

Wrestle with Saturn, Flow with Pluto

By Linus Robison

All of us have an area of life where we feel restricted, limited and unable to throw off some great burden that holds us back. As well as corners of our mind that we seldom look at, but where we know the darker aspects of the psyche linger. In astrological terms, these two psychological components are represented by Saturn and Pluto, and if you know where these are placed within a person's chart, you know where they encounter issues in their life. Although every archetype has a negative and positive polarity that can be disruptive in their own way; Venus may express itself as lazy, the sun as arrogant etc. Pluto and Saturn represent uniquely difficult elements of the psyche to integrate and in every case require particular attention.

As such they are perhaps the most important elements to work with, as they house the crucial jewels of the psyche once integrated; power, passion, mastery and purpose. This article will discuss how to engage with these parts of the self and the different approach's each planet requires. The keynote is that Saturn is the conscious task that requires action, while Pluto is the unconscious task that must be trusted and accepted. The paternal Saturn energy wants to be wrestled with, stood up to and mastered. Whilst the maternal Plutonic force can not be treated in this way, it will damage you to the degree you resist and only by surrendering and trusting its transformative process will it become a friend who will bless your life.



Horus, standing on crocodiles

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Saturn

Saturn is the planet that activates the capricornian archetype in the psyche, and its highest role is to give our life structure and provide the discipline needed to achieve our life's purpose. In this sense it is referred to as 'the friend of the sun', it teaches us key life lessons, pushes us to master our craft and without its tough love, self actualisation is not possible. It is a vital part of the self, and without it our life would be void of purpose - this frame is always essential to keep in mind when handling Saturn, the more we can make it our friend the more meaning we will be filled with.

However harnessing these positive aspects of Saturn are not easy, as encounters with this archetype are painful and we shy away from its necessary but unpleasant lessons. To name a few of its negative qualities; doubt, depression, despair, pain, obstacles, punishment, delays and karma all factor in. The heightening of these feelings are the price we pay for trying to avoid the unavoidable. Saturn asks us to take upon ourselves the responsibility of that which we know is ours to bear, to carry a burden, to overcome our limitations, throw away excuses and face reality.

In the unintegrated self the pressure of this inner demand results in a tendency to run away from that area of life entirely, thus in Jungian terms Saturn represents The Shadow. It is the portion of ourselves that becomes repressed, maligned and unintegrated. The irony being that the greater it is repressed, the greater the influence it exerts on our life as it seeks attention through escalating knocks on the door. Saturn is the psychological tax collector who demands payment of the debt you owe for pretending that you can run away from your self selected duty to the world. All running away from it does is exhaust us until our fears finally catch up to us. Here we come to the frontier upon which Saturn must be faced; the overcoming of fear.

Wrestling Saturn

We have to be braver than we think we can be, because God is constantly calling us to be more than we are. — Madeleine L'Engle

A helpful metaphor through which to see Saturn's role in the psyche is the relationship between a stern father and his child. The father sets challenges which are outside the child's comfort zone, but within their abilities. He pushes them to extend their boundaries and grow comfortable in difficult situations. Soon enough what once seemed unendurable becomes bearable and situations which would have overwhelmed us in the past are able to be met with a practiced courage. This is the truth of Saturn; it hurts us only to make us stronger, and spur us to fulfil our potential. Saturn represents maturity - without its lessons we would remain perennial infants, children or teenagers.

However, the force it leverages to produce this essential effect are experienced as very unpleasant; fear, doubt and pressure. Saturn fills us with dread to do the very thing we are most called to do, and fills us with a sense of doubt in ourselves, whilst also creating the pressure that forces us toward this daunting mountain. The extent of this is such that fear can be used as a compass - the thing that most frightens us is the very thing we should attempt to do. Even the knights of King Arthur's round table start their search for the grail in the part of the forest that appears darkest to *them*. If you can identify the path which frightens you but exerts a profound gravity and pull, then you are at the foot of the mountain you must climb.

