatives (but later, after the transit ended, he was acquitted by a single vote in the ensuing Senate trial).
- Ulysses S. Grant, elected initially in 1868, was re-elected President in 1872 during a first-quarter Uranus-Sun square. His entire second term was marked by recurring scandals.
- After surviving one of the most salacious and dirty presidential campaigns in American history, Grover Cleveland was elected President in 1884 during a Uranus-Sun opposition. He lost his bid for re-election in 1888, but then returned to win the 1892 race and served another four years, the only President ever to have non-consecutive terms in office.
- Dwight D. Eisenhower had a last-quarter Uranus-Sun square in 1953-1954 that began the same month as the negotiated truce that ended U.S. military involvement in the three-year undeclared war in Korea.
- President John F. Kennedy's chart contained a first-quarter Uranus-Sun square at the time of his assassination in November 1963.
- The most recent Presidents to undergo a Uranus-Sun transit while in office were Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. Nixon's last-quarter square occurred in 1972, as the revelations about Watergate heated up, leading to the subsequent Senate investigation, whereas Ford's

first-quarter square was active in 1973, when he suddenly became President following Nixon's unexpected resignation.

These ten examples may not be sufficient to constitute a definitive or "scientific" sample, but they are, in fact, all we have, and they do offer a range of possibilities from which we may glean some sense of what Hillary may face if she becomes President.

Certainly, Hillary's chart is no less provocative over the coming years than Donald Trump's. As President, either candidate will face significant shocks, surprises, and challenges. This is to be expected, of course, since it comes with the job and also reflects the tenor of our times. The indications from both their charts, however, leave a question hanging in the air: *does either Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump realize what might await them in office?*

While I have no doubt that both Clinton and Trump want the job, I can't help but wonder if they're truly prepared for the events and pressures that may await them. However turbulent the year of the campaign might be, an old phrase quite likely applies:

*"You ain't seen nothin' yet."*

## 3. Bernie Sanders: Dark Horse No More

by Bill Herbst

*Version 1.3 (31 January 2016, updated on 10 February 2016)  
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I drew up Bernie Sanders' natal chart and graphed out his major transits weeks ago, thinking as I did so that, on one level at least, his chart might not matter. No one who embraces the dread term "socialist" has a snowball's chance in hell of becoming President. If you're running for City Supervisor in Berkeley, California, calling yourself a socialist might actually be an advantage, but not on the national stage.

For America as a whole, socialism is regarded as one tiny step away from totalitarian communism, however absurd that connection may be. Individual freedom is the most sacred of all American myths, even if all that usually means is the sense of entitlement to do whatever the hell you want to make money without regard for the collective well being. The Scandinavian nations have had seemingly no trouble integrating capitalism and socialism, but America isn't Sweden or Denmark. More than a century of reactionary sentiment (i.e., "*better dead than Red*") goes hand in glove with the spurious assumption that America is a country that "should be" white, Christian, heterosexual, and run by 100% balls-to-the-wall, survival-of-the-fittest capitalism. Yeah, fat chance.

Oh yes, we do have socialism in this country, but it's socialism for the rich and powerful through a cultural and economic playing field tilted severely in favor of business through corporate welfare. The New Deal, with its social safety nets and legal prohibitions designed to limit financial racketeering, was an aberration in American history, a 40-year hiccup that has been mostly dismantled since 1970. Compared to Wall Street's financial "Masters of the Universe" who preside over the American landscape today like feudal lords, the Robber Barons of the Gilded Age were mere pikers by comparison.

Free markets and level-playing-field competition are the hallmarks of Adam Smith-style capitalism and function effectively in local economies, but thousands of K Street lobbyists attest to the fact that we don't have that in big-is-better America. In my view, all of the "isms" — *capitalism, socialism, communism, libertarianism, fascism, totalitarianism, etc.* — are perfect systems *in the abstract*, but none of them works worth a damn in the real world, and particularly not in mass societies, without elements of the others as necessary counterbalances. Each "pure" system is inevitably undone by the predictable failings of human nature — corruption, greed, megalomania, narcissism, etc.

Even after 11,000 years, civilization (and humanity as a whole) hasn't yet progressed much past the "Terrible Twos," with their exaltation of the personal control of resources through ownership ("*I, Me, Mine*"). Yes, Buddhist and Hindu cultures pay homage to humility, but Western Civilization barely recognizes humility as a meaningful value. Occasionally, the West applauds compassion, which is related to humility but not the same thing; in general, however, our half of the world embraces individuality and self-absorption that are too often nearly indistinguishable from narcissism. Capitalism remains the perfect system for such an infantile society, with Predatory Capitalism its fullest expression and proudest achievement.

Look at Supreme Court decisions over America's nearly two and half centuries. Time and time again, the "rights" of property owners are given immense weight in the Court's deliberations. This doesn't mean that the Little Guy never wins. Numerous "landmark" decisions have been handed down to protect the disenfranchised. Those are exceptions, however: A clear pattern exists among Supreme Court cases indicating routine deference to property and wealth.

Bernie Sanders declared his candidacy in the presidential election in April 2015, stating that the cornerstone of his campaign would be correction of the extreme income disparity and wealth inequality that are crippling American families and eroding the middle class. His orientation is unabashedly populist and progressive.

Sanders started out as the proverbial symbolic candidate whose chances of winning were considered slim-to-none. His entry into the race harkened back to Eugene McCarthy in 1968. Bernie's candidacy was expected to exert at best some leverage to force Hillary a little to the left. His early campaigning was so successful, however, that Sanders' position in the race is no longer merely symbolic.

*[Note, the rest of this page was edited or added on 10 February 2016 to keep the essay current with developments in the campaign.]*

Bernie's early popularity in the polls has now been confirmed and dramatically expanded by the Iowa Caucus vote and the New Hampshire primary, both of which occurred in early February.

Sanders finished neck-and-neck with Hillary Clinton in the Iowa Caucus polling, and he scored a smashing victory in the New Hampshire primary, winning wide majorities in every voting demographic and leaving Hillary in the dust.

Curiously, some polls have suggested that Trump would stand a better chance of winning against Clinton than Sanders. That said, however, the election is still ten months away, and nothing has been decided yet. The long and grueling six-month process of weeding out the also-rans and removing the casualties from the field has only just begun.

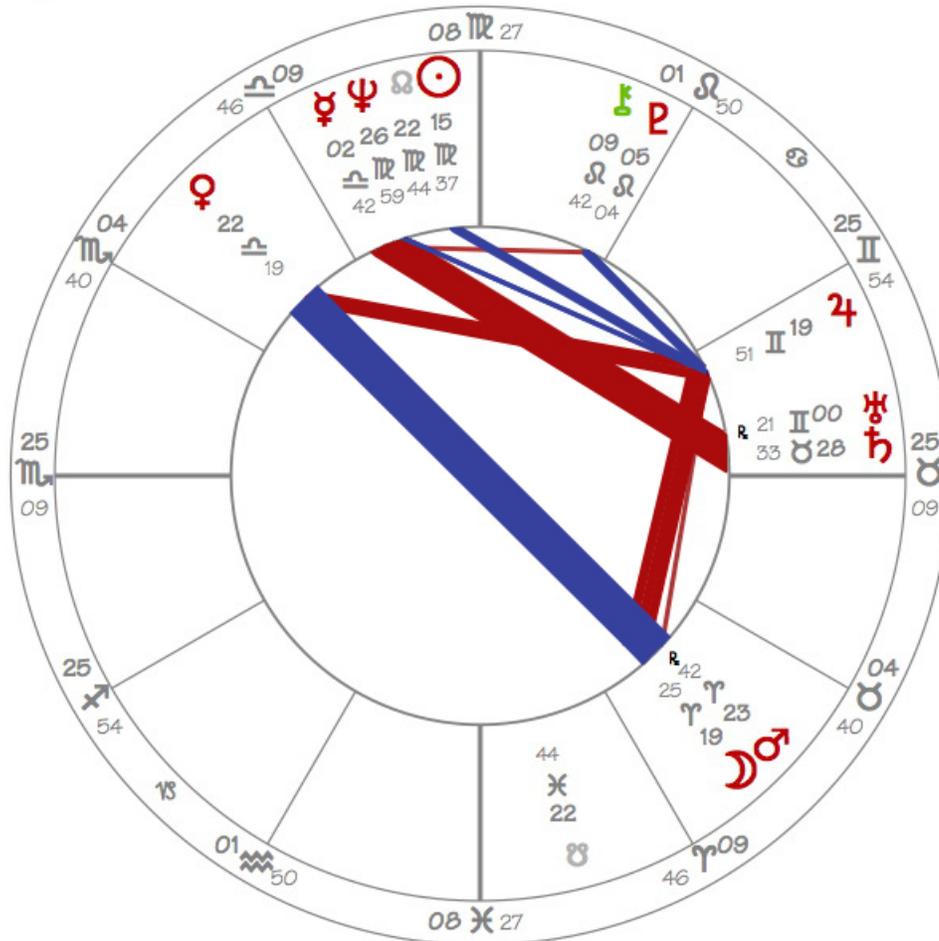
I like Bernie. He's smart, thoughtful, has unquestionable integrity, and total commitment to the causes he embraces (campaign financing and Wall Street Banking reform, to create a fairer and more level playing field for Americans and thus restore the ideals of democracy from the oligarchy of Big Money that currently dominates our society). Bernie's politics reflect the beliefs and wishes of a sizable percentage of Americans, perhaps even a majority, which is clearly not true of all those Republicans on the far right.

On the next page is Bernie Sanders' natal chart. The time of his birth is a matter of public record and is considered reliable:

## Bernie Sanders

Monday, September 8th, 1941  
12:27 p.m. EDT  
New York, New York

Tropical Zodiac  
Placidus Houses  
Moon's True Node



### Character

The first position to consider in Sanders' natal chart is the elevated 10th-house Sun in Virgo. Bernie was born at 12:27 p.m. daylight time — 11:27 a.m. standard time — with the Sun almost directly overhead in Virgo. The vertical axis in charts symbolizes both security and power. The area underfoot is the 4th house and points toward the center of the earth, linking it to personal security — home, family, and lineage, all elements of our inward, private world. The space overhead points outward into the larger universe, linking it to social or collective security — our place in the outer world, at whatever

boundary we happen to draw: community, city, state, nation, earth, or cosmos. 10th-house types are concerned with both the well being of the group and their personal role in managing and protecting it.

In standard textbook natal astrology, the condition of the midheaven/10th house indicates the career dimension of a person's life in all the ways people typically consider that: the importance of career through social recognition and respect, the resources and liabilities of a particular individual's career path, types of careers indicated, and likelihood of success or failure along the way.

While I have no trouble with those kinds of interpretations, my vision of the 10th house is slightly different. In poetic terms, I see the 10th house as repayment of a debt. A debt for what? For the gift of our individual lives. Repayment to whom? To everyone else, including the earth and the universe. Repayment how? Through demonstrating certain truths. I call this *mission*, in contrast to *purpose*.

The Sun in every chart symbolizes the organizing principle, gravitational center, and core source of meaning. It reveals our power to integrate all the disparate elements of our lives into a coherent whole, as well as describing how we go about that challenge. The term I use as shorthand for these related functions is *life-purpose*.

The condition of the Sun in our charts — by sign, house, and aspects — shows how we go about developing, expressing, and achieving a sense of purposeful life. All the other symbols in our charts carry their own symbolic meanings and implications, but all of them finally relate back to the Sun. They may contribute to our sense of purpose or detract from it. The bottom line, however, always comes back to the Sun in our charts and our power to achieve integrity and coherence.

If the expression of our solar purpose goes awry in any of the myriad way that can happen in life, it doesn't mean that we will necessarily be unsuccessful or unhappy. What it does imply, however, is that we will be unfulfilled inside. All the goodness available in life is not enough to compensate for a lack of inward meaning and coherence. We may distract ourselves for a while with pleasures and privileges,

but we cannot escape the specter of inner emptiness. In very real ways, our spiritual connectedness depends on effective expression of our solar purpose. Not everything in life is or needs to be purposeful. If we fail to build the structures that allow us to spend a considerable amount of our time in meaningful activities, however, we lose the core sense of who we are.

Our individual solar purposes belong to us. They are ours; we may succeed or fail at their expression and fulfillment, since purpose lives in the arena of free will.

By contrast, the mission in our charts shown by the condition of the midheaven/10th house does not belong to us. One way or another, it will be expressed successfully, because the various truths embodied by our missions shine through for everyone to see and feel.

Let me offer a hypothetical example of how this might work. Imagine that my mission were to illustrate the importance of personal discipline in living well. If so, I might become a Marine Colonel, not because I'm necessarily aware of my mission, but simply because that's how my life unfolds. As I walk down the street in my clean, crisp uniform, with my fit body, my confident gait, and my eagle eye, guess what passers-by register (whether consciously as perception or just "vibrationally" as a subtle feeling)? *"Ooh, discipline! Right. That's important."*

OK, now assume that I have the same mission, but my life goes badly wrong and falls apart completely, so that I end up a drunk lying in the gutter. As people step over me onto the sidewalk, guess what they register/think/feel? *"Ooh, no discipline! Right. That's important."*

In each situation, the people who pass may think/feel/register many other perceptions or reactions, based on who they happen to be as individuals, but among those custom-tailored responses will be the truth of my mission, whether conscious or buried. It doesn't matter whether or not I live my life well, my mission will still be conveyed.

In other words, the truth that is my particular mission to illustrate will radiate forth to the world one way or another. I am the transmitter,

and everyone else receives the transmission, regardless of my being on-track or not with my life, and equally, regardless of whether others are conscious or not of receiving the message.

So, in my way of looking at charts, purpose operates within the realm of free will, choice, and circumstance. Mission, however, is not a function of will, but instead operates in the realm of fate or destiny. In much the same way that ants or bees are members of a hive and receive all the transmissions of the hive-mind, so our missions are part of the collective mind of humanity. Unlike bees or ants, however, humans are also individualized beings with the chance to fulfill ourselves apart from our function in the collective.

OK, that's a lot to read through, but here's where it gets interesting. What does all this discussion about purpose and mission imply for people born in the late morning, between about 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., depending on location, season, and daylight or standard time? See, for the majority of people — almost 90% — purpose and mission are separate and different, according to their natal charts. Put very simply, that means that the Sun is not located in the 10th house, but in one of the other eleven houses (each of which represents particular dimensions of life-experience). As a result, purpose and mission are different.

For those of us born in the late morning — meaning people who took their first breath when the sun was overhead in the 10th house — purpose and mission fuse together. They are, if not completely identical from an astrological perspective (for reasons too technical to go into here), at least very closely related. This group is comprised of less than 10% of the population.

Bernie Sanders is in that group. According to his natal chart, his purpose and mission are essentially the same: to maintain and enhance the public good through leadership, by the acceptance of responsibility for others' welfare and the power or authority to make that happen. That is sometimes thought of in spiritual dimensions as a "vocation." Most commonly, however, "career" is the operative term. Whether as mayor of Burlington, Vermont, or President of the United States, Bernie's career is always the central and primary

source of meaning and coherence in his life. The well being of the collective is not separate from his personal fulfillment.

Those two levels of concern and ambition may not always be identical, but they work in tandem, hand-in-glove. Technically, Sanders' mission is to find or create ways to convert social ideals into the pragmatic structures of real life expressed through the policies and institutions of culture. Bernie believes that all institutions should serve the greater good, and he sees government as the only watchdog that can prevent organizations from "going rogue," and serving themselves at the public expense.

While capitalism holds that the creation of profit serves everyone, and conversely, that government regulations tend to destroy wealth, Bernie considers the welfare of the public more important than the profit motive, a stance that often puts him at odds with the business community.

Augmenting Sanders' 10th-house Virgo Sun is a Moon-Mars conjunction in Aries opposite Venus in Libra on the 5th/11th house axis. The Arian Moon-Mars gives him fire, passion, and a certain spontaneous aggression that complements the calm reasoning of his Virgo Sun. Bernie doesn't shy away from a fight, and — like Donald Trump — he relishes performing on the public stage. (Hillary is much more suited to behind-the-scenes deliberations and covert operations.)

The Moon-Mars opposition to Venus in the 5th/11th houses imply that had Bernie's life unfolded differently, he might have been an artist or actor. The ambition of his purpose fused with the social idealism of his mission, however, make politics and public service natural arenas for him. Bernie remains an enthusiastic performer, though, especially when questioned or challenged. (The Moon and Venus are both receptive symbols, with the Moon showing our immediate temperamental reaction to stimulus and Venus revealing our more graceful responsiveness. Add Mars to that mix and we get a man who reacts very quickly. It's easy to trigger Bernie's passion or get his dander up. Sanders is no shrinking violet.)

Mars and Venus in their natural signs and tight opposition imply that Sanders is both a tireless warrior who fights for what he believes, but also a person who values fairness and diplomacy. How can one be uncompromisingly assertive and willing to gracefully compromise? By going back and forth from one to the other. Fight to win, but if you can't win, negotiate as good a compromise as possible, and thus live to fight another day.

Two other pairs of planetary conjunctions highlight Sanders' chart: Mercury conjunct Neptune and Saturn conjoined Uranus. Both pairs are called "dissociative," since one of each pair is at the end of a sign, with its partner at the beginning of the next sign. Mercury-Neptune bridges Virgo-Libra, while Saturn-Uranus spans Taurus-Gemini.

These two pairs add complexity to his chart, and presumably to his character, since they tie together different archetypal layers — rationality with intuition and the conservative with the revolutionary. Bernie's life-experience doesn't fit into neat or didactic categories, but instead defies simplistic labels — his approach to governing is more gray shades stark blacks-and-whites. Bernie is likely to see the world as "us" more than as "us-versus-them." Conflicts between people, and possible resolutions of those conflicts, are approached in atypical fashion.

The greatest paradox of Sanders' chart is that, while he's willing and temperamentally equipped to fight aggressively for what he believes, he wins only when we all win, which is a more impressive and idealistic outcome than mere personal victory, but infinitely more difficult to achieve.

### **Transits**

The current pattern of active cycles in Bernie's chart reflects and amplifies this paradox. Mission and purpose, opportunity and resistance, predictable and unexpected, traditional and radical — all these apparent dualities are active in his chart now.

### **Jupiter**

Starting in October of 2015, Bernie's chart entered a period of potent Jupiter activity, with Jupiter conjoining his natal Sun and in first

quarter square to its own natal position. Those transits correspond to attitudes of permission, confidence, and optimism, and will continue through mid-summer 2016, with other Jupiter transits carrying him through September. So far, Sanders' self-assured performance in the campaign has reflected those transits. The influence of Jupiter drops out of Sanders' chart in October and November, however, leaving one to wonder whether his momentum will carry him through, or if his campaign might falter as the election draws near.

## **Saturn**

Jupiter's opposite, Saturn, is also a major archetype in Sanders' chart this year. As a pair, Jupiter and Saturn refer to the social realm of real life, tangibly and pragmatically, with Saturn representing the hard work of investing in fundamentals by building a solid infrastructure, while Jupiter symbolizes the payoff of such hard work through profits and dividends. Throughout most of 2016, from February until the end of November, Saturn is moving through a first-quarter square to Bernie's natal Sun. Of all the many cycles in our charts, the 29-year Saturn-Sun cycle is the most central, since it tracks the development and progress of core meaning in our lives.

In 1950, at the age of eight, Bernie's first Saturn-Sun cycle began. During that first life-purpose cycle, while growing up in a working-class family, young Sanders developed sensitivity to politics, social justice, and economic equality. 29 years later, on the eve of turning 38 in 1979, his second life-purpose cycle began, and with it his career in elected office, starting as Mayor of Burlington, Vermont, and progressing into the U.S. Congress, where he served long tenure in both the House and Senate. In 2009, Bernie's third and culminating Saturn-Sun cycle kicked off.

In poetic or metaphorical terms, the past seven years of Sanders' life have represented the spring season in planting his third garden of core life meaning. Now that garden is moving into summer, and the challenge is to shift from preparing the soil and planting the seeds to tending the growing plants in the garden. In real life, this means that seven years of emotional preparation and laying groundwork must now shift into literal activities that embody and expand the meaning by giving it tangible form.

The theme of core meaning in Bernie Sanders' life is to maximize our collective well being through his responsible leadership in ways that simultaneously protect what works and reform what doesn't. If that purpose was expressed through diverse but persistent social activism during the first Saturn-Sun cycle in his youth, and then in his second cycle through of elected office including decades in the U.S. Congress, then what is left for the third cycle? How about the presidency?

The period of the actual Saturn-Sun first-quarter transit (2016) corresponds to a time of potent conflict. Bernie needs to move forward, to give concrete form to his current ambitions, but overcoming inertia requires him to push harder. Literally, this means that powerful forces will oppose his bid for greater leadership authority, especially since his long history as a cantankerous independent means that he's not exactly a member of the club.

