

Uranus-Pluto and the USA Chart

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Preface

Before I began to devote myself in 2002 to the serious study of the astrology of collective humanity — for which I coined the term, *civilizational astrology* — my then just-more-than-half-century of life had already prepared me for the idea that the 2010s would be a momentous decade in human history. One doesn't need to study astrology to realize this; many diverse sources of direct experience and vicarious knowledge all point in that direction: peak oil, overpopulation, environmental degradation, political and financial corruption, institutional corporate distortion, agricultural exhaustion, medical vulnerabilities, etc.

I already had sufficient awareness about these and other looming social crises to see the years from 2012 on as a significant crossroads in human affairs. Add to this the more metaphysical indicators, such as the well-known ending of the Mayan Calendar, and the argument for the 2010s being a watershed decade is compelling.

Still, my mind harbored doubts. What if I was wrong? What if all of us who held concerns for humanity's future and foresaw an imminent collective crisis were just plain wrong, either incorrect about the extent to which the status quo might break down through overshoot and resource exhaustion or mistaken as to the timing of how fast or slow such an institutional disintegration might be paced?

This is where the study of civilizational astrology proved telling. The further I delved into the outer-planet cycle activations of the first two decades of the 21st century, the more convinced I became of the vision of the 2010s as a critical juncture in our social evolution. Analysis of the so-called Cardinal Cross (the 2008-2011 T-square configuration composed of Saturn, Uranus, and Pluto, which began late in mutable signs then moved over the zero points into cardinality, and which would be joined by Jupiter in 2010), and then the seven exact passes of the Uranus-Pluto first-quarter square to follow in 2012-2015 left little doubt that we were collectively entering that minefield.

Still, even after careful analysis of the symbolic implications of those major alignments, which included deeper study of the cultural history of the Uranus-Pluto cycle over the last 150 years, with particular attention paid to the social upheavals of the two previous activations of that cycle during the 1930s and 1960s, the seemingly overwhelming evidence remained on an uncertain footing. Throughout history, accurately predicting the future has been a dicey proposal. Those who undertake that task often run smack into a vexing contradiction, namely, that the future has a way of defying all expectations, including even the most educated predictions.

One further astrological revelation, however, finally banished whatever shreds of doubt still remained for me. While I did not then (and do not now) claim to know for sure the exact nature or precise sequence of events that will propel the 2010s into the rarified club of super-critical decades, this one crucial piece of astrological information convinced me utterly that such events will indeed occur to foment the resulting period of crisis that will reflect the entire pantheon of Uranian-Plutonian responses: dramatic and sudden change; pockets of social chaos; global swaths of decay, destruction, and death; resource wars; movements of social disobedience; long-needed reforms in the institutions of commerce and finance due to economic collapse — in short, the onset of a brave new world composed of equal elements of the very best and worst in human nature, drawn from the practical wisdom of the past and the experimental solutions from a never-before-seen future.

The one piece of astrological information that proved so convincing was the Grand Cross that will be formed in 2014-2015 between Uranus and Pluto squared in the heavens and the natal Sun-Saturn square in any of the July 4, 1776 birthcharts for the USA. This is true no matter which of the various July 4th charts we wish to use — the classic Sibly chart or any others asserting different “birth” times for the country on that day. For this article, I will use the Sibly chart with its original, “uncorrected” birth time: July 4th, 1776, at 5:10 p.m. local time, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *[Note: Some astrologers have published compelling arguments that the Sibly chart is misinformed and incorrect, but the fact remains that the original Sibly data produces a chart that corresponds exceedingly well to America’s national character and history, not to mention its central contradictions and paradoxes, which I will discuss shortly.]*

For this commentary, I will assume that readers are already familiar with at least some of my essays in The Uranus-Pluto Series and know something about the symbolic meanings of the Uranus-Pluto alignment of the 2010s. If you have not read any of those essays, please do. They contain in-depth analysis, historical precedents, and predictions about the events and developments that may correspond to the Uranus-Pluto alignment.

