

The Plutonian Meltdown of the United States 2000-2023

Part Three (of Three) *USA Pluto transits 2014-2023*

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5. Feb 2014 – Nov 2015 Pluto oppose Sun **Jan 2015 – Nov 2016 Pluto square Saturn**

These two Pluto transits are without question the most central, and probably the most powerful, of the USA's entire group of ten major Pluto transits of the 21st century. The Sun and Saturn, along with the Moon, are the primary planetary symbols within any chart. They comprise the Big Three. If you know nothing about a chart but the condition of those three bodies by sign, house, and aspects, you're already a long way down the road toward an accurate and informed understanding of what the native's life is about.

So, given the profound importance of these two transits, what could possibly have happened that would rise to this dizzying level of importance? Well, how about Donald J. Trump?

This period, from early 2014 to late 2016, encompasses the latter half of Barack Obama's second term as U.S. President and includes the 2016 Presidential campaign and subsequent election of Donald Trump to the presidency.

This means that the ascension of Trump to the pinnacle of political power in the U.S. is at the heart of meaning for these transits. The Pluto-Sun transit refers to the basic purpose and direction of the country, while the Pluto-Saturn transit references the whole compendium of limitations, restrictions, responsibilities, and constraints that are built into the nation's character. All of that has been "transformed" by Pluto. Less generously, we might simply say that Trump's becoming President reveals that America's former purpose and responsibilities are now dead in the water. Whatever we were before Trump's election in 2016, we are no longer now. Whatever America was before Trump, it is no longer now.

Trump's first election in 2016 was the result of a long build-up of resentment and grievance in modern America. Ever since the 1960s, millions of Americans felt

abandoned and betrayed by both government and society. By 2016, those many millions were fed up, having suffered more than enough of politics as usual. They wanted real change. And they got it with Trump, who was unlike anything that had come before in America.

What is even more shocking than the fact that Trump was elected President in 2016 is the fact that he was elected *again* in 2024 to a second term. What that tells me is that 77 million Americans still couldn't stomach the idea of a woman in the oval office. Basically, for Trump's supporters, his many thoroughly despicable qualities didn't outweigh the fact that he was a white male.

Trump is the poster child for the worst impulses buried inside the darkest recesses of the American psyche. For ten years, relatively sane Americans have been in denial about what's happened. Now, in 2026, after Trump has gutted the government, destroyed the rule of law, surrounded himself with sycophants and toadies, suffered dementia, and attacked Iran, those Americans are finally asking if our republic is in serious danger. Not really, because it's already dead. It died a decade ago when Pluto opposed the USA Sun and squared the USA Saturn.

Is there any chance of the American experiment being positively resuscitated or resurrected in the future? Maybe, but first we have to rid ourselves of Trump. Given his descent into madness, there's no telling how much more hellish damage he might do before he leaves.

6. Jan 2020 – Dec 2021 Pluto oppose Mercury

Can you say *Sars CoV 2*? Or *COVID-19*? That's really all you need to know to understand Pluto opposite the USA natal Mercury in 2020-2021.

Astrologically, 2020 was set up to be a very big year, with the Pluto-Mercury transit in the U.S. chart and the three-planet alignment of Jupiter, Saturn, and Pluto all coalescing in late Capricorn. And life did not disappoint.

The reality turned out to be that nothing that happened in 2020 even came close to the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact was world-wide and spawned repercussions and controversies, all of which have continued to the present.

7. Jan 2022 – Dec 2023 Pluto conjunct Pluto (Pluto Return)

The cultures of some countries extend back thousands of years, but it is exceedingly rare that any modern governments do. Most nations in the world today have governments and social structures that are quite recent. America is almost alone in being paradoxically young and old — young in culture but quite mature in government. That makes us one of the only nations to be even close

to undergoing a Pluto Return. The symbolic meaning of the Pluto Return that occurred in 2022 includes not only who we were at the time of the transit, but who we have been throughout America's entire history since being founded as a nation.

I've written before about America's Pluto Return, specifically in Commentary #71 from December 2017, again in Commentary #116 from October 2018, and finally in a four-part essay, Commentaries #242-245, from March 2021. That last piece was my definitive take on America's Pluto Return.

Unlike the two earlier Plutonian transit periods in the USA chart — 2014-15 and 2020-21 — that I discussed in the essay you're reading now, America's Pluto Return that took place in 2022-2023 does not correspond to any single event in the life of the country and its citizens. The Return is less an indicator of literal events that carry potent symbolic meaning than it is a boundary between the past and the future, separating what America was throughout the first 246 years of our history from what we may become in the future.

Pluto's essential meaning in the USA Sibly chart, revealed by its sign (Capricorn) and Houses (occupying the 2nd House while ruling the 12th) has to do with how Americans understand and regard "value." At the Plutonian level of compulsive drives, Americans are passionate about the headlong pursuit of personal wealth. This means that if you want to understand the deepest drives in the American psyche, follow the money. In the U.S., even freedom cannot hold a candle to money as a guiding motivation.

Mythically, America has typically been seen by the rest of humanity as the land of milk and honey, where the streets were paved with gold, and anyone with sufficient pluck, resourcefulness, and willingness to work hard could become rich. And yet, too often this ongoing dream manifests in the most superficial and crude way imaginable.

In the famous 1941 movie "Citizen Kane," 26-year-old writer-director Orson Welles portrayed the tragic protagonist, Charles Foster Kane, who was modeled after American newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst). Kane amasses a great fortune through business success and builds a huge pleasure palace called Xanadu (the movie's stand-in for the real Hearst Castle in San Simeon, California) to house all the treasures he has purchased or plundered from around the world. The subtext and core meaning of the movie is that, for all Kane's wealth, he is spiritually empty, a tragic figure. His money cannot buy authentic love or enduring happiness.

America has resonated to the Horatio Alger story for 250 years. We have been, for more than a century, the richest nation on earth. The uppermost 10% of our population lives surrounded by conspicuous wealth. And yet, the American ideal of a better life for everyone seems to have failed. Despite having the largest

economy in the world, America is now \$39 trillion in debt. Our sense of "Us" versus "Them" is seriously unbalanced, especially in terms of the "haves" and "have-nots." Greed has overwhelmed generosity.

Even religion in America has been corrupted by money. Christianity here has succumbed to the lure of material wealth. Fundamentalist churches throughout the U.S. preach what has come to be called "the Prosperity Gospel," where financial success and material riches are seen as confirmation of divine grace and God's enthusiastic favor. This attitude is about as far from the Teachings of Jesus as could be imagined.

I'd suggest that the essence of America's Pluto Return is a reckoning that's already underway and will become more and more obvious over the coming decades. Basically, the symbolic challenge is to reject our addiction to endlessly greater material wealth in order to regain at least some the wealth of soul and spirit that we've lost over the past 150 years, starting with the Gilded Age of Robber Barons in the 1880s. Given the overall meaning of the USA chart, that development was probably inevitable in setting up our challenge to grow beyond our driven adolescence toward more graceful maturity.

Of course, I don't know if such a renewal will come to pass. My vision may be dead wrong. Another much darker path is equally possible for America's future, one where we continue down the same karmic road we've been on, doubling down on inequality and autocratic rule by the wealthiest among us, which would take America back to feudal society and despotic government.

That would mean freedom only for the most privileged and well off in America, but serfdom for the rest of us. I hope we do better than that.

— *End Part Three*