### **Uranus**

Of the three outer planets, only Uranus and Pluto are provocatively active now. A Pluto first-quarter trine to Sanders' natal Sun is a steadying influence, but not a major event. Uranus, however, is very active as it passes over the tight natal opposition between the Moon and Mars in Aries/5th house and Venus in Libra/11th. This passage extends from mid-2015 through early-2018, and implies that Bernie's emotions are electrified now. Sanders is moving through an unusual period of impassioned concern for people. He doesn't simply speak to his constituency, he courts them with gusto and great energy. We can't know if Bernie is more in love with his audience or with the thrill of performance on such a huge stage, but, either way, the effects are compelling. Bernie is acting less like a 74-year-old and more like a young stallion.

### **Neptune**

As the Jupiter, Saturn, and Uranus transits are unfolding, Neptune is also active, passing over the Midheaven at the top of Sanders' chart, which corresponds to a period of profound inspiration about his mission but possible delusions about the viable options. Insights and illusions intermingle in Neptunian symbolism, and separating one from the other is a very difficult task, since they appear identical to

the person experiencing them. Insights are clear visions of reality as it is or can be, while illusions are fantasy escapes from reality.

Fantasies are not inherently evil, they're just so far from reality that bridging the gap is not possible. Fantasies may certainly be enjoyed as fictional entertainment, but trying to turn them into reality will result in disappointment. Too much investment into fantasy (or belief in dreams) puts us at risk of "dis-illusionment" and even despair as they evaporate, as they invariably do eventually, leaving behind only cold, stark reality. Some people never awaken from their dreams. For them, reality's inevitable intrusions seem unspeakably cruel, since they believe the alluring sweetness of their dreams.

### **Beyond the Campaign**

That two-year transit of Neptune over Bernie's Midheaven in 2015-2016 ends after the election, but will be followed by another equally important Neptune transit in 2018-2019, when Neptune opposes Sanders' natal Sun. Should that be a concern for us? Are Americans more at risk with a President whose chart is undergoing enervating and potentially confusing Neptune activity as reality intertwines with fantasy?

Major Neptune transits are not rare among U.S. Presidents. In fact, they are so commonplace as to be almost routine (which is true for everyone), and the developments or events to which they correspond range throughout the spectrum of Neptunian symbolism, from inspiration and high idealism to scandal and diminishing effectiveness.

After studying the charts of all 43 U.S. Presidents' and the real-life histories of their performance in the White House, I can state that the presence of major Neptune transits doesn't prevent election or ascension to office for first-time candidates running for our highest national office. On the other hand, Neptune transits do seem to correspond to difficulty or vulnerability among serving Presidents, as well as the distinct possibility of failure in their bids to be re-elected.

Neptune was active in the charts of two recent Presidents when they were defeated for re-election: Jimmy Carter in 1980 and George H.W. Bush in 1992. Many other Presidents have seen their popularity

or effectiveness dissipate during Neptune transits while in office. Bill Clinton is a perfect example. President Clinton was debilitated by revelations that surfaced in his second term. Neptune opposite his natal Saturn was the culprit in the Lewinsky sex scandal. Clinton limped to the end of his time in office, only to see Republicans take back the presidency in the bizarre and contested 2000 election that followed.

All Presidents experience both adulation and scorn. They are adored by some and loathed by others. That comes with the territory. All Presidents govern as best they can, given their talents, philosophies, and the times in which they serve. No personal cycles in charts offer us anything even remotely like a simple or reliable acid-test for predicting success or failure in the Executive Office.

So, given that Bernie Sanders is hinging his campaign on progressive reforms based on an appeal to the ideals of democracy, perhaps the active presence of Neptune in his chart now and for years to come represents consistency rather than vulnerability.

Questions remain, however. Can Bernie's "political revolution" gain enough support among the American people to win the Democrat nomination, and then afterwards carry the election? At the age of 74, is Sanders' vitality strong enough to serve a four-year term in office, especially during a time in history that may be (and probably will be) marked by profound and shocking turbulence? As President, would he be able to translate his broadly populist ideals into effective legislation that could successfully navigate passage through the take-no-prisoners gauntlet of combative politics on Capitol Hill?

Only time will tell. Right now, Bernie clearly relishes his role as the Uranian reformer boldly challenging the Plutonian powers-that-be.

### **Author's Notes**

**#1:** In the earliest version of this essay, I incorrectly stated Bernie Sanders' current age as 77 years old, but he is actually 74. I apologize for that factual error and have corrected it.]

**#2:** This essay concludes my trilogy of early commentaries about major candidates in the 2016 presidential election. With the exceptions of Trump, Clinton, and Sanders, none of the other Republican nor Democratic party candidates has any publicly-available birth times, whether those birth-times are certain, possible, or purely speculative. All the other candidates' birth-times are listed as "unknown."

I am not inclined to write about any candidate for whom I cannot erect a full natal chart, since charts without birth-times apply to every human being born on that day/month/year and are therefore much more generic than individual. In addition, the transit patterns provided by such "solar" charts are incomplete in ways that can omit critical information.

**#3:** Since I've chosen to update this essay weeks after posting the first version, I may do the same with the earlier two essays on Trump and Clinton. I've never tried this updating-over-time approach with other essays I've written, and I can't tell how effective it might be, but it's worth a try, especially with these essays about a presidential election that promises to be one of the most compelling spectacles in the recent history of American politics.

## 4. Signs of the Times

by Bill Herbst

*Version 1.1 (29 February 2016)*

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As anyone who has read my essays and commentaries over the past years already knows, I am a member — not a prominent or illustrious member, by any means, but a member in good standing, nonetheless — of a segment of the American population whose voices and opinions are not generally welcomed by the mainstream culture.

In part, this is because we don't participate in the gung-ho cheerleading about America and the future of this country and our effect on the world that has long been a meme of American mythology. Historically, Americans have been considered (and thought of themselves) as energetic optimists with a can-do attitude. The pervasive mythology in and about America has been that we are strong, capable, and good. As enshrined in The American Dream, ours has always been an idealistic, feel-good attitude about ourselves and what we can achieve. This mythology is one facet of American Exceptionalism, which is based on the fundamental belief that, as a nation and culture, America was chosen by God or Destiny to set things right in the world and to improve the quality of life on this planet.

The disparate group in which I hold membership believes that the evidence of history does not support such an ideal. We are critics of our society, each in our own particular ways, who perceive that the divide between idealized images of who we are and the reality of who we've been is much wider than presumed, and we see the gap growing larger with each passing decade. The drumbeat of our consistent criticism of America is not pleasing to a wide range of Americans who take varying degrees of comfort from the goodness of those ideals. As a result, some people have labeled us "America-haters." This is not true, of course. In many ways, we are more idealistic and even sometimes more patriotic in loving our country than typical rah-rah flag-wavers. But because we don't subscribe to the almost religious optimism about American goodness felt so strongly by previous generations and still embraced today by the majority of Americans, we are sometimes castigated as heretics.

In general, we are considered alarmists on the fringe. I wouldn't say that we're necessarily seen as the lunatic fringe — a club that seems to be growing in numbers among Americans — instead, we are tagged more often as people

whose perceptions and beliefs are far from the middle of the bell curve in our society. I'm not sure that such a designation is accurate; while we may be a minority, I think it likely that our numbers are considerably higher than assumed and include at a minimum tens of millions of Americans. It's just that most of the people who hold opinions in agreement with ours are less vocal about their perceptions. They get on with their lives not exactly in silence, but without rocking the boat by expressing their opinions loudly or in public. The one demographic that may be an exception are those Americans, especially on the political right, who share a particular and specific complaint. They are extremely dissatisfied with the federal government. More of these people are likely to actively participate in the political process.

I'm pretty sure that some of those who are offended by criticism of American society see the critics primarily as embittered and disaffected losers who have failed to capitalize on the fruits that America offers. They dismiss any critique as little more than sour grapes. Earlier in American history, the term "Luddite" was applied to anyone who felt that progress — specifically industrial or technological progress — was not necessarily positive in the evolution of civilization. More recently, with the many apocalyptic scenarios that precipitated out of the collective dream ether, which emerged from every conceivable direction — the end of the Mayan Calendar to Biblical prophecy to global warming/climate change to overpopulation to nuclear holocaust — a new designation has come into common parlance. Over the past two decades, the term that's gained the most traction in describing people who fear for our collective future is "Doomers." I don't like that term because of its fatalistic implications, but I do understand why it has come to be applied.

I wouldn't presume to speak for others, but my own assessment of who I am differs. I'm not a disaffected loser, nor a Luddite, nor a Doomer. I consider myself to be a well-informed realist who views civilization and humanity from the long-term perspective of history.

Those who share my views and concerns are often accused of being like Henny Penny (a.k.a., Chicken Little) from the well-known children's fable. We are seen by others more in the mainstream as shouting loudly that "the sky is falling." The problem with the use of that fable to dismiss us is that, unlike the story, the sky really is falling. A better parable to apply, in my opinion, would be Aesop's fable of The Ant and the Grasshopper. My compatriots and I represent the Ant. We believe that a harsh winter is coming, and that we must prepare to insure our collective survival and continued well-being. We see too much of modern America (and too many Americans) as The Grasshopper. Unlike the fable, the moral of the tale in this context is not that hard work is preferable to indolence. Americans are not lazy. America is among the most hard-working societies on earth. But too often the object of our work is shortsighted. American society has become obsessed with and addicted to immediate gratification. We tend to live only for today, and both our lifestyles and our institutions operate now with a

perverse disregard for the longer-term consequences of our actions. While many millions of Americans live as mature adults, our culture as a whole has adopted the approach of an embarrassingly immature adolescent male. Whatever increases profits in the short run is considered acceptable, and we celebrate those who use immaturity to their immediate advantage.

Whatever one's personal orientation, the undeniable fact is that we live in extraordinary times. From an astrological perspective, the entire decade of the 2010s represents the most significant and serious crossroads that humanity has faced for more than 500 years. The Uranus-Pluto alignment, which recurs usually three times per century at intervals of roughly either 30 or 50 years, is always provocative. The alignment of those two bodies during the 2010s, however, is both more powerful and challenging than is usually the case. I've written at length about this decade's perpendicular alignment of these two bodies, so I won't reiterate all that here. Let me state simply that — from a purely technical astrological standpoint — the Uranus-Pluto alignment of the 2010s is the most potent and critical activation of these two symbols in their shared cycle since a similar configuration occurred during the last decade of the 15th century — specifically from 1496-1500.

That transit corresponded to the watershed events that began the opening of the western hemisphere to European invasion, conquest, and colonization. The myth many of us learned in school that Columbus "discovered" the New World in 1492 has been thoroughly debunked by more recent revelations from the disciplines of history, anthropology, and archaeology. Many explorers from other parts of the world visited the Western Hemisphere long before Columbus set sail. We know also that the continents of North and South America were inhabited by a larger population of people than was previously presumed, most of whom lived in longstanding indigenous cultures. Estimates vary widely, but the current consensus among scholars for the western hemisphere's pre-Columbian population is somewhere in the neighborhood of 50 million.

Why, then, was the re-discovery of the western hemisphere by Columbus such a significant event? The answer is obvious, especially given the Uranus-Pluto symbolism of that decade. Previous visits from earlier explorers had been brief and only temporary. They returned to their homelands without leaving behind significant footprints, and without much, if any, effect on the indigenous native populations or cultures.

Columbus' "discovery," however, ignited a dramatic change. A golden doorway of opportunity opened that allowed the burgeoning empires of Europe to expand their territories, influence, and wealth. The result was that over the next 400 years, the western hemisphere was invaded and eventually taken over by emigration from these European empires, with the collateral effect of the near-total destruction of the indigenous population and their cultures. Much of this destruction occurred in the first century of European influence, due to the

importation into the west of diseases against which native cultures had no resistance. The gruesome work of genocide continued by conquest, however, over the next 300 years.

Another outcome was the founding of America as a nation through the decision by formerly English subjects in the 13 American colonies to break with England and establish their independence and national union. That revolution grew out of new social philosophies that laid the foundation for the ideals of individual freedom and democracy and was, in a sense, their logical outcome. Those radical philosophies (Locke, Rousseau, etc.), developed earlier in the Uranus-Pluto cycle that began at the beginning of the 18th century, proved so powerful that they even spread back to Europe through the French Revolution that followed on the heels of America's establishment. Significantly, however, the American Revolution was the only conspicuous success. The period when the French Revolution careened into disaster corresponded precisely to the halfway point in the cycle, which was the final Uranus-Pluto transit of the 18th century.

Then, in the middle of the 19th century, a new Uranus-Pluto cycle kicked off with the publication of an even more radical social philosophy, *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx, a political pamphlet that highlighted economic and social inequality through the historical concept of class struggle. This slim tract seemed destined for obscurity, but it found renewed popularity later in the rising labor movements of the late 19th century and set the stage for the Russian and Chinese revolutions of the 20th century.

All Uranus-Pluto cycles represent a challenge to the status quo of civilization by taking aim at the existing power structures. If the Uranus-Pluto cycle that began in late Leo at the beginning of the 18th century corresponded to the rise of individual dignity and personal freedom in society (democracy) and the next cycle that began late Aries in the mid-19th century corresponded to a similar challenge to the powers-that-be, but this time through emphasis on collectivity (socialism and communism), then a logical question arises: What new challenge to the status quo power structure is associated with the current Uranus-Pluto cycle that began in the 1960s?

I don't have a simple answer to that question. Spontaneous, grassroots social movements that challenge the status quo are characteristic of Uranus-Pluto decades, but the movements that have arisen in this decade are so diverse as to defy categorization. The many challenges to civilization's future that demand our attention are equally disparate.

The one unifying factor I see at work now — and I observe it most clearly in the political realm through the now full-blown campaign for the presidential election late this year — is that Americans as a whole seem broadly and deeply dissatisfied with the way things are in our country. Business-as-usual among the ruling elites is under fire, and the attack is heating up.

One might think that, in a different era, Bernie Sanders' call for a "political revolution" would guarantee rejection by centrist voters, but Bernie's candidacy has been spectacularly successful so far. Eight months ago, no one thought that any Democrat could even remotely challenge Hillary Clinton, but Sanders is giving her the fight of her life, forcing Hillary to change her strategy and up her game. Sanders may not win the nomination, but his candidacy has changed the entire tenor of the campaign.

On the Republican side, many pundits scoffed when Donald Trump entered the race. They aren't dismissing The Donald now. In fact, the Republican side of the race has descended into a nearly unbelievable mud-slinging combination food fight and barroom brawl as Trump's two principal remaining competitors, Rubio and Cruz, desperately try to smear Trump and derail his unexpected march to the nomination. Trump is so unpredictable in his complete lack of allegiance to any standard political philosophy that the Republican Party is now in crisis, and their campaign has taken on the appearance of a no-holds-barred, Reality-TV cage match more than a political debate over issues.

As I wrote in my recent commentary series about the campaign, I doubt very much that any of these candidates could effectively save us from ourselves. One thing is certain, however. This presidential election is surely a Sign of the Times.

It's easy to take pot shots at whack-job politicians who refuse to acknowledge the reality of human-created climate change and insist that we need not worry about climate disruption. Equally specious is a looney-tunes Supreme Court that first grants George W. Bush the presidency, then decides in favor of Citizens United fat-cat political lobbying through SuperPacs, and even has the gall to pronounce with a straight face that racism is no longer a problem in America. We might as well change the name of the highest court in the land, supposedly the final arbiter in protecting the Constitution, from "Supreme Court" to "Kangaroo Court."

Justice Antonin Scalia's recent demise and the subsequent political fight that appears to be shaping up concerning his successor on the bench reveals plainly how much is at stake, as well as extent to which our future is up for grabs.

Yes, it's easy to go after the privileged elites in power who run our institutions, especially the most smug and self-satisfied among them, but I don't wish to minimize the importance of doing so. Institutional corruption, breakdown, and collapse are major factors in what ails us and puts our collective future at terrible risk. Still, just because our leaders are crazy and our institutions are whacked does not mean that we should take that as permission to trundle off to Bozo Land ourselves. We the People share a burden of responsibility here also, not only in who we elect to lead us, but in the ways we live as individuals.

While I see nothing to indicate that we are ready or able to solve the many problems that beset humanity, the first step in that process is to recognize that serious problems exist. What the past months have shown me is that this recognition is far more widespread than I presumed. I opened this commentary by stating that I was a member of a minority. I'm no longer sure that this is an accurate assessment. From where I sit today, early in 2016, it appears to me that a majority of Americans are well aware that something is wrong.

Whether that awareness and the deep dissatisfaction that accompanies it will lead us eventually to a saner course that improves life on this planet or simply rips us apart as we careen over the cliff remains to be seen. Currently, our collective discontent is all over the map. Not only are we dissatisfied with the existing status quo, we are divided among ourselves and in serious conflict about what is wrong and the changes we'd like to see implemented.

This splintering into entrenched factions is so extreme that it brings to mind two previous periods in American history. The first occurred in the mid-19th century as the debate over slavery came to a head and boiled over. The American Civil War was the tragic result, although even that bloodbath didn't truly resolve the issues surrounding race. The second period was during the tumult of the 1960s, when a diverse set of issues — civil rights, the counterculture, and the Vietnam War, among others — exploded into a culture-wide crisis in America. Both these periods happened as new Uranus-Pluto cycles began.

One outcome of the 1960s was the reactionary rise of a hard-right conservative movement in both social issues and politics. That movement grew immensely powerful over the ensuing decades from the 1970s on, fueled by organizations funded by the deep pockets of the billionaire class, by a significant and ongoing presence in the mainstream media, and by a religious resurgence in Christian fundamentalism.

Until very recently, these conservative elements found a home together under the umbrella of the Republican Party, however diverse their beliefs may have seemed. Now, however, the momentum of Donald Trump's candidacy in the presidential campaign threatens to rip the heart out of the Republican coalition. This is yet another illustration of the assault on and possible breakdown of major American institutions, a long-term event that is echoed throughout global civilization.

This upwelling of divided beliefs — all of which are inherent fault lines in the tectonic plates of American mythology and ideals — have once again stirred up very muddied waters in American society. What strikes me as clear as a bell, however, is that we're living through times of extraordinarily intense pressures for change that are certain to call forth both the very best and very worst qualities of human nature. I continue to hope that we may eventually see more of the former than the latter.

# 5. Rage: The Authoritarian Dark Side

by Bill Herbst

*Version 1.3*

*(originally posted on 10 March 2016, updated on 15 March 2016)*

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I've written a great deal about the 2010s, a decade that is dominated in astrological symbolism by the perpendicular alignment between the outer planets Uranus and Pluto. In more than 100 newsletters, essays, commentaries, and articles, I have approached this period of Uranus-Pluto "influence" in every way I can think of, since the symbolism is not only potent and critical, but amazingly diverse in manifestation. Like all major transits within this particular paired planetary cycle, and indeed all transits in every astrological cycle, the meaning is not simple or singular. No, the manifestations that somehow take shape in real life from these archetypes extend throughout a myriad of different activities, events, and developments in society, many of which may seem on the surface to be unrelated in any obvious way, but turn out on closer inspection to be connected by deep threads that are consistent with the Uranus-Pluto combination, in all its paradoxical expressions.

Throughout this now book-length body of writing — an ongoing effort in which I've been engaged since 2005 — I've tried to maintain a balance in the writing between discussion of the positive possibilities for humanity's evolution, on the one hand, and, on the other, acknowledgment of the negative potentials that scare the shit out of nearly everyone in one fashion or another. Maintaining the detached, disinterested neutrality of a "reporter" has never been my goal. So-called "objective journalism" may be all well and good, but that has never been what I'm about, nor something to which I aspire.

I think back to some of the courageous reporting done from war-torn Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These print and television journalists sent their written articles and broadcast live reports from the actual fields of conflict, often putting their lives in danger to do so. Those seat-of-the-pants news stories were not only informative, they were often shocking in their revelations. That style of journalism continued throughout wars around the world, right up to Desert Storm in the early 1990s, by which time the U.S. military had gotten savvy about the need for censorship to cover their own asses. The result was "embedded" journalists, who were chosen to accompany the troops in part for their willingness to cheerlead and not rock the boat. Many

of those who might have inadvertently revealed unpleasant truths were effectively muzzled.

In writing so often and so much about this Uranus-Pluto shaped decade, I've striven to rekindle that rogue and partisan journalism of the late 1960s. I intend many of these commentaries to be my equivalent of "live reports" from the trenches, in real time, as we are all living the events together. While I do my best not to lie by playing fast and loose with the facts and try not to discount or disrespect other points of view, I want my writing to reflect my personal feelings about what we're all witnessing (and, to one degree or another, co-creating) in the 2010s.

