

More on What's Coming

by Bill Herbst

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On September 8th, I posted a commentary entitled, "*What's Coming*." This week's commentary is a follow-up to that post — a little more, basically.

I will not make a typical "prediction" about the results of the November 3rd national election. Not that I don't care — I do — but my opinion (which I expressed in the previous commentary and still hold) is that whether Trump or Biden "wins" (in terms of counted votes and the Electoral College) is likely to be less consequential than many people hope. Do I think that which candidate wins makes no difference? No, I'm sure it does make a difference, just not as clearly or in the ways that so many people presume.

That said, the astrology of the election has some unusual features, especially in the timing and coincidence of two specific astrological events.

Mercury and Mars have both been in retrograde loops, and each will soon resume direct motion. Mercury has been retrograde since October 13th and will remain so until its direct station at 26° of Libra on November 2nd or 3rd (depending on one's time zone). The 3rd is the exact day of the election. After being retrograde since September 9th, Mars goes direct on November 13th at 16° of Aries. So, on election day, Mercury will be effectively motionless in the heavens, while Mars will be nearly motionless. That's noteworthy.

In the kaleidoscopic pantheon of astrological alignments, this isn't the biggest deal of the century by any means, but it's meaningful and obviously significant. What makes these two events and their coincident timing more important is the context of longer, slower cycles within which they occur. I'll get to that in a bit.

First the technical background: All bodies in primary orbits around the Sun exhibit retrograde motion from our point of view here on earth. The Sun doesn't, nor does our Moon, but all other bodies — planets, asteroids, comets, etc. — periodically appear to change speed and direction through the zodiac (which is an extension of the plane of the earth's orbital path around the Sun, also called the "ecliptic"). Retrogradation is a visual anomaly caused by parallax. Planets do not "actually" slow down and back up in their orbits. Astrologers know this, but

the astrology most of us practice is an earth-centered system based on symbolic movement in addition to literal movement, so retrogradation is presumed to be meaningful. Astrology integrates poetry as well as science.

Mars exhibits retrograde motion in our perceptual heavens once every two years. It spends about two months apparently moving backward (from the earth's point of view), with set-up and resolution periods that bracket the retrograde phase, adding about a month and a half on either side. So, there are three phases: slow down, actual retrograde (backward motion), then gradual resumption of "normal" forward motion. The total retrograde "loop" takes a little more than five months from start to finish. (That same three-phase scheme applies for all retrograding bodies in the heavens.)

By contrast, Mercury retrogrades are much shorter and occur more frequently — three times per year on average, about once every four months. Mercury is retrograde for roughly three weeks, with another ten days of transitional phases on either side. That makes the entire Mercury retrograde loop about six weeks. (And yes, that means that Mercury spends about one-third of the time in retrograde loops. With Mercury, it's two steps forward, one step back, over and over.)

Since Mercury exhibits retrograde loops three times a year, there's always at least one Mercury retrograde that occurs within the Mars retrograde loop. So, the fact that these two faster-moving planets are retrograde together is not just common, but inevitable. What's significant this time is that they're both arriving at the end of their apparent backward motion on and near the day of an American election for President and Congress. That's worth noting. OK, if it's meaningful, than what does it mean? What might happen?

Those two stations occurring so close in time implies that we're at the end of a specific, two-pronged phase of "retrogradation" — which, in the simplest possible terms, implies a symbolic "backward flow" in communication (Mercury) and action (Mars), a time likely to correspond with extra confusion and consternation for humanity, along with a higher-than-normal percentage of unexpected events occurring in real life, some of which throw monkey wrenches into our plans. That period closes out with the election.

That *might* indicate a kind of "throwing off our shackles," or "coming to our senses," the most likely interpretation of which would be a collective American repudiation of Trump and a landslide for Biden, along with flipping of the U.S. Senate from Republican to Democratic control. But wait, at least three longer cycles factor into the mix of symbolic archetypes, specifically, those of Saturn

to each of the major outer planets: Saturn-Pluto, Saturn-Uranus, and Saturn-Neptune. Two of those cycles are in active phase-change transits now, and the third, although not currently changing phase, is also relevant.

What are the odds that the election will go as planned, or that it might reunite Americans? Saturn-Pluto says essentially zero. The Saturn-Pluto cycle is the harshest and most extreme of all long-term civilizational transit cycles in astrology. The conjunction between Saturn and Pluto that kicks off this new cycle has been at critical mass for almost two years and accounts for at least some of the extreme polarization between different groups of Americans. Saturn-Pluto symbolizes a welling-up of raw power, a “take-no-prisoners” and “my-way-or-the-highway” approach to social process. Cooperation, compromise, and ethical principles be damned. The transit remains active through January 2021. Get it? *January*, the month when the new administration is sworn in. Concerns about a contested election or a peaceful transfer of power are, if not confirmed by that symbolism, at least supported by it.

OK, what about the Saturn-Uranus cycle, also currently active (in last-quarter square)?

