

Some Notes on Cycles in a Time of Crisis ...

by Anne Whitaker

*Down from the gardens of Asia descending radiating,
Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny after
them,
Wandering, yearning, curious, with restless explorations.....
Ah who shall soothe these feverish children
Who justify those restless explorations?*

from "Passage to India" by Walt Whitman



Introduction

I love this quote: standing back and looking at world history in the large scale, it becomes clear that those 'restless explorations' are not in any way random: they are shaped by the large cycles of history as described by the planets in their orbits.

Furthermore, individuals who are 'plugged in' via their natal horoscopes to the degrees at which key planetary cycles end and begin – eg the 13 degrees Leo conjunction of Saturn and Pluto which occurred in the middle of August 1947, or the Jupiter Uranus conjunction of 5/6 degrees Aquarius in February 1997, are challenged to live out those 'chips' of planetary energy as major contributors to their lives' stories.

Also, the cycles belonging to those planetary combinations, eg the 33-38 year cycle of Saturn/Pluto or the 14-year cycle of Jupiter/Uranus, become of great significance in the unfolding pattern of their individual lives, as well as the human collective of which they are part.

In these notes, whilst briefly mentioning the larger overarching planetary cycles, I am focusing mainly on the cycles which are of **immediate** concern to us now, as we sit in the eye of a circling series of collective storms, contemplating an increasing threat to the long-term survival of planet Earth, our Mother as the biggest one. My aim is to provide those of you who are just beginning to get to grips with the larger, more complex – and fascinating! – dimensions of astrology beyond the merely personal with some initial perspectives hopefully to whet your appetites.

Turmoil: planetary, political, cultural, social...

Via the Extinction Rebellion movement sparked off by 16 year old Greta Thunberg this year, and David Attenborough's magisterial TV series Blue Planet, as we watch the rainforests burn and the polar ice caps melting, it is at last dawning on us all (although not, apparently, USA President Donald Trump...) that we need to do something both collectively and individually if we want a planet fit for our children and grandchildren to inhabit.

We also have political turmoil right across the globe of a more acute nature than 'conflict as usual': from the USA dealing with the 2016 election of Donald Trump and the consequences both national and global flowing from that, to China struggling to decide what to do with the determined rebellion of the people of Hong Kong not willing to part with their independence without an increasingly nasty confrontation, to an increasingly right-wing government in India and their brutal treatment of minorities, especially Muslims.

Mass migration of peoples fleeing from war and other desperate hardships into affluent Western countries has created huge instability politically, culturally, nationally and socially. There has been a distinct move to the Right in many countries affected by this influx who are increasingly unable to cope with the pressures put on at every level. The mood towards refugees and asylum seekers has increasingly been turning sour in recent years in those countries most affected.

Closer to home, we have the European Union's increasing exasperation and impatience as they – and the rest of the world who have looked to the UK as an exemplar of cool-headed democracy and respect for the rule of law – observe the UK's increasingly angry paralysis and turmoil.

Our politicians have proved themselves depressingly unable to deliver the now infamous Brexit voted for in June 2016 by a narrow 52/48 % majority of our population who are now (as I write this on 4.9.19) being forced to contemplate crashing out of the European Union without a deal – on Hallowe'en, of all dates.

This is a scenario which by all rational analysis – '*Project Fact, not Project Fear*' would create havoc economically, politically, and socially which would last for a very long time indeed, probably harming most grievously the most vulnerable of our citizens, whose vote to leave the EU can reasonably at least partly be seen as a massive angry protest against the policies of a Tory government which have hit the poorest in our communities the hardest.

My own small country of Scotland voted in the 2014 Independence Referendum by a 55/45% majority to remain in the United Kingdom, and in 2016 by a 62 % majority to remain in the European Union. However, recent UK Parliamentary events culminating in the recent election of Boris Johnston as UK Prime Minister (by his fellow Tories, not the UK public) a figure hugely unpopular in Scotland, is likely to tip the balance toward our holding a second Independence Referendum which might this time see us leave the UK.

Turmoil all round, indeed!