In August of 2015, a mere eight months ago, I wrote a commentary entitled "The Power Disconnect." In it, I explored the phenomenon of climate change denial, especially among the power brokers of our society. Toward the end of that essay, however, I shifted gears slightly and wrote about one particular dark-side manifestation of the Uranus-Pluto transit. Allow me to quote certain sections of those concluding paragraphs below:

*"Whenever [Uranus and Pluto] are in alignment — as they were during the 1930s, the 1960s, and now the 2010s, to cite the most recent decades of major activations of the Uranus-Pluto cycle — their combined symbolism indicates a welling up of some of the worst impulses in human nature. Depredations that have been chugging along for a while, unseen but still potent and causing much damage, suddenly break through the surface and emerge in all their horror. With fresh eyes, as if for the first time, we "see" how wrong we have been. We see that because the transgressions, misunderstandings, and wrong-headedness are expressed in exaggerated form in the body politic (Pluto). They become plain as day. Pluto's correspondences are akin to the colored stains used in micro-biology to selectively reveal parts of a cell's structure that were previously invisible, highlighting them in bold relief.*

*We are now approaching readiness to see the changes that must be made to keep civilization intact and the evolution of our species moving forward. But in order to see this, the bad things in our midst have to get really, really bad. So, we're in for a period of time where leadership, having now degraded to the point where nearly all our leaders appear to be idiots, has to become even more egregious for us to see finally that we, the people, must stand up and be counted.*

*In the midst of this ongoing negativity, individuals will appear on the scene that represent the "new" leadership to come. We have only to think back to the 1960s, however, to ask, will these new leaders succeed, or will they be martyred, stopped in their tracks by those who will resist change or loss of their power at any cost?*

*On the other side of the coin, other, less exemplary individuals will emerge from the pack to grapple for spots in the limelight of power and leadership who are little more than demagogues and pied pipers. What they offer may sound good*

*to some people, but their proposed remedies to what ails us are never viable solutions. These types are always in evidence on the fringes of society, but every so often they well up in number and congregate much nearer the center of society. This is happening now.*

*If any of these people manage through hook or crook to galvanize enough support to achieve power and authority, then our situation could worsen quite seriously, perhaps even to the point of major internal or external strife. Considered in light of astrology and history, we can expect a profound struggle for many years to come between well-entrenched falsehoods — which, to reiterate, will be seen in their most exaggerated forms, rather like the last-gasp brilliant colors of leaves in autumn just before they die and fall to the ground — and saner, more balanced truths, which may frustrate us by not offering simple solutions, but instead only the hard, sustained work required to find a better way forward.*

*At the level of leadership, all this is made even more complex and paradoxical by the likelihood that both qualities may at times be found in the same person. Individuals, especially those vying for the power of authoritative leadership, are not simply angels or demons. They may embody both the worst and the best of old and new ideas. It will be up to us to hold their feet to the fire, to make these people accountable, and to insure that brilliant but flawed new leaders don't devolve into the dark side and drag us down into hell with them."*

Those ideas are part of the background for what might be called "The Trump Phenomenon" in this year's campaign for the coming presidential election in November. I call it that not because Donald J. Trump is the only candidate who embodies the ideas — no, this year's race for the Presidency is chock full of contenders who reflect in one way or another parts of what I wrote above, with Bernie Sanders' "revolution in politics" being the second most obvious. Nevertheless, Trump is the candidate of choice for the segment of the American voting public that longs for an authoritarian "savior." Trump is a fierce, outrageous, charismatic, often crude demagogue who "calls them as he sees them," "shoots from the hip," and boldly promises to rescue us from our troubles by his savvy as a deal-maker. His confidence in that set of business skills is so absolute and unshakeable that he doesn't just promise success, he *guarantees* it.

I'm reminded of the prescient 1977 movie, *Network*, written by the brilliant Paddy Chayefsky, which won the Oscar for Best Picture that year. The most famous line from movie, delivered by Peter Finch, who portrayed the film's protagonist, Howard Beale, a deranged-but-inspired newscaster, was: "*I'm mad as hell, and I'm not gonna take it anymore!*"

That tagline from a movie made 40 years ago could easily be considered the mantra of the 2010s. The groundswells of various grassroots social movements that arose or gained traction during the 2010s — the Tea Party, Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and protests against domestic violence, rape, or head injuries in sports — all share this dynamic. They began as spontaneous alliances

formed by individuals who were fed up, angry, and “not gonna take it anymore!” and who demand social justice from institutions that have abused their power. That, in a nutshell, is a core manifestation of the astrological symbolism of Uranus in Aries square to Pluto in Capricorn — not the only manifestation, by any means, but certainly a central one. This year’s presidential campaign is yet another prime example of that symbolism in action.

The voter sentiment this year represents a marked departure from the way Americans typically approached previous elections for our highest office in the past. Historically, different political philosophies shaped the competition along dualistic left-right lines, i.e., liberal versus conservative. Over the past 25 years, however, American politics underwent significant shift to the right as a more extreme ideological brand of conservatism emerged, making its presence felt in the Republican Party with Tea Partiers and Libertarians. That shift has reached its zenith during President Obama’s two terms in office, as an obstructionist Republican Congress dug in its heels to try and block all Democrat initiatives. To say that conservative Republicans loathe Barack Obama is no understatement. Gridlock in government has resulted, and neither party has been able to put into practice any comprehensive policies. Movement in either direction is always bitterly contested at every turn. While each party blames the other, the voting public has become disenchanted with both parties, to the point where frustration turned into anger.

Americans are hard working, but in my view we are somewhat spoiled in expecting government to help us as individuals in whatever specific ways we want or need. Rather than seeing our troubles as the result of collective decisions for which we all bear at least some responsibility, many Americans assign all the blame to forces beyond themselves. Different factors are blamed according to left, right, or centrist orientations, but anger about the ineffectiveness of government is felt by a significant segment of the population, regardless of political/economic leanings. For some, that anger is so deep that it has morphed into rage.

Rage against others in general but government in particular is a primary reason why a sizable percentage of Americans are now vulnerable to the lure of an authoritarian savior, someone who offers the seductive promise to solve our problems, exonerate us from personal responsibility, and end our troubles by re-establishing all that is good in our country and ourselves.

To some degree, most politicians make such promises. I could easily assert that *all* politicians do, but that might be too sweeping a generalization, so I’ll stop short of the absolute “all” and stick to the relative “most.” I think, however, that exceptions are few and far between among those who seek the mantle of power and the burden of responsibility as our elected representatives in high office. Politicians, like most of those who have an entourage, often invoke the royal “We” in their pronouncements and speeches. “*We* will do this, and *We* will do

that." What the public hears, however, is almost invariably "I will do this, and I will do that."

That's one of the reasons that Donald Trump has been so successful thus far. His narcissism is so complete that he doesn't mince pronouns or try to fool us. No, Trump comes right out and says, with brash egotism, that "I will do this, and I will do that." No wonder he appeals to the longing for an authoritarian savior among angry adults who still want a Daddy. Trump's supporters don't care that he has formulated no comprehensive slate of policies. They don't care that he pads his business resumé by presenting failed ventures as ongoing successes or that he contradicts himself time and again. None of that matters to them.

What matters is that Trump is the anti-politician who speaks to their rage and their fears of loss. All Trump has (and all he needs apparently) is absolute certainty that he is always right, and complete, utter confidence in his own ability to fix everything through the magical force of his ego-driven personality, his amazing street savvy as a deal-maker, his total belief in himself as a "winner," and his dominant will.

No one knows what a Trump Presidency would look like, because that's completely unpredictable. If any of the other candidates were elected, we'd have at least some reasonable expectations — either as anticipation or anxiety — about what they would try to achieve as President. Not Donald J., though. He's a total wild card.

But that doesn't matter to his millions of supporters. They need to know only that Trump feels like one of "us" and not one of "**them**." Who are *they*? Why, the people who caused the mess we're in, of course. For some Trump supporters, that's Obama or the Democrats. For others, it's the government in general. For still others, it's foreigners — Mexicans or Muslims who threaten our country, our safety, our economic well-being, and our "American way of life." For still others, it's businesses that have moved their headquarters offshore and exported all the good factory jobs to Asia or Mexico. Trump has promised to neutralize all of *them* and return us to our "greatness," which means restoring our status as the combination 800 lb. gorilla, biggest badass on the block, and the richest country in human history. The fact that this is a ridiculous fairy tale doesn't matter. What matters is rage and fear — expressing the former while banishing the latter.

To be fair, I could say that Bernie Sanders' supporters tend to see Wall Street and its out-of-control lust for monetary profits as the main culprit in what ails us. Still, there's a critical difference between Sanders and Trump. Bernie Sanders isn't a demagogue, he actually has policy proposals, and his constituency is coherent within a definite segment of the political spectrum. Trump's appeal is nearly universal, cutting across both demographic and political lines. Sanders' populism is traditional. Trump's is radical.

Both men are perfectly suited to the Uranus-Pluto tenor of our times, and each represents a challenge to mainstream institutions and the status quo. Trump, however, is by far the more unpredictable of the two, in that he embodies the built-up rage against government that simmers like a pressurized magma chamber just beneath the surface of the collective unconscious. He feeds on it with an exuberance that is either inspiring or embarrassing, depending on where one stands.

I've already stated my opinion in numerous essays that no one person can save us from ourselves, and that we are likely to go through significant suffering — as a nation, as a population, and (depending on personal circumstances) as individuals — before we awaken from our disturbed and adolescent dreams of escape from reality. I won't embellish that view here, except to say that I hope we awaken sooner than later, and that our collective and personal suffering is minimal.

### **Update, 15 March 2016:**

In the wake of the past week's dramatically increasing protests and suddenly escalating violence at Trump rallies, many opinions are being tossed around concerning "First Amendment Rights." These include the accusation and defense that disruptive protestors are violating others' "Constitutional" rights to free speech. I'd like to weigh in on that discussion with my own two cents.

Here's the actual text of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution:

*"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."*

The Amendment is intended to protect freedom by prohibiting government interference in limiting citizens' expression through "the establishment of religion" (i.e., formation of churches) or any "speech" by individuals and the press. In other words, no censorship by the federal government. Americans can worship as they please and say or publish whatever the hell they want without fear that our national government will come down hard on them.

Nothing is mentioned or implied in the First Amendment about citizens' interactions with each other regarding free speech or gathering in assembly. The Amendment is *completely* about what government cannot do, and — conversely — utterly *silent* about what private citizens do with each other.

Conflicts between individuals are about civility and legality, but **NOT** about violation of any presumed Constitutionally-guaranteed "rights" to free speech.

If you don't like what I say or stand for and decide to protest, the Constitution steers clear of any rules or regulations. If you shout me down, that is an issue of civility, not law. It may be rude, but it's not illegal.

If you hate what I say or stand for and try to shut me up by physically beating the crap out of me or even killing me, that's *illegal*. You become a criminal, liable to arrest, conviction, and fines or incarceration by court judgment, or more informal social censure (i.e., shunning) by your fellow citizens. But even that has nothing to do with violation of "First Amendment rights to free speech."

The Declaration of Independence refers to *self-evident truths* and *certain inalienable rights*, among which are *life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*.

*Life* is fairly clear (except in the case of an unborn fetus), but *liberty* and *the pursuit of happiness* are considerably murkier. Their precise meaning, extent, and limits are left unstated.

If you kill me because you don't like what I say, stand for, or believe (or for any other reason, including revenge for real or imagined transgressions I may have perpetrated against you), the accusation that you violated my *right to life* would be reasonable. If you silence me in lesser ways, however, by shouting me down or physically harming me (short of death), does that violate my rights to *liberty* and *the pursuit of happiness*? Perhaps, but those rights aren't guaranteed by the Constitution, which is America's formal legislative reference about what the federal government must, can, and cannot do.

So, while the whole concept of "rights," at least here in America, is a large tent that encompasses much of our experience, the specific complaint of "violation of my right to free speech" applies **only** to the Constitution and thus to the *government*, **not** to the actions of other people.

That may seem to some people like nit picking or an unimportant distinction, but I do have a reaction to the Constitution being invoked in ways that are incorrect.

Interacting with other people is not always a cakewalk, not in one-to-one relationships, families, or society. Relationships involve civility, diplomacy, power dynamics, pleasure and duty, equality or dominance/submission, and inevitable conflicts surrounding dignity and pride, not to mention all the subtleties of attraction/repulsion through the complex emotions of affection, love, friendship, competition, co-creativity, work, indifference, disdain, loathing, and hate.

All the various rules we have in place — from tacit and understood as common sense to specifically codified in legal terms — cannot remove conflict or violence from human interactions. The best we can hope for from rules or laws is limiting the conflicts and violence, which (as we all know) frequently fails, sometimes

spectacularly. The whole 20th century was pockmarked by wars, pogroms, and purges that prematurely ended the lives of at least 100 million human beings from violence or its disruptive collateral effects.

Human relationships offer the heights of ecstasy and the depths of tragedy. Most of us would choose ecstasy if given a choice, but even our best efforts are insufficient to guarantee that. Both ecstasy and tragedy are experiences that overtake us, often by surprise, and while we may look back in hindsight and see how each one developed in any particular relationship, they remain profoundly mysterious and far beyond the realms of will and intention.

## 6. Death of a Political Institution

by Bill Herbst

*Version 1.4 (19 March 2016, with an update on 28 May 2016)*

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Over the past eleven years, I've written around a quarter-million words about the Uranus-Pluto alignment, a configuration so deeply powerful and transformative that it stands alone as the primary astrological symbolism of the entire decade of the 2010s. One need not be an astrologer, however, to know that this decade is a seminal crossroads for civilization. Like so many people, I've waited for things to heat up to critical mass. It appears now that we're well on our way.

A fundamental interpretation of Uranus in the sign Aries making a first-quarter square to Pluto in Capricorn is that we are likely to see a revolution in the institutions of society, both in America and throughout the global community of nations that comprise modern civilization.

The way this will occur, according to the Uranus-Pluto symbolism, is two-fold: First, through the weakening or outright breakdown of social institutions, either because they cease to serve the common good in favor of feathering their own nests, or because they over-reach their charters through corruption or other abuses of power. In a nutshell, that's Pluto in Capricorn. Second, revolution may occur because of the arising of grass-roots movements based on common dissatisfaction on the part of many individuals concerning how society is run, either spontaneously in the mass or led by charismatic individuals who harness the discontent and ride to power on that basis. That's Uranus in Aries.

These two ways of challenging the status quo through the institutions of society are assumed to be complementary, tied together in mutual conflict: Both are likely to occur, and each will amplify the other to provoke change that will be increasingly dramatic. Some of these conflicts will probably involve violence; all of them will be shocking in one way or another.

Another part of the astrological symbolism of this Uranus-Pluto decade suggests that the challenges to institutional stability will seem sudden and unexpected when they initially arise, but once underway and gaining traction, what they target as unacceptable will turn out to have longstanding roots as common practices within the institutions under assault. Surprise and shock will give way to the deeper realization that the changes are necessary.

That's one meaning of a first-quarter square, to express in concrete reality what was begun when the cycle began, in this case 50 years ago, during the 1960s. The seasonal rhythms of earthly life suggest that seeds planted, fertilized, and watered will germinate in the spring, then grow into viable plants during the summer. We are at the beginning of the summer transition in the Uranus-Pluto cycle during the 2010s. The next three decades will represent increasingly conscious and careful weeding of the garden to protect the growing plants. The harvest will occur in the autumn, which begins in the 2040s. That's when we'll find out how well we did as gardeners.

Institutions at risk for radical change during the 2010s include those from every arena of social activity: governmental, commercial, financial, military, religious, educational, entertainment, medical, scientific, agricultural, racial, and philanthropic, plus others from less obvious or less powerful niches within society. Basically, all institutions are more vulnerable than at anytime in the past century to breakdown, collapse, or serious challenge, either from within or without.

### **What are Institutions?**

Institutions are group organizations founded for specific purposes. They form the skeletal structure of every society and serve to maintain stability and insure coherence in the ability of their societies to conduct all the business, affairs, and interactions that people deem essential. Whether public or private, institutions help to formulate standards and practices in the areas of their concerns. They act as clearinghouses to support the established laws and customs of their societies.

Institutions employ a significant percentage of the population of every nation around the globe. These people earn their livelihoods in ways that vary little from the ordinary, where the work is akin to a regular office job, to executive levels, where policy is formulated and power conferred. Compensation for such employment reflects the stature of the position within the institution, from modest wages through extravagantly lucrative salaries.

The word that is commonly used to describe individuals who work within governmental institutions is *bureaucrat*, but that term applies just as well for those who work in institutions within the private sector. The word has come to have pejorative connotations, but its technical meaning is neutral. Congress is a political institution, and elected representatives are essentially bureaucrats, not fundamentally different from workers at the post office or DMV, although with higher status and compensation. Those who occupy the upper echelons of bureaucracy quite literally decide how society will conduct its affairs.

## **Political Parties as Institutions**

Examples of institutions in the political realm of American society include all formal political “parties,” such as Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Socialist, Green, etc. In America, however, only the two major parties — Democrat and Republican — predominate, and by a large measure. All other political parties are marginal by comparison in both power and membership. That’s why we refer to the “two-party system” in America. Although millions of Americans consider themselves “Independents” politically, that is not an organized political party, and thus not an institution. Political independents are individuals without allegiance to a particular party.

The Republican Party emerged in the 1850s, founded by anti-slavery activists, ex-Free Soilers, and ex-members of the Whig Party, which was suffering its death throes because of the conflicts around slavery and was completely moribund by 1856. Modern Republicans are fond of pointing out that they are members of the party of Abraham Lincoln.

Over the following 160 years, the Republican Party came to be associated with conservatism in culture and economics. Conservatism in this context includes an emphasis on what are called “traditional American values,” which basically means the “Christian” morality embraced by white European immigrants who comprised the majority of the American population over our initial 150 years, as well as the concepts of American Exceptionalism, limited government, and strong national defense. The economic emphasis includes freedom of all commercial enterprises, large or small, to operate without governmental interference through regulations (i.e., “free markets”) or excessive taxes (i.e., the “trickle-down” theory of wealth distribution and job creation).

From the latter 19th century through the middle of the 20th century, many Democrats from southern states were social conservatives. That ended in the aftermath of the 1965 Civil Rights Act as many “Dixiecrats” shifted their affiliation to the Republicans.

The modern Republican Party that exists today was jump-started in the 1950s out of the anti-communist fervor of the Cold War, and solidified into a more aggressive stance in the 1980s with Ronald Reagan’s presidency. Since then, the Republican Party has undergone a significant shift to the right, pulled in that direction by an ideological movement that is more extreme in its conservatism. The result has been the near takeover of the party from moderates by harder-core ideologues, with an accompanying schism of belief and attitude that was not fully in place until the events of 9/11. Since then, however, the two wings of the Republican Party coexisted under a single banner in a truce that was more pragmatic than united. Tensions within the party increased over the past decade.

## **The Political Revolution**

Now, however, the Republican Party is in danger of exploding, or perhaps imploding. The rise of Donald Trump as a candidate in the current presidential campaign, and particularly his unexpected success in becoming the heir apparent to the party's nomination, has caused the very real possibility that the Republican Party may be torn apart or even destroyed as a viable institution.

The power brokers within the Republican Party establishment, who almost uniformly scoffed at Trump's candidacy and predicted his early or eventual exit from the campaign, are now scrambling to figure out some way to stop Trump from further steamrolling through the primaries with victory after victory and prevent his nomination at their convention in Cleveland during mid-July, 2016.

Everything about this year's election defies the traditional wisdom. Pundits are wrong as often as not. Polls are wrong time and again. Strategies and tactics that have worked for decades to steer the campaign in a direction approved by the leaders of the Republican Party have proven irrelevant or downright useless.

Why? Because Trump is not part of the institution. He is a demagogue, a pitchman, and a wild card, whose outrageous showmanship appeals to a sizable segment of not just Republican voters, but also Independents and some Democrats, all of whom are disaffected by the political process. These voters are royally pissed off at politicians and the powers-that-be in government for what they consider a betrayal of their birthright as Americans. Trump has galvanized that anger into a social movement. His supporters do not care about any of the thousand reasons offered by critics to invalidate Trump's candidacy. In fact, they revel in his status as an iconoclastic outsider who doesn't give a damn what people think. They love that Trump talks like them. He has become their voice. The more shameless Trump's performance becomes, the more his supporters are committed to following him anywhere. He is their Pied Piper, and they happily dance to his tune.

And yet, the bulk of Republican voters from the more moderate wing of the party are clearly horrified by the prospect of Trump becoming the Republican nominee. They may loathe President Obama and Hillary Clinton, his likely successor among the Democrats, and they sure as hell don't like Bernie Sanders, but they fear that Trump's nomination will result in either of two terrible outcomes — a defeat at the polls in November, thus giving the election to the hated Democrats, or an unlikely Trump victory that plants him in the White House. It's uncertain which outcome is more unpleasant to them. Trump is not a "true" conservative, they say, not in philosophy or policy. His unpredictability is anathema to the Republican playbook.

The specter of a "contested" convention now looms as a last-ditch effort on the part of Republican Party regulars and big wigs to stop the Trump juggernaut. Even that, however, offers little solace or much chance of saving the

Republicans' bacon. If Trump is somehow denied the nomination, the election is almost certainly lost, and perhaps control of the Senate as well.