Before we get out on the dance floor of the commentary and begin to boogie, let me acknowledge that the awareness of this particular Grand Cross first came to me from Robert Gover — who is both an economic astrologer and my friend — through his book, **Time and Money**. The central thesis of that book is that Great Depressions occur in America every time two outer planets squared from Capricorn to Aries form a Grand Cross with the USA Sun and Saturn, which are squared from Cancer to Libra. I am indebted to Robert for the benefit of his exhaustive research on this subject.

The USA Chart and the American Character

Many astrologers have provided eloquent interpretations of the salient symbolic indicators of the Sibly USA chart. Let me list some of those qualities briefly:

- *Cancer stellium (Sun-Mercury-Venus-Jupiter) spanning the 7th and 8th houses (depending on house system used).* At heart, Americans are family-oriented, deeply sentimental, and broadly emotional.
- *Mars in Gemini/7th square Neptune elevated in Virgo/9th.* On the one hand, Americans embody an exaggerated militarism, responding aggressively to every challenge from without. We are also mistrustful and even xenophobic toward anyone we see as foreign. On the other hand, Americans are very religious with mystical roots, although those are often tinged with superficiality or over-simplification. We believe in the miraculous, but often mistake illusion for magic.
- *Sagittarius rising with the ruling planet Jupiter conjunct Sun and Venus in Cancer/7th-8th.* Americans are spontaneous and sincere, a people of buoyant, almost irrepressible optimism. Collectively, we tend to believe that life will improve rather than degrade. We've been blessed to live on a continent containing a wealth of abundant national resources (Jupiter conjunct Venus). Less positively, we may succumb to arrogance (excessive belief in our own goodness) or the expectation of entitlement, as in our longstanding certainty about "American exceptionalism," which supposedly protects us from the fate of all past empires in history.
- *Aquarius Moon in the 3rd House.* Americans need to see themselves as rugged individualists and staunchly independent, even though other factors in the chart indicate strong group-dependence. This paradox shines through our ambivalence toward government, where we give up control on the one hand and expect

government to take care of us, but still cry "Don't Tread on Me" on the other, and cling to the quaint notion of Americans as self-reliant.

- Pluto in late Capricorn/2nd opposite Mercury in Cancer/8th. In any natal chart, Pluto reveals the fault lines between the raw, unconscious power of compulsion versus self-aware choices. For Americans, that volcanic fault concerns money, land and natural resources, and possession/ownership/wealth in general. The institutional vehicle for our obsession with money is the corporation, which is forbidden by law to honor any other consideration than profits. That device is a bargain with the devil, however, for now corporations control nearly everything, with nary a whit of care about people, despite the endless propaganda of public relations posturing. Pluto's passage through Capricorn (2008-2023) represents a watershed confrontation with our obsessions about wealth and money.

The Sun-Saturn Square in the USA Chart

The Sun and Saturn are arguably the most important symbolic indicators in any natal chart. The Sun in astrology represents the gravitational center, the core, the source of both power and meaning within a given life. Saturn represents responsibility and physical limitations — experienced as fears of failure or denial, but also as deep ambition to overcome obstacles to achieve eventual fulfillment. The Sun reveals our life-purpose; Saturn shows the path of slow maturation over time. In America's birth-chart, these two critical symbols were located at right angles to each other, in mid-Cancer/8th house and mid-Libra/10th house respectively. That square is of particular importance in revealing central facets and paradoxes of the American character.

The Sun-Saturn square in the USA chart implies that, as a nation, America has at its core a fundamental dilemma: Are we a nation of social justice and equal opportunity for all, regardless of background or station in life, or are we instead a nation of untrammelled ambition to amass personal wealth through success in business, with accumulated wealth that will then be kept within our biological families to be handed down from one generation to the next?

