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EMPIRE OR COMMUNITY: *Globalization and Relocalization in the 21st Century*

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In the four-million-year history of hominid evolution, our ancestors lived on this planet mainly as small groups of hunter-foragers living in relative harmony with the natural world, just one species among millions of others. Certainly, we had bigger brains than most, and as omnivores our niche was near the top of the food chain, but our stature in the matrix of life on Earth was still fairly modest.

Biological selection proceeded at its elegant, glacial pace until recently, after the appearance of our particular species — *homo sapiens*. By that time, we were genetically optimized to live in extended social families, often matrilineal in organization and usually pantheistic in spirituality. With the onset of agriculture and the gradual shift away from fertile earth-goddesses toward a more distant monotheism, the social order changed. As human settlements increased in

population, formerly egalitarian cultures operating through sharing, partnering, and mutual protection gave way to authoritarian societies based on ownership, possession, wealth, stratification into classes, and aggressive patriarchy. Cultural conditioning supplanted genetics as the driving force of our collective evolution, with commerce our most fundamental activity.

Over the last millennium, and especially during the past two centuries, the powers of civilization grew exponentially. In the rush to manifest dreams of abundance, convenience, and comfort, we human beings saw ourselves as rulers over nature. Although many social philosophers and theologians counseled a responsible dominion, business preferred total freedom for exploitation. Commercial interests, especially among industrialists and land developers, lobbied for an untrammled, anything-goes opportunism. The natural world was widely seen as having no inherent value other than providing economic resources for human use. We threw caution to the winds with a stunning disregard for repercussions, plundering this garden planet for our own short-term gain, to the point of the Earth's (and our) impending ruin.

The crises we now face cross all political, cultural, and spiritual boundaries. Humanity's reign may prove tragically brief indeed, if we are unable or unwilling to change how we live. The changes needed are unlikely to be chosen by a peaceful awakening of foresighted wisdom. No, if we make the changes at all, they will almost certainly be the product of much pain, suffering, and conflict. Nevertheless, we would do well to prepare as best we can by realistically considering our options.

This article focuses on one significant choice among many in our making the necessary adjustment: continued corporate globalization versus relocalization by revitalizing relatively autonomous human-scale communities. Can astrology tell us anything about the possibilities for such a major reform of modern society and culture over the next century? It can — but we need to set the scene first by looking at the astrological factors that help us to understand how we collectively arrived at the current crossroads.

Civilizational Astrology

As concerns mount for the future of humanity, a subdiscipline within astrology that might be called "Civilizational Astrology" is rapidly gaining traction. Though this is not a new arena of study, by any means, interest in the astrology of civilization is increasing, due to the obvious dangers we already face and the emerging crises in the decade ahead.

Numerous astrological techniques can be used to glean information about our shared evolution, including the precession of the equinoxes (the "Ages" in astrology) and the changing sign positions of various slow-moving outer bodies in the solar system (such as Pluto leaving Sagittarius and entering Capricorn in 2008). Each of those techniques is well known, but they are limited in the amount of information and insight they reveal.

Far and away the most important technique is the study of paired outer-planet cycles. Any two planets from Jupiter outward can be charted and examined to reveal characteristic cultural meanings and timing of shifts in the archetype field that synchronize to their cycles' quarterly phase changes.

Primary among these are the six paired cycles between Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. These six cycles form the backbone of Civilizational Astrology. Their individual phase changes and sporadically concurrent multiple alignments reveal the grand panorama of the collective human struggle to adapt and change, to fulfill our shared dreams, to grow beyond illusion into maturity, and to deal with reality both as it is and as it might become.

Over the modern epoch since the mid-19th century, seven critical outer-planet alignments have stood out in bold relief, with another just around the corner in the 2010s. All these include nearly simultaneous cycles involving combinations of the four outermost planets mentioned above. Taken in sequence, these configurations define passages that mark

significant astrological turning points in the dramatic acceleration of civilization, for better and for worse.

Listed below are the major outer-planet alignments, their respective periods (using 10° orbs), and a brief synopsis of just a few of their more obvious correspondences to historical events and social changes.

1847-1854 — URANUS CONJUNCT PLUTO

- in the last degrees of Aries
- 1850-1853, Saturn formed a triple conjunction with Uranus and Pluto in late Aries/early Taurus

The Industrial Revolution gears up with steam-powered ships and worldwide building of railroads. Cumulative advances in invention and production of modern weapons that will change warfare forever. Radical theories in natural sciences, politics, and economics. Taiping Rebellion kills 20 million in China.