We will know more a month from now, but, one way or another, Trump's probable nomination threatens to rip the very heart out of the existing institution of the Republican Party. Like the Whigs in the 1850s, the modern Republican Party could easily go the way of the dodo bird by being shattered into irreparable factions. Trump is the hammer that could shatter the glass pane of the Republican Party into a million shards. No one knows what would emerge to replace it.

### **But Wait, There's More...**

The supreme irony in this political melodrama is that the Republicans are not the only party in chaos. The Democrats are also at risk, if somewhat less obviously. Although Hillary Clinton seems to be fending off the serious challenge from Bernie Sanders — a set of circumstances that not even Bernie expected when he announced his candidacy almost a year ago — all is not resolved among the Dems.

Despite his poor showing in the March 15th round of primaries, Sanders has regrouped and now promises to stay in the race all the way to the Democrats' convention in Philadelphia during late July, no matter what happens in the remaining primaries. A candidacy that began mainly as a symbolic appeal for fairness in politics and economics is now indeed a "political revolution."

Like Trump, Sanders has tapped into a deep strain of discontent among American voters, although Bernie's supporters are obviously of different stripes than Trump's, both politically and socially. Each candidate represents the Uranus in Aries symbolism of our times. Bernie's passionate but measured and rational appeal is not at all like The Donald's scandalous performances, but both men feel total commitment to their respective causes, and each is more than willing to become the figurehead for a radical social movement based on a demand for sweeping change.

If Hillary Clinton is unable to secure the majority of Democrat delegates necessary to secure her nomination, Bernie says he will be there in Philadelphia to challenge her at the convention. Whether or not the unlikely event of Sanders' nomination comes to pass, the possibility of another "open" convention is provocative, to say the least.

Although prospects for contested conventions often arise early in election campaigns, they actually come to pass very rarely. Usually, nominations are locked up months before the conventions. As far as I can determine, no presidential election in American history has ever seen contested, open, or brokered conventions for *both* major parties. That would represent an unprecedented event in American politics. Although the likelihood of such a

coincidence is slim at best, it would be truly revolutionary, implying that the center has indeed given way, thus setting the stage for other, even more radical changes that would inevitably follow.

But even if neither party ends up holding an open convention, the handwriting on the wall is clearer than ever. With each passing year, the 2010s appear more and more to be precisely the kind of crossroads for civilization that the Uranus-Pluto symbolism suggests. Like Elvis, the status quo of business-as-usual has left the building. This decade is now breaking the mold of standard expectations in dramatic and unpredictable fashion, and we still have four more years to go.

That's four years where nearly anything could happen, and just might.

### **Update, 28 May 2016:**

Well, the shoe now appears to be on the other foot.

In their fervent wish for "anyone-but-Hillary," the Republican establishment has ignored its previous excoriation of Donald Trump and rallied around their now-certain candidate with ringing endorsements. A small number of stalwart Republican Party bigwigs have continued to refuse their support for The Donald, maintaining their anyone-but-Trump commitment and riding off in search of some third-party candidate they can stomach (Libertarian Party, perhaps?). Most significantly among the holdouts, Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan hasn't yet caved in to grant his grudging endorsement, but that will probably happen soon.

In general, however, Republicans have once again demonstrated an undeniable truism in politics, namely, that party loyalty is more compelling than either integrity or personal consistency. It's a little disconcerting but not particularly surprising to see someone like Marco Rubio, who aggressively painted Trump as the Anti-Christ during the primary campaign, now offering to do "all he can" to support Trump's bid for the White House. Such is the nature of politics.

Meanwhile, the Democrats have hit a potentially serious snag. The relatively polite discourse of a mere two months ago between Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton has devolved into an Animal-House-style food fight. Or, at least it has from Bernie's side.

Hillary hardly mentions Sanders at all anymore. She's claimed the mantle of the presumptive Democratic nominee and moved on to focus on the general election and the sobering challenge of finding an effective way to neutralize Trump's attack-dog/3rd-grade-school-yard-bully tactics. So far, Trump seems to be winning the smear campaign, especially with recent help from the government's pronouncements about Hillary having violated State Department guidelines in the

scandal-that-won't-die surrounding her use of a private email server when she was Secretary of State.

Bernie, however, seems not to have noticed (or, more to the point, doesn't care) that Hillary has taken off her boxing gloves and left the ring. While Sanders still lambasts Clinton, he's taken aim at a bigger target — the institution of the Democratic Party itself.

While Bernie's chances of winning the nomination as a Democrat are now effectively nil, he's demonstrating not only perseverance in continuing to campaign, but also proof that his call for a "revolution" in American politics is serious, and deeper than most people assumed. Bernie would like nothing better than to crack the very foundations of the existing power structure that makes up the Democratic Party hierarchy and pecking order.

So, as the power brokers of one dominant political party revert to the status quo, the other party appears headed for a confrontation, one that could be potentially very nasty.

For anyone who understands the archetypal symbolism of the Uranus-Pluto alignment that reveals the collective and personal zeitgeist of this decade, such developments are not surprising.

The fact that one candidate who is clearly an ego-maniacal narcissist and snake-oil salesman has beaten off all his more traditional and conservative competitors to win the nomination, will garner at least 30 million votes from Americans in the coming November general election, and might even manage to become president is entirely in keeping with the tenor of our times. Americans of many different stripes are pissed off at their institutions — most of all, government — and their motivating emotions are frequently closer to lynch-mob rage than to reasonable anger.

Donald Trump has tapped into that rage, feeds off it, and is making hay while the sun shines. Whether he would rise to the occasion of becoming president or turn out to be dangerously and tragically looney-tunes is beside the point for now. People that vote for Trump will care later, but not now. What's important now is overturning the existing political and governmental status-quo power hierarchy.

Many people (myself among them) feel strongly that Trump does not represent any sort of forward-looking reform. Instead, we believe that Trump is effectively a throwback to stone age Strong Man days, which is no solution for what ails us. Trump's more rabid supporters don't see it that way, of course. They want to return to a fantasy America that never really existed, but for which they long fervently.

Bernie Sanders is another side of a similar coin. His call for a political revolution is more thoughtful than Trump's I-say-and-do-whatever-the-hell-I-feel-like-at-any-given-moment (as long as it gets him the support he wants. Much more than Trump, however, Sanders regards the existing status quo of power in America with disdain. Trump games the system to his advantage. Bernie wants to dismantle and rebuild the system for the greater good. Is that possible, given the inherent flaws of human nature? Maybe, maybe not. Is such an effort premature, given where we are in time? Probably.

Again, however, none of that matters. Where we are as a nation in 2016 is at the point of collectively screaming the famous line from the 1977 movie, **Network**: *"I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore!"*

Two months ago, the Republicans appeared to be in trouble. Now it's the Democrats. In the astrological view, both political parties are entering the phase of breakdown accelerated by rebellion.

What will happen? I don't know. Time will tell.

## 7. Narcissism and Politics

by Bill Herbst

*Version 1.1 (originally posted on 8 May 2016)  
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Donald Trump is now the “presumptive nominee” of the Republican Party in the coming election. That term — *the presumptive nominee* — is used by party officials to indicate the de facto winner of the primaries. Although Trump’s formal nomination will not be confirmed until the party convention in July, the race on the Republican side is effectively over, with only one candidate left standing as King of the Hill.

*All hail the victor, Donald Trump! All Republicans must now unite and pledge fealty to the new heir to their throne! Well, maybe not all...*

When I began this commentary series about the 2016 presidential with an essay about Donald J. Trump’s chart, I attempted, as best I could, to maintain at least some semblance of neutrality, more detachment than objectivity, *per se*.

I began pulling back from that intention with updates to the Trump commentary — first on March 3rd, then again on March 11th — by injecting more of my own personal politics.

Now I want to take that further in a separate commentary, not through more revelations about my own politics (which are hardly a secret), nor with deeper exploration into the astrology of the candidates, but rather by stating my perceptions and opinions concerning the basic psychology of Donald Trump’s character.

These perceptions and opinions were formed by the totality of my experience over the past months, which includes both direct perception and astrological insights, among other factors. They are

not, however, strictly astrological in the interpretive sense. While they correspond to certain potentials in Donald Trump's chart, they're not inevitable consequences of that natal chart, or any other chart, for that matter. We take the heritage of what we begin with — in genetics, family, astrology, and our time and place in history — and parlay it into something more. Yes, we play the hand we're dealt (whoever the dealer may have been), but the outcome is usually not pre-ordained. How we play the hand matters — well or badly, with skill and savvy or unconscious predictability. In my particular beliefs, who we become is a function of many different factors, among them fate and destiny perhaps, but also luck and grace. I'm not sure exactly how much individual consciousness and maturity may contribute, but I believe they make a difference.

The opinions and perceptions I'll offer here are not particularly complex or unique. They're already held by a considerable segment of the American and global populations, so I'll keep this update simple and to the point.

Donald Trump is a narcissist. That epithet comes as no surprise to Trump's critics, who invoke it with regularity when describing him. Trump's behavior, however, does nothing to challenge or discourage the idea. He can be an aggressive-defensive narcissist when in attack mode or a friendly, engaging narcissist when not feeling put upon, but either way, his narcissism is obvious.

Because I'm not a licensed psychologist or professional clinician, I'll stop short of labeling Trump with the clinical designation of *Narcissistic Personality Disorder*. It may be useful, however, to list a few of the definitions surrounding that designation:

***Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD):*** *a disorder in which a person has an inflated sense of self-importance. Found more commonly in men, NPD's symptoms include an excessive need for admiration, disregard for others' feelings, an inability to handle any criticism, and a sense of entitlement.*

In my non-clinical use of the concept of narcissism, I'd add to that list of symptoms a few others, such as pathological lying and the inability to accept, admit, and/or apologize for wrongdoing. The typical

strategy of the narcissist in the latter situations is to blame others. Consider Trump's response to an interviewer's question about his implied insults in a Tweet about Ted Cruz' wife: "*Well, he started it.*" Ah yes, the convenient rationalization of a nine-year-old.

Do all those qualities of narcissism accurately describe Donald Trump to a T? I think they do.

The Donald is arguably one of the more successful snake-oil salesmen in the world. While no one would suggest that Trump has a tightly-controlled personality or a carefully-considered approach to self-expression in behavior — quite the contrary, he is a notorious loose cannon who will say nearly anything that crosses his mind in a given moment — Donald Trump is nonetheless a very cunning individual and extremely effective in fending off or redirecting criticism while keeping himself center-stage and in the spotlight.

Why people believe anything Trump says is a question with a complex answer, but the simple response has to do with the collective state of the American psyche at this point in history. I don't know if Trump's supporters among the voting public would disagree with the presumptions I wrote above or merely dismiss them as irrelevant. Having won the primary campaign to become the presumptive nominee of the shattered Republican Party, Trump has amply demonstrated his skills as an outrageous performer, able to galvanize and thrill his audiences with repeated, nearly endless statements designed for provocation or shock value. I agree that, for those who eagerly or grudgingly plan to vote for Trump in November's general election, what I've written in the paragraphs above probably doesn't matter.

At least one commentator recently opined that Trump doesn't actually want to be president, but only to run for the office, so that he can capitalize afterwards on the massively increased public exposure and notoriety he will have gleaned throughout the campaign. To me, that argument seems particularly prescient and insightful. I doubt that Donald has any interest in taking on the awesome and serious responsibilities of the highest political office in the land. Instead, I think he's aiming to make his ego-brand a

household word. He wants the world to worship at the altar of Trump.

Whether or not Trump truly wants to be president, however, the timing of his run for that office has been perfect thus far. While having made numerous feints about running for public office in the past, Trump's decision to do so in 2016 reveals a savvy appreciation on his part regarding the simmering conditions now emerging in the electorate.

Trump is capitalizing on a virtual tsunami of inchoate rage that has been welling up for some decades and is now cresting in our collective psyche, especially among Americans who feel that they have lost privileges to which they believe themselves entitled.

Entitlement is a fascinating phenomenon among humans, especially because of its linkage to the importance of habit in our programming. Choice may matter (at least, I think it does), but habits comprise a much larger component in our lives. Whatever benefits we accrue, in whatever ways they come to us — through our own hard-won achievements, through family heritage, through social largesse, or just by being in the right place at the right time — tend to become hard-wired into our expectations about life.

Add to this the concept of territoriality — the characteristic behavior of all animals (including human beings) to keep others away from an area they use or control, i.e., fiercely guarding what we own — and we have a virtual guarantee of conflict when life changes and what we assume is ours is lost or taken from us.

Over the more than half-century since the end of World War II, American society has changed dramatically. Starting in the 1960s and sporadically accelerating through the ensuing decades right up to where we are today, American politics has become a battleground over entitlement and territoriality. Those who felt entitled have fought to keep what they own (or believe they own), while those who felt disenfranchised have fought to gain a foothold in entitlement. This extended, ongoing battle has often taken the shape of class warfare in various ways — economics, race, social beliefs, religion, etc.

Certain classes have won major victories. The wealthy have improved their entitlement massively and claimed great swaths of additional territory. Immigrants of non-European racial heritage (particularly Asian) have also made significant inroads into acceptance and prosperity, claiming their place in the sun. While the century-long struggle for women's equality continues, the feminist movement has clearly changed the social landscape in America.

By contrast, the economic and largely white middle and lower-middle classes in America, which gained significant entitlement in the period following World War II, have suffered grievous losses over the past four decades. Manufacturing in America is now a mere shadow of its former industrial might, and the export of manufacturing facilities (to regions previously called the Third World, with Mexico, China, India, and Malaysia being foremost in this category of cheap-labor havens for manufacturers) has eliminated the bulk of once-lucrative factory jobs in America that allowed middle- and lower-income workers to support their families. In addition, those classes in America that embrace conservative attitudes in social, religious, and lifestyle considerations have all felt their territories to be under assault. Finally, a sizable percentage of white males now consider themselves to have been demoted to second-class citizenship.

These losses, whether in income, status, well-being, cultural homogeneity, or even meaning itself — are felt by many who suffer them as unjust, unfair, and just plain wrong. This segment of the population has no trouble finding scapegoats for their losses, particularly in government or society at large.

The problem for the losers — whether those who were previously entitled and have suffered erosion of their territory, or those who were never entitled and desire a bigger slice of the pie — is that society and even Life itself does not seem to care. In the nitty-gritty of civilization, entitlement tends to be a pragmatic issue of power rather than a moral crusade. Considered in the mass, the "haves" are not very attentive to the needs and desires of the "have-nots." The appeal for social justice, whether to go backward to recover a more comfortable past or to move forward into a brave new world, is usually greeted with indifference. Over time, this inertia leads to

frustration, anger, and finally rage among those beset by a sea of troubles.

Rage tends to oversimplify, causing those who feel it to lash out at any target that can be identified as the enemy. As I stated early in this commentary, what we have now in this country is a welling-up of cumulative frustration in the form of inchoate rage. I'm not suggesting that this rage is unjustified, merely that it shuts out more thoughtful considerations and nuanced strategies for achieving redress of grievances or beneficial changes in society. Those in the grip of rage become singularly focused on their own wounds, which is a kind of survival-based narcissism.

In short, the disturbed personal narcissism of Donald Trump is in total harmony with our own disturbed national narcissism. Trump affirms it, confirms it, and enshrines it. That may be a good strategy to win votes in the primaries, but it's not a smart or viable approach to governing.

Narcissism, whether on the part of our leaders or ourselves, exists in the dark underbelly of the Uranus-Pluto alignment whose symbolism dominates this entire decade. The macro-level of narcissism among institutions is a bellwether of what ails us in the 2010s and a huge obstacle to the changes necessary to allow the human species to mature in the ways we live on this planet. At the micro-level, narcissism among individuals is playing out not only as defiant refusal to move ahead, but also as sporadically increasing spasms of violence. In the latter half of the 2010s we are witnessing at both levels the tragic results of our inability to empathize with others, particularly those who don't seem like us.

Narcissism is not a modern phenomenon. It's as old as humanity and has accompanied us throughout our history. In some ways, narcissism could be considered the root problem at the heart of human psychology, a toxic ailment for which we have never found easy or effective treatment. What's different now about our struggles with our own and others' narcissism is how much more is riding on the outcome. Our collective future may rest on how we deal with this dangerous flaw in human nature.

The case can be made that current conditions in civilization are likely to worsen before they improve, in part because we are past the point of meaningful reforms to the existing order, but also because we aren't yet ready collectively to create a better, more harmonious future. While myriad individuals continue to work diligently and with great heart toward personal maturity and social progress, in the overall zeitgeist we still cling to a past that is being revealed as untenable, and we need to see this clearly before we can move ahead cooperatively. From that perspective, breakdown is not only inevitable, but necessary, since we will move forward only when we have no other choice.

In that sense, Donald Trump is the ideal candidate to reflect where we are now. He mirrors back to us our own narcissism.

While I believe the odds of Trump's winning the election and actually becoming president to be slim, stranger things have occurred. For all his glee in shocking people, I think Donald Trump would be shocked to find himself President, as would America.

## 8. Brexit: Another Sign of the Times

by Bill Herbst

*Version 1.4 (originally posted on 24 June 2016)*

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The decision in Britain on Thursday, June 23rd, 2016, where United Kingdom voters chose by the slim margin of 52% to 48% to leave the European Union, is, in numerous ways, a significant sign of the times.

Disunity is the order of the day in civilization. Harmonious cooperation — never a particular hallmark of the mass societies created by a species that is both in-group competitive and out-group fearful — is currently at low ebb. As a collective, human beings are more afraid now than at any time in recent decades about the possible loss of what they have (whether what they think they have is real or imagined).

Economic, religious, racial, and philosophical/ideological conflicts have escalated since the 21st century began, to the point where collective humanity, particularly in its national and regional alignments, is now Lincoln's "house divided against itself." This erosion of trust in cooperation has occurred for many reasons that I need not detail here. A reasonable assessment of the astrology that describes this epoch implies that this condition will worsen before it improves. Like a broken leg that has knitted improperly, making walking difficult, and thus needs to be intentionally re-broken and set again to heal correctly, we face the inevitable breakdown of a civilization that has, through the bulk of its 11,000 year history, been held together not by union, but by force and coercion (whether overt and crude or covert and subtle).

I don't mean to imply that harmony and cooperation are invariably good, nor that conflict and differences are necessarily bad. To

everything there is a season, with ebbs and flows in the overall balance between getting along together and fighting for dominance or control. Just as night and day are paired opposites in earthly existence, so harmony and conflict are forever paired in the dance of the Tao. Both have a correct place and natural function, and each helps to define and clarify the other.

At any given moment in the world, both good and bad harmony exists, and good and bad conflict exists also. Just because a sizable percentage of any group may agree on something does not insure that what they agree on is true or positive. The same applies to disagreement. There are creative and fertile disagreements and stultifying and tragic disagreements.

Assessing which expressions of harmony and conflict are good versus which are bad is neither simple nor obvious, and it's sure as hell not straightforward. Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so the judgment of harmony/conflict as positive or negative is a subjective evaluation. Not only can the expression of harmony and conflict change from good to bad all on their own, but our value systems for assessing which is happening can and do change over time. In addition, these opposites are often simultaneous and intertwined: harmony in any area is usually accompanied by conflict in related areas, whether or not that is easily apparent. That makes the determination of helping versus hurting — of setting up positive outcomes versus sowing the seeds of negative repercussions — all the more difficult. That uncertainty, however, is part of what makes human life so kaleidoscopically diverse and curious.

What we have now is groups of people — frequently groups that come together with a select or even relatively small number of members — that are coalescing because many individuals feel alienated or excluded from the collective agreement. Not only do they feel excluded and harmed by their lack of acceptance from the larger society, but they believe fervently that the collective agreement is wrong or bad. What distinguishes this particular decade — the decade of the Uranus-Pluto alignment — is that such people, who formerly felt isolated and/or powerless to confront the status quo and thus remained silent, are now rising up in active defiance to confront the status quo.

In the 2010s, such downtrodden individuals (whether they are actually disenfranchised or simply imagine themselves to be) are being galvanized by events to discover that others feel themselves to be in the same boat. That recognition of shared experience is a potent outlet for frustration and an incubator for passionate social activism. Such groups are arising almost spontaneously, often seemingly overnight. That suddenness is only in appearance, however. Actually, the discontent has simmered for a long time, cooking slowly under the surface, and is triggered by events that act as a tipping point, so that people who have previously suffered in silence suddenly shout, "*Enough!*" The unexpected and seemingly spontaneous alignment of "belonging" to an out-group allows people to go beyond the isolated and relatively powerless experience of feeling that "*I've had enough, but what can I do?*" to the socially powerful experience of saying: "***We've had enough, and we demand change NOW!***"

In America and around the world, this phenomenon has been occurring with increasing frequency. Whether we're talking about the Tea Party or Occupy movements in politics, gender causes targeting rape in the military and on college campuses, the Black Lives Matter uprising against institutionalized racial violence by law enforcement, social concerns about serious injuries in sports, or, in this year's presidential election, the profound significance of voter passion that has arisen around Bernie Sanders' and Donald Trump's candidacies. Even the onset of Isis/Isil out of the ashes of the Mideast (ironically, the ancient "cradle of civilization") reflects this meme — the alliance between individuals who feel ignored, disenfranchised, mistreated, and resentful into an active group that challenges the majority view and existing order, and often does so with a vengeance.