In the first perspective, no one is above the law, and anyone can grow up to be President (meaning that one can rise or fall based solely on individual merit, rather than being aided or limited by the station in life occupied by one's father or family). In this view of social organization, governmental legislation and cultural morality would both support a level playing field of opportunity by

limiting the power of the most fortunate and distributing some of that power more equitably throughout the population. This is exactly what happened in the 1930s New Deal and post-World War II policies that built a burgeoning middle class in America.

From the other perspective, every person is free to pursue the acquisition and accumulation of wealth, without any particular social responsibilities attached. Whether the wealth is acquired through personal diligence, hard work, and business success, or by inheritance through family makes no difference. Ownership of property by individuals is a sacred right, inviolable, protected by the constitution. In this view, concentrations of capital are what drives the economic engine of the society, and thus are considered necessary and correct. A person may feel motivated to return some of his wealth to society for the greater good, but that is his choice and should not be mandated by legal coercion.

Those who embrace the first perspective often feel that overwhelming disparity of wealth is an evil that harms society, while those who embrace the second perspective may feel with similar passion that forced re-distribution of wealth is also an evil that harms society.

This contradiction lies at the very heart of the American consciousness. Are we all in this together? Or is it every man for himself? Do we have a duty to share what we have with others? Or should we be free to do whatever we want and choose with whom we will share whatever we have?

Even if the choice isn't black and white, the problem still remains: How do we allocate the gray shades of responsibility to others versus freedom to be ourselves? Where do we draw the lines, and how? This is only one of the dilemmas upon which the transit alignment of the coming Grand Cross transit will very soon shine its spotlight through disruption of whatever status quo agreements America has put in place concerning wealth, personal freedom, collective responsibility, and social justice, as well as how we configure our institutions and conduct our economy.

In a more general way, the disruption of America's natal Sun-Saturn square by Uranus and Pluto will remove all remaining illusions of security and safety. Life is never truly secure — anything can happen at any time to anyone. But human beings don't like that rather harsh fact. We're hard-wired to seek security more than unexpected and dramatic change, so we do everything we can to buffer the slings and arrows that life may throw at us.

Security and freedom are paradoxically connected. Each requires the other. Without at least some of one, the other cannot exist. The idea of freedom

without any security is untenable, because security diminishes fear, and freedom cannot operate when fear is overwhelming. On the other hand, security is meaningless without freedom. Take away all freedom, and security becomes merely a prison.

Arguably, the Sun-Saturn square in the USA birthchart represents the very heart of the dilemma in which we Americans find ourselves. Are we really the light of mankind, the shining city on the hill, as we have so long declared? Or are we simply another in a seemingly endless series of blundering, violent empires that seek to dominate the rest of the world for their own ill-gotten gains but always suffer eventual downfall? How can we reconcile individual freedom with socially-engineered equality? Is America indeed a just and equitable society, or is she merely an elite club for wealthy white male landowners of European ancestry who engage in class warfare against every other segment of the American population? Is our country the paragon of virtue, generosity, and fair-dealing, or are we too often just a bunch of greedy, down-and-dirty, good-old-boy businessmen? Is America a level playing field, or is it a plutocracy marked by continuing racism with extreme economic and legal biases toward the ultra-rich, who now either own or control pretty much everything?

Apparently, the answer is "yes" to all of the contradictions listed above. At least this is so from my own perspective. Many people clearly feel different about America. They would strongly assert that by affirming both sides of our nature I am being too harsh on our country, but I would suggest in reply that they have been hypnotized by the Great Mythic Propaganda Hologram that incessantly puts out its whitewashed jingoistic message (namely, that we are both The Good Guys and The Chosen People) through the mainstream media. In refining the power of mass media, most specifically television, America elevated the one-eyed monster to an art form that is brilliant in manipulating its own populace to consume certain beliefs as well as goods. America has not needed the brutal repression of totalitarian, fascist states, because it has television, which performs the same function covertly, without needing to resort to crude coercion and overt violence.