1883-1900 — NEPTUNE CONJUNCT PLUTO

- in mid-Gemini
- with three partile passes in 1891-1892
- 1889-1890, Saturn in Virgo formed a first-quarter square to both
- 1900, the alignment ended with two dominant oppositions: Saturn opposite Neptune and Uranus opposite Pluto on the Gemini-Sagittarius axis

The end of the Victorian era and the beginning of the modern age. Industry and invention, mainly for pragmatic purposes of travel and convenience (electric lights, internal combustion engines). The rise of corporate power. Idealized dreams of modernity.

1899-1905 — URANUS OPPOSITE PLUTO

- on the Sagittarius/Gemini axis
- 1900, a grand opposition of all major outer planets, with Pluto and Neptune in Gemini opposed by Jupiter, Saturn, Chiron, and Uranus in Sagittarius

Shocks in science as the Newtonian universe is challenged by Einstein's relativity theory, which paves the way to quantum physics. The era of powered flight begins. Continued stirrings of radical politics and social discontent.

1903-1915 — URANUS OPPOSITE NEPTUNE

- on the Cancer-Capricorn axis
- with eleven partile passes in 1906-1910, the maximum number possible between Uranus and Neptune
- 1908-1910, Saturn in Aries formed of focus of a cardinal T-square with Uranus and Neptune
- 1914, as Uranus closed out its opposition to Neptune, Saturn conjoined Pluto in Cancer

Revolution in the arts. Fascination with presumed benefits for humanity of industry and technology. Accelerated international emigration and demographic population shifts from rural to urban. The end of royal dynasties in China. Imperial militarism in Europe, and the eruption of World War I.

1928-1937 — URANUS LAST-QUARTER SQUARE PLUTO

- in cardinal signs, from Aries to Cancer
- with five partile passes in 1932-1934
- 1930-1931, Saturn in Capricorn formed a cardinal T-square
- 1931, Jupiter conjoined Pluto while Neptune moved into the semi-sesquisquare stress

- point, forming a grand alignment of major outer planets
- 1936-1937, as the Uranus-Pluto square ended, Saturn opposed Neptune from Pisces to Virgo

The Great Depression. In the U.S., onset of FDR's New Deal social welfare and labor union movement. In Germany, decay of Weimar Republic and rise to power of Hitler and National Socialism. Mass purges in Stalin's Soviet Union. Revolutionary struggle for control of China. Initial planning for economic globalization.

1961-1970 — URANUS CONJUNCT PLUTO

- in mid-Virgo
- with three partile passes in 1965-1966
- 1965-1967, Saturn in Pisces opposed both planets during the exact period of the partile Uranus-Pluto conjunctions, making that three-planet opposition the most precise, polarized, and concentrated configuration of the 20th century

Rise of grassroots movements toward social equality through civil rights and feminism. The appearance of ecology and systems biology as scientific disciplines, and the beginnings of widespread concern for the environment. Political assassinations in the U.S. The Cultural Revolution in China. The sexual revolution and psychedelic drugs. The Vietnam War. Woodstock and the Moon landings. Polarization between revolutions: in culture, alternative lifestyles vs. social conformity; in agriculture, small-scale organic farming vs. corporate agri-business; in medicine, traditional/natural holism vs. technological/pharmaceutical allopathy.

1988-1998 — URANUS CONJUNCT NEPTUNE

- in Capricorn

- with three partile passes in 1993
- 1988-1990, the period began as a triple conjunction with Saturn
- 1997-2001, as Uranus and Neptune pulled out of orb after a decade, Saturn made first-quarter squares to both, first to Neptune (from Aries), then to Uranus (from Taurus)

Collapse of the Soviet Union. Proliferation of consumer technology, especially in personal computers. Networking the planet through the internet and cell phones. Economic globalization by transnational corporations. Rise of religious fundamentalism as a political and social force.

