

# StarGates: Planetary Portals and Windows in Time

by Ray Grasse



In his book *The Invention of Air: A Story of Science, Faith, Revolution, and The Birth of America*, writer Steven Johnson explores the life and mind of scientist Joseph Priestley (1733-1804). As part of his study, Johnson points out the extraordinary streak of research and pioneering work Priestley undertook between the years 1767 and 1775. Besides making two groundbreaking scientific discoveries, that streak included publishing major papers on electricity, inventing new apparatuses for the creation of electrical charge, isolating and naming ten distinct gases (sparking a revolution in chemistry in the process), and writing more than fifty books and pamphlets on politics, education, and faith.

And if those weren't enough, he also invented soda water.

Reflecting on that extraordinary run of achievements, Johnson then asks the reader to consider the question of not just *what* happened, but *why*:

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*Intellectual historians have long wrestled with the strangeness of this kind of streak. The thinker plods along, publishing erratically making incremental progress, and then, suddenly—the floodgates open and a thousand interesting ideas seem to pour out. It's no mystery that there are geniuses in the world, who come into life with innate cognitive skills that are nurtured and provoked by cultural environments over time. It's not hard to understand that these people are smarter than the rest of us, and thus tend to come up with a disproportionate share of the Big Ideas. The mystery is why, every now and again, one of these people seems to get a hot hand.*

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"Hot hand," indeed. What explains why certain historical periods are times when important new ideas burst onto the scene in profusion, not just for single individuals but society as a whole, almost as if a dam had burst and creative works in various fields flooded through into and transforming the culture?

Not too surprisingly, astrology offers some possible answers to such questions. As even a cursory study of history shows, the movements of the heavens coincide in a variety of intriguing ways with cultural developments down here on Earth. But while there are any number of celestial patterns which appear to accompany significant developments in society, it's clear that configurations involving the outer, slower-moving planets—Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto—play an especially important role in opening up those "portals," when novel ideas, creative works, and inventions flow more readily and frequently into global consciousness.

One of the advantages of having lived through a number of decades is the chance to witness, first-hand, a variety of significant planetary configurations involving the slow-movers. Among other things, it's allowed me to sense the way there's definitely something "in the air" when these bodies join forces; such periods seeming "richer" somehow, more pregnant with possibility for better or worse, not just creatively but scientifically, politically, even spiritually. It's almost as though the proverbial veil between worlds thins during such times, allowing us access to the energies, ideas and feelings of non-ordinary states of consciousness, possibly even other dimensions.

In previous articles and books I've written about a number of these periods from history, including the epic conjunction of Uranus and Neptune that took place during the early 1990s. Among other things, this was a time when global culture was turning its attention to more alternate forms of spirituality along with an assortment of unconventional subjects that included explorations of the paranormal and the possibility of extraterrestrial civilizations. TV shows like the "X-Files," "Sightings," and "Star Trek: Next Generation" became hugely popular during this time while, in the real world, the Hubble Telescope was literally giving us access to other previously unknown worlds.

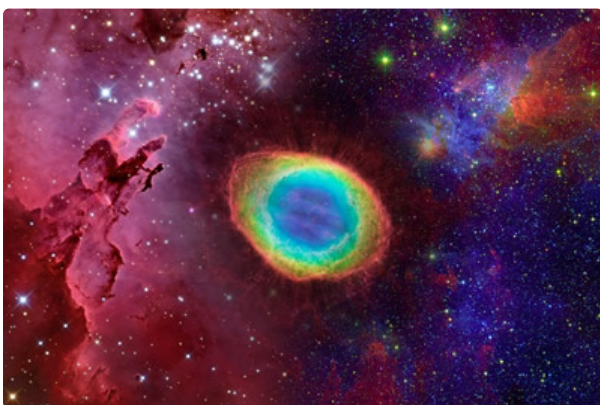
But I'd like to turn my attention to one event in particular from that period which struck me as an especially telling symbol for the development I'm describing here. I'm referring to the blockbuster Sci-Fi movie *Stargate*, which premiered near the height of that planetary conjunction, in 1994, and featured at its center a technology that served as a portal through which individuals could travel the cosmos: the so-called "stargate" of the movie's title.

By stepping through this unusual device—highlighted by various celestial symbols along its metallic rim—individuals were transported to distant worlds instantaneously. The fact that this cinematic image emerged into popular culture exactly at the peak of this planetary configuration struck me as deeply synchronistic in the way it coincided with what was happening astrologically. Under the influence of those outer planetary forces, it really did seem as though a portal was opening up in the collective consciousness, enabling us to access other worlds of being.



