

A Call to Transformation: The Astrology of the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries

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Part Three: The Tense and Complex Astrological Situation of the Late 20th Century

The previous section touched on the main challenges and opportunities posed by the current Neptune-Pluto cycle, and outlined some of the important social and intellectual transformations which took place around the last conjunction of the two planets in 1891-92. Now let's have a look at how the cycle has unfolded throughout the 20th century.



The Great War, as World War I was known in its time, occurred during the waxing semisextile phase (30 degrees) of our current Neptune-Pluto cycle. The war shocked Europe and the world with the realization that modern humanity had not yet outgrown its barbaric past. Yet its peace brought for a few short years a vision of what could be. The inertia of the past cycle and the unsolved problems acting through WWI challenged the expanding creative impulse of the new cycle during the tense and confrontive semisquare phase (45 degrees) of Neptune and Pluto, which lasted from the late-1920s to the mid-1930s. It saw a flourish of new ideas and attitudes in all fields of human endeavor vanquished by the Great Depression, and the rise of Fascism and its corollary in the arts and sciences, "neo-Classicism."

Neptune and Pluto moved into their septile phase (51°25' arc, based on the division of the circle by seven) during the late-1930s.

Septile aspects represent the compulsive and irrational elements of existence, and its arc of 51.428571... is an irrational number. They also symbolize the action of fate or destiny. A waxing septile, which occurs after the opening of a new cycle of relationship, represents the action of karma and the enduring pressure of ancient patterns. During such a phase we are faced with the challenge to neutralize the failures and unfinished business of the past cycle, which can return to haunt the present. If toxic materials leftover from the previous cycle aren't successfully eliminated during the waxing septile, they will toxify and contaminate the process unfolding through the current cycle.

Destiny and fate are related, yet polar opposites. Destiny provides the experiences and conditions through which we may realize and fulfill what we were born for, our dharma or truth of being.

Humanity today needs to take a step into the next phase of its evolution and to realize a new, harmonious form of global social organization. If the challenge is accepted, destiny opens the way.

Each of us have a function to fulfill in making a truly new age a reality, and if we accept that function—which one must recognize for oneself—destiny provides the conditions allowing its fulfillment within the range made possible by collective factors, by the success or failure of humanity as a whole. While destiny implies a positive, voluntary acceptance of individual and collective dharma, fate is the usually unpleasant and compulsive result of a failure to accept one's dharma or of a refusal to perform a future-oriented act when needed.

The existence of the 500-year cycle of Neptune and Pluto was unknown before the discovery of the planet Pluto in 1930. Its discovery marked the first widespread development of new human capacities, and gave new potency to the before then unknown Neptune-Pluto cycle. New human faculties and capacities always seem to be misused at first, and the early phases of the current Neptune-Pluto cycle produced ample exemplars of such misuse and showed the world the fate awaiting personages and movements resisting the direction of human and planetary evolution.

Out of the confrontive semisquare and fateful septile phases, which witnessed the darkest and most terrifying years of this or any century, grew the hopefully constructive years of the sextile phase—the mid-1940s to mid-2030s. The "long sextile" of Pluto and Neptune is perhaps the most optimistic factor of our complex celestial and mundane situation. It may be significant that its approximately 90-year length is about that of a long and full human lifetime. It began in the mid-1940s—the birth years of many counterculture and new age forerunners. It is a fitting signature of a generation. But like Moses who was forbidden to enter the Promised Land, those born in the 1940s may complete their life-cycles soon before the concrete and existential beginning of the Aquarian Age, expected to occur around 2062. Rudhyar writes in [Astrological Timing](#), that the so-called "long sextile" constitutes, as it were, the deep bass-note supporting the chord of faster shifting planetary relationships. As the sextile is a constructive and steadying aspect, this "long-sextile" of Neptune and Pluto . . . should mark the beginning of a new order—perhaps of a global civilization and a true World-Federation. (p. 74)

But, as we'll explore in greater detail, the "long sextile" narrows to a series of exact septiles during the first years of the new millennium, when the compulsive pull of ancient patterns may bring humanity to a blazing moment of choice.

A Prelude to Global Transformation

The mid-1960s saw still immature, underground stirrings of the seed-message sown at the Neptune-Pluto conjunction of 1891-92. Two factors figure largely in the celestial situation of the 1960s.

The first is the Uranus-Pluto conjunction of 1965-66. It occurred in the seventeenth (16°06' and 16°28'R) and eighteenth (17°10') degrees of Virgo. Saturn in opposition to these conjunctions signifies a polarized situation between a Saturnian establishment and a variety of discontent elements seeking integration or revolution. The mid-1960s signaled the rapid, worldwide spread of peace and civil rights demonstrations, large-scale youth protest, the use of psychedelics drugs and, eventually, social and ideological change.