Cycles – and the perspective they can offer



I am not the only person at present who feels themselves to be sitting in the eye of a local, national, and collective storm. However, I am taking some comfort from a reasonable, if sketchy, grasp of the historical timeline of eg the last 2000 years. Humans have always gone through periods of greater than usual planetary, political, cultural, national and personal upheaval. Why should we in the comfortable West think ourselves exempt?

Also, as an astrologer, I can look at the great planetary cycles to offer me some perspective, some detachment. For example, the epoch-defining 500-year cycle of Neptune and Pluto – the last one took place in 1891/2 in Gemini, so we are less than one quarter of the way through that one! – ushered in a communications revolution whose consequences we are living out today in the shape of a world utterly changed since the 1890s. Chillingly, the most notable person 'plugged in' to that conjunction, whose actions led to the destruction of millions of lives, was Adolf Hitler, born just before the conjunction was exact, in 1889.

Earlier than that, the 172-year cycle of idealistic Neptune and revolutionary Uranus in Sagittarius saw the birth of Karl Marx, father of communism, just before its beginning in 1821 – and the death of the communist system, via the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, just before its ending in 1993. (We are now just beginning to observe the impact on our world of the generation born under this most recent Uranus/Neptune conjunction in Capricorn – a more idealistic, less materialist generation of young revolutionaries arising in a time of planetary crisis.)

Nearer our own time, during the 1960s, we had the symbolic dominance of the unruly, challenging and often violent Uranus/Pluto conjunction in Virgo, exact in the middle of that decade of the Vietnam War, protest, and political assassinations. Uranus/Pluto conjunctions bring sudden and radical changes... yet their full integration takes a very long time. We are still outworking the huge consequences of that classic Virgoan invention, the microchip, to give but one striking example.

Cycles right now...

It is not at all surprising that we find ourselves living right now through an era of exceptional turmoil and change at every level: there are three cycles in particular which reveal that reality very clearly in symbolic terms.

Firstly, let's take Pluto, Lord of the Underworld, purger, destroyer, transformer. His cycle is 248 years, and he is currently approaching the end of his long dredge through Capricorn, begun in 2007/8 with the near-collapse of the world's financial system. Since then, every major institution has had its flaws mercilessly exposed to the unforgiving eye of public scrutiny, the Roman Catholic Church and its sex abuse scandals being one striking example.

Pluto was last in Capricorn during 1762-1778 which saw the early beginnings of the Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions, and the start of humans exploiting the rich resources of Mother Earth to build a world-wide materialist culture whose cost to the planet is now having to be faced as that 248 year journey of Pluto from Capricorn through the whole zodiac and back to Capricorn, comes to an end with his entry into Aquarius in 2024.

The USA's founding Declaration of Independence on 4 July 1776 saw Pluto at 27.5 degrees of Capricorn. He returns to that degree in February and November 2022. If you thought your 29/30 year Saturn Return was a big deal – I certainly found mine and most of my clients' and students' to be so – I invite you to imagine what challenges its Pluto Return will bring to one of the most powerful nations on Earth...

Saturn joins Pluto – 12th January 2020

A quick Google search will reveal just how much discussion concerning this rather fearsome conjunction is taking place – as I said at the outset of this article, I am only providing notes as a scaffolding upon which to hang your own reflections. In essence, Saturn/Pluto lets us off with nothing, either personally or collectively. We are forced into increasingly tight corners, whilst the pressure is ramped up on us to face and deal with the present consequences of past decisions, some of which might not be of our direct making. The environmental crisis which has become so vivid this year with the Nodal Axis joining the dance of Saturn/Pluto throughout 2019, is a case in point.

To give a historical flavour, the last time Saturn and Pluto were conjunct in Capricorn was in 1518. The most famous event of that year is probably Martin Luther's refusal at the Diet of Worms to withdraw his powerful critique of the Catholic Church – supposedly nailed in the form of 95 theses to the church door at Wittenberg, Germany on Hallowe'en 1517 (...has Boris Johnson been taking notes re the UK's supposed Hallowe'en departure from the European Union in 2019, one wonders, especially regarding the radical consequences in the shape of the Protestant Reformation and its aftermath which flowed from Luther's actions on that earlier Hallowe'en?...).