(The synchronicities didn't end there, by the way. In the movie's narrative, the "other worlds" opened up by this device were distinctly Egyptian in nature. As it so happened, the early 90s was likewise a time when Egypt-related topics became hugely popular in both mainstream and alternative circles. Just one year earlier, John Anthony West's provocative TV special "Mystery of the Sphinx" drew huge ratings for NBC, and books, magazines and TV shows on ancient Egypt sold like wildfire throughout the entire 90s. Among the more controversial books of the period was Adrian Gilbert and Robert Bauval's controversial tome *The Orion Mystery*, which suggested that the three main pyramids on Egypt's Giza Plateau were intentionally positioned to reflect the three main stars of the belt of Orion. - As it turned out, coincidentally enough, that same constellation occupied a key place along the rim of the aforementioned device featured in the *Stargate* film. - Indeed, it seems as though Uranus/Neptune conjunctions are archetypally related to Egypt-related interests in a more general way. I say that because the previous time those two planets came together, during the early 1820s, it was likewise a period when interest in ancient Egypt reached a fever pitch, climaxing in arguably the most important development in all of modern Egyptology: the deciphering of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics by the French scholar Jean-François Champollion in 1821.)

To my mind that cinematic image of the stargate not only seemed like an apt metaphor for what was happening throughout that period but for what happens during *any* period involving major configurations between the outer planets. During such times, it's as though a tear in the fabric between worlds opens up, to the extent that we even see a notable surge of interest in spiritualism, mediumship and "channeling," where individuals attempt to communicate with spirits on the other side, a trend that flourished during both the 1890s and 1990s.



Now, the early 1990s involved an alignment of just *two* bodies, Uranus and Neptune, just as the alignment of the 1890s also involved only two bodies, Pluto and Neptune. So it's natural to wonder, what sort of effect would we expect to see if *all three* of the outer planets were to form a major configuration? What kind of "mega-portal" in consciousness would *that* create?

In fact, we have several examples of that from history to study—and they're dramatic indeed. As one example, consider the fact that Uranus, Neptune and Pluto moved into an extremely rare "Grand Trine" during the years

1769 and 1770. Did anything important happen during that period? Aside from that being the era which paved the way for the American and French Revolutions, those two years saw the birth of such towering cultural figures as Beethoven, Napoleon, Hegel, and Alexander von Humboldt.

As one way to think about a period like this, consider how the outer planets carve out exceptionally broad orbits in space, far beyond the boundaries defined by the visible inner planets. Looking at it this way offers a helpful analogy for how the outer planets symbolize larger, more generational concerns beyond strictly personal realms of experience. With that in mind, note how each of the four individuals I cited born during that Grand Trine expressed uniquely broad visions in their work, with a predilection for

especially "big ideas." In the case of Beethoven, those ideas were musical in nature; for Hegel, they were philosophical and historical; for Napoleon, they involved broad social reforms and military conquests (extremely bloody ones, alas); while for von Humboldt, that "bigness" manifested in the scope of his extraordinary travels and scientific speculations. It's also worth mentioning that 1769 and 1770 also saw the birth of poet William Wordsworth and the German writer Friederich Holderlin, while in 1770 Captain James Cook became the first European to set foot on the continent of Australia, thus inaugurating a turbulent new phase in the life of that continent and its peoples.

But it's also important to point out those two years happened to coincide precisely with the creative "portal" I opened up this article with, when Joseph Priestly experienced his astonishing run of scientific achievements. So when writer Steven Johnson pondered what might account for the "hot hand" Priestley experienced at that time, he might well have considered the role played by astrology!

Even comparatively modest configurations involving these three outer planets can pack a formidable punch of their own. For instance, in the early 1940s those bodies moved into a somewhat less dramatic configuration when Uranus formed a trine to Neptune, and those two bodies in turn formed a sextile to Pluto. Although this was a time of considerable turmoil, happening as it did in the midst of World War II, this was also a period of extraordinary cultural ferment in cinema, literature, and music. To cite just one area, consider some of the influential pop musical figures born during this outer planet trifecta: Joni Mitchell, Mick Jagger, George Harrison, Jimmy Page, Barbara Streisand, Brian Wilson, Paul McCartney, Jimi Hendrix, and Keith Richards. In fact, Joseph Priestly was himself born during a configuration involving these three planets, albeit of a slightly different sort: when he was born on March 13, 1733, Neptune was opposing Uranus, with Pluto in turn aspecting those two. In short, it's not necessarily just the so-called "harmonious" aspects between the three outers that can give rise to influential time-windows or individuals.