The mind-transforming influences of the [Uranus-Pluto conjunctions of 1965-66](#) forced us to realize we are living amid a situation demanding a very deep and thorough change of mind. Any deep and essential change, however, takes time and involves repetition of its keynote on various levels.

The powerful, revolutionary Uranus-Pluto conjunction was followed in 1968 by a waning sextile between Uranus and Neptune.

1968 was the fall following the famous Summer of Love. A fall epitomized by the police assault on demonstrators gathered in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. The incident and its epilogue—a highly publicized and controversial trial—resulted in a temporary backlash of public opinion against the Establishment. It culminated in the Watergate incident and the resignation of President Nixon.

The counterculture of the 1960s survived and the 1970s witnessed widespread social and ideological change—change in many ways reversed during the 1980s. The ground reclaimed by the inert and obsolete American social, political and economic establishment, however, may be akin to a dying organism's last desperate attempt to reconsolidate strength and power.



The Walls Come Down

One of the most potent symbols of the late-20th century is provided by Pluto's penetration of Neptune's orbit from 1979 to 1999 and its perihelion (when it is closest to the Sun) during 1989.

The transition from virgin to lover occurs in a night and, transforming the past, gives rise to new possibilities. Similarly, the dynamism and sheer fecundating power of Pluto moving inside Neptune's orbit destroys any barrier standing against the future it catalyzes. Witness the overnight destruction of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain around the time of Pluto's perihelion— 4 September 1989 at 12°52' Scorpio (the sign it rules).

The tidal wave of social, political and ideological change in Eastern Europe and Russia also occurred around: 1) a conjunction of Saturn and Neptune on 13 November 1989 at 10 22' Capricorn—the night of 9-10 November witnessed the symbolic destruction of the Berlin Wall; 2) the massing of five and six planets, especially Saturn, Uranus and Neptune, in Capricorn during late 1989 and early 1990; and 3) a conjunction of Saturn and Uranus during 1988 in late Sagittarius.

The solar eclipse of 15 January 1991 at 25°20' Capricorn, close to Saturn at 27°26' Capricorn, made history. Hours after it occurred the United States and its allies began bombing Bagdad. The January 1991 eclipse was complemented or polarized by another occurring on 11 July 1991 at 18°59' Cancer. Occurring on Pluto's north node and opposite the zodiacal degree of the 1993 Uranus-Neptune conjunction, it was soon followed by the failed coup by Soviet hard-liners and the subsequent acceleration of reform in Russia and the republics of the former Soviet Union.

In Search of a New Principle of Integration

During the late-1980s and early-1990s, five basic, sometimes overlapping, social-political trends seem to be operative. one is characterized by the European drive toward **integration and unification**. Many Islamic and former southern Soviet republics may be gradually following this trend—in **their own way**. If integration is founded on exclusionary platforms grounded in region and religion, however, the movement toward unification is severely limited and eventually produces just another big nation competing with other big nations.

The second trend disintegrates monolithic social and political "blocks" mortared together by an often brutally enforced ideology. Although on the surface this movement may appear to be moving toward small, independent and utterly sovereign political entities concerned only with their own welfare, prosperity and ethnic integrity, it may be the first stage of a voluntary and purposeful reintegration in which each "unit" participates freely in the realization of a new sense of togetherness and unanimity. In other words, both individuals and collectives must first feel themselves free and independent wholes before they can meaningfully identify with and creatively participate in a large whole. The trend may also feature the resumption of old conflicts and vendettas, as seen today in Bosnia. In its larger sense, it is a **deconditioning process leading to reintegration**.

The third trend is characterized by nations, classes, social and religious groups, as well as by alienated individuals, unable or unwilling to participate in any larger whole in which they cannot play the role of master. In terms of nations, the collective mentality is locked in a hypnotic stranglehold by the belief that it must **compete** against all other nations; or that its particular ideology and way of life represents the One and Only True Way; or that it is somehow uniquely qualified to rule or police the world.

This is the path of a dying and fearful culture that has lost the ability to visualize a creative future. It replaces vitality and creativity lost with rigid and controlling structures propping up its slowly collapsing institutions and way of life. It is the way of fascism. A nation following this trend may long for a return to its "Glory Days," a return to a post-war boom when money was plentiful and the future always looked bright, for the "good old days" when its society and culture were still "pure," unpolluted by centrifugal elements, such as "the Jewish" or "illegal immigrants." It is a collective mentality that wants to be looked up to by other nations. It wants to hold supremacy over other nations.