It is highly indicative of a changing world order, of movement into a radically different way of living on Planet Earth, that Saturn's movement away from Pluto during the course of 2020 sees him enter Aquarius in December 2020, just a few years before Pluto is due to enter that sign in 2024. However, he does not make that shift alone: he does it in Jupiter's company as they make their first conjunction, at 0 degrees Aquarius, since 2000 when they met at 23 degrees Taurus.

An 800 + years event

The Jupiter/Saturn cycle has always been considered of paramount importance in shaping the course of history: Baigent, Campion and Harvey in "Mundane Astrology" describe it as

... the ground base of human development which marks the interaction between perception of ideas, potentialities (Jupiter) and their manifestation in the concrete world. (Saturn) (p. 184)

However, this upcoming meeting of theirs at 0 Aquarius is no ordinary 20-year event. The last time the conjunction occurred in Aquarius, at 3 degrees of that sign, was in 1226 AD – roughly 800 years ago, when it remained in the air element until its last conjunction there in 1405. That long period saw classical knowledge largely lost to Europe during the Dark Ages flow back, via the vital influence of the Muslim

world in preserving and disseminating texts which would otherwise have been lost to history, leading to the flowering of the Renaissance and later the powerful challenges to the hegemony of the Catholic Church via the Reformation – movements which would change the world.

Their elemental tenancies are *roughly* as follows – with overlaps, which mean that the conjunctions occupy each element in total for around 240 years:

1000 - 1200 AD: Earth
1200 - 1400 AD: Air (beginning with 3 Aquarius in 1226)
1400 - 1600 AD: Water
1600 - 1800 AD: Fire
1800 - 2000 AD: Earth
2000 - 2200 AD: Air (beginning with 0 Aquarius in 2020)

To quote from “Mundane Astrology” again (p. 185)

... the transition of the conjunction from one element to another – the ‘Mutation Conjunction’ – has always been considered to be of particular importance marking a major shift in emphasis and orientation in the world...

In conclusion...

Collectively we have been seeing an increasing emphasis on the air element, and the sign of Aquarius in particular, in the last twenty years or so: Uranus moved through Aquarius from 1995-2003, overlapping with Neptune’s tenancy there from 1998-2011. Scientific advances have seen amazing strides in those years, amongst them the appearance of Dolly the Sheep, the world’s first cloned animal in 1997, the mapping of the human genome in 2000, the first iPhone in 2007, and finding the Higgs Boson particle in 2012; no, the CERN Large Hadron Collider hasn’t blown up the world – yet!

Most significantly, there has been the arrival and blossoming of the Internet and attendant social media via Facebook, Twitter, etc: the most stunning world-changing shift for both good and ill since 1776. In that year, the Scottish engineer James Watt and his business partner, Matthew Boulton, installed two steam engines with separate condensers, a vast improvement on Newcomen’s original steam engine, for industrial use in England. This hugely accelerated the progress of the Industrial Revolution. That date of 1776 may also register as being of significance for our USA readers, being their Declaration of Independence year!

The slow, punishing grind of Pluto through Capricorn from the financial crisis of 2007/8 to the current stark confrontation with the consequences of our collective actions – symbolically provided by Saturn/Pluto this year – has been a wake-up call for us all. As the exact conjunction looms in January 2020, along with a crucial USA election later that year which may see the re-election of climate change denier Donald Trump, the planetary symbols through Time’s great cycles show the old materialist order slowly coming to a messy, turbulent end – an order which has dominated all life on this planet since the Jupiter/Saturn duo’s journey through the element of Earth began as the Industrial Revolution was taking off around 200 years ago.

As the authors of “Mundane Astrology” put it in their seminal book, we are standing on the cusp of

... a major shift in emphasis and orientation in the world...

We can expect more stunning scientific leaps forward, and new ways for the human community to organise itself in the next two hundred years, as we move into the Air era with the Jupiter/Saturn conjunction at 0 degrees Aquarius in 2020, followed by Pluto’s shift into that sign in 2024. Let’s hope we can use our ingenuity and our interconnectedness in this epoch arising, to find methods of organising our communities which no longer depend on destroying the Earth upon which we all stand.