But wait, America is not a totalitarian culture, right? Isn't America a democracy, and a capitalist one at that? Well, not really. We never were a democracy, but instead were created as a representative republic. Over two centuries, that republic has moved very far from what our founding fathers envisioned. Unfortunately, those in elected office who supposedly represent our interests are no longer primarily beholden to their human constituents (even though they want us to believe that they are). No, especially in the federal government, our representatives are now inordinately influenced by financial interests with deep pockets that fund their election and re-election campaigns (i.e., big corporations and other wealthy lobbying groups). And, with the possible exception of small

businesses, we no longer have anything that looks remotely like Adam Smith's Capitalism. What we have is managed social welfare for big corporations.

Sadly, America today is a plutocracy masquerading as a republic, where powerful interests with great concentrated wealth call the shots. In other words, government and big business are in bed together. The vast majority of elected and appointed office-holders in the federal government (which includes senators, representatives, judges, high officials in cabinet positions, and heads of departments) come into government from corporate board rooms, and go back to lofty positions in the private sector when they leave government. In other words, those who rule tend to come from an extremely rarified culture — like an elite club — and they share similar beliefs and attitudes. To suggest that the upper echelons of government embody a "group-think" mentality is a serious understatement. Whether by disposition, peer pressure, or business-as-usual gridlock, most are loyal servants of the Empire, rather than representatives of The People, and the great beehive of lower-level government workers follow their lead.

All three branches of government are effectively controlled by corporate big business, which writes the bills in Congress and then spends billions of dollars effectively lobbying for their passage into law. As far back in America as we care to go — all the way to our founding — the playing field has never been level. Wealthy property owners have always enjoyed an overwhelming bias in their favor, both legislatively and judicially. In America, money talks, which is to say, money is free speech, according to the Supreme Court. And neither you nor I have that kind of money. Only corporations have wealth in sufficient concentration, and they use it without constraint to get what they want, which is more money through a larger share of the pie.

Throughout American history, the two mutually-exclusive approaches to society — equality/social justice versus freedom to pursue wealth — have been in conflict. They ebb and flow in terms of which view is embraced by the culture. Basically, however, while America's ideals have always included social conscience and equal justice under the law, the reality has been that we favor wealth and property ownership. The advances made in social justice and equitable distribution of wealth during the mid-20th century, from the 1930s through the 1960s, represented an aberration in American history. If you don't believe me, simply study Supreme Court decisions stretching back into the 19th century.

The problem is that many of us were born or grew up during that period of the mid-20th century, so we assume the America of that time to be consistent with our country's entire history. Wrong. Starting in the 1970s, America began to revert back to its elitist roots, where money and power set the agenda and make the policies. The increasing domination of mega-corporations over the past 40

years has resulted in the most extreme inequity of wealth ever in America's history — more than at our founding, more than in the Great Depression, and more even than in the Robber Baron epoch of the latter 19th century.

Social mobility in America — the percentage of individuals who elevate their social standing, which is one of the most telling indicators of social opportunity and an egalitarian culture — is now lower than ever before in America, and among the lowest among all developed nations. We have become economically stratified into the *Haves* and the *Have-Nots*. Even worse, the *Haves* are comprised these days by only a tiny percentage of Americans, about 5%, while more than half the population has now joined the *Have-Nots*. In between is a fast-shrinking middle class.

What Could Have Happened Versus What is Likely to Happen

Please understand: I am not anti-American. I simply recognize both sides of our nature. For instance, I am pro-business, because commerce is the life-blood of communities. The exchange of goods and services in the marketplace, and the income-producing work generated by the marketplace, are the primary reasons that human beings congregate in towns and cities. We don't live in cities because we love being around our neighbors. No, we live in cities because doing so makes getting the products we need and want easier and more convenient, and because that's where the jobs and careers are.