2007-2020 — URANUS FIRST-QUARTER SQUARE PLUTO

- alignment begins in late mutable signs, from Pisces to Sagittarius, then moves into cardinal signs, from Aries to Capricorn
- with seven partile passes in 2012-2015, the maximum number possible for any Uranus-Pluto alignment
- 2010-2011, Saturn forms a T-square from late-Virgo into early-Libra, with Pluto at the apex (the so-called "Cardinal Climax")
- 2011, Neptune moves to the semi-sesquisquare stress point in a grand alignment similar to the 1930s cardinal T-square
- 2014-2015, Uranus-Pluto square from Aries to Capricorn forms a cardinal grand cross with the July 4, 1776 U.S. chart's Sun-Saturn square from Cancer to Libra, again resonating to the 1930s alignment
- 2019-2020, Saturn conjoins Pluto in Capricorn then squares Uranus in Aries as the Uranus-Pluto alignment ends

Neptune-Pluto: Background Resonance

For civilization, the most encompassing outer-planet cycle is Neptune-Pluto; at 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 more minor symbols, but they have neither the breadth of scope nor depth of meaning that characterizes Neptune-Pluto.

This cycle charts the upwelling 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 bi-millennial conjunctions equate almost precisely to three Neptune and two Pluto orbits. As a result, their cycles align closely from one to the next, with each successive conjunction occurring about 5° further in the zodiac. In addition, their oppositions occur on the same sign axis as their conjunctions, and their quarterly phase changes occur in signs of the same modality.

This means that six full cycles, encompassing almost 3,000 years' total duration, are required to advance Neptune-Pluto forward by one sign or axis and into a different zodiacal mode. Since the beginnings of civilization, the movement of the Neptune-Pluto cycle through the zodiac has followed a steady progression:

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.

Initially, in the Aquarian and Piscean periods of human myth-making (called the Stone Age in history), social groups emerged that were matrilineal in organization, loosely egalitarian, and still based around relatively small communities. During the Aries phase (Bronze Age), communities grew into towns and cities. Patriarchal hierarchies 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 (Iron Age) of Neptune-Pluto dreams, control of land was unified, first into city-states, then into kingdoms and theocracies. Money itself was invented in China, initially as cowrie mollusk shells, then later as 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, one opposition on the Gemini/Sagittarius axis (and another to come in the 22nd century), 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 activates wanderlust — dreams of mobility, travel, and exploration. Indeed, "discovery" of the New World, linking the cultures of Eurasia and the Americas, occurred less than one century after the onset of the Gemini phase. Also emphasized is intellectual curiosity in discovering how the world is put together. Science emerged here 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, and disassembly.

The presence in the cycles of the mutable signs Sagittarius and Pisces implies pursuit of truth through grand ideas and philosophies, as well as the emotional components of metaphysical faith and belief. 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.)

Gemini, Sagittarius, and Pisces also reveal that limitless horizons of possibility are now at the center of our collective dreams of empowerment. Knowledge is power, and anything that *can* be created *will* be, for better or 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 explored, theorized, extracted, experimented, and manufactured with wild abandon but without any sense of organic wholeness. We refine, recombine, or synthesize anything 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 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 eagerness to manipulate, alter, and reshape the Earth for our

own purposes. In our insatiable curiosity and childlike eagerness to wield power, we have fallen headlong into the trap of the sorcerer's apprentice.

Given that the current types of dreams flooding up from the collective unconscious are unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, do other major outer-planet cycles offer an alternative or countervailing symbolism? While both of the much-shorter Uranus-Neptune and Uranus-Pluto cycles provide a contrast to the longer and more subtle tonal background of Neptune-Pluto, it is specifically in the Uranus-Pluto configurations that we find a significant and challenging counterpoint.

Uranus-Pluto and the Choice of Worlds: Empire or Community

Whereas Neptune-Pluto charts the collective impact of our shared dreams, Uranus-Pluto reveals the collective power of our social, scientific, political, and economic revolutions. Cultural changes during Neptune-Pluto periods typically work by osmosis, filtering through social structures that remain at least superficially stable. The new is quickly integrated. Uranus-Pluto activations, however, are radical and shocking. The existing shared beliefs that hold society together are challenged, and cultural institutions are broken down by revolutionary attitudes that emerge from the depths of collective consciousness like magma spewed from a volcanic eruption. Old and new worlds collide in tectonic crashes. Social upheaval is the result.