The fourth trend is characterized by a national desire of Third World nations to **emulate** (in their own way) the middle-class life styles they imagine are being lived by citizens of the United States and Europe. Nations that were once colonies of Europe or de facto American colonies have been gradually pursuing this path of emulation for centuries, often under subtle and not so subtle coercion. The citizens of these nations are becoming rapidly infatuated with an avarice for expensive imported items— cars and motorscooters, TVs and VCRs, modern kitchens and high technology.



The work of avarice can be seen in India's recent "dowry inflation" and "dowry murders." To make the most of a rare opportunity to acquire costly imported items quickly, the families of young Indian men are now demanding exuberant dowries and bride murders (freeing the groom to marry again, thus an opportunity to gain yet another bountiful dowry) are increasing at an alarming rate.

Although these nations **emulate**, they need to **regenerate**. In the event of a major, worldwide technological setback, however, these nations may fare far better than nations following the third course.

The fifth trend may be seen in an as yet ill-defined movement toward recognizing the necessity of a global society and facilitating its gradual realization. Members of all nations are tuning into and resonating with the creative tone and power underlying the movement, yet it is difficult to identify groups and nations truly

exemplary of it. In the European community, perhaps Holland and Denmark come nearest, with Britain occupying the opposite pole. The fifth trend differs from the first to the degree it features a **conscious** drive toward a harmonious and all-inclusive global society.

The Uranus-Neptune Conjunction of 1993 and Its Call to Transformation

Uranus-Neptune conjunctions occur at intervals of about 171 years. They march through the zodiac in steps of sixteen degrees.

Uranus and Neptune last met during 1821 in the early degrees of Capricorn, and before that during 1650 in mid-Sagittarius. The conjunction of 1650 coincided with the rise of empirical science and the large-scale colonization of North America. The period between 1650 to 1821 saw the breakdown of the Classical Era and the birth of the Revolutionary Age. The closing cycle of 1821 to 1993 featured the growing power of individualism, capitalism and imperialism. It witnessed the Romantic Movement, the Industrial Revolution, the Age of the Machine, the Atomic Age, the Sexual Revolution, the Electronic Revolution, and the assumption of new roles by women. During this phase humanity experienced two devastating world wars, a worldwide economic depression and the rise and fall of Fascism, Nazism and Communism.

Due to scientific and technological advances made during the last two Uranus-Neptune cycles, a global society is now not only possible but necessary. It is necessary because the sort of power modern science and technology has placed at the disposal of as yet morally and spiritually undeveloped men have produced global problems. For instance, the very existence and proliferation of plutonium is not merely a local or national concern—it poses global problems which must be dealt with on a global level.

Local mindedness and local solutions are no longer adequate—instead of solving problems they compound them. In a sense this is so because much of our current science and technology, and especially our present-day scientific and technological mindsets, are still rooted in a classical past. At best they seem tied to Neptune-Pluto cycle of 1399-1892. It was during that cycle that our current science and technology, as well as the political-military-industrial complex, were conceived.

The recent geocentric conjunctions of Uranus and Neptune occurred on 3 February 1993 at 19°34' Capricorn, on 20 August 1993 at 18°48' Capricorn, and 18°33' Capricorn on 25 October 1993. Their single heliocentric conjunction occurred on 21 April 1993 at 19°16' Capricorn. They sounded a call to active transformation, a call to attune to and actualize the seed-message of this Neptune-Pluto cycle.

The challenge posed by the Uranus-Neptune conjunction of 1993 is clear and simple: **Take a step beyond national sovereignty and cultural pride — transform or perish.**

Everywhere the signs of the times seem to echo the message: Take the next evolutionary step ahead (become a mutant seed, an agent of transformation) or perish (be a leaf, among innumerable other leaves on the autumnal forest floor, that eventually disintegrates into humus). Yet it takes time for the seed to germinate, and it will take time for the message sounded by the Uranus-Neptune conjunction to be heard. What concerns us isn't so much the big events that occurred around the time of the recent conjunction of Uranus and Neptune, but the larger picture and gradually developing opportunities and movements behind visible developments and events.

Meaning and significance actually lie not so much in events but in our response to them. And it is our response to today's growing needs that will set the course for coming decades. It may well be too late to avoid a more or less drastic and, from the point of view of obsolescent institutions and mindsets, destructive adjustments. Doing and giving too little too late, humanity may be forcing (or polarizing) an intervention of the Earth-being—our Greater Whole. Global famine, depletion of the ozone, telluric activity, drastically altered weather, pole shift, plague and any one of innumerable other cataclysms may be interpreted as Wholeness acting to dissolve the leaves of a closing cycle. But at least some seeds survive even the harshest winter.(12)

It is, of course, notable that the first phase of European unification was realized very near the first of three geocentric Uranus-Neptune conjunctions occurring in 1993.

