

The USA Chart in 2020

Part Three (of Four)

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[In Part Two of this four-part commentary about the USA chart in 2020, I discussed America's decline and the Saturn-Pluto and Jupiter-Pluto cycles that begin in the first year of the new decade. Now, in Part Three, I'll focus on the most important of the transits to the USA chart in 2020 — the simultaneous Saturn and Pluto oppositions to the USA's natal Mercury.]

More Major Transits

Following transiting Saturn's opposition to the Sun in the USA chart during 2019, which I wrote about in my commentary of two weeks ago, both Saturn and Pluto then oppose the USA's natal Mercury throughout 2020. As important as 2019 is astrologically, the first year of the next decade becomes even more critical.

Transits to Mercury in any natal chart imply periods of mental deliberation and decision. That is stretched to the very limit with simultaneous oppositions to America's natal Mercury from both Saturn and Pluto, which elevate those deliberations and decisions to a level of profound seriousness and great difficulty.

The Saturn opposition to Mercury represents the culmination (halfway point) of the current Saturn-Mercury cycle in the USA chart that began in 2004-2005. The cycle is about practical plans of the nation and the decisions that implement them. We will come face-to-face with the inevitable consequences of policies and actions that America undertook over the past 15 years. In addition, questions about leadership and authority (Saturn in the 10th house) come to a head.

The Pluto opposition to Mercury is also a culmination, but within a much longer cycle that dates back to its beginning over the years 1932-1936 during the depths of the Great Depression. That period was the prelude to World War II, the onset of FDR's New Deal (designed to save capitalism from its own worst excesses), and the bottom from which America rebounded over the next decade to emerge as an economic juggernaut and eventual global superpower. Because of Pluto's extremely elliptical orbit, the halfway point in America's current Pluto-Mercury cycle will have been reached in less than 90 years. (The waning half of the cycle will take another 160 years before the cycle starts over in 2178-2180.)

The Mystery of Pluto

Pluto presents astrologers with a conundrum. Despite its demotion by astronomers to the reduced status of a minor planet, Pluto remains a potent symbol within astrology. All the various historical correspondences that accompany Pluto's discovery lobby for its great importance as a symbol of profound power in civilization through all implications of such power, for good and for ill. The 20th century was arguably the epoch of Pluto. The idea of realms of primal power within human and earthly existence that are invisible to us but exert tremendous influence is Plutonian. Historical correspondences include Freud's positing of the Unconscious in psychology and the parallel development of advertising and marketing as effective manipulators of people's desires and beliefs, the discoveries in science of the subatomic realm of quantum mechanics, the splitting of the atom and resulting benefits and terrors of nuclear energy, the shift in warfare during the 20th century to total war, where civilians are no longer exempt from harm — all these are considered Plutonian within astrology.

The most frequently used metaphor for Pluto's meaning and operation is that of a volcano. Seams or fissures within the earth's crust connect the molten core of our planet to its surface through volcanoes. Pressure builds, and volcanic eruptions are the eventual result. But volcanoes can remain apparently dormant for centuries. The science of volcanism is only beginning to understand why some volcanoes erupt while others don't, and when such eruptions will occur is still mysterious. Sometimes lava flows are moderate, as with Kilauea in Hawaii. These are called "effusive eruptions." Other times, violent eruptions are spectacular, as with Vesuvius in 79 A.D., Mount Tambora in 1815, and Krakatoa in 1883. The eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980 was a mere burp compared to those much larger blow-outs.

Pluto's astrological meaning is often stated as "endings and beginnings," or "death and rebirth," or "transformation to an enlarged perspective." When fully expressed, Plutonian symbolism is both destructive and creative. Whatever existed before is swept away in a massive purging, clearing the ground for new growth. The problem for astrologers in interpreting transits to or from Pluto within a particular chart is that we don't know whether the correspondences in real life will be tangible or intangible, obvious or subtle. Undergoing a spiritual transformation of consciousness may share symbolic meanings with losing everything in an unavoidable disaster, but they sure as hell don't feel the same to the ego.

