

Hitting the Wall

by Bill Herbst

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Last week, on January 17th, Saturn arrived at a point in the zodiac — $13^{\circ} 19'$ of the sign Capricorn — exactly opposite the position of the Sun in the USA national birth chart. On January 30th, Saturn will have moved one degree of arc further in the ecliptic — to $14^{\circ} 48'$ of Capricorn — exactly perpendicular to the position of Saturn in the USA national birth chart.

Are these two alignments a big deal astrologically? You bet.

In the USA national birth chart for July 4th, 1776, the Sun and Saturn are tightly squared. That means that the two bodies are almost perpendicular — $91^{\circ} 29'$ apart in arc. That relationship implies both tremendous ambition and deep conflict at the core of the American character. With the Sun in Cancer/8th house and Saturn in Libra/10th, our ambition focuses on security, commerce, money, authority, and government, while the conflicts surround family wealth versus equality and social justice.

Natal interpretation is about the basic elements of an enduring life-script — delineating the permanent character of the native, which highlights many different experiences and challenges that will manifest throughout the life. Cycles, then, reveal the timing of those experiences, when certain facets of our character take precedence at center-stage within the life-journey. When a tight square between two important natal symbols — in this case the Sun and Saturn — is energized by a transiting planet in quarterly phase changes, two different but connected cycles are activated together — simultaneously, in an overlapping cascade, or back-to-back (one right after the other).

That's what's happening now in America's chart. January is the beginning of a ten-month period during which astrology presumes that Americans will experience two different but connected dimensions: First, many real-life events will occur that reflect the symbolism of the transit. Second, an overall tone of life in America will emerge as an almost palpable presence, felt by nearly everyone.

Back in September of last year, I wrote a pair of Commentaries about the USA chart in 2018-2019 in which the Saturn-Sun opposition figured prominently. I discussed the symbolic meaning of the transit in considerable depth. I won't

repeat that here, but below are links to each of those Commentaries for anyone interested:

<http://www.billherbst.com/Comm110.pdf>

<http://www.billherbst.com/Comm111.pdf>

In this Commentary, I want to write about how the Saturn-Sun opposition will feel — in America, to Americans.

First off, no one likes Saturn transits. They are heavy, somber, and not fun at all. We're not likely to enjoy this one.

All Saturn cycles are about the transformation of symbolism into material reality, shifting from the abstract into the concrete through the building of structures. At the beginning of any Saturn cycle, when Saturn conjoins a particular natal symbol, we are faced with a dilemma. The natal symbol, whatever it may be — Sun, Moon, Venus, Mars, etc. — carries with it specific meanings and challenges that are custom-tailored to our individual life-journey. For instance, the Saturn-Sun cycle is about the core sense of purpose and meaning in everyone's life, but how that will most naturally be expressed, and where in life, is different from one person to another, often profoundly different.

The conjunction by Saturn necessitates a long-term strategy for expressing those meanings, overcoming the challenges, and reconciling the paradoxes. At the beginning of the cycle, the ultimate outcome is uncertain in terms of winning or losing, succeeding or failing, but how we play the hand over the 29 years of the cycle will be important. As we set out on the journey toward realization in the physical, our emerging strategy is likely initially to be unconscious, although it may become clear or even obvious to us over the following decades.

As the cycle unfolds over time, each quarterly transition brings us temporarily to a full stop. Our overall strategy continues, but our tactics must change. At the first-quarter waxing square that occurs seven years into a given Saturn cycle (symbolizing the end of spring and beginning of summer), obstacles arise in our path that need to be overcome if we are to move forward. We feel blocked by circumstances and have to find a way through or around the obstacles. The challenge is to express our intentions tangibly. At the last-quarter waning square 22 years into the cycle (symbolizing beginning of winter), obstacles emerge again, often more psychological than literal. The challenge at that point is to let go of our judgments about whatever happened in the past.

The Saturn-Sun opposition at the halfway point in the life-purpose cycle represents the end of summer growth and the fulfillment of autumn through the harvest of whatever seeds were planted in the spring and tended through the summer — essentially reaping what was sown. It is a transit of realization and

culmination of the 15 previous years that sets up the next seven years to come. The harvest may be bountiful or sparse, a satisfying success or a bitter failure. Viewed from where the country seems to be right now, this harvest is likely to be particularly bitter, which does not bode well for the coming decade.

Each major quarterly transit in a Saturn cycle presents us with obstacles and challenges. What separates the other quarterly transitions (the conjunction and two squares) from the opposition is the nature of the obstacles — how and why we feel stopped and blocked. At the halfway point, the obstacles are not so much circumstantial as they are relational. The blockage is not physical nor even psychological. What stops us is our conflicted relationships with others who oppose us.

The partial shutdown of the federal government that has gone on for more than a month is the most obvious correspondence in real life of the symbolism.

The government shutdown was provoked by disagreement over President Trump's intention — a signature promise of his 2016 campaign — to build a Wall across the southern U.S. border that will keep out illegal immigrants from the South, meaning mostly refugees seeking entry into America from Mexico and Central America.

Politics in America has again reached a level of insanity that approaches Theater of the Absurd proportions. This is far from unrivalled in American history, since we've suffered through many periods of political madness over our two centuries, but it is again becoming very difficult to witness, much less bear. The Southern Border Wall began as a dog whistle for Trump to stoke the xenophobia of white supremacy by claiming that hordes of subhumans were coming from the south to take our jobs, rape our women, and break into our houses to steal our iPhones and flat-screen TVs. This racist thread has run long and deep within the American psyche, from extermination of native populations and cultures through the Yellow Peril of the 19th century to the fears of swarthy Eastern Europeans in the early 20th century. And let's not forget the Eugenics movement of the 1920s that was the precursor of The Holocaust.

There is no crisis at the border, except perhaps in our handling of refugee families seeking asylum. The Wall is ridiculous, a terrified fantasy of Fortress America.

Assailed from all sides of the political spectrum, Trump has once again dug in his heels and refuses to compromise. Congressional Democrats in the House, flush with their renewed power, are in no mood to give in, Nancy Pelosi has branded the Wall "immoral," and Mitch McConnell won't let the Senate even take a vote. As a result, we are stuck in total stalemate, with no prospects for re-opening the government or paying the salaries of the 800,000 federal workers who have been either furloughed or working without pay for the past month. Meanwhile,

all the associated parts of the economy suffer, including contractors whose livelihoods depend on government-driven commerce. As of today (Jan 22nd), no resolution is in sight.

Welcome to the opening salvo of the USA's Saturn-Sun opposition. It's the first, but it won't be the last.

The Shutdown has an urgency because so many Americans have been placed in financial jeopardy by it. Other issues that take huge chunks of airtime in the mainstream media are suspect, however. In my opinion, the obsession with securing our borders as well as the ongoing narrative about Russian meddling and "collusion" in the 2016 election don't come close to making the Top Ten List of Serious Problems Facing America, but you'd never know that by watching the news. The melodrama has become dizzying.

America is now Reality TV 24/7. The show isn't very good, but the ratings are great.