

The Neptune-Pluto Cycle: *Background Resonance*

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Version 1.2 (posted on 20 June 2023)
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Preface: I've decided to take a break from the current series of weekly blog commentaries. I'm not all that pleased with the initial two installments as set-up for the main event. I wrote at the beginning of Part One that I wasn't sure I had the maturity as a person nor the skill as a writer to successfully address the two questions that have dogged my heels for 50 years. Those two questions are:

1. *How can astrology possibly work to reveal information about individual human lives?*
2. *If it does work (and I am firmly convinced that it does), then what does that imply for the world-views of modern civilization?*

I still feel committed to grappling with both of those questions, but I don't feel capable of doing so very well right now. So, I'm taking at least one week off (and perhaps longer if necessary) to let this simmer on the back burner of my inner sanctum, at the junction where personal sentience meets the vast reservoir of the unconscious.

In the meantime, this week's commentary is a partial reprint of an article I wrote for *The Mountain Astrologer* way back in 2007, called "*Empire or Community.*" The bulk of that article concerned the extraordinary 13-year Uranus-Pluto first quarter square alignment that began in 2007 and continued in a rare seven-pass transit until early 2020. As it turned out, the Covid Pandemic was the next event that set a very different tone for the 2020s. But that's another story.

The 2007 article detailed my hopes for what might transpire during the Uranus-Pluto transit. Now that the extraordinary astrological event of that transit is behind us and fading in the rear-view mirror, it's clear as a bell that America did not choose anything remotely close to what I'd hoped. In many ways, I think the Uranus-Pluto transit was our last great opportunity to rescue America and ourselves from our own worst impulses. Sadly, the Monsters and their Minions had no interest in doing that. At this point, collapse seems to be baked in as America's only possible future, so our hope must shift from the restoration of sanity that might have prevented collapse to the unknowable and uncertain possibilities of rising from its ashes for America, civilization, and humanity.

The section in that 2007 article on the implications of the Neptune-Pluto cycle for civilization seem worthy to me of renewed consideration, so I'm reprinting an edited version of that section here.

The Neptune-Pluto Cycle

For humanity and modern civilization, the most encompassing of the ten major outer-planet cycles is Neptune-Pluto. With a duration of almost 500 years from one conjunction to the next, this is the longest cycle between bodies in the solar system that represent primary astrological archetypes. Longer cycles exist among many of the smaller, more minor bodies on the fringes of the solar system in the Kuiper Belt or even further away in the Oort Cloud, but those have neither the breadth of scope nor the depth of meaning that characterizes Neptune-Pluto.

This cycle charts the unconscious reservoir of humanity's deepest dreams, our longing to harness power (Pluto) toward the manifestation of collective fantasies (Neptune). Who among us has not had the sleeping dream of flight, of magically rising into the air to soar, loosed from the bounds of gravity? After we achieved powered flight in the 20th century, space travel through the solar system and beyond took over that niche in human imagination. Our dreams have always been the repository for visions of shining cities, great personal wealth or power, perfect health or immortality, and possession of beautiful objects (including other human beings).

Since Neptune has a cycle around the ecliptic of about 165 years, while Pluto takes 245 years, their conjunctions every 500 years equate almost precisely to three Neptune and two Pluto orbits. As a result, their shared cycles align closely from one to the next in "cosmic geometry," meaning where in the ecliptic they begin. Each successive conjunction between Neptune and Pluto occurs about 5° further in the zodiac. In addition, their oppositions take place on the same sign axis as their conjunctions, and their quarterly phase changes occur in signs of the same modality (cardinal, fixed, or mutable).

This means that six full cycles are required to advance the Neptune-Pluto cycle forward by one sign or axis and into a different zodiacal mode. Since the beginnings of what we think of as modern civilization roughly 12,000 years ago, the progression of the Neptune-Pluto cycle through the zodiac has followed a predictable and regular time frame of "chapters," each of which is 2900 years or about three millennia long:

Aquarius (<i>fixed</i>):	10200 B.C.E. – 7300 B.C.E.
Pisces (<i>mutable</i>):	7300 B.C.E. – 4400 B.C.E.
Aries (<i>cardinal</i>):	4400 B.C.E. – 1500 B.C.E.
Taurus (<i>fixed</i>):	1500 B.C.E. – 1400 C.E.
Gemini (<i>mutable</i>):	1400 C.E. – 4300 C.E.

What is called the "Standard Model" in academic history presumes that socialization among our ancestors was originally based on small, often nomadic kinship bands of 75-100 people that were matrilineal in organization, loosely egalitarian, and maintained in relatively small communities. That was the social structure of humanity for most of the past 200,000 years. Then, somewhere

between 10,000–20,000 years ago, civilization took root in permanent settlements made up of larger populations. The presumption among academics (archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians) has been that the change was linked to various developmental factors — climate change, domestication of animals for labor, supplanting of horticulture (gardening) with agriculture (farming), particularly in the cultivation of grains, which could be stored as excess stocks of food. That led to private property and the subsequent beginnings of trade and finance.

More and more, however, the Standard Model is being questioned, despite the resistance of academic institutions. Civilization may have begun much earlier and more gradually than previously thought. It's possible also that our evolution as a social species isn't linear. Civilization itself might not be linear, but instead a cyclic phenomenon that has occurred numerous times rather than just once.