All these and many other significant developments reflect the Uranus-Pluto symbolism of this decade. The transformation of diverse social movements into bold social activism is not occurring from the top down, but rather from the bottom up. People in positions of social authority in corporate boardrooms, institutional offices, or in the halls of government may be sympathetic and even support a given reform, but they are not the originating sparks. These are grass-roots movements.

When Donald Trump speaks about his intention to build a wall along our southern border to keep out illegal immigrants, he's not the creator of that idea. He's simply tapping into a deep feeling of resentment that has been growing among a segment of the population, bubbling away under the surface, but now breaking through into full view. Basically, Trump is surfing on a tidal wave of disturbed but intense sentiment.

The same is true of Bernie Sanders' impassioned wish to get big money out of politics. He is hardly the first person to feel that large corporations and moneyed interests exert too much power and distort the values of our society. No, that perception has been around for a long time, but it registered most deeply with disconnected individuals who felt powerless to change the situation. Now that is the proverbial idea whose time has come, and Bernie Sanders happened to be the person who was present and willing when the deep feeling cracked through into the zeitgeist and coalesced into a nascent movement. Sanders didn't set out to be the leader of a revolution, but he volunteered for the job, and millions of people said "Yes!" to his offer.

As I've written before, Sanders and Trump are different sides of the same coin. Both challenge the status quo with the entire force of their personalities. Sanders comes from the progressive and idealistic wing (idealistic as in, "*We all do better when we all do better*"), lobbying for more inclusive togetherness. Trump has arrived from the conservative and pragmatic side (pragmatic as in, "*There's only so much pie to go around, and we deserve the full share we enjoyed in the past, but which was wrongly taken from us*"). So, Sanders and Trump represent inclusion and exclusion as strategies to challenge the way things are, i.e., the existing power hierarchy.

The two factions in the Brexit debate were divided along similar lines — those who favored inclusion versus those who wanted exclusion.

The inclusionist position says basically, "*Despite our serious problems, the fundamental direction of modernity is correct. Let's keep moving forward.*" The exclusionist position says, "*We have gone*

*too far and lost our way. We should go back to recover the values we held dear."*

At the heart of the exclusionist position is the deep feeling, based in anger and frustration over losses (whether real or feared), that stopping the forward momentum is absolutely paramount. Whatever has to be done to achieve that is OK, even if it risks disastrous consequences. Trust in the responsiveness of institutions has eroded so far for exclusionists that faith in any gradual reform is gone. As a result, disruption of the status quo is now the chosen strategy, even if it means harming everyone. This is eerily similar to the infamous misquote from a U.S. army officer during the Vietnam War: *"We had to destroy the village to save it."*

As a general rule, the astrology I see points to these last four years of the 2010s as a period when, more and more, the exclusionist point of view holds sway. Of those movements that gain traction and become powerful as forces pushing for social reform, an increasing percentage will resonate to the exclusionist attitude.

This is not to suggest that every social movement that arises to challenge the existing order will succeed in establishing a more just society. Far from it, some will fail outright or wither after only pyrrhic victories at best, with little real redress of grievances. Even the successes may prove illusory. As Pete Townshend wrote in The Who's song "Won't Get Fooled Again" — *"Meet the new boss; same as the old boss."* Social protest can re-shuffle the deck, but often the rules of the game don't change, and, even when they do, the odds typically remain in the house's favor. The games are rigged by those who manipulate the rules to their advantage.

The general expectation among those "in the know" before the UK vote was that the "Remain" faction would win out. I wasn't surprised in the least, however, by the British electorate voting to leave the EU. Staying was the inclusionist attitude. Leaving was exclusionist.

The global financial markets went batshit the morning after the British vote (Friday, June 24th) and fell precipitously. Why? Because they had already "built into" their pricing the expectation that Britain's voters would choose to stay in the European Union. When

the results of the vote were confirmed on Thursday night, the shock sent the markets reeling. Without claiming to be a financial pundit or soothsayer (I'm not), the question is not whether the markets will rebound — they will in the short run, because that's how markets work — but rather if this shock to the system will break the long-term trend and begin the unraveling of a global financial system built on sand.

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The implications of Brexit are sobering for America's presidential election. I won't predict that Donald Trump's "America First" (exclusionist) attitude will necessarily triumph in the November presidential election against Hillary Clinton's theme of "Togetherness" (inclusionist). Maybe he'll win; maybe he'll get his butt stomped. What I'm saying, though, is that those who write off Trump because he's a complete narcissist, snake-oil salesman, and buffoon, and assert that he could *never* win the election are dead wrong.

I've already stated in previous commentaries that I'm no fan of The Donald. But Trump's meme of taking America back to an imaginary 1950s fantasy is perfectly timed, while Hillary's cheerleading for "Togetherness" swims upstream against a powerful undercurrent in the collective unconscious. If Hillary and her well-funded team of professional advisors conduct her campaign according to the traditional political rule book of what has worked in the past, she may be in deep trouble.

Stated in different terms, to the extent that Hillary continues to be associated among voters with the Plutonian archetype in the American psyche (i.e., *the more things seem to change, the more the power elites remain the same*) and fails to appeal to the revolutionary Uranian impulse ("*I'm mad as hell, and I'm not gonna take it anymore!*") — an attitude that is still rising and getting stronger with each passing season — she risks losing the entire shebang.

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The horrors inflicted by fanatical religious fundamentalists, such as Isis, represent a violent protest against modernity itself, which — for

better and worse — has changed the face of life on our planet over the past 200 years. Radical acts of public sabotage and murder against the presumed sins of modernity will no doubt pockmark the landscape for quite awhile to come. The tragic carnage of the current seasons is, however, perversely in tune with a deep current flowing through these times — an intense abhorrence toward the way things are.

Collectively, social movements expressing active disagreement and discontent with the status quo are growing in both number and power. The momentum for change — at times regardless of the cost — is a rising tide, and many potent confrontations are in the offing over the coming years.

Whether these conflicts tear apart civilization and send the survivors back to the Dark Ages or set the stage for renewal through an evolution of our species out of its disturbed adolescence toward some wiser collective maturity remains to be seen. One way or another, though, the die is cast: Our immediate future is a time of discord more than union, separation more than togetherness, and sporadic shock more than consistent stability.

This does not imply that cooperation is dead, only that teamwork is likely to occur among smaller groups. Some of these groups will operate within a limited or primarily local scope, but others will no doubt exercise a disproportionate impact on society in general, altering the basic assumptions of how we live.

The pendulum will swing back, of course. From the mid-2020s through the 2030s, cooperation will once again hold sway as a social organizing principle, whether by choice or — more likely — out of necessity. For now, however, we are breaking apart more than coming together.

# 9. Bankrupting the Conventional Wisdom

by Bill Herbst

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According to the conventional political wisdom, the Republican National Convention, held this past week (July 18th-21st) in Cleveland, was a disaster.

Starting with the bludgeoning of the anti-Trump forces on Day 1, and continuing through the obvious plagiarism of Michelle Obama's words in Trump's wife Melania's speech on the second night, then culminating in Ted Cruz' refusal to endorse Donald Trump in his presentation on Night 3, media commentators — including nearly all those from the center to the left side of the political spectrum, but even many on the right as well — have pointed out, discussed at length, and roundly condemned the incompetence of Donald Trump's campaign staff. The criticisms have been accompanied often by expressions of shock and disbelief. The attitude that resounds in the media is not merely surprise that such crude mistakes were made at the convention by Trump's campaign staff, but downright bewilderment at how these kinds of mistakes could have been allowed to happen by supposedly professional political managers in an election campaign for the highest office in the land.

Here's the rub, however: *A very good chance exists that none of those gaffes will matter one whit in terms of the election-to-come in November.*

The case can be made — and I'm making it here — that the conventional wisdom in American politics, and indeed, in American life as a whole, has taken an extraordinary nosedive into irrelevance. We are living in Brave New World, with all the uncertainties, shocks, and unexpected developments that implies.

As has been pointed out numerous times by various commentators, this year bears an eerie resemblance to 1968, with its unpredictability, shocks, violence, and a deeply divided American public. Beyond that general correspondence, the years 1968-1969 witnessed the most dramatic expressions of the Uranus-Pluto cycle that began during the 1960s.

The decade of the 2010s is the next phase of that radical, revolutionary cycle — the first-quarter transition into the “summer” phase of what began as “spring” in the 1960s. I’ve written about the astrology of this at some length, so I won’t repeat it at any length here. A compact reiteration is that many social developments that were birthed in the 1960s but then went underground in subsequent decades are now arising again, sometimes with a vengeance.

By the mid-1970s and certainly by the 1980s, it appeared that various “social experiments” of the 1960s had been either beaten back or overwhelmed by more standard and conservative structures. To cite just a few examples, organic farming seemed to have lost out to agri-business, natural medicine was apparently the loser to the high-tech and pharmaceutical approaches of allopathic Western medicine, and the civil rights movement that culminated in the Civil Rights Act of 1965 was undone by a new “Jim Crow” subtext, including economic marginalization and “drug wars” that put a significant percentage of entire generations of black men behind bars.

The astrology of the Uranus-Pluto cycle clearly suggested that these and other “winners” of cultural backlash would not simply walk away with the prizes forever. Astrological cycle theory predicted that the 2010s would see an upwelling of grassroots rebellions against that very status quo.

In a general way, this conflict comes down to class war between the “haves” and the “have-nots.” The divide between those who benefit through privilege and profit from the ways American culture is organized and run, on the one hand, and those who feel left out or disenfranchised on the other has never been more extreme. Even the “Robber Baron” epoch of the 1870s-1880s pales in comparison to the severe disparity we now see in America between the 1% who determine social policy and control most of the wealth and the 99% that comprises “the rest of us.” I don’t blame any particular group for this state of affairs. We are all responsible for allowing it to happen, and — if astrology offers any solace — the fact that it happened over the past 40 years was, if not inevitable, at least predictable.

The debate about the questionable wisdom of the market economy we have now, with its emphasis on financial speculation, over-consumption through the headlong pursuit of short-term profits, and wealth accumulation at any cost, can be argued at great length, and from either camp — those who love what America has become and those who don’t. My intent in this commentary is not to engage in that heated discussion, but merely to point out that millions of Americans on both sides of the left-right political spectrum are rising up to protest the status quo of the way things are.

One of the hallmarks of the existing order can be seen through the conduct of our national political life. While the left-right political divide is as potent and conflicted as ever, what unifies a large segment of the American public in this

decade is the desire to “throw the bums out.” The conventional wisdom of politics — now well established in the two major political parties, most of our elected representatives on both sides of the aisle, and the entire machinery of professional politicians that support them and run the machinery — is under assault.

The stunning success of Donald Trump’s candidacy in the Republican camp and the relative success of Bernie Sanders’ run for president among the Democrats, which has been no less impressive despite Sanders’ failure to gain the nomination, give ample testimony to how fed up many Americans are with the ways our society is organized and conducted.

When I watched the Republican Convention on TV this past week and heard so many pundits, commentators, and television anchors echo the opinion that the Convention was a disaster, I could not help but feel that those people — all of them, regardless of their political leanings — were part of the existing status quo and the privileged classes that are now being challenged. Of course those commentators, pundits, and operatives decried the lack of a smoothly run, slick convention. They are all part of the established order that oversaw the transformation over the past 70 years of political conventions into highly scripted, tightly controlled theater of “infotainment.”

I don’t pretend to know the outcome of the coming election, nor exactly what will happen in the years ahead, whichever of the two nominees — either Hillary or Trump — manages to attain the White House. The wild card factors are too great to allow any reasonable prediction about the results. What I am certain of, however, is that the opinions of well-paid commentators and pundits are, if not completely irrelevant, at least largely suspect. Their opinions may not count for much in this extraordinary time of disruption and change.

Will the Convention gaffes hurt Donald Trump’s chances over the three months of this campaign and the election that follows? Maybe, but maybe not. Trump hasn’t been harmed by the many “mistakes” he’s made during the primary, and whatever further errors are made from here on out may not matter, either.

In terms of political realities, the only thing that matters is how Americans vote in the November election, and no one can predict with any certainty this year how that will go.

As Dorothy said to her little dog when they first set down in Oz after the tornado lifted up their farmhouse and took them to another dimension, *“I don’t think we’re in Kansas anymore, Toto.”*

# 10. Is Donald Trump Crazy?

by Bill Herbst

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If you're reading this commentary, you probably don't need me to reiterate the litany of statements and responses by Donald Trump that have left people scratching their heads and wondering if Donald Trump is crazy. At any given moment in his ongoing public performance, Trump is liable to say damn near anything.

Some of what Trump says is insightful and incisive in accurately reading the tenor of the times, most typically in articulating the dissatisfaction, anger, and even rage among segments of the body politic, particularly older white males who feel that their privileges have been minimized, lost, or taken away.

Other Trump pronouncements, however, seem utterly divorced from reality. Is he simply out of control and unable to restrain his narcissism? Or is Trump, as billionaire businessman Mark Cuban recently asserted, "bat-shit crazy"?

These questions bring up numerous important and often misunderstood truths about astrology, most of which I've talked about for decades. Donald Trump's behavior — throughout his life in the public arena, more pointedly on the campaign trail during his run for the presidency, and most especially as the brouhaha surrounding his most recent statements reaches fever pitch in the media — gives me yet another opportunity to clarify what astrology is and is not, and what charts can and can't tell us.

Natal charts reveal how individuals are hard-wired. They show us a schematic diagram of the principles, assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes out of which we build our personal realities. This is structured in a natural hierarchy of meaning: some parts of our characters are more important than others. Everything in a chart has meaning, but not all meanings carry the same weight. That may seem obvious, but it's often overlooked. Students of the system and even some professional astrologers sometimes amplify the importance of relatively minor configurations in the chart or interpret them in isolation. Both tendencies are understandable, given the complexity of the system and the inherent challenges of verbal or written communication, but each muddies the waters of comprehensive and accurate interpretation.

Every combination of symbols has a set of generic meanings that represents a kind of background tonality, but any combination of symbols in a particular chart is modified by other factors in the chart and by the chart as a whole, effectively adding specific and custom-tailored meanings that apply only to the chart in question. Many “chart interpretations,” especially computer-generated reports, are little more than a compendium of these generic interpretations. No attempt is even made to account for the interaction of many symbols or the overall implication of meaning for the chart as a whole.

Unlike science, which attempts to limit or control variables that might affect the outcome of an experiment, astrology regards all components as essential rather than extraneous. When Marc Edmund Jones, one of the seminal astrologers of the first half of the 20th century, was asked to define astrology, he replied that astrology was “the study of the relationship of everything to everything else.” That may have been more poetic than literal, but it resonates nicely to astrology’s reflecting life in ways that are both amazing and difficult.

Nothing in a chart (or precious little, anyway) operates in isolation. Every alignment of symbols in astrology — a planet in a sign or ruling a house, an aspect between two planets, etc. — contributes to and is modified by the whole. A hallmark of astrological interpretive technique is that symbols that are relatively isolated from the overall design of the chart take one of two directions. Either they “stick out like a sore thumb” or they remain silent and don’t operate at all. Even those minimally integrated factors are not completely isolated, however. They are still rightly considered in light of the overall hierarchy of meaning, even when contradictory.

Astrology is brilliant at delineating the fundamental core of meaning versus the periphery of other traits and characteristic approaches we use to build and support our sense of central meaning. That’s not a fact, of course, but my strongly held opinion. I wouldn’t have spent 46 years studying and using astrology if I felt otherwise.

That doesn’t imply, however, that I believe astrology to be infallibly accurate or to provide answers to every question. In my opinion, it isn’t, and it doesn’t.

First off, astrology cannot answer every question. Many questions have no resolution from within the system, only a range of possible outcomes. Frequently, such questions can be “answered” only in hindsight, by observing how the person lives and what happens along the way. Other times, the questions themselves are specious. A question such as, “Will I ever be happy?” simply cannot be addressed.

Astrology is a language of symbols. As such, it’s a sub-set of life and operates from within life, not from beyond it. Learning to speak the astrological language

tells us which questions to ask about any given chart, or, in more pragmatic terms, which questions to ask about the real life that is linked to any chart. In natal astrology, that life is an individual, typically human. Part of what becomes obvious after studying the system for a while is that not all questions are relevant for every chart. Each chart presents its own set of patterns, and thus each chart comes with custom-tailored possibilities.

Knowing the date, time, and place of a person's birth (first breath of autonomy) allows us to erect an accurate map of the solar system that shows us in symbolic form the meaning of that time-space moment. Typically, personal astrology is geocentric: The map is drawn from the perspective of the individual. That may not be "scientific" in the way science is normally considered, but it's the correct approach to illuminate meaning for that particular individual.

The chart itself, however, won't tell us the nature of its subject. Charts are simply maps of a moment in time and space, viewed from a specific point of view. If someone tells me that a certain chart is the natal chart of an individual, I can't know whether the person is male or female. The chart itself won't tell me, because it doesn't contain that information. I need a name to know the gender of the person. In purely symbolic terms, gender may not matter. In real life, however, gender makes a difference in how we understand a given life. Context matters, and charts provide only limited context. We need information from beyond the chart to apply the astrological insights in a meaningful way.

So, despite the wealth of information that any chart provides, an undeniable truth of astrology is that no chart can tell us everything we need to know for comprehensive understanding.

The most critical factors that natal charts *don't* contain and cannot tell us is *anything* about the consciousness and maturity of the individuals to whom they "belong" or refer. Charts tell us how we're built, not what we do with how we're built. In other words, astrology cannot predict and does not reveal simple value judgments about how well or badly our life-challenges might be expressed in manifestation. Yes, charts often specify that some developments will be easier or more difficult for us in experience, but that's not a good/bad judgment.

By applying typical cultural standards, charts can delineate both positive and negative experiences that are possible or likely to occur, but they cannot tell us with any degree of certainty or accuracy which might happen at a given time. The symbols of astrology necessarily include both positive and negative expressions, especially during sensitive time frames of heightened sensitivity when certain events or experiences are more likely.

The mandala of symbols in a natal chart reveals to the astrologer a great deal about the life-journey of an individual. It shows where we start and where we'll naturally tend to go, as well as many of the experiences that might, could, or will

occur along the way, whether those experiences happen because of our own choices and behaviors (i.e., experiences that happen *out* of us), because we encounter them on our journeys (i.e., experiences that happen *to* us), or both. The chart also defines the ways we achieve and maintain coherence in our lives — the sense of a meaningful personal narrative — which is one of astrology's most important revelations. Charts yield information that varies from the surface to the depths — from the obvious, immediate, and ephemeral to more deeply internalized and long-term orientations that keep us on track.

Here's one example of what Donald Trump's chart tells us: Some media reports have indicated that higher-ups in the Trump campaign staff are frustrated by Donald Trump's seeming inability to stay "on message." These political advisors want Trump to stop "shooting from the hip" or "taking pot-shots" by saying whatever comes into his mind, no matter how far afield it may be from the strategy of an essential political message. His advisors desperately want Trump to stick to the planned script in a more disciplined way.

Astrology suggests strongly that those advisors are whistling Dixie. They have zero chance of reining in Donald Trump. Trump's natal chart makes it clear as a bell that he cannot and will not be restrained by such advice. For one thing, Trump accepts no authority above his own. He is a law unto himself. Beyond that consideration, consistency and disciplined self-expression, especially verbal, are not in Donald Trump's nature, according to his natal chart. Trump is wired in a manner that causes his mind — and his mouth — to jump around from one thing to another through what might be called "free association."

What Donald Trump says and how he moves from one thought, perception, opinion, or judgment to another is not random, but it's not necessarily logical or linear, either, and it's sure as hell not disciplined. Trump doesn't stick to the facts, for facts carry little weight in his mind.

For Donald Trump, facts intertwine with beliefs, hunches, things he read or heard someone say, and even purely speculative possibilities. Truth and untruth dance together inside Trump's head. In itself, that's not particularly unusual, since our brains are wired to present us with as much information as possible. What distinguishes Trump from most people, however, is that his chart implies that he can't distinguish which is which and doesn't care.

To Donald Trump, non-facts have equivalent weight and meaning to facts. They are all equally interesting and compelling in his mind. Whatever Trump says at any given moment is as likely to reflect dreams as realities. Everything Trump says makes sense to him as support to what he holds as true. Audiences that like his act have no problem with this freewheeling pastiche of facts, assertions, lies, memes, and beliefs, but others find Trump's stream-of-consciousness style to be chaotic, disturbing, and often inappropriate.

The further modern civilization goes in separating us from the natural world, the more difficult it becomes for many people to distinguish "actual" reality from "virtual" reality, especially in their personal experience. Trump is the poster child for that state of mind, which could be considered creative or dangerous, depending on one's orientation. But that's another essay...