Sometimes we see the "expected" correspondences — provocative external changes produced by the release of massive and irresistible power that purges the old and makes way for the new. But sometimes what happens is not so obvious. When transiting Pluto conjoined the Sun in America's chart during the mid-1920s, the financial changes astrologers studying that chart would expect were not accompanied by destruction or disaster. But the "irrational exuberance" of financial speculation during the 1920s led directly to the Crash of 1929 and

the subsequent Great Depression of the 1930s. Astrologically, the 1920s were the set up to the 1930s.

Similarly, when Pluto opposed the USA natal Sun in 2014-2015, nothing obvious happened in the financial sector. No crash, no new catastrophe. Instead, that two-year period accelerated the economic "recovery" from the financial meltdown of 2008 through low interest rates and massive increases of the money supply (quantitative easing by the Federal Reserve, essentially a bail-out for the big investment banks). Little was done, however, to reform the financial policies that had led to the 2008 unraveling. Is it possible that the same dynamic of extreme financial speculation followed by collapse that occurred in the 1920s-1930s might happen again in the 2010s-2020s? Supposedly, safeguards were implemented to prevent any such recurrence, but those regulatory precautions have been steadily dismantled over the past decades.

Pluto Opposite Mercury in the USA Chart

Mercury's general meaning in the charts of nations centers around education, communications, and transportation. How does the nation approach decision-making? What do people tend to think about most? Mercury in Cancer in the USA chart (along with Sun, Venus, and Jupiter) implies that America isn't strongly inclined toward rationality, but rather to the more emotional values of need-fulfillment and security. Also, America has been and thus far remains a culture dedicated to personal rather than mass transportation. The entire structure of our society has been built around the automobile. Trains are mostly relegated to shipping freight rather than moving people.

Added to these qualities is Mercury's placement in America's natal 8th house opposed to Pluto in the 2nd. The issue of value becomes paramount — *How much is America worth? And how do we use our value?* This means our system of finances and allocation of money. The interpretation of that natal opposition between Mercury and Pluto implies that America spends much of its thinking time focused on money and wealth, and that this drive will be primal, potent, at least partially unconscious, and quite possibly obsessive.

Mercury is always close to the Sun in astrological charts, never more than 28° away. In the USA chart, Mercury is 11° behind the Sun. So, any transit to the USA Sun is always followed by the same transit to the USA Mercury. Pluto conjoined the USA Sun in the mid-1920s, then opposed the USA Mercury in the early-1930s. Pluto opposed the USA Sun in 2014-2015, and opposes the USA Mercury in 2020.

Since Mercury is opposite Pluto natally, the major alignments of transiting Pluto to the USA's Mercury will be more powerful than if the two planets were unaspected in the birth chart. The worst depths of the Great Depression coincided with Pluto's conjunction to the USA's natal Mercury. In 1980-1982,

Pluto made its waxing square to the USA Mercury. Those years began the Reagan revolution, where neoliberal “supply-side, trickle-down” economics reaffirmed unfettered capitalism and the headlong pursuit of wealth. In both the 1920s and 1980s-1990s, the short-term results were stunning as financial booms. But both led inevitably to busts.

Is America headed to yet another financial disaster? Will the economy be taken down by a monetary implosion? I don't know, but the astrology of the USA chart provides no reassurance to the contrary.

With transiting Saturn and Pluto simultaneously opposed to the USA's natal Mercury in 2020, followed by America's Pluto Return in 2021-2023, the astrological implications are daunting, to say the least. We are coming to yet another major crossroads.

Although a financial and/or economic crisis is astrologically the most likely trigger for this watershed national crossroads, the USA chart reveals at least one other possible cause that might emerge to provoke significant changes in American leadership, social structure, and decision-making.

End Part Three

[In Part Four, the final commentary of this quartet, I'll discuss the social changes already underway in America concerning gender relations through the #Me Too and #Time's Up movements, and the potential implications in the USA chart for what might develop.]