European integration, however, is not a new idea. During the last Uranus-Neptune conjunction, which occurred in 1821, the Saint-Simonians were busy formulating and promoting a plan for European unification.(13)

But the question is: Do the European people and collectives sincerely wish eventually to united with all nations and peoples in a global society of harmony and fullness, or is the drive toward unification actually self-serving—a means to better compete against Japan, the United States and the rest of the world? And what of Eastern Europe and Eastern Europeans?



The United States saw the inauguration of President Clinton a few days before the Uranus-Neptune conjunction of 3 February 1993. The first Democrat to occupy the White House since 1980, and the first youthful president since John Kennedy in the 1960s, Clinton seemed a well-suited agent of trans-Saturnian forces. Yet the reforms proposed by his administration have met unprecedented resistance in the legislature. At the end of his second year in office, however, the GATT agreement bringing the United States into the global marketplace passed with an overwhelming majority. Yet it may cast a long shadow.

In Russia, a few days after the conjunction, Yeltsin successfully defeated hardline opposition. And on 12 February 1993 a historical pact was signed promising the end of white rule in South Africa by April 1994.

Around the time of the single heliocentric conjunction of Uranus and Neptune on 21 April 1993, the United States experienced the Rodney King beating and the Waco Standoff. On 24 April, a large IRA bombing shook London.

Then, just before the final geocentric conjunction, Yeltsin successfully put down yet another uprising by hardliners. A week after the conjunction, on 1 November 1993, the Maastricht Treaty finalizing European unification took effect. It was followed by a devastating fire storm in Southern California and the controversial North American Free Trade Agreement.

During January 1994, Los Angeles suffered a major earthquake, bringing "California Dreaming" to an abrupt end. A brutal murder and its well-publicized courtroom proceedings held the nation's attention during the summer of 1994. That autumn important political campaigns brought the art of mud-slinging to a new low and, again in California, an important anti-immigrant proposition emerged victorious in the polls.

If we were expecting the Uranus-Neptune conjunction of 1993 to bring sudden radical change we were disappointed. But nothing happens all at once. Indeed, we may not see decisive and irrevocable change until the end of the century or the first years of the new millennium.

Crossing the Threshold

Examined against the background of the 500-year cycle of Neptune and Pluto that began during 1891-92, the years 1994-2017 promise to be a difficult phase leading humanity into either an age of global harmony and fullness or a global society of imposed and enforced unanimity, into another dark age of fascism.

Beginning late-1994, and continuing for more than 20 years, each year during December and January the planets Neptune and Pluto draw together forming a new series of septiles or near septiles. The two planets first realize an exact septile aspect during the last week of 2001 and the first week of 2002. Exact septiles are repeated every year until 7 February 2011, but the two are often found within orb of septile until about 2017. There will be a Jupiter-Saturn conjunction in 2020, about the time Neptune-Pluto enters sextile orb. Then, in 2025, Neptune and Pluto once again met in exact sextile, which may constitute a prelude to a truly new age.

In view of developments following the Neptune-Pluto septiles of 1937-1939, the question begs asking: "Will the new series of Neptune-Pluto septiles bring a holocaust of the magnitude witnessed during the 1940s?"

The answer depends on how we respond to the call to transformation.



By now, however, it seems clear that the establishment and power-cliques which rule our corporate and national life are not going to graciously stand aside and allow the future to act upon the present. A final confrontation may be inevitable. Yet it is impossible, and of very little constructive use, to know its precise countenance. It may take the obvious form of a social, political or military confrontation. It may assume the guise of a "War of Ideas." A greater whole—the Earth-being—may act, giving birth to natural disasters.

The social and political climate surrounding the first of the new series Neptune-Pluto near septiles—December 1994 to January 1995—is far from optimistic. Most disturbing is Russia's fierce suppression of the independence movement in Chechnya. Moscow sent tens of thousands of troops into the region on 11 December to reestablish its control over the predominately Muslim republic located in the Caucasus Mountains—a key power center in the West according to esoteric tradition. Armed conflict between Russian and rebel forces began on New Years Eve, and in the following two weeks thousands are believed to have been killed.

The United States seems to be moving toward the Right. Anti-immigrant sentiments run high in what seems an echo of nazism. The General Election of 1996 may set the country's course toward the far Right.