The bipolar symbolism of Uranus, which is akin to alternating current in electricity, combines with the archetype of Pluto's deep-seated raw power for destruction and renewal to indicate simultaneous but contradictory revolutions that coexist despite their seeming mutual exclusivity. Uranus and Pluto together imply the sudden appearance of new expressions of deep power welling up out of nature or from collective humanity. This can take the form of coercive power used by an elite over the masses through force, legality, or, more subtly, the psychological mind control of propaganda. It can also mean grassroots uprisings, where people band

together to take power, throw off their shackles, and challenge the status quo through social revolt.

In their most archetypal forms, one direction of Uranus-Pluto eruptions is related to *Empire*, and the other is connected to *Community*. Both empire and community are methods of social organization with deep roots in history and human nature, although they could hardly be more different in their meaning and shape.

Empire is based on ownership of land and resources, with economic productivity and money as primary values, along with competition, conquest, and domination. Perpetual growth is a necessity, with gargantuan size a desired result. Empires are monolithic, imposing themselves on the environment. Power is amassed and concentrated within a vertical hierarchy of command and control, where standardization and conformity promote economic efficiency. Empire stratifies culture into classes and dictates the limits of social mobility. The celebration of empire occurs through spectacles meant to inspire awe and to be viewed vicariously by their populations.

Community is defined mainly by location or interests shared in common. It may be based on private ownership, communally shared property, or a combination of both. Cooperation is a key value, as is mutual protection. Organization is dispersed and decentralized, with a more horizontal or egalitarian social structure. Scale remains limited and local, with renewal preferable to growth. Communities are diverse, able to exist independently as towns or, within larger cities, as neighborhoods. Their development is based on the specific eco-regions they inhabit. Each community is relatively autonomous and different from others, but they connect through a rhizome-like network of interconnections, to share their various commercial products and unique cultural styles. The celebration of community occurs through festivals meant to inspire joy, with active participation by the populace.¹

Empire and Globalization

Empire emerged over the past 5,000 years and holds sway in the current structuring of civilization. Patriarchal, plutocratic, and impersonal, empire works through institutions — in the past, this meant governments of city- or nation-states and their bureaucratic social organizations, backed by military force should economic power alone prove lacking. The dominant institutions are either owned or run by an elite group of individuals. Political scientist and longtime researcher Thomas Dye has found that the power to dictate major economic and sociopolitical policy decisions in the United States is concentrated in the hands of a mere 8,000 individuals out of a population of 300 million.²

Anyone educated in history is familiar with empires from antiquity, such as the Egyptian and Chinese Dynasties, the Roman Empire, and the European empires of Portugal, Spain, France, and Great Britain that flourished during the 15th–19th centuries. However, modern imperialism goes beyond nation-states to include transnational corporations. These specialized entities, which are commercial in charter and only political or social to achieve their economic aims, took hold during the massive industrialization of the second half of the 19th century through the phenomenal growth of various industries: railroads, lumber, mining, steel, oil, textiles, and banking, among others. Initially modest infusions of speculative capital by individuals, aided by governments, produced astonishing profits, creating the Gilded Age of the Robber Barons. Incredible private fortunes were built as individual entrepreneurs (Uranus) pumped the well of collective resources (Pluto).

Industrial expansion continued far into the 20th century in the automotive, armaments, agricultural, chemical, and construction industries. Sometimes, 20th-century industries were capitalistic, as in the U.S.; other times, they were state-run, as in the communist (or, more accurately, totalitarian) Soviet Union. Whatever "ism" they operated under, however, such industrial empires were all centralized and hierarchical and always abetted by government largesse. Together, government and business milked the Earth of her amazing abundance; the cream was reserved for and ladled off by those at the top of the pyramid, while the diluted skim milk trickled down toward the base. Disparity of wealth is a

hallmark of empire; even today, half the population of humanity — more than three billion people — lives in dire poverty, subsisting on an income of less than \$2 per day. For about a billion of those individuals, chronic hunger is a fact of daily existence.

Earlier empires used military conquest as their initial means of expansion, followed by colonization (to siphon off resources and products) and subjugation of conquered populations. Contemporary empires still maintain armies and use invasion by force, but their preferred method of expansion now centers around perpetual growth of profitable economic activity through penetration of new markets for commercial goods and services, plus the free movement of capital to maximize efficiency in reducing costs of production and labor. That sentence is a mouthful, but it basically means: Sell more, pay less to do it, grow in size, and increase profits, presumably forever.