I am, however, no lover of corporate hegemony. All social institutions, and especially corporations, start out with a mandate to serve the public. Over time, however, as they grow, age, and amass more concentrated wealth, they become self-serving. When institutions reach gargantuan scale — as they have now in America — their own survival becomes more important than whatever good they contribute to the general welfare of the commons. "What's good for General Motors is good for the USA."

Many Americans resent the intrusion of government into their lives and pocketbooks (and not just Libertarians, Tea Partiers, and the right-wing Republican looney-tunes free-market ideologue politicians who have gerrymandered their way into Congress). They dislike legal but coercive rules and regulations that curtail their freedom to do whatever the hell they want. I sympathize to some extent. Left unfettered, however, mega-corporations will eventually own everything and crush our humanity. They will promote conformity over diversity, alienation over community, and their own profit-driven agendas rather than human agendas. This is inevitable.

One way to obstruct or at least delay that unhappy end is to limit the growth (and devolution) of corporations by governmental rules and regulations. This is the method we've attempted in America, but it has been undercut at every turn, by erosion from without (by lobbying to change the laws) and neutering from within (by lack of regulatory enforcement). Regulatory agencies are too often the equivalent of the foxes guarding the hen house. As a result, reform is now impossible. We are too far gone for reforms to reverse the trend, even if they could be put in place (which can't happen anyway, given gridlock).

At this point, the only viable solution is to let the game play out. The economics of the past two centuries, hinged on the lynchpin of perpetual growth (the fantasy of ever-increasing wealth) achieved through low-cost energy (fossil fuels) is rapidly approaching its end. In fact, the whole mantra of endless economic growth — embraced by every politician and business CEO — is hitting its limits. Push for more growth (as we invariably do), and the guaranteed outcome is collapse. That's the stark lesson of ecology: Ecosystems that lose their interdependent balance through the dramatic growth of one or more species inevitably suffer collapse as a sort of built-in system reset. That collapse is usually sudden and dramatic.

Guess which species in our ecosystem has grown too fast and too huge? It's us, of course — human beings — and our economic engines. Like every species from bacteria up to primates, we are genetically driven to reproduce, multiply, and prosper, and therein lie the seeds, if not of our outright extinction, at least of our comeuppance. Friends, there's something seriously out of whack about a world with only 3,200 tigers (down 95% since 1900), but seven billion humans (up 250% since 1900). I understand that Mother Nature does not mourn as species come and go, but human beings should. The survival of other species is a telling barometer about our own health and probable longevity.

The costs of oil, natural gas, or coal are measured economically in dollars per barrel/BTUs/tons, but those energy sources also incur costs not factored into spreadsheets in terms of environmental toxicity to extract, refine, and use. Those "invisible costs" are rising dramatically. But even if we ignore the environmental damage and think only in terms of market value, \$100/barrel oil all by itself will be sufficient to kill the vaunted global economy, which is the nursery and playground of corporations. Predatory capitalism fails to see this (or perhaps sees it but doesn't care, since it believes in the myth that technology will allow us to continue as we have, without any serious reforms). As a result, mega-corporations look increasingly like dinosaurs headed for extinction through over-reach and lack of adaptability to changing economic and physical environments.

I don't relish the thought of economic collapse, since it may result in human suffering on a scale that is fearful to imagine. But I see no alternative. However

painful our collective failure could be, breakdown and collapse contain the seeds of our rebirth. We will be forced to find a mixture of old and new ways of living that might---just might---reconstitute our humanity, and allow us to discover how to live more in harmony with each other and with the world of which we are a part. I don't know how good the odds are of our achieving any meaningful improvement in collective human nature, which remains in the mass stubbornly adolescent, but that challenge — to pick up the pieces and start over — is clearly the road that stretches out ahead of us for the foreseeable future, starting now.