Beyond the type of information he offers, Trump's assertion of particular ideas are less "chosen" than compulsive. Stuff flies through Donald Trump's mind in kaleidoscopic fashion, and some of it flies right out of his mouth. A moment later, another thought flies out. The two thoughts are connected for Trump, but not necessarily according to any external or coherent script.

In addition, Trump's chart implies that unpredictability and eccentricity are inherent and central to his on-stage performance. Some people like smooth interactions where they plan both what they say and how they say it. By contrast, Donald Trump likes shocks, but only when he delivers them. Trump enjoys being controversial and defying the expectations of others. He moves from serious to joking in the blink of an eye, and often without any change in delivery. Even Trump doesn't know if he actually means what he says, although once he's expressed any thought, Trump will defend whatever he said as "true" and "correct."

I could go on, but I want to keep this short and sweet. (I refer anyone interested in more information about Donald Trump to my original essay on his character written in January of 2016, which is still available on my web site.)

To hammer home the central point once again, astrological charts are fundamentally neutral in their information. They describe the make-up of individuals; they don't judge that make-up. They also reveal likely events and experiences, but they don't judge those, either.

Astrological techniques cannot reveal either consciousness or maturity. The actor behind the curtain remains invisible and beyond the realm of astrology. From the chart alone, we have no way of knowing whether the individual concerned has been learning, growing, or otherwise paying attention along life's journey. To see that kind of content judgment, we have to use information we find trustworthy from outside the astrological system. Then we can add the indications from the chart to further illuminate those opinions or judgments.

No chart ever states that someone is crazy. Yes, charts can and do indicate whether sanity (in the mental health sense of reality competing with fantasy or being in conflict with our fictions in potentially crippling ways) will be an issue or concern in a given life. And yes, Donald Trump's natal chart does indeed imply that the question of personal sanity is relevant to his life. The chart also pinpoints periods in Trump's journey where that issue comes to the fore and

becomes substantial in experience. 2016 is one of many such phases in Donald Trump's life where that question arises in particular and specific ways.

Astrologers routinely make judgments when they interpret charts. That's understandable, given the powerful motivation within human nature to evaluate experience in terms of pro and con, positive and negative, good and bad. What's important to remember, however, is that those judgments come from the astrologer, not from the chart.

Astrology alone never was and never will be sufficient by itself. To obtain any sort of full picture of an individual life, we need to apply information from beyond the chart. When that additional information is accurate, insightful, or particularly compelling, the resulting mix can be brilliantly revealing. When it's inaccurate, however, the mix is questionable, and sometimes just plain wrong. But that's usually our fault, not the fault of astrology.

Is Donald Trump crazy? I don't know. For me, Trump's knee-jerk, defensive reactions to any perceived slight or critique by resorting to attacks and crude insults are more worrisome. Donald Trump seems completely unable to handle any criticism and to believe that he is sorely put upon by others. Trump can dish it out, but he can't take it. I regard him as aggressively narcissistic more than crazy. That's just my personal reaction, though, and not a clinical assessment.

In general, Trump's chart indicates clearly that the question of his mental health is relevant as an ongoing and recurring issue in his life. Arguments in support of both sides of the question can and are being put forth, but the voters will make the final decision on that in November.

# 11. The Saturn-Neptune Square of 2015-2017

by Bill Herbst

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In astrology, Saturn represents the physical realm, what is often called the “real world” — not theoretical, not philosophical, not poetic, and not intangible, but instead, the nuts-and-bolts construction of reality at its most dense level.

Saturn is about limitations and the hard work of building something over time, through sustained efforts that accrue, step-by-step, or brick-by-brick. This is ambition: the will and focus to achieve a goal, whether that means success in business — with all its accompanying rewards of income, prestige, and respect — or in some other arena of achievement, such as intimate relationships. In either dimension, and for better or worse, the results will be tangible, visible for all to see.

Saturn teaches us the importance of the passage of time, and about both the fulfillments possible in life and the harsh realities that life sometimes imposes.

By contrast, Neptune is the symbol in astrology for the urge to return to a state of undifferentiated oneness. That can mean sensitivity to the underlying connectedness of everyone and everything, or it can mean the wish to escape from the troubles of individual life by a return to the comforts of the womb.

Neptune is about possibilities, not realities — dreams, fantasies, and perfect ideals. It is about invisible rather than visible worlds, the intangible rather than the tangible.

From Saturn’s specific point of view, Neptune is crazy — lost in dreams, seduced by unrealistic fantasies, and wishing to escape from life’s responsibilities. From Neptune’s more universal perspective, Saturn is cold and pessimistic, an overly harsh and critical taskmaster, and far too black-and-white. For Saturn, the glass is always half-empty, while Neptune sees it as half-full. Saturn is like Newtonian physics, while Neptune is similar to Quantum Mechanics. Saturn wants proof; Neptune wants faith.

Saturn is walls, Neptune is windows. If Mr. Saturn and Ms. Neptune are sitting together in a room inside a house, and Mr. Saturn says, "I wonder if it's raining outside," Ms. Neptune looks out the window and says, "No, the sun is shining." Saturn responds by saying, "How can you possibly know that without going outside?" Neptune replies, "I looked out the window." In the experience of Saturn, everything is discrete and separate. Inside is different from outside, self is different from not-self. For Neptune, however, everything merges together — inside and outside, self and not-self are fused, or merely illusory facets of the ultimate oneness.

When we're young, Saturn's position in our natal charts shows experiences that we believe everyone else can have (and is having), but we can't (and won't). In some way, either obvious or unknown, we are unacceptable, too much one thing or not enough of another. We feel flawed, imperfect, and somehow fated to be shut out. It's as if we've lost the race before the starting gun even goes off.

These are areas of life where we're overly sensitive and too attached. We take the experiences linked with our Saturns so seriously that we can't relax into them. Rather than flowing into the experiences, we seize up in anxiety. We're pent-up and frustrated by our fear of failure. Curiously, however, we're also afraid of the responsibilities that come with success. It's a little like having a car that holds only a single gallon of gas. We're scared of running out of fuel (and often do), but when we fill up, we can only put in one gallon. More than that just spills out on the ground and is wasted. The challenge of Saturn is to achieve one or both of two changes: either slowly increase the capacity of our tanks over time or learn to live happily within our limits. Either way, this is a de-sensitizing process. We care too much and would be much better off caring less.

Neptune, on the other hand, shows where we have infinite capacity. No limits, no boundaries. Anything is permitted, and everything is possible. Life is a dream. But with Neptune, the dream itself is what's important. Reality hardly matters at all. With Neptune, the inspiration of and faith in a bountiful universe are direct payoffs. Whether or not the universe actually proves to be bountiful in fact is much less important.

Many people report that faith is a bulwark of their lives, and that they wouldn't get through the hard times without it. From the standpoint of believers, faith is the true floor upon which they stand. For non-believers, pure faith may be considered groundless, but that doesn't necessarily invalidate its benefits. The "placebo effect" has a well-documented ability to produce measurable positive effects, even if those are not guaranteed. Hard-core skeptics may decry the validity of simple faith, but most will agree that life is complex and often beyond our comprehension. Neptune is where mysteries reside. Hope springs eternal for

many human beings, and that realm cannot be eradicated by science, rationality, or pragmatism. Belief in the transcendent is an element of who we are.

Obviously, Saturn and Neptune are not natural playmates. Both are part of our nature; both are entirely reasonable within their own realms. But together? Since they're inherently antipathetic, how can they possibly be combined?

When Saturn and Neptune are considered as a planetary pair, especially in their shared cycles through time, the question posed is: *Can fantasy and reality cross-fertilize successfully to produce a better, more perfectly-realized offspring, that of an improved life through hard work and imagination, or will they prove toxic to each other, with each realm (the real and the imaginary) ending up diminished, tarnished, or invalidated, and with nothing good emerging from their association?*

### **The Saturn-Neptune Cycle**

Saturn and Neptune have a cycle whose average length is 36 years, with quarterly phases of approximately 7–10 years. Each time the cycle begins, a characteristic tone is set for the following 27 years, with the last quarter of each cycle (the winter phase) representing a transition away from the current meanings in preparation for the next cycle to come.

Below is the timing for the three Saturn-Neptune cycles that began in the 20th century, with keywords and brief comments about each:

From August 1916 to August 1918, Saturn conjoined Neptune in Leo. Keywords for that cycle were Patriotism and Nationalism. The period from World War One through the end of World War Two dramatically changed the map of the world, eliminating entire empires and reshuffling national boundaries. Millions were sacrificed for the dreams of national honor.

From July 1952 through December 1953, Saturn conjoined Neptune in Libra. Keywords were Balance, Equality, and Justice. The period from the early 1950s through the late 1980s framed what was called "The Cold War," a fearful competition between the Soviet Union and America, with their nuclear deterrents and carefully maintained balance of power. That period also saw the rise of various significant social movements in the U.S., from civil rights to equality for women.

The current Saturn-Neptune cycle began in Capricorn from October 1988 to December 1990. Keywords might be Traditions, Institutions, and Economics. The long-held dream of a global economy was actually created, and with it, the fantasy of unlimited wealth. The end of the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet Union was followed by a period of exuberant celebration for American capitalism, which led to excesses of every kind. The result has been a bounty of extraordinary corporate power and riches for the few, but the many have been

largely left out. This cycle includes many paradoxes: In the western world of liberal modernity, social mores have moved forward, but not without heated challenges from more conservative factions, most of which are based in traditional religious authority.

In November of 2015, Saturn reached a 90° arc (called a "square" in astrology) from Neptune, which marks the beginning of the phase change into the Winter Quarter of the current cycle. That square will end (and culminate) in September 2016.

The period of transition into the Winter Phase is a time where the confluence of dreams and realities reaches unanticipated proportions, with both comic and tragic overtones. The real and imagined have been cooking together in the same pot since 2005, and we've been eating that stew. Now we're reaching the bottom of the pot, and the dregs of the stew are beginning to taste funny. Are we witnessing a documentary or a complete fiction? Hard to tell.

Where is truth during this 2015-2017 transition? Oh, it's still around, as always, but it's obfuscated (and often overwhelmed) by exaggeration, hyperbole, innuendo, and outright lies.

We are on the verge of a new phase that will last through 2024 where we will see which of the dreams begun at the end of the 1980s were fulfilled, and which came up empty or even harmful to our collective reality. The question that will emerge in the Winter Phase is: *In the wish, intention, and effort to convert our dreams into realities, where do we pull back, and where do we move forward? How do we change what hasn't worked, yet keep what has?*

During the transition period, which will play out through the end of 2016 and most of 2017, we're collectively unable to answer those questions. Astrologically, the period of Saturn and Neptune's perpendicular last-quarter alignment is a time of confusion rather than clarity. We see what's happening in the world, and we know that it's meaningful, but we don't yet have any consistent or overall agreement about what the meaning is nor what to do in response.

By itself, the changes of the Saturn-Neptune cycle are meaningful, but less as dominant themes than as modifiers to longer and more important alignments. That's the case in the 2010s, which are dominated by the first-quarter transition of the Uranus-Pluto cycle. Astrologically, this decade brings to a head and thrusts into our collective awareness the various ways we've used our power wisely, versus the many ways we've used power foolishly. The thrust of the Uranus-Pluto transition is determining what is necessary to restore balance and support our collective well-being. That process is being sparked into action by a series of shocks, some of which occur through events, but the bulk of which arise through an eruption of emotions in a groundswell of spontaneous social movements. These movements are often triggered by current events, but they're based on

fundamental precedents that date back over the past five decades to the 1960s. Their re-appearance in potent new forms during the 2010s is surprising in its suddenness, and the force with which they arise is unanticipated.

All the dominant institutions of culture — government, business, education, medicine, etc. — that represent the status quo of how we structure our societies are under tremendous pressure, either by depredations from within or assaults from without.

Trust in and respect for institutions will reach an all-time low over the 2010s. This is already underway and apparent throughout our society, especially in the politics of our current presidential campaign. Never in the past century have we had two major-party candidates for the highest office in the land who were both mistrusted by a majority of voters. Significant disapproval ratings for politicians are nothing new, but the levels of disapproval for Trump and Clinton respectively in this election are stunning. Clearly, the public has little faith in either candidate, nor in the political parties they represent.

An increasing percentage of the public feels that our institutions and those who run them no longer possess the will, ability, nor even the inclination to serve us effectively. We may still purchase the shiny products of consumerism, since that remains a dominant theme of the status quo dream, but even whiz-bang techno-toys cannot keep people as docile as they did over recent decades past. By the time we reach the end of this decade, certain harsh truths will have become obvious, and we will be faced with the necessity of hard choices.

This summer, as we near the third and final pass of the three last-quarter squares that mark the beginning of the winter phase of the current Saturn-Neptune cycle, we are still caught in the confusion of competing dreams and conflicting beliefs. We may recognize the importance of unity in moving ahead to solve our problems, but we are still painfully divided.

Over the coming year, as the Saturn-Neptune connection fades away, that fog could be dispelled. Although we might consider that a gradual process, the many awakenings — bringing restoration of greater clarity in realizing what is necessary — will probably occur in fits and starts, through sporadic shocks. I hope, of course, that these shocks will be relatively mild and benign, at least from the standpoint of the collective, but I really have no idea.

These days, even seemingly small shocks may lead to significant awakenings. And once awake, it becomes difficult to go back to sleep.

# 12. Transparency

by Bill Herbst

*Version 1.4 (posted originally on 13 September 2016)*

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We've reached a point in this looney-tunes presidential campaign where yet another of the relatively unusual issues that pop up like weeds has taken center-stage. This time it's concerns over transparency, the marked tendency on the part of both major-party candidates — Clinton and Trump — to withhold disclosures, revealing relevant information about themselves to the voting public only on a selective basis, under duress, or sometimes not at all.

The kerfuffle over Hillary's recent health problems is less about the actual state of her health than over the decisions (either by her or by her campaign staff) to parse out the information about the sequence of recent ill health events in dribs and drabs, rather than immediately and in a straightforward manner.

Conversely, Donald Trump continues to refuse to release his tax returns, always hiding behind the shopworn and completely debunked excuse that he's under audit by the IRS and thus "can't" release his returns to public scrutiny. Of course, the fact that a certain statement is repeatedly shown to be utterly false carries no weight with Donald. He goes right on repeating the lie as if it were true.

The candidates' birth charts have much to offer about the dynamics behind their respective lack of transparency. Sometimes the astrology details distinct elements of their behavior and strategy. In other ways, the charts show us a kind of "karmic overview" of what these two people are up against. In that latter perspective, the indications from their charts are less about behavior or choice, and more about the archetypal symbolism with which each has to contend, sometimes despite their best intentions. In other words, personal astrology goes beyond showing us the decisions or choices made by individuals to reveal the larger context of their lives that come through no matter what they do.

First Hillary. I need to restate the uncertainty surrounding an accurate time of birth for Ms. Clinton. Two birth times have been claimed by investigators, and the respective charts, while sharing the tonal similarities of the same confirmed birth date, are profoundly different in the individuating factors produced by the time of day a person was born. The natal charts of two individuals born on the same day but at different times, or even at the same time but in different parts

of the world, often end up more different than similar. To apply a useful metaphor, people born on the same day are singing a life-song that uses the same chord structure, but the melodies and lyrics can be, and usually are, very different, because of the critical importance in astrology of the exact birth-time and place.

Of the two possible charts for Hillary, I've chosen the chart that I feel is more likely to be correct, since it dovetails better with my knowledge of her history and perception of her temperament, but there's no guarantee that I'm right, nor that either chart is necessarily accurate. Some of what I'll write below concerning Hillary is reflected in both charts, but I'll custom-tailor my presumptions to fit the chart I'm using.

Hillary has been accused for decades of being secretive and controlling. Her birth chart agrees with this assessment, although the reasons behind those strategies are defined in the chart as less-than-conscious and probably unintentional.

The Sun in Hillary's natal chart, symbolizing who she is "inside" and the most basic ways she perceives reality and approaches living, is in the sign Scorpio. Of the twelve archetypal signs of the zodiac, Scorpio is notorious for its reputation as secretive. As an astrologer and a Scorpio Sun myself, I find that assumption simplistic, over-general, and often incorrect. To my way of thinking, Scorpio isn't "secretive," *per se*, but instead *suspicious*. On the other hand, Scorpio is definitely controlling. This is not a spontaneous, anything-goes, let-the-chips-fall-where-they-may sign of the zodiac. (Those qualities are found on the Gemini-Sagittarius axis, and Donald Trump is a perfect example of a quicksilver Gemini Sun and full Sagittarian Moon.) As a power-based, suspicious sign, Scorpio is concerned that others may not perceive and interpret reality as it does, so it doesn't give away (reveal) who or what it is until it's ready to do so. That's not secretive, it's cautious, and Scorpio would say that the caution is warranted.

So, is Hillary secretive? No. Is she controlling? Absolutely.

The other fundamental quality of Hillary's natal Sun is its position in the 12th house. The houses represent arenas of life-experience, and the 12th is the arena where ordinary, plain reality is shrouded by dreams. These dreams may be ideals or illusions, true or false, but they obscure the obvious and create phantasmagorical perceptions. The tangible and intangible coincide and merge. In short, the 12th house is, indeed, an area of experience where much is hidden, under the surface, or not as it appears.

The Sun in Hillary's birth chart is not the whole story, however. Far from it. Hillary is not only a Scorpio Sun, but also Scorpio rising. Mercury and Venus are also in Scorpio near the Ascendant, and both are squared to a very significant stellium of three planets (Mars, Saturn, and Pluto) in Leo/9th house.

Hillary is not an artist or a carpenter. She's a lawyer, and not just literally, but temperamentally and metaphorically as well. The five-planet alignment of Mercury and Venus square to Mars, Saturn, and Pluto from the 9th house to the 12th/1st implies that she sees every public interaction as a courtroom. Everything she says is a legal argument. She is always building a case and presenting it to the jury.

Unlike someone like Barack Obama, however, Hillary is not a natural or accomplished on-stage performer. Her public persona doesn't "win over" her audience. Instead, like the lawyer she is, Hillary relies on facts and arguments to convince others.

The most exact connection in that five-planet alignment is a near-partile square between Mercury in Scorpio and Saturn in Leo (less than 1° orb). This implies that Hillary is not confident of her ability to perceive correctly or communicate accurately. As a result, the fear of making mistakes or failing to convince others causes her to work overtime to get everything right. Paradoxically, that effort is sometimes so intense that it leads to errors, which then bite Hillary on the ass.

Contrast Hillary's exact Mercury-Saturn square in Scorpio-Leo to Donald Trump's Mercury-Neptune square in Cancer-Libra. Here's Hillary, doing her lawyer thing, striving mightily to get every detail right before she says anything, confirming and re-confirming everything she thinks and sees to make sure it's both real and accurate. God forbid that she should get even a single detail wrong.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump can't tell the difference between fact and fiction. In Trump's mind, reality intertwines with fantasy, and they might as well be one and the same. It's not that Trump merely has trouble distinguishing between truth and lies, but that he doesn't care. With his Sun-Uranus and Leo Rising, the truth is whatever he thinks it is.

Just as Scorpio is associated with secrecy, perhaps incorrectly, so an alignment between Mercury and Neptune is associated with lying, since an individual with those symbols connected can't discern fact from fiction. But that association with lies is only partially correct. Mercury is logic and rationality in its sequential mode — one thing leads to another in a chain of connected perceptions; Neptune, on the other hand, is instantaneous perception of the whole, with no steps or process, just a divine leap to seeing the final meaning. That's part of the difference between rationality and intuition.

Donald Trump is sometimes dead-on and almost uncanny in perceiving the tenor of the times or the mood of the crowd. He leaps beyond the rational to embrace the intuitive, and at times he is downright brilliant in cutting through all the noise and saying the profound, over-arching truth.

And yet, this occasional brilliance is contrasted with an even greater number of completely whacked-out, bat-shit crazy public statements Trump offers as factual that are totally made-up, often not by Trump himself, but by some nutty belief he heard or read.

Trump's chart is not secretive or cautious where verbal expression is concerned. He is liable to say anything at any time. That's not to suggest, however, that Trump isn't controlling. As much as his Gemini Sun-Uranus and full Moon in Sagittarius combined with his Mercury-Neptune square may allow Trump to shoot his mouth off "from the hip," so to speak, his Leo Rising with Mars on the Ascendant indicates that he always has a warrior's sense of whether or not he is in an advantageous position.

That Leo Mars on the Ascendant has many meanings, of course, among them the tendency to attack when challenged. With Trump's temperament, the best defense is a good offense. He sees challenge or criticism from others as a personal attack, and he immediately goes after his critic with an assault of his own. More relevant to this commentary, however, is the meaning (along with his 10th-house Uranus) of aggressively wanting to always be in charge. Trump is the Strong Man, the authoritarian leader of the pack. He sees himself as the Stud Duck, the 800-lb. gorilla, and the Dominant Male. In his own psyche, he is the All and Everything, the Beginning and the End. Trump doesn't really want to be President; he wants to be God.