This is called *Globalization*, the removal of all boundaries and limits to commercial development, creating a global marketplace that functions as the equivalent of a local market but on a massive scale designed to accommodate corporations rather than people. Though the roots of economic globalization go back to the 1930s, its implementation was fervently embraced by big business when the current Uranus-Neptune cycle of revolutionary dreams kicked off in Capricorn during the 1990s.

Community and Relocalization

On the other side of civilization's coin is community, which can be traced back to the earliest hunter-forager tribes of our distant past. Current accounts of history and even prehistory would lead one to assume that empire is the natural order, since the melodramas of wealth, war, and conflict have so captured our imagination. Communal societies are all but overlooked. In fact, however, cooperative sharing in relative peacefulness is much more ancient and deeply embedded in our genetic heritage. Empire is actually a very recent development in anthropology, almost an aberration, like a viral infection, calling forth the extremes in human nature.

Evidence suggests that both agriculture and animal husbandry were known and understood by our ancestors, but they did not choose those ways of living until forced to do so by climate change. As long as we lived in smaller cooperative groups, humans found it much easier to live off nature's abundance rather than be chained to the labor-intensive requirements of farming. At the end of the Pleistocene Ice Ages, however, global warming of tropical regions and resulting desertification forced human beings to seek out fertile land near rivers and deltas, settle into permanent villages, and begin full-time agriculture. By intensifying our labors to grow food rather than find it, we culled from nature sufficient nutrition to support the larger populations drawn to a central food source.

In community, we know well, or are at least familiar with, most others in our small group. In larger societies, however, people inevitably become strangers to each other, increasing our anxiety. Authority takes over, promising to provide security and stability — but at a profound cost. Equality is replaced by hierarchy. Active cooperation is replaced by passive obedience. The balance of masculine and feminine expression, so essential to community and our genetic heritage, is disrupted. Personal warmth and feminine nurturing end up confined to home and family, while the impersonal structures of masculine patriarchy are institutionalized, running society as a whole.

Throughout much of the past five millennia, communal groups continued to flourish, usually beyond the reach of empire or in areas that empire regarded as devoid of resources. That changed when Neptune-Pluto's Gemini phase of exploration began 600 years ago, and it accelerated dramatically over the past 200 years, when the Industrial Revolution geared up and humanity's population spiked upward. When empires come into contact (and conflict) with communal societies, empire wins. Consider the extermination of Native American cultures during the 19th century through the justification of "manifest destiny." Similarly, the 20th century saw the worldwide decimation of what few indigenous populations of community-based societies remained, as their eco-regions were invaded and overrun for

resource exploitation, the geopolitical maneuverings of empire, or simply the encroachment of larger populations.

In a quite different example, the demolition in the 1960s of New York City's Penn Station also demonstrates empire's callous disregard for community. Built in 1910 atop an underground railway terminal, Penn Station was the finest example of Beaux Arts architecture, a magnificent building whose aesthetic beauty and cathedral-like inner spaces thrilled New Yorkers. In 1961, the Pennsylvania Railroad, in league with developers and moneyed interests, announced plans to demolish the structure and replace it with Madison Square Garden, a sports and entertainment complex. Hundreds of civic organizations, neighborhood groups, and architects' guilds organized a concerted protest, but to no avail. Penn Station was demolished. The diverse communities embedded in New York City suffered an incalculable loss, but the financial elite who ran the city cared not a whit. As befits the Uranus-Pluto activation of that decade, however, the historic preservation movement was born out of that struggle.

Size Matters: Large versus Small Scale

Right now, the relationship of community to empire is mythically equivalent to the situation at the end of the Cretaceous period of life evolution, when tiny mammals scurried about on the floor of primeval forests and savanna grasslands, trying to avoid being stepped on by huge dinosaurs, which still ruled the world at that point. That analogy is flawed, of course. Community is not a new development, as mammalian species were — community predates empire by millions of years, while mammals appeared after dinosaurs — but communities have been pushed out, overwhelmed, and reduced to a small niche in the rapidly changing social environment of imperial civilization. Like early mammals, they continue to survive only because of their small size and relative invisibility.

Just as the dinosaurs' gargantuan size allowed them to dominate in a world of stable climate and abundant food, so the huge scale of empire has triumphed in civilization up to now. And, just as the dinosaurs were wiped out 65 million

years ago by a major disruption in the natural environment, where their size and inability to adapt proved fatal, so the 5,000-year run of empire may soon end in collapse due to another disruption of previously favorable ecologies, both natural and social. This time, the catastrophe is less likely to occur from a meteor collision or super-volcanic eruption than from the results of empire's inhuman scale and inherently rapacious appetites.