The two issues being dramatized today in Russia and the United States epitomize the key issues of our time. Both are not merely local issues but global issues, and both must be harmoniously resolved or outgrown if we are to avert a new dark age of social oppression and enforced conformity. And every indication confirms that they need to be resolved within the next few years.

Natural forces also made a contribution to the near septile when a devastating earthquake struck Kobe, Japan the morning of 17 January 1995. It may be significant that it occurred exactly one year after the destructive Los Angeles quake of January 1994.

Epitomizing the closing years of the 20th Century, during the U.S. General Election of 1996 President Clinton promoted himself as a "bridge to the future," while his chief opponent offered himself as "a bridge to the past." On 9 January 1997, just after the start of President Clinton's second term, Jupiter and Neptune will meet in conjunction. The conjunction occurs in the 28th degree of Capricorn—Pluto occupied the same degree on 4 July 1776. Also during January 1997, Neptune and Pluto experience a near septile.

Much publicity has been given to the coming conjunction of Jupiter and Uranus, which occurs on 15 February 1997, in the sixth degree of Aquarius. The conjuncting planets form a waxing sextile with Pluto in the sixth degree of Sagittarius, another sextile with Saturn in the sixth degree of Aries, and a waning trine with Mars retrograde in the sixth degree of Libra, which in turn is sextile Pluto and opposite Saturn. A larger pattern emerges when all the mentioned planets are linked together. With the exception of Mars opposite Saturn, the bodies are linked by either sextiles or trines, suggesting a challenging though mostly constructive response to the Jupiter-Uranus conjunction. Yet the character of the Jupiter-Uranus conjunction will be much conditioned by the preceding Jupiter-Neptune conjunction. The former may be seen as implementing the larger social ideals, values and visions of the latter. In view of this, early 1997 may witness early signs of a new, transformed approach to our troubled social and economic situation. Perhaps an acceptance and application of a "new social paradigm".

By 1998, both Uranus and Neptune will be in Aquarius, a sign "ruled" by Uranus. Their pivotal conjunction of 1993 will have grown to a 10 degree arc, suggestive of something definite growing out of seeds sown at its conjunction. During 1999 there will be a series of tense squares (90 aspects) between Jupiter and Saturn (the planets symbolizing our social, economic, political and religious institutions—their power, influence and leaders) paired in the steadfast sign Taurus and Uranus and Neptune paired in Aquarius. During September 1999, all four will be retrograde, bringing an opportunity for introspection, for going over old ground to repair damage done, or to re-engage abandoned lines of activity—for better or for worse.

On 4 May 2000, all seven classical planets (Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn—all **but** the trans-Saturnian planets—will be in the sign Taurus. Then, on 28 May 2000, Jupiter and Saturn begin a new 20-year cycle while forming a confrontive square to Uranus, the planet of revolution and social transformation.(14)

What is decided then, between the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction of May 2000 and the first of the new series of exact Neptune-Pluto septiles during December 2001, will deeply condition future decades. It will decide how we move through the septile phase, where we will face the action of karma. Then we will either accept a more or less peaceful movement toward a global age of harmony and fullness or force Wholeness obstructed to assume a destructive aspect in order to open the way for a creative future.

For the past 100 years the trans-Saturnian triad of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto have been battering the walls of Saturn. Three times these galactic agents have coupled to challenge the heliocentric, nationalistic and materialistic mindsets that represent the flower of the classical age. The last Neptune-Pluto conjunction sowed the seed. The germ first stirred during the Uranus-Neptune conjunction of 1965-66 and the waning sextile of Neptune and Pluto during 1968. These years may be seen as a prelude of things to come and, in a different sense, past challenges inadequately met contributing much to today's exacerbated world situation. If we had boldly, consistently and earnestly faced the challenges of the 1960s **when they were first presented**, by now we might have developed alternative social instrumentalities and power sources, and by now we might have cast-off our antiquated mindsets.

Fortunately, we have been provided with the much needed larger frames of reference and an all-inclusive worldview upon which a global age of harmony and plenitude may be eventually founded. With the third of three—Uranus conjunct Neptune—behind us, we should ready ourselves for an irrevocable turning-point, for the most formidable of challenges, an ultimate moment of choice.

And so the question is: How are we meeting the threshold marking the perilous transition to a global society? Are we making ourselves fit to live in a new age? Are we ready and willing to take the next step ahead that will transform our chaotic world situation into a planetary society where plenitude will replace hunger in the face of conspicuous consumption, where cooperation will supersede competition, and where harmony will supplant conflict and war.

The moment approaches. Will we take the next step ahead? Not for ourselves, but for humanity as a whole.

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