Another incorrect presumption in astrology is the belief that Leo is the sign of natural and self-assured confidence. No, Leo is a sign of increasing public displays of confidence based on inward insecurity. It's the *fake-it-til-you-make-it* sign of the zodiac, where bravado and bombast are the road to social success. This is Method Acting, where the actor becomes the character that he or she portrays. Yes, Leonine types are natural performers. They love nothing better than being on-stage and in the limelight, because this gives them the chance to shine, become stars, and lay to rest their own lurking interior uncertainties about themselves. Over a lifetime, a person with a strong Leo quotient may actually achieve true and authentic confidence, but that's the end result, not the beginning. More than any other sign, the Leo archetype involves coming to believe the mythic stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. And Donald Trump is very far down that road.

Both candidates have difficult Venus-Saturn connections in their natal charts. Hillary has Venus in Scorpio/12th square to Saturn in Leo/9th, while Donald has Venus conjunct Saturn in Cancer/11th. Those connections tie personal love to limitation, responsibility, and ambition. In fact, much of their experience of love is linked with success or failure in their careers.

This doesn't imply that they won't marry or create a family. Quite the contrary. For Trump especially, personal family is critical, and something he will work hard

to achieve and maintain, despite setbacks and disappointments. Neither Trump nor Clinton are individuals for whom personal love flows easily, and their lives will contain more-than-average heartache or loss.

With Venus and Saturn together, love becomes denser and more physical, linked with the real world more than the emotional or ethereal realms. People with Venus-Saturn connections want the perfect partner, the perfect children, and the perfect family, considered in the context of social appearances and success. Often they achieve that, but the psychic costs of such strategic choices can be very great.

For Hillary Clinton, with her Venus-Saturn square from the 12th to the 9th houses, the question is: *What duties, sacrifices, or even moral transgressions will love require from me?*

For Donald Trump, with his 11th house conjunction of Venus and Saturn, the question is: *Who loves me?*

Stated in overall terms, Clinton and Trump are two people whose hearts are guarded, and that alone is enough to make them seem less than transparent to others and the public. The fact that their charts are replete with additional factors that muddy the waters of clear visibility implies that public concerns are justified about the differences between who they want us to believe they are versus who they truly are.

# 13. (I Can't Get No) Satisfaction

by Bill Herbst

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The rising first five minor-key notes of this song's opening guitar riff (accompanied first by bass and then by drums) are as iconic as anything in popular music — the rock and roll equivalent of Beethoven's Fifth. They are followed by five more notes in a quick slide back down, leading to a repeat of the refrain:

*Duh, Duh, Duh-duh-duhhhhh, duh-duh-uh-duh-uh  
Duh, Duh, Duh-duh-duhhhhh, duh-duh-uh-duh-uh*

Then Mick Jagger starts off the vocals, soft and slow, in what is the all-time-classic anthem of teen angst:

*I can't get no sat-is-fac-tion  
I can't get no sat-is-fac-tion  
'Cause I try and I try and I try and I try  
I can't get no, I can't get no*

*When I'm drivin' in my car  
And a man comes on the radio  
And he's tellin' me more and more  
About some useless information  
Supposed to fire my imagination*

*I can't get no — oh no no no  
Hey hey hey, that's what I say*

*I can't get no sat-is-fac-tion  
I can't get no sat-is-fac-tion  
'Cause I try and I try and I try and I try  
I can't get no, I can't get no*

*When I'm watchin' my TV  
And a man comes on to tell me  
How white my shirts can be  
But he can't be a man 'cause he doesn't smoke  
The same cigarettes as me  
I can't get no — oh no no no*

*Hey hey hey, that's what I say*

*I can't get no sat-is-fac-tion  
I can't get no girl reaction  
Cause I try and I try and I try and I try  
I can't get no, I can't get no*

*When I'm ridin' round the world  
And I'm doin' this and I'm signing that  
And I'm tryin' to make some girl  
Who tells me baby better come back maybe next week  
Cause you see I'm on losing streak  
I can't get no — oh no no no  
Uh hey hey hey, that's what I say*

*I can't get no, I can't get no  
I can't get no sat-is-fac-tion  
No sat-is-fac-tion  
No sat-is-fac-tion  
No sat-is-FAC-tion!*

*(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction* was arguably the song that put the Rolling Stones on the map in 1965. It might also be considered the theme song of both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

I've written already (in my September commentary, *Transparency*) about the connection between Venus and Saturn in both Trump's and Clinton's natal charts. Donald has Saturn conjunct Venus in Cancer/11th, while Hillary has Saturn square Venus from Leo/9th to Scorpio/12th. Time to write more.

In astrology, Venus is the planet that symbolizes the feminine, the receptive, and the socially responsive. It's the symbol for beauty, the arts, pleasure, and personal love (as opposed to universal love, which is Neptunian). Venus is about grace, harmony, and charm.

Saturn is the symbol in astrology for life's challenges and difficulties, as well as custom-tailored personal responsibilities. It indicates where we experience denial or encounter obstacles — limitations that must be resolved, overcome, or accepted. Saturn is the planet of ambition, perseverance, and long-term strategies for climbing our mountains. It is also the most dense and physical of all the planetary symbols. It is practical, skeptical, and not generally subtle or ethereal. With Saturn, nothing is given or free; everything must be earned through effort and sustained work. This is the symbol for real maturity through hard-won experience by understanding the passage of time and the importance of learning to delay gratification sometimes.

Saturn shows where and how we are over sensitized to success and failure. Wherever Saturn is in our birth charts, we feel inadequate, somehow destined to

fail. In part, this is because our fear of failure is so acute that we tend to seize up, unable to relax about whatever experiences Saturn is linked. This is a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. Nonetheless, we are driven to prove ourselves by succeeding. Curiously, however, both sides of that coin are often too much for us to bear. Success may convince others of our prowess or talent, but it frequently fails to banish our own demons, especially if success comes too early or without sufficient effort. The challenge is to gradually increase our capacity to bear and hold these experiences (by reducing our attachment and thus de-sensitize ourselves to both failure and success). This is the part of our life-journeys where repeated failures are inevitable and required, whether in fact or in feeling. True and meaningful success can be achieved if we learn from our mistakes and make our judgments (especially self-judgments) pragmatic and reasonable, rather than extreme and unrealistic.

The alignment of Venus and Saturn in a natal chart carries many possible meanings. One of the most obvious is some version of the old saying, "*lucky at cards, unlucky at love.*" Ambition, status, and physicality become powerful factors in the experience of love, beauty, and intimacy. The other is objectified.

When Saturn and Venus are connected in the psyche, romantic love is subordinated to the acquisition strategies of ambition — removed from the realms of mystery, serendipity, or even chemistry, and transplanted into the arena of product consumption. Finding a suitable lover or mate may be reduced to a shopping list of qualities in another that the Venus-Saturn person wishes to acquire, achieve, or possess. To varying degrees, potential partners are seen in terms of the social or even economic benefits their association will confer on the individual (i.e., the proverbial "trophy wife"). This may not be black-and-white, but it's always a factor in considerations of intimacy.

By fusing sensitivity to status with affection, the result is frequently social success but personal disappointment. Saturn cools the warmth of Venus, so that the heart may become coldly calculating, as if love were a cost-benefit analysis. The danger is gaining the world but losing one's soul. (The same applies to Mars-Saturn connections, but at the level of desire rather than affection.)

Venus-Saturn types also tend to interpret love through physicality. Beauty may be only skin-deep, but to Venus-Saturn, that's fine, since physical beauty is what counts most. It's not that Saturn denies the reality of love at other levels — mind, emotion, spirit — it just doesn't care about those less tangible experiences. Billy Crystal's "Fernando" character of 1980s Saturday Night Live fame was quintessentially Venus-Saturn: "*It is better to look good than to feel good.*"

Strong Venus-Saturn connections tend to correspond to the attitude that "*others don't understand me or know what I'm up against and have had to overcome.*" That defensiveness leads to concerns by some observers of insincerity: "*Thou dost protest too much, methinks.*" Normally graceful and flowing, Venus is often

made more stilted or rigid in social expression by Saturnian caution and anxiety.

Although no one could accuse Trump of a lack of spontaneity — his Gemini Sun-Uranus, full Sagittarian Moon, and Mercury-Neptune square all indicate an anything-goes, shoot-from-the-hip, shotgun approach to self-expression — both he and Clinton often seem to have rather large chips on their shoulders in response to criticism from others. Trump is obviously more aggressive in counter-punching, while Clinton is more slippery and circumspect, but both are tenacious in their own self-defense. Admitting that they were wrong is a hard pill for either to swallow.

With Venus conjunct Saturn in Cancer/11th, Donald Trump's "love ambition" is to have the perfect wife, perfect children, and thus the perfect family (Cancer). The 11th house is the arena of social participation and ideals, friendships, organizations, and love received. Having Venus and Saturn in the 11th (along with Mercury), Donald Trump fears that he will never be accepted as truly "belonging." He will always be an outsider, an interloper, and his Sun-Uranus embraces that iconoclasm, turning it to his advantage. He revels in his status as an outsider, but he secretly feels deep-seated fears of rejection by others. Trump's most famous line (from his Reality-TV Show *The Apprentice*) may be "You're fired!" but his personal mantra is "You can't fire me, I quit!" Every rejection he suffers is interpreted as an attack or betrayal.

Rather than a conjunction (the fusing of two symbolic functions into one), Hillary Clinton has a Venus-Saturn square, meaning that the two planets were roughly 90° apart, viewed from the earth. Not only that, but Pluto is also square Venus and distantly conjunct Saturn, intensifying the condition. This is a relationship where all three symbols are in conflict, locked into an uncomfortable back-and-forth struggle. Is she tough or tender? Fiercely judgmental or deeply compassionate? Martyr or Saint? Well, probably all of those to some degree.

Unlike Trump's chart, which is brash, crude, and over-the-top, Clinton's chart is a multi-layered labyrinth, a puzzle of Machiavellian subtlety, with many hidden layers. Assessing what she knows versus what she doesn't is difficult, since she's likely to be juggling many balls of possibility inside her head.

Hillary is nothing if not calculating. While Trump is occasionally brilliant, but equally often just dead wrong and out to lunch, Hillary is an exhaustive researcher who always does her homework. She is dogged in her work ethic and pursuit of solutions. Unlike Trump, whose loyalties can flip in an instant from friend to enemy, Hillary is liable to being fooled by misplaced trust. She is internally consistent in her loyalties, but not always to her benefit.

Hillary's Venus-Saturn-Pluto square is from the 9th house to the 12th; issues arise regarding legality, morality, or ethics, juxtaposed against secrecy, control, and manipulation. This is where the spirit of the law may diverge from the letter

of the law. In a sense, Hillary's life is a courtroom drama where she embodies all the various roles: victim and accused, prosecutor and defense, judge and jury.

The various 9th-12th squares in Hillary's chart lead to a basic question in the public mind: Is Hillary a compassionate, selfless, and hard-working lawyer devoted to the welfare of women and children, or is she a secretly selfish manipulator of the system? Well, her chart says a modified "yes" to both. Hillary, of course, sees those paradoxical motives as one and the same, or, at the very least, leading to a single end — from her perspective, amassing power and resources allows her to give more and do more good for humanity. Others see those quite different approaches as contradictory or even damning. Some are convinced of Clinton's fundamental sincerity, but others believe that Hillary's commitment to service and the greater good are mere masks for craven self-interest.

Even the rude chants at Trump rallies of "Lock her up!" resonate strongly to Hillary's chart. Her life "in the marketplace" has always been conflicted. In many ways, Hillary would be better off in a monastery. That's not a realistic option, however.

Every person in a position of public prominence or high social exposure will be both loved and hated by segments of the public. That comes with the territory of fame and notoriety. For those with Venus-Saturn connections in their natal charts — such as Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump — this contradictory response will be significantly more pronounced and extreme.

So, why do Hillary and Donald subject themselves to such slings and arrows, especially since being lionized and loved by an adoring public can be almost as painful and tragic as being hated and vilified? They do so, in part, because they love ambition (Venus-Saturn). That's what gives them pleasure. Retiring to a quiet, private life would be profoundly difficult for either Clinton or Trump. In a very real way, their social ambitions are the measure of their deepest affections, even though their successes and failures in the court of public opinion are often hard on their hearts, not to mention the private disappointments they suffer along the way.

However crazy this presidential campaign has seemed, the election isn't likely to provide any resolution. This past year has been the setup to an ongoing process — an eruptive collision of tectonic plates — and America isn't going back to business-as-usual. We are at war with ourselves, and the conflict is intensifying.

Whichever candidate prevails in the election — whether Clinton or Trump — the winner will have a very hard time as President.

# 14. What Now?

by Bill Herbst

*Version 1.5 (posted originally on 11 November 2016)*

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As the most divisive, exhausting, and unpleasant presidential campaign of our lifetimes ground down through its final weeks, the outcome seemed to me very uncertain. Like millions of Americans, I thought Hillary would probably win, but the various counter- and crosscurrents buffeting that presumption were so strong that I kept to my original intention when I began writing about the election early in 2016 and made no public prediction concerning the outcome.

Now the election is over. A decision has been made. For the second time in 16 years, a Democrat won the popular vote, but a Republican prevailed in the Electoral College.

Tens of millions of people are excited and pleased about the outcome, and tens of millions of others are appalled and terrified.

In my perception, two emotions underpinned the campaign and the election. One was anger. The other was mistrust. Both of those emotions are characteristic of the Uranus-Pluto transit that constitutes the symbolic backbone of this decade.

Democrats won the so-called "popular vote" (which would be called simply "the vote" in almost any other country in the world), but lost the Electoral College, an arcane and anachronistic structure put into the U.S. Constitution two centuries ago by the Founding Fathers to counter their concerns about "mob rule." As a result, Donald Trump is the President-Elect of the United States of America.

While most authoritative political sources anticipated a close election, most polls predicted a win for the Democrats. The polls were wrong. Their complex algorithms and reliance on historical precedents misread the underlying mood of the American voting public. They failed to realize the depth of dissatisfaction and anger in the zeitgeist, and the upwelling of revolt against institutions (indicated symbolically within astrology by the Uranus-Pluto alignment that is the hallmark of this decade, and about which I have written at great length). Half the country voted to "throw the bums out!" — with the "bums" being those in power and the entire political institution of government.

Whatever her intentions, Hillary Clinton was seen to represent the existing order, the status quo, business- and politics-as-usual, and the privileged powers-that-be. Conversely, for all the paradoxes and often-agonizing contradictions of his background and personality, Donald Trump was seen as the agent of change, the candidate who would shake things up and “drain the swamp.” That remains to be proven, of course, but it turned out to be a more powerful rallying call among the populace than most pundits understood.

### **Uranus-Pluto Again, Big Time...**

When I began writing in 2005 (along with many other people) about what was then the coming decade of the 2010s, I felt strongly that the most critical astrological alignment of the decade would be the first-quarter square between the outer planets Uranus in Aries and Pluto in Capricorn. In my opinion, which was shared by many astrologers, this would be the most powerful symbolic event of the early 21st century, taking the impetus toward radical change begun in the 1960s and dramatically pushing those developments into concrete manifestation.

The symbolism of the transit indicated in no uncertain terms an extraordinary disruption of the status quo. In part, the Uranus-Pluto square implied that this would take shape through an inevitable clash — effectively a series of uprisings or rebellions from the grass roots upwards — aimed at the monolithic structures in society created and held by institutions and corporations. In addition, the transit implied that institutions themselves would falter badly, provoking even more outrage and opposition. These meltdowns would likely occur through overreach, corruption, malfeasance, failure to serve the public, and attitudes among the elites of oligarchic or plutocratic privilege. Both authority in general and economics in particular would be primary targets within the conflict.

The century began with 9-11 and subsequent invasions/wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. While these were precursors of the Uranus-Pluto alignment, they set the stage for what was to come. The next shots over the bow occurred in 2006, with the bursting of the real estate bubble, then again in 2008, with the sudden and catastrophic meltdown of the Big Banks due to their wild, unsound financial practices that were completely disconnected from the welfare of the population. That Humpty-Dumpty fall off the wall was addressed by All the King’s Horses and All the King’s Men by propping up those very banks and letting them continue on their merry way. No truly substantive reforms were put in place. No financial executives were prosecuted. The status quo protected itself and its own.

Having chosen to create the “global economy” in the 1980s, the elites decided to replace America’s manufacturing base with the “FIRE” economy (Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate). By the end of the first decade of this century, we’d sent the bulk of American factory jobs to other countries with cheaper labor, snidely referred to as the “Third World.” Meanwhile, education, medicine, and

insurance all became rackets dedicated to maximum profit. The powers-that-be in government, business, and social institutions grew ever more divorced from the well-being and concerns of regular people (i.e., “the masses”).

As the Uranus-Pluto alignment approached, political movements arose — such as the Tea Party from the right and Occupy from the left — and made their presence felt in social protest. Over the active technical period of the transit, more grass-roots uprisings began that cast light on domestic violence, rape, and sports injuries, then culminated in the Black Lives Matter protests. Along the way, America’s wealth disparity grew to epic proportions. Those in the top tier of the economic ladder profited hugely, while the middle and working classes stagnated or sank closer to poverty.

Through these initial years of the century, ordinary people’s faith in authority and trust in institutions steadily eroded, sporadically becoming more visible, more intense, and much angrier.

When the Uranus-Pluto alignment made its seventh and final pass in March of 2015, some astrologers moved on, suggesting that the real-life correspondences of the symbolic cycle’s active period would begin to wane. I disagreed. After extensive research to explore the correlations between astrology and American history, I believed firmly that the Uranus-Pluto transit would set a tone for the 2010s that would resonate not just during 2012-2015, when the transit was technically precise, but continuing past that and even growing in significance throughout the decade and beyond, well into the 2020s.

The national election we just held to pick our next Chief Executive and a percentage of our Congressional representatives has been arguably the most profound manifestation of the Uranus-Pluto symbolism we’ve seen so far. The repudiation of the existing political order amounts to a grass-roots rebellion. Yes, the Uranus-Pluto transit technically ended a year and a half ago, but the power of the symbolism to manifest dramatically is greater than ever and still growing. When the Democrats chose the slogan, “Stronger Together,” I felt that they were in trouble, since the tenor of the times is definitely not unity or togetherness.

I’ve written about how the various Uranus-Pluto correspondences cannot be understood in simplistic terms of good or bad. Revolutions are not invariably positive and all institutions do not deserve to be overthrown. Societies exist with an ongoing tension between stable, dependable structures and provocative change in the ways we organize and run our affairs. Both revolutions and the status quo can be either progressive or regressive.

## **The Coming Trump Presidency**

The only certainty in this upheaval is that things are going to change. While it seems likely that the country will move from a partially progressive to a largely reactionary social stance, at least in government and public policy, no one can be sure what a Trump Presidency will mean. The Republicans may encounter almost as much trouble with Mr. Trump as the Democrats do. Trump is not an ideologue. He is a showman, a TV star. He wants to be a Big, Can-Do, Do-Everything President, along the lines of Theodore Roosevelt. Trump doesn't concern himself with how something gets done, and he will push, shove, seduce, and cajole to get what he wants.

But there's a fly in the ointment. Trump's chart runs smack into major difficulties starting in late December as Saturn reaches his Sagittarian full Moon and arrives in January opposite his Gemini Sun-Uranus. This means that he will have reached the halfway point in his life-purpose cycle at the same that he begins a new emotional needs cycle, events that are astrologically rare and hugely significant.

Trump's first cycle of life-purpose definition and expression was from age 27-56. In that cycle, he followed in his father's footsteps to pursue wealth and fame in New York real estate and wealthy society. His second life-purpose cycle, which began 13 years ago at the age of 57, revealed to him a new focus, that of becoming a global celebrity. That cycle is now reaching the halfway or harvest point. He has reached the summit. Now, he must start to live in and use what he built.

2017 is also the beginning of Trump's second Saturn-Moon cycle. He must redefine how he needs to present himself to feel comfortable and secure day-to-day over the decades ahead. In Trump's particular chart, this is about his on-stage persona — the character he's portraying himself to be. Where he once identified himself as an elite billionaire who reveled in his status as an outsider and an often crude loose cannon, now he must become a man of the people, at least in his self-created pose, and take on the awesome responsibilities of the highest office in the land.

In anyone's chart, these transits are significant and meaningful, setting a tone for the coming 15 years of the life-journey. In pragmatic terms, however, they are difficult transitions. Since Trump was born at the full Moon, both cycles change phase together, and their simultaneous activation corresponds to dramatically increased pressure, responsibilities, and — typically — blockage or opposition.

It's as if one has been driving down the road and comes to a railroad crossing where the gates are down, the lights flashing, and a long freight train is clackety-clacking its slow passage through the crossing. The only choice is to stop and wait — in this case, for an entire year.