Of course, so-called "occult" history has long challenged the Standard Model, claiming that vanished civilizations, such as Atlantis and Lemuria, far predated what is taught today as civilization's earliest origins. Modern science asserts confidently that such myths have been thoroughly debunked as false, but the idea persists that powerful cultures with significant technological power and prowess (some of which might have been superior to what we know today) may have existed much earlier than currently believed, even if this is not taught in schools.

But back to the Standard Model. During the Aries phase (the Bronze Age, which began about 5,000 years ago and lasted for approximately two millennia or 2,000 years), communities supposedly grew into towns and cities. Patriarchal hierarchies are presumed to have emerged here, as did territorial conquest and the subjugation or enslavement of formerly autonomous groups.

Banking developed in Mesopotamian temples as a way of centralizing the exchange of goods. During the Taurus phase (the Iron Age) of Neptune-Pluto dreams, control of land was unified, first into city-states, then into kingdoms and theocracies. Money itself was apparently invented in China, initially by the use of cowrie mollusk shells as symbols of value, then later through precious metals minted into coins.

Starting in the 14th century — with the onset of the Renaissance in Europe, the Ming Dynasty in China, consolidation of the Russias under Ivan the Great, and the Samurai ruling class in Japan — the Neptune-Pluto cycle entered the current Gemini phase, where it will remain for another two millennia from today. Since the current phase began, we've had two conjunctions of Neptune and Pluto in Gemini, with one opposition already on the Gemini/Sagittarius axis (and another to come in the 22nd century), and with three intermediate quarterly transitions in either Sagittarius/Pisces or Gemini/Pisces.

The significance of these positions is revealing. The entire Gemini phase of Neptune-Pluto corresponds to curiosity and a deep wish for fresh if sometimes superficial stimulus. Often, that translates to human wanderlust — our dreams of mobility, travel, and exploration. Humans have always been mobile, but much of our wandering was provoked by climate. This is different. During the Gemini phase of Neptune-Pluto, this is a kind of universal tourism among humans. Although some of us remain rooted to the locality of our birth, many more of us wish to move beyond where we were born to see more of the world, even sometimes all of it.

Obviously, economics and the search for wealth play a large role in our mobility. Indeed, the European "discovery" of the New World at the end of the 15th century (Columbus landed in the Bahamas in 1492), linking the cultures of Eurasia and the Americas, occurred less than one century after the onset of the Gemini phase.

Another pursuit emphasized in the Gemini symbolism of Neptune-Pluto is intellectual curiosity in discovering how the world is put together. Science emerged at that time and has developed rapidly since the Gemini phase began. Human ingenuity and invention are all brought to the foreground of our collective yearning. We want to *know* — by analysis, categorization, disassembly, theory, and experimentation.

The presence in the cycles of the mutable signs Sagittarius and Pisces implies pursuit of truth through grand ideas and philosophies (Sagittarius), as well as the emotional components of metaphysical faith and belief (Pisces). Contrasts between science and religion are one crucible through which modern culture has been shaped. Basic conflicts between these two very different approaches to knowing will likely continue, although they may eventually find a complementary basis in mutual support.

Already, the paradoxes of quantum physics have given rise to parallels with certain ancient spiritual insights of Taoism and Buddhism, inspiring some physicists and theologians to join hands. Many physical scientists and Christian fundamentalists, however, still find themselves on opposite and mutually exclusive sides of the cosmic fence over issues such as biological evolution, the origins of humanity, and the age of the Earth. (Personally, I go with science on those questions, flat out, but that's just me...)

The mutable signs Gemini, Sagittarius, and Pisces reveal also that limitless horizons of possibility are now firmly at the center of our collective dreams of empowerment. Knowledge is the key to both wealth and power. Anything that *can* be created *will* be, both for better and for worse.

Crucially, however, the fourth mutable sign, Virgo, is absent from any influence in current and future alignments of Neptune and Pluto in this phase. The missing

element of earth in the mutable quartet means that our collective fantasies tend to be ungrounded, lacking any reference to Virgoan understanding of whole, integrated systems. The very cleverness of our big brains may prove to be our undoing.

Over recent centuries, humans have experimented, explored, theorized, extracted, and manufactured with wild abandon, but without even the slightest sense of organic wholeness. We refine, recombine, and synthesize anything and everything we can — regardless of the consequences. The current tinkering with nature that is rampant in the chemical, agricultural, and pharmaceutical industries resembles nothing so much as Dr. Frankenstein and his Creature.

Enough virulent man-made biological toxins are stored in laboratories around the world to kill all of humanity many times over, and the same applies to our rapidly degrading arsenals of nuclear warheads. Respect and reverence for the natural world have been supplanted by our obsessive eagerness to manipulate, alter, and reshape the Earth for our own purposes. In our insatiable curiosity and childish eagerness to wield power, we have fallen headlong into the trap of the sorcerer's apprentice.

Given that the current Neptune-Pluto cycle isn't even at the halfway point yet, with another 3,000 years to go, it seems unlikely that humanity will reign in our reckless pursuits by choice. Any limitations we suffer will probably be forced on us by harsh circumstance.