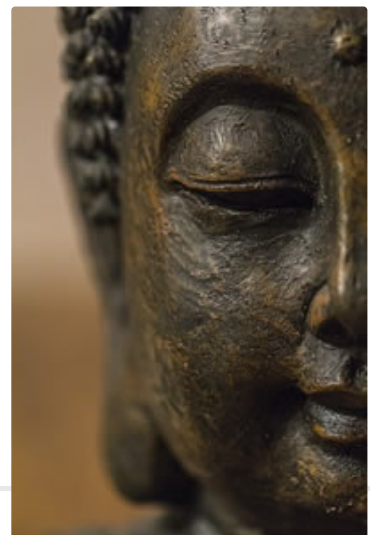
But if any configuration involving the three outer planets would logically seem to be important, that would seem to be the conjunction, when the energies of planets join forces in extremely tight proximity. Have these three slow-movers ever joined up in that way?

As a matter of fact, there was one such period—indeed, it was the only time in all of recorded history that we know of, and it took place during the 6th century BCE. In the five decades between the 590s and the 550s BCE, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto came into close alignment, and it was an occurrence so rare it won't take place again until the year 3370 AD. This was a time that philosopher and astrologer Richard Tarnas referred to as "historically unprecedented and still unparalleled." He goes on to write:

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*These decades constituted the very heart of the axial age that brought forth the birth of many of the world's principal religions and spiritual traditions. This was the age of Buddha, bringing the birth of Buddhism in India, of Mahavira and Jainism in India, of Lao-Tsu and the birth of Taoism in China, which was followed a decade later by the birth of Confucius, Lao-Tsu's younger contemporary. This same epoch coincided with that sudden wave of major prophets in ancient Israel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the second Isaiah, through whom a deep transformation in the Judaic image of the divine and understanding of human history was forged, one that is still evolving. In this same era the Hebrew scriptures were first compiled and redacted. The traditional dating for the immensely Zoroaster and the birth of Zoroastrianism in Persia, though still elusive to historians, has long centered on the sixth century. 2*

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Into that time frame we could also insert the names of such important figures as King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the Greek philosophers Thales and Anaximander, the first great lyric poet of Western culture Sappho, and even Pythagoras, who was born during this era. This wasn't simply an important period in history, in other words, it may well be the *single most important period in all of recorded history*, in terms of seismic cultural developments that would leave a lasting imprint on world culture for centuries or even millennia to come.

# The Personal and the Collective

As should be obvious, not every individual alive during such historically potent periods responds as fully or creatively to the energies they offer up. What accounts for the way some individuals seem more attuned to their possibilities, while others are more oblivious to them?

Here again, astrology offers some useful answers. I've sometimes likened it to how elephants are able to hear certain frequencies inaudible to humans because of the longer wavelengths involved, which human ears can't detect. To my mind, that's analogous to the perception of subtle states associated with the outer planets: Uranus, Neptune and Pluto represent especially long "wavelengths of consciousness," as it were, which only certain individuals seem able to hear. What allows them to detect those subtle vibrations? Simply put, it has to do with how their horoscopes are attuned to those planets, whether through close aspects between personal planets and the outer bodies, or through the prominent placement of these slow-movers in the horoscope, such as conjuncting the Ascendant or Midheaven.

For example, take Beethoven and the outer planet Grand Trine that was in effect at his birth. When we look at his horoscope (December 16, 1770), we see several points of contact between his personal planets and the outer planets, including the fact his Moon formed a tight square to Neptune, while Venus was in a wide conjunction to Pluto—suggesting a more creative connection with the cosmic energies. Or in the case of Napoleon, born under the influence of that same Grand Trine, his Mars conjuncted the Neptune leg of that Grand Trine, suggesting his attunement to that generational energy was more militaristic in nature. Likewise, when we look at all of the influential pop music luminaries of the early 1940's I mentioned, such as Joni Mitchell, George Harrison, and Mick Jagger, we invariably find close contacts between personal planets and that outer planet triad.

In all these instances, in other words, we encounter that elephant-like ability to hear "broader wavelengths" of consciousness that involve larger swaths of humanity, rather than just the interests of isolated individuals or clans. In and of itself, that ability isn't either inherently positive or negative; after all, Napoleon and Hitler clearly had a capacity for "big ideas" with an attunement to global concerns, yet both of them left a trail of death and destruction behind. Whenever these planetary portals of consciousness open, they can unleash either angels or demons. Likewise, it's good to remember that the extraordinary energies of the late '60s not only gave us the Moon Landing and Woodstock but also Charles Manson and the tragic concert at Altamont.

In the end, only one thing seems certain: whenever these stargates open wide, the world is never quite the same again.