We have become the proverbial dragon eating our own tail. Numerous crises loom just ahead, including imminent exhaustion of natural resources (not just peak oil, but, more importantly, soil depletion and watershed destruction), increasing toxic waste from wars and poisonous industrial byproducts, as well as unsustainable economic and financial systems. Even at the height of its powers, empire has been digging its own grave and now faces extinction.

Admittedly, empire will not give up without a fight, and not just because of the elites in power. We are all part of empire — plugged into the electrical grid, driving automobiles, and resistant to giving up our habitual conveniences. Hybrid vehicles and renewable biofuels are now hot topics, but such "solutions" do nothing to solve the problems of resource depletion and industrial toxins, since cars themselves are the problem. Rebuilding our railroads and waterways for efficient mass transit is barely discussed, however. In this and other arenas — especially politics, economics, and mass media — the myths of modern empire stubbornly hold us in their thrall. Great debates lie ahead concerning the uses of science and technology in transportation, the military, medicine, and agriculture. If we continue down the roads we've traveled in those areas over the past half-century, our future appears dim indeed.

On the other hand, we're not going back to hunter-gatherer groups, either. The "back to the land" communal experiments of the 1850s and 1960s (during the last two Uranus-Pluto cycle births) were utopian, naïve, and Luddite. Permaculture eco-villages will be nothing like the early settlements of our ancestral lineage, nor will our reconstituted towns, cities, and urban enclaves resemble sentimental images of America's small-town past. To be viable, relocalization

must integrate modern technologies and new social structures customized for each community and bio-region, unlike empire's one-size-fits-all approach. We can look back through history and prehistory for basic designs, but they will require more sophisticated and contemporary implementation.

The 2010s: Disintegration and Awakening

The youthful movements that were birthed (or rebirthed) during the Uranus-Pluto conjunction of the 1960s — ecology, feminism, social equality, peace, reduced consumption, and sustainability — are about to move from the fringes to the center. Uranus-Pluto's First Quarter square will bring crises that cause those movements to re-emerge after their 50-year gestation, during which they went underground in culture while slowly gathering strength. Now those movements are ready to grow again into fuller, more mature manifestation, called forth by sudden breakdowns in empire. Political, economic, and cultural landscapes are about to change dramatically.

The year 2007 marks the transition into this reawakening of alternate possibilities. Although the confusion and passivity of the Saturn-Neptune opposition peaks in June and takes another year to fade out, the leading edge of radical consciousness appears on the scene. Uranus reaches the initial 10-degree orb of its square to Pluto in May, and Saturn begins its four-year opposition to Uranus in November 2007. Look for a steady rise in public outrage concerning the inactivity and unresponsiveness of those who hold the reins of power. By the U.S. presidential election of November 2008, discontent with the status quo will have struck a resonant chord.

As the Saturn-Uranus-Pluto t-square activates from late 2009 through 2011, any of various triggers could provoke breakdowns in social stability. History tells us that empires become most dangerous as they decline, resorting to ever more extreme measures in desperate attempts to maintain control. We are in that fading period of the American Empire, and the years ahead may be daunting. Critical mass is

reached in June 2012, when Uranus and Pluto make their first partile square. The rest of the decade should be turbulent indeed.

A particularly dark shadow will be cast when Uranus and Pluto form a cardinal grand cross with the Sun and Saturn in the July 4, 1776, U.S. natal chart. Over the 200+ year history of the United States, whenever two outer planets in Aries and Capricorn formed a grand cross with the U.S. natal Sun in Cancer square natal Saturn in Libra, the corresponding economic event was a Great Depression: in the 1790s, 1840s, 1870s, and 1930s.³ The next one up is in 2014–2015.

Reasons for Optimism

Many reasons for optimism exist. We may be at the beginning of a new awakening in mass consciousness that will gradually grow through the 2040s, when Uranus reaches its opposition to Pluto at the harvest phase of the 1960s cycle. Humanity may yet redeem itself. We may rediscover our connection to nature and pull back from the brink of destruction of Earth's life-systems, saving ourselves in the process. We can apply ingenuity to positively integrate the necessities of mass civilization with the essential needs of human nature by scaling back our industries, economics, and consumption. Living more simply carries a whole range of benefits. Losses in easy mobility and habitual convenience could be offset by decreasing alienation and increasing empathy with others. We may learn again the pleasures of knowing our neighbors.