In short, Trump is in for serious frustration in 2017. The American President is often called the most powerful person on the planet, but that power is not unlimited. Trump is about to run head-on into the hard lesson that our government has built-in checks and balances. We shall see how well he handles that. This is not to suggest that he will not wreak havoc. He may. But, whatever he does, he won't be a happy camper.

So, where are we now? I have two different perspectives: short-term and long-term.

### **In the Short Run**

In the short-term of pragmatic reality, we're facing a situation where the country is divided into extremely polarized camps in a way not seen since the 1960s era of Vietnam War protests. It's not just the people against the government, it's the people against the people. The new federal regime will probably attempt to roll back much of the hard-won social progress we've made. This must be resisted at the ground level of citizen protest. We're in for a bad time, my friends, and not just for those who think that Donald Trump is a disaster for America. Even Trump's most fervent supporters and many others who voted for him will discover before too long that what was promised can not be delivered.

So far as President-Elect, for every step Donald Trump has taken toward sensible responsibility, he's taken two steps toward the abyss. Examples include naming Steve Bannon (the bat-shit crazy head of the alt-right web site, Breitbart.com) as his Chief Advisor, and considering the appointment of John Bolton (the poster boy of the Bomb-Them-All-Back-to-the-Stone-Age cabal of NeoCons who were fervent cheerleaders for the invasion of Iraq in 2004) to the critical Cabinet Post of Secretary of State. So much for even the pretense of sanity.

Populist, nationalistic, nativist, anti-globalization movements are mounting around the world: Brexit in Britain, Marine Le Pen's National Front in France, and Trump's election in America. These movements are typically conservative culturally, far right politically and economically, often racist and xenophobic, and growing in power. They've suddenly gained a boost in legitimacy because of the American election and pose a serious challenge to the civilization that was rebuilt out of the ashes of World War II.

The creation over the past 50 years of a global economy built on free trade and consumption has changed the way human beings live and the very calculus of civilization, enriching those at the top while impoverishing many others below. The rising populist movements embrace much more, however, than mere dissatisfaction over wealth disparity and how the economic pie is sliced, although that's certainly a powerful motivating factor. They are fantasies about returning to a time that perhaps never was, but is certainly gone forever.

Are we headed for a civil war? I'd suggest that we've just been notified that it's on. I doubt that it will look like the war we fought from 1860-1865, but it's a civil war nonetheless. And it's quite likely to be one hell of a struggle.

### **In the Long Run**

OK, so the short-term isn't looking great. What about the long-term? In the long run, I'm not sure that either of the two outcomes from the election would make much of a difference. Neither Hillary Clinton nor Donald Trump can save us from ourselves.

The 21st century contains a profound challenge, that of civilizational collapse. The question isn't how to prevent it, but rather, how to recover from it after it happens.

We are a monumentally immature, adolescent species. Hundreds of millions of human beings are loving, mature, and even evolving toward wisdom, but, taken as a whole, we are collectively like petulant children, fascinated with toys and driven by compulsions. Yes, we are smart, but collectively our intelligence is more clever and cunning than truly thoughtful.

What humanity has created over the past 300 years has brought us to the brink of disaster. We are no worse than human beings were millennia ago, but in those ancient epochs and even up until recently, there simply weren't enough of us to really mess things up. Our powers were limited, and our foolishness played out on a scale that could be absorbed by the earth. We played our games, but life went on.

Now, however, two factors have changed.

First, our big brains and cleverness have unlocked and unleashed awesome power. We now wield sufficient power to destroy not only ourselves, but Life as We Know It. I'm not talking about nuclear weapons, although those are certainly a real and present danger of staggering proportions. No, I'm talking about the day-to-day power used to conduct business-as-usual and the cumulative effects of those machinations on human beings and the planet.

Mother Nature, in her infinite wisdom, saw fit to take the many toxic elements on this planet and distribute them throughout the earth's crust, effectively making them harmless to Life. Human beings have dug them up, concentrated them, and refined them to a level of toxicity that is breathtaking (literally). What we have now is bad food, bad air, and bad water. The poison is now in our very bones.

Second, there are now so many of us. We are voraciously gobbling up all the resources and habitat on the surface of the planet, either stealing it or fouling it. We are living now in the midst of the greatest mass extinction of species since

the Great Permian Extinction 250 million years ago. One quarter of the living species on the earth has vanished over the past three centuries. Friends, there's something seriously out of whack about a world with seven billion human beings and 400 Bengal Tigers. And we — human beings — made that happen.

Unless we become better citizens of this planet and wiser stewards of the environment, Mother Nature will destroy us, regardless of who occupies the White House. Life on Earth is based on the principle of ecological balance. If a particular species is too successful (as we have been), the imbalance produces natural and inevitable forces of correction. One way or another, that top-heavy species goes down. Well, right now, that's us.

Our species is brilliant in many ways. We're terrific at manipulating physical reality. We have more than enough testosterone to accomplish damn near anything. We are wonderful builders and industrious as hell. Our creativity can be stunning. We are capable of great heroism and sacrifice, as well as profound love.

What we're not good at, however, is addressing the fundamental problems of human nature. We're not good at getting along with each other. We haven't understood or altered our own proclivities toward violence and revenge, and we can't handle our own power. Families and intimate relationships are as often nightmarish and abusive as they are loving and respectful. The astounding capabilities of our brain's neo-cortex have not mollified the compulsive and aggressive drives of our brain stem.

There's an old joke: A man is walking down a street at night and sees a drunk on his hands and knees under a street lamp looking for something. "*What are you looking for?*" the man asks. The drunk slurs back, "*I dropped my car keys.*" So, the man begins to help the drunk look for his keys. After a couple of minutes searching to no avail, the man asks, "*Where did you drop your keys?*" The drunk points to a dark alley and says, "*Over there, in the alley.*" Astonished, the man asks, "*Then why are we looking here?*" The drunk looks at the man like he's crazy, then replies, "*Because this is where the light is.*"

Rim shot.

Human beings, and the modern civilization we've created, are like the drunk in the joke. We do what we're good at because we can. Meanwhile, we avoid what we're not good at. We distract ourselves from many necessary and critical realities, in part because they are often just too hard for us.

I realize that survival is a bottom line. You can't eat wisdom. If you live in a country such as America, where wealth is conspicuously and ostentatiously displayed everywhere, and yet you have barely enough money to pay your bills or take your kid to the doctor, you damn well might feel anger or resentment at

what's happened in this country over the past 40 years. Eventually, you'll stop trusting those in power, who seem to have everything and ignore you.

Interestingly, those are the same people who voted for Ronald Reagan in 1984, Bill Clinton in 1992, George Bush in 2004, and Barack Obama in 2008. They just came out in droves and elected Donald Trump in 2016.

However Trump adjusts, adapts, and changes as he gets over the shock of becoming President (which I believe he didn't truly want or expect), his election and subsequent term in office will almost certainly accelerate our confrontation with civilizational collapse. In the long run, that may turn out to be a good thing, however perverse it seems.

With few exceptions, human beings don't change by choice; we change only when we are forced to change. The years ahead, starting in the early 2020s, will force us to change or else.

# 15. Banding Together

by Bill Herbst

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This commentary may be premature, perhaps by years. Still, the subject is on my mind, and it's unquestionably relevant to the times that await us in America and the world.

Among the hallmarks of astrological cycle theory is the presumption that cycles begin with the germination of seeds. These seeds may represent new ideas and developments that have never been seen before, or they may be renewed formulations of previous manifestations updated in an evolutionary way. The old spiritual sayings that *"there's nothing new under the sun,"* and *"the more things change, the more they stay the same"* imply that renewal is more likely, probably through mutation or permutation, than brand spanking new.

Seeds planted in the spring may germinate dramatically, even explosively, as they send up shoots to reach the sun's rays and use that energy to put down deep roots. Other times the new growth is subtle, almost unobserved, as the young plants germinate more sporadically, over time, then struggle to claim a niche for space and nutrients within the existing landscape.

When, over the first years of this century, I began studying and then writing about the Uranus-Pluto transit that would become the dominant symbolic theme in the astrology of the 2010s, I realized early on that the first-quarter transition of the cycle was critical to understanding the meaning of what was then a coming decade and is now in its waning years. I'll return to that point and explain what I realized later in the commentary.

The beginning of any astrological cycle is analogous to spring planting — clearing the ground, fertilizing, laying out the garden, and getting the seeds in. The beginning of the cycle sets a tone and defines the essence of what will unfold over the entire cycle. The first-quarter phase change, then, is analogous to the transition from spring to summer, from planting to tending. The garden has been laid out and prepared, the seeds have germinated, and we shift into the phase of protecting the growing plants — watering, weeding, etc. — to maximize the chances of fulfillment at the halfway point of the cycle (autumn) in fruit or flower.

Astrologically, the spring phase is “hurry up and wait.” Ask any woman about the experience of giving birth, and she will confirm the urgency and intensity of the process. That’s probably an understatement. Technically, the actual beginning of an astrological cycle is akin to becoming pregnant. Gestation and birth follow, but usually later on during the New or Spring phase.

The current Uranus-Pluto cycle began in 1965-1966, and the transit covered an effective period from the early-1960s through the early-1970s. One might make a case that the final act of the Uranus-Pluto conjunction was Watergate and the subsequent resignation of President Nixon.

I’ve written about many of the revolutionary or counter-cultural manifestations of that era in previous essays, articles, and commentaries — organic farming, holistic medicine, computer technology, etc. — and I won’t reiterate all that here. Instead, I want to focus on one particular social development from the 1960s and early 1970s, that of communal living.

At the Life Magazine level, “communes” were primarily a Hippie phenomenon. Young people, often middle-class and college-age, created a “Back to the Land” movement with a strong bent toward simplicity and spirituality. Given the myths and memes of the times, one might think that many of America’s youth formed or joined communes. Not so. The vast majority of young Americans never came closer to a commune than seeing one portrayed in a Hollywood movie (“Easy Rider” comes to mind as a typical example). Millions of young Americans fell in love, got married, had babies, acquired jobs, and moved to the suburbs to live in the traditional social structure of family units. The communal phenomenon was limited to specific and limited subsections of the counter-culture. In short, it was a fringe manifestation.

With a small number of significant exceptions (one example would be The Farm in Summertown, Tennessee), most of these idealistic communal ventures failed or vanished by the beginning of the 1980s.

At this point, let me insert something that may seem from left field, but isn’t. Another old spiritual saying is “*When one door closes, another door opens.*” During the Mesozoic period, dinosaurs roamed the earth and dominated the ecosphere. For 175 million years, dinosaurs were the top dogs. There were, however, many other species. Small mammals occupied a minor niche, scurrying about on forest floors and savannah grasslands. When a giant asteroid slammed into the Yucatan peninsula 65 million years ago, the reign of the dinosaurs came to an abrupt end, along with many other of the “higher” life forms. That mass extinction, called the “K-T Event,” opened the door for the small mammals that survived to flourish and multiply. To make a long story short, the result of that evolutionary change is us.

OK, back to our story. For every person who looks back on the 1960s with fond memories of his or her personal experience and growth, another American looks back on that decade with loathing and horror. Millions of people absolutely hated the radical social experiments, protests, and upheavals of the 1960s, and a powerful backlash from traditional and conservative institutions followed, welling up in the 1970s and intensifying through the 1980s.

Judging from what happened in America during the final two decades of the 20th century, one might even assume that much of what began in the 1960s had been stamped out, crushed under the prodigious weight of backlash against it. High-tech, allopathic medicine clearly won out over natural, organic, and holistic medicine. Agribusiness beat the crap out of organic farming. Wholesale industrial extraction of earth resources continued far beyond our efforts at conservation. Acidification of the oceans and depletion of marine life increased, despite programs for sustainability. Getting rich by making tons of money took center-stage over living simply, and the excesses of conspicuous consumption swamped frugality. Movements toward racial equality and social or economic justice were beaten back as modern civilization continued the extreme polarization of haves versus have-nots. And, in terms most relevant to the subject of this commentary, traditional social structures, such as families and churches, reinforced their presence in America and pushed communes to the very edge of society. Apparently we were headed toward a feudal civilization with a few lords and many serfs.

The problem with that scenario is that it doesn't take into account the way cycles work. During the New Phase (the first 90° of a cycle), what is untried and developing may not seem successful at all. The nascent social structures with their new ways of being, doing, and relating may struggle for survival and even appear to be completely extinguished. But they're not dead. Like the small mammals running around the forest floor trying to avoid being stepped on by giant dinosaurs, they're waiting for an extinction event to open up an evolutionary door that will allow them to flourish and eventually flower.

When does this "extinction event" occur within an astrological cycle? At the first-quarter square, the transition from the spring phase to the summer phase. And that's what been happening in the symbolism of the Uranus-Pluto first-quarter square alignment during the 2010s.

In terms of the Uranus-Pluto alignment, the "extinction event" is the failure of traditional institutions that no longer serve the common good, as well as the accompanying loss of faith and trust in those institutions on the part of the public. The very bigness of modern civilization, with its huge scale and hyper-complexity, may be its downfall. In addition, the plutocratic elites, who own the overwhelming bulk of wealth and property and control most of the power, face a mounting rebellion from those who have less. The showdown between the haves

and have-nots may not be a fair fight, but it's likely to be a long-term struggle that will go on throughout the rest of this century.

A sizable percentage of human beings, perhaps even a majority, believe that modern civilization can continue indefinitely without our making any fundamental changes in society, commerce, and our relations with each other and the planet. Time will tell if they're correct.

On the other hand, another segment of the population sees clear and mounting evidence that civilization may be in the throes of a long-term breakdown that is likely to accelerate in the decades ahead and carries profoundly alarming implications for humanity and life on earth.

Each view has its champions and extremists. Some die-hard capitalists in the former camp lobby for free markets, total deregulation, and the privatization of all resources. At the other end of the scale are the "Doomers." No less an authority than Guy McPherson, a respected professor who has compiled an exhaustive list of climate change studies, predicts a sufficient rise in global temperatures to make the extinction of humanity inevitable by the end of the 2030s.

Those who have read my essays, articles, and commentaries over the years know where I stand.

Even those who feel that civilization will survive essentially intact, however, are likely to agree that humanity faces serious challenges and daunting times over the coming years into and through the 2020s.

The subject of this commentary is not the future of civilization. Instead, I'm concerned with the question of our individual lives in the years ahead and how we might maintain a degree of personal safety and maximize the possibility for fulfillment in lives worth having.

Only a tiny percentage of the so-called "G.I. Generation" that lived through and fought World War II is still alive, and those few who are left will be leaving soon. My own post-World War II generation of "Baby Boomers" are either entering or already well into our seniorhoods. The more recent generations that followed, right down to the "Millennials," are facing a very different situation than we encountered in our youth.

Regardless of our age or generation, how are we to survive and prosper over the uncertain years and decades ahead?

The symbolism of the Uranus-Pluto cycle, now entering its first-quarter "summer" phase, suggests strongly that the time is coming again for fuller, more mature expression of certain of the experiments begun in the 1960s and 1970s. Banding

Together is one of the phenomena from that bygone era that may be ready to re-emerge from apparent obscurity in a more robust and practical form. The spiritual rebellion and "Back to the Land" movements created in our youth that were part of the mythology of the 1960s are no longer relevant as fringe manifestations of an emerging counter-culture. Instead, finding moderately like-minded people with whom to cohabit and organize our social activities is likely to become a mainstream option in the years ahead to address human problems for which we'll need to find workable solutions.

Those of my peers who are well off financially or still part of multi-generational family units will continue to live as they have. To some extent, their wealth protects them from the ravages of difficult life-circumstances, and their families, composed mainly of adult children and grandchildren, provide them with a built-in social group for companionship and mutual support. As elders, they may often find themselves in the position of providing sustenance and shelter for their less privileged offspring.

Tens of millions of other Americans, however, occupy a very different niche. I count myself among this group. We are unmarried, divorced, or widowed, have no children or cohesive families, and find ourselves alone here in Act III of our lives as we enter or move through our seniorhoods. We may still work to make a living, or we might be retired, but we get by on distinctly limited resources, since we are not among the wealthy in the upper strata of society. What will happen to us as our culture undergoes the nearly inevitable contractions that lie ahead? What can we do to maintain our lives, make a meaningful contribution to collective well-being, and promote personal fulfillment over our waning time on earth, whether that time is measured in years or decades?

One significant option is to Band Together, whenever and wherever we can, and with whomever we find. In the best of circumstances, the "where" will be in moderately comfortable surroundings of social co-habitation, and the "with whom" will be with people we like or love. In these close-to-ideal settings, our lives may actually be better than they may have been earlier, when we were more independent and singular. The necessary sacrifices of cooperation, compromise, and perhaps living more simply will be well worth the effort. Friendship and mutual respect will be more important than romance and profound attraction. Getting along in practical terms will be of greater value than achieving mystical union.

Throughout my adulthood, I've met and interacted with thousands of individuals in America who felt a strong desire for deeper sharing and more loving social cohesion. Many of the ideas expressed in conversation took the form of creating intentional communities based on political, social, or spiritual ideals. People spoke of wanting to buy land or property where like-minded individuals could come together to live in harmony and work productively. Very few — if any — of these hopes came to pass, remaining instead unfulfilled dreams. They were all

swimming against the current of the times. In the 1980s and 1990s, the economic juggernaut of America's consumer culture tended to produce alienation. "Togetherness" may have remained a mythic ideal, but America was headed in another direction, promoted by advertising, where happiness was to be found in acquiring and having possessions rather than in human sharing.

The 2020s may change that condition of alienation, not because we undergo some sort of magical transformation into the spiritual recognition of our ultimate Oneness, but because we find ourselves in more difficult circumstances, where separateness works against us. In that kind of environment — where economics, politics, and degradation of the natural world make getting by more challenging — we could find ourselves in situations where forging cooperative alliances becomes critical for survival.

Banding Together in the years ahead will not look anything like the Back to the Land communes of the 1960s. It will occur in both cities and suburbs, because that's where available housing already exists and can be adapted or retrofitted most easily for small group living. Zoning restrictions will need to change, but this is not an insurmountable obstacle. Laws can be rewritten, and many existing laws will become irrelevant. Frequently, co-habitation will be *ad hoc* or informal and not subject to legal restraints. When people need to Band Together to live, they will find a way to do so.

Active participants in the new styles of Banding Together will tend to be adults, often those in seniorhood, although 20- and 30-somethings may also participate within their own demographic sub-cohorts. These small groups that come together in shared living situations will often be peer-based or age-centric, but multi-generational families may also find that Banding Together provides a definite advantage in maintaining a positive quality of life.

I'm not suggesting that this social movement will be easy or simple. Getting along together in relative harmony has always been among the most difficult of human endeavors. Given human nature and the uncertainties of our collective future, biological families will probably remain the seminal unit for shared protection. The emphasis on the zodiacal sign Cancer in the July 4th, 1776 chart for America (the Sun, Mercury, Venus, and Jupiter were all in that sign) implies that Americans are strongly family-oriented, and that blood is and will probably remain thicker than water. We will need more than biological families, though.

*[Note: July 4th, 1776 — the signing of the Declaration of Independence — is not the only date used by astrologers for America's birth, and the time generally used — 5:10 p.m. local mean time in Philadelphia — has been disputed. That chart, called the "Sibly" USA chart, has proven to be relevant, sometimes even uncanny, in describing the American character and the paradoxes of our history. As a result, that date and time remain the most commonly used by astrologers for the birth chart of America.]*

In situations that are less than ideal, we may find ourselves Banding Together not by choice, but by necessity. Failing health and exhausted financial resources will require dependence on others, perhaps enabled by the state. To borrow the words of Tennessee Williams' character Blanche DuBois in "A Streetcar Named Desire," many older people who find themselves alone and at risk will have to "*rely on the kindness of strangers.*" In those situations, some of the Banding Together may be less than pleasant.

Will there be casualties? Of course. Will some people fall through the cracks or be thrown under the bus? Yes. Inevitably, certain individuals who need help because they are alone will come to unpleasant or tragic ends. That sort of suffering in life's winding down is nothing new. Throughout human history, final chapters for individuals have often been unhappy or fraught with misery from illness, loss, or despair. The fearful specter of sad or painful outcomes is one reason why society doesn't generally publicize such endings. Civilization prefers dreams of happiness, even if they are illusions.

My focus here, however, is not on suffering, but rather on the reduction and minimizing of suffering. In my past writing, I've often stated my assumption that, over the coming decades, we're likely to see expression of both the very best and very worst of human nature. To me, the best of human nature includes the loving compassion and creative ingenuity that allows individuality and fosters togetherness. Of the many duality paradoxes that comprise human experience, individuality/singularity/independence versus collectivity/belonging/togetherness is close to the heart of who we are. We need both, and the coming decades give us another opportunity to refine and improve our understanding of how to reconcile these seemingly exclusive opposites.

How we Band Together in shared living situations and working communities as we re-localize in the decades ahead may be a significant factor in whether humanity is able to outgrow the long struggle with its own disturbed adolescence and move into more responsible and loving adulthood.