Enter the transiting Grand Cross

Every time a slow-moving outer planet moves through the middle of Aries at the same time that another slow-moving outer planet moves through the middle of Capricorn (specifically 13-14° of both signs), the birth-chart of America is dramatically affected by what is called a transiting Grand Cross. The two moving bodies form two points of a square box, with the other two points being the Sun and Saturn in the USA natal chart. Diagrammed on the circle of the zodiac, this alignment looks like a box with an "X" through the middle, composed of two axes at right angles to each other.

Of all the regularly recurring multi-planet astrological alignments — Grand Trines, T-Squares, Mini-Trines, Yods, etc. — the Grand Cross is the most powerful. Its potency derives from the mutual exclusivity of its two axes. If we take two strong magnets, their positive and negative poles are drawn to snap together. Try to force together the positive poles of both magnets, however, and they resist. A Grand Cross is rather like two magnets that have been forced together in that way. The energy of the magnetic fields wants to blow them apart.

Uranus is currently moving through Aries in the 4th House in the USA chart, fast approaching opposition to the USA Saturn in Libra/10th and square to the USA Sun in Cancer/8th. Meanwhile, Pluto is in Capricorn moving through the USA's 2nd house, approaching opposition to the USA Sun and square to the USA Saturn.

With Uranus moving into opposition with the USA natal Saturn, and Pluto moving into opposition with the USA natal Sun, and with both these axes aligned at right angles, something's got to give. The USA chart is 237 years old. It has been through many major multiple-planet transit alignments over those two-plus centuries. But the USA chart has never been through any multi-planet transit configuration this precise, powerful, or disruptive.

Uranus opposes the USA natal Saturn every 84 years, so that's happened twice before in the country's history (in 1847-48 and 1930-31, with severe economic

disruption occurring each time. By contrast, Pluto — the archetypal symbol for death-and-rebirth through eruptive convulsions — has *never* been opposite the USA natal Sun. This will be the first time that astrological event has occurred in American history. Not only is that transit unprecedented, but it's happening simultaneously with the Uranus opposition to the USA natal Saturn, and while Uranus and Pluto are square each other. Friends, that's off the scale. The argument can be made that this is most important crossroads ever faced by this nation, every bit as important as the Civil War or the Great Depression.

OK, so when does this tumultuous alignment happen in the USA chart?

Technical Timing of the transiting Grand Cross

General timing of the transiting Grand Cross — during the mid-2010s — is fairly obvious. Precise timing of the alignment, however, is not as straightforward as it might seem.

The USA Sun and Saturn are not exactly 90° apart. They are 91 1/2° from each other — still a tight square, but not perfect. As a result, some variance will exist in the aligning of the two transiting outer planets to the two natal bodies. The dates I give will not attempt to reconcile the variation. Instead, I'll simply note when the first begins and the second ends, since they will overlap.

The other technical factor is which tropical zodiac to use: precessed or unprecessed? Because the earth's poles aren't perpendicular to its orbit around the sun (they're tilted by 23°), the equinox and solstice points move backwards (precess) very slowly relative to the background of apparently fixed stars. This is called the Precession of the Equinoxes and is where the Great Ages come from — the Age of Pisces, the Age of Aquarius, etc.

How much is the precession factor? Well, over about 26,000 years, the seasonal markers of the equinoxes and solstices will complete an entire circuit of the heavens. That's just shy of one minute or about 50 seconds of arc each year. This means that for a country such as America, which is now 237 years old, the tropical zodiac used to calculate its natal charts is 3° displaced in space from the tropical zodiac we use today. As a result, timing of the Grand Cross might be delayed by as much as two years. Whether or not that's true is a mathematical/philosophical problem I don't really want to take on here. I will simply use the natal and transit positions as they are given in the ephemeris.