With the end of Pluto's passage through Sagittarius and its entrance into Capricorn, the culture wars of religious fundamentalism will wane, although churches will remain magnetic nodes for social networking within and between communities. The monolithic institutions of national government will crack and crumble as Pluto in Capricorn is challenged by Uranus in Aries, but local governments and smaller-scale social organizations will pick up the slack, encouraging civic participation.

Environmental disasters may finally get our attention. This is not merely about "global warming," which is only the most

recently popular catchphrase for a whole phalanx of ecological depredations. Nor is the crisis merely about government policy and unsustainable economics, although the strong possibility of collapses in those realms over the next decade will surely rouse us from our slumber. No, we need a reawakened understanding of our interdependence with nature through regard for *all* life on Earth, not just human life.

Descartes' philosophical mind-body split that separated us from nature back in the 15th century must be rescinded, even if the ultimate healing takes centuries to achieve. In reforming civilization away from empire's pattern of tragic destruction, we can begin to recover our reverence and wonder at being part of nature in the ongoing creation of Earth and Cosmos. Finally, we are caretakers, not rulers. By our very success as a species, the responsibility for maintaining the interconnected life-systems of our small and amazing planet now falls to us. No more of this nonsense about "conquering nature."

Uranus-Pluto suggests that some of this long-overdue change in consciousness can occur by individual efforts, with the rest necessarily legislated and enforced. The old distinctions of liberal versus conservative may lose relevance as left-wing socialism and right-wing capitalism merge. Future generations in the 22nd century and beyond will almost certainly look back on our notions of personal freedom as extremely irresponsible. Freedom for the next waves of human beings will mean personal empowerment through consecrated service to collective humanity.

The Uranus-Pluto conjunction of the 1960s saw the birth of this awareness in infantile and adolescent forms. The Uranus-Pluto square of the 2010s will move it into young adulthood through urgent, pragmatic exigencies. Uranus in Aries square Pluto in Capricorn is not about ideologies but rather creative individual responses to dire collective emergencies. Some of our responses will be piecemeal, and most will be messy. As Humpty Dumpty falls and shatters, we will glue him back together, with spit and bailing wire if necessary.

Then, in the culminating Uranus-Pluto opposition of the 2040s, a new and different type of civilization will be formalized and put into place. The story of humanity will have reached another chapter. Some of us who are already older will not live to see that day, but that's all right. To resurrect a phrase from the 1960s, we have the choice in the decade of the 2010s to become part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

Relocalization is not merely about economic sustainability, nor is it fundamentally about survival, although those may soon be real motivations for moving in that direction. Relocalization also means enhanced quality of life, joy in social participation, and the shared fulfillment that extends beyond the primary bonds of marriage and family. Active communal involvement has been largely lost in the U.S. over the past century, diminished by the urban beehive and suburban isolation, buried by consumerism, suppressed by the corporate state, and nearly killed outright by the passively hypnotic trance of television.

Rejuvenating the gentle pleasures of belonging by becoming stakeholders in a community is a basic spiritual need. As human beings, we are here together on this planet for a very short time, and we might as well celebrate that fact with the people who live near us in our neighborhoods, towns, and cities. We may not all be One in the literal sense, but the revitalized experience of togetherness in work and play within real communities may move us a little closer toward the actual experience of that sublime cosmic truth.

Let us begin now.

References and Notes

1. See Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy* (Metropolitan Books, 2007), for a discussion of the differences between the spectacles of hierarchical mass societies and the festivities of smaller communities.

2. Thomas Dye, from *Who's Running America?* (Prentice-Hall, now in its 7th edition, *The Bush Restoration*, 2001), an ongoing series of studies concerning those in positions of authority and power who control industry, banking, investment, insurance, education, media, law, private foundations, civic associations, key federal government posts, and the military. Quoted in David Korten's *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community* (Berrett-Koehler, 2006).
3. See Robert Gover, *Time and Money: The Economy and the Planets* (Hopewell Publications, 2005), an astrological history of economics in America, for a discussion of these grand cross correspondences to Great Depressions.

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