Saturn is the symbol in astrology for authority — father of the family, chief of the tribe, leader of the group. Saturn is also about creation, maintenance, and acceptance of hierarchical structures of power in society, the top-down pecking order. Saturn is conservative, cautious, and slow. It likes stability and minimal change, only incrementally if at all. By contrast, Uranus is iconoclastic, acknowledging no authority other than its own certainty (based usually on an idea derived by a combination of intellect and intuition rather than concrete evidence). Uranus likes stability until it doesn't, then it provokes change that's revolutionary and sudden. And it never accepts hierarchies or the status quo.

The Saturn-Uranus cycle is 44 years long and charts the evolutionary interplay between these two largely contradictory impulses. It poses the question, *“How should we as a society go about making changes — incrementally or all at once? Slow or fast? Cautiously or passionately? Should we respect and keep the status quo structures or disdain and overturn them?”*

Donald Trump is Uranian in the extreme. Joe Biden is Saturnian to a T.

The current Saturn-Uranus cycle began in 1988, when Saturn and Uranus were both aligned in late Sagittarius. That implied a half-century period of new and revolutionary ideals. Before the cycle even began, America had moved to the right with the renewed religious fundamentalism and cultural conservatism of the 1970s, followed by the economic neoliberalism of the Reagan years during the 1980s. What happened at the end of the 1980s? The disintegration of the Soviet

Union. What had begun as backlash became mainstream. America celebrated its "victory" in the Cold War by throwing a drunken party to celebrate capitalism (i.e., "freedom," meaning unlimited pursuit of wealth). The Clinton years saw the end of welfare, creation of the institutionalized prison system, and removal of guard rails preventing Wall Street from excessive greed. The rise of the billionaire class had begun. This was a revolution (Uranus) to reward the Haves (Saturn) while shutting out the Have Nots (minorities, working class, and poor).

The first-quarter transition (summer phase) brought us George W. Bush's Supreme-Court-abetted win in the 2000 Presidential election. At that point, the fix was in, but more was to come. 9/11 gave us the endless wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Meanwhile, the Tea Party began moving the Republicans even further to the hard right. The culmination of the Saturn-Uranus cycle saw the bursting of toxic mortgage bubble in housing and the Big Bank derivatives meltdown of 2008. (The full-phase or halfway-point transition represents the "harvest" of whatever was planted and grew to fruition during the first half of the cycle. In this case, what we planted was greed, financial chicanery and letting Wall Street wolves guard the Main Street henhouse. What we got at the harvest was a disaster.) The Obama economic "recovery" that followed sent no bankers to jail and benefitted the wealthiest top 20%, but ignored the majority of Americans, leaving them behind and in the lurch. That led to Donald Trump.

Now, however, Saturn and Uranus have reached the three-quarter mark in their cycle during 2020-2021. Here at the winter transition of the cycle — which represents a time of "letting go" of the previous seasons of manifestation — we've come to yet another crossroads. We're headed into a decade of change in the breakdown of what has been the existing status quo.

Trump's act has become not just exhausting, but boring. The pandemic has broken the spell of enchantment. Oddly enough, Biden represents *both* stability and change, which satisfies the paradox of the Saturn-Uranus transit.

As an interpretation, an election landslide for Democrats goes with the last-quarter Saturn-Uranus square, while a Trump election victory is highly unlikely. I'm not suggesting that Trump might not somehow game the system to retain the White House, but he won't do so by getting more votes. If Trump wants to retain the Presidency, he'll have to steal it. He's setting up the Supreme Court to do just that.

Finally, there's the Saturn-Neptune cycle, which is about the interpenetration of evidence-based assessments of reality (whether pragmatic or cynical) with dreams and fantasies (from the ideal to the crazy). Saturn-Neptune reveals much about how we deal with unreality. All too often, humans can't tell the difference between reality and illusion. That's always been true, especially here in America,

but never more so than now. Americans aren't merely addicted to fantasy, we're marinated in it. Everywhere we turn, lies masquerade as truth, and even relatively sane Americans are easily fooled.

Back in 2017, as the last-quarter square of Saturn-Neptune came to a close, I hoped that we would straighten up and choose reality over illusion. My hopes proved unfounded, and we continued down the path of deception. Looks like we've paid the price.

The next astrological crossroads that might fundamentally change this sorry state of affairs doesn't occur until 2025-2026, when a new 36-year Saturn-Neptune cycle begins at 1° Aries. Astrologically, that is as potent a restart as possible. Ancient realities and new dreams. Until then, we're lost in delusion, awash in a sea of falsehoods, from outright lies to perverse but seductive half-truths.

From my perspective, no matter what happens in and after the election, we're still in deep trouble. The entire institutional structure of American society is corrupted, bankrupt, and coming apart at the seams. Economics, politics, and the social order cannot sustain themselves, and their collapse from a host of factors is already underway.

As I concluded in the September 8th post, America will almost certainly be a very different nation by the end of this decade. How we respond is yet to be determined.