Practical Timing of the transiting Grand Cross

Below is the exact timing of the four separate transits that will be formed by Uranus and Pluto to the natal Sun and Saturn in the USA chart. These are all what are called three-pass transits. I will give only two dates, however — the beginning and the end dates of each transit's period:

Uranus square USA Sun: **17 Apr 2014 – 2 Feb 2015**

Uranus oppose USA Saturn: **15 May 2014 – 14 Mar 2015**

Pluto oppose USA Sun: **14 Mar 2014 – 1 Nov 2015**

Pluto square USA Saturn: **21 Feb 2014 – 24 Dec 2015**

So, the exact period of the Grand Cross alignment begins in mid-March 2014 and lasts for one year, until mid-March 2015.

The exact period is not necessarily the same as the *effective* period, however. An "allowable orb" increases the time-frame, extending it on either side, before the first exact date and after the last exact date. Transits in the personal charts of individuals are generally allowed a 1° orb. For mundane or civilizational charts, however, that orb is often extended to 3°, 5°, or even 10°.

If we use the 5° orbs often allowed for mundane or civilizational astrology, the boundaries move out considerably: from **January 2013 until April 2016**.

Which of these is correct? Reality will tell us the answer, but in the meantime I have some conjectures of my own.

All the uncertainties within the system of astrology — from which zodiac to use through the allowable orbs — make pinpointing precise dates for the Grand Cross very difficult. In addition, beyond the technical questions are the real-life issues. Events in the collective realm are almost never singular. Whether shocking or subtle, visible to the public or behind-the-scenes, the events themselves are often only triggers whose full repercussions take years to manifest in reality. My personal feeling is that much of the Plutonian "eruption" and Uranian "revolution" symbolized within the Grand Cross might take the form of smaller, less obvious breakdowns or collapses in the political and economic systems that form the power structure of America.

In other words, a delay factor exists in civilizational astrology between the actual transit alignment and the real-life manifestations in the collective, with even more delay for the full repercussions to unfold. What happens during the transit may not seem particularly dramatic at the time. Shocks may occur during the transit, but history suggests that these shocks are not likely to seem as profound at the time as they turn out to be later.

What is obvious, however, is that somewhere in the middle of this decade, America is likely to encounter developments that will eventually de-stabilize the status quo of business-as-usual, crack the foundations of the American Empire, and lead us into the profound challenges and changes that lie ahead in the years and even decades yet to come. Exactly what these developments will be and precisely when they will occur are much less certain, however. We can be reasonably sure that economics and social institutions will be primary arenas for breakdown and/or collapse. Mother Nature may also play a role in one way or another.

The direction from which any significant disruptions occur is another question. If something noteworthy happens, will it be provoked from outside or will it emerge from within? The likelihood is that a cascade of widely divergent global events will coalesce to provide the critical mass shocks necessary to awaken us from our habitual comforts and conditioned acquiescence. Determining where the initial trigger originated may be far from obvious, and even when the source is clear, the full repercussions will not be. However unexpected in terms of their sudden appearance, these developments will not be without precedent or otherwise out of the blue. We have already been warned about them all, at length, by people who saw what might be coming from a long way off.

But — as is so often the case in human affairs — those with the power to set public policy are currently concerned more with maintaining the status quo at all costs than with heeding even the most cogent, practical warnings, much like in the fable of the Emperor's New Clothes. In fact, the powers-that-be have spent much of their time and effort over the past 30 years attempting to deride, decry, and deny all the warnings, no matter how obvious the truth of those concerns. As we know, America prefers comforting illusions over hard realities, and what has long passed for debate within the corridors of power are simply arguments between opposing fantasies.

America has always been a land of ideals and dreams, for better and for worse. In a real sense, this is the nation where dreams come to be fulfilled or to die.

Some fantasies can cross-fertilize with reality to actually improve it. Those ideals are worth keeping. Other fantasies are toxic and distort reality until it bites back hard, revealing our dreams to have been little more than foolish illusions that were cruelly poisonous to our well-being. How are we to tell the difference? Well, one way is to live long enough.

The 2010s is essentially the decade where reality bites back.