Once there, the fear does not go away, it must be wrestled with anew each day - you must make a habit of being courageous. You will squirm with discomfort, looking for any way out, and filled with a sense of inevitable failure - such is the way Saturn gives us our test. Saturn will try to wrestle you, and you must wrestle it back.

Here we can use the Cardinal cross on which Saturn dwells to see the challenge, solution and effect.

When responsibilities (Capricorn) are not met we find ourselves in a routine of procrastination (Libra), moodiness (Cancer) and stabs of restless panic (Aries). This leads to the three D's of a disharmonised Saturn: Doubt, Despair and Depression. What is needed is the bravery to push through the fear (Aries), a habit of facing them (Cancer) and the reward of pleasure once we have done so (Libra). This will harmonise the demands of Saturn, leaving us with a sense of fulfilled purpose (Capricorn), ease and harmony (Libra), renewed self worth (Cancer) and vigour (Aries). With Saturn, the way out is through. Fight it back and as a loving father does to a brave child, he will smile at you with pride.

Pluto

Pluto is a darker, more mysterious force and in Jungian terms represents the Collective Unconscious. With Saturn we become painfully aware of our insufficiency in the area of life that it affects, it's the proverbial 'soft spot'. We get the feeling that if only this thorn could be pulled from our side, if only we could remedy this inadequacy, all our potential might be realised. This is in contrast to the mysterious lurking quality of Pluto that lies just below the surface of our awareness, and is felt with an ominous sense of being overwhelmed by compulsive feeling until it explodes into a crisis. Pluto represents on the highest level our personal evolutionary task in this lifetime. It contains what we currently are not and are called to become through a process of transformation. Thus we aren't fully conscious of all that this



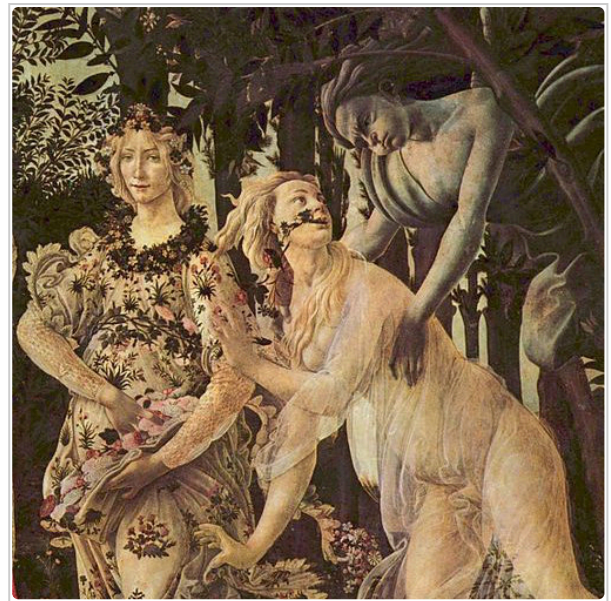
Saturn devouring his children

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portion of our psyche contains, it is locked off from us, influencing us unknowingly. It is the point on the zodiac where coal turns into a diamond and caterpillars turn to butterflies. Though it is also one of the most challenging archetypes to handle.

The difficulty with Pluto is twofold. The first is that it carries with it the elements of the human consciousness we would most like to forget about, expunge or limit to a demonised subset of the population. Pluto's house is where the darkness gets in. It's where those feelings of envy, cynicism, resentment, humiliation, wrath or cruelty crawl their way into our awareness. These feelings are so offensive to our sense of self and so culturally unacceptable that when they appear in our psyche (and they appear in every adult psyche) we do all we can to deny or eliminate them.

The second issue is that the process through which Pluto forces us to evolve is destructive. The snake eats its own tail and the trees let dead leaves fall for new ones to sprout. Personal evolution is not a pretty process, it means nothing less than the death of the old so that new creation is possible within the space created. The outcome is that we do not lose what we think we will lose, in fact we become more authentic and alive as we volunteer those blockages and limitations to be cleansed out. But change is terrifying, it can feel like annihilation; and our resistance only worsens and prolongs the process. Thus to sit with the darkness inside and to allow the transformative process to take place is enormously difficult and an experience we usually get dragged into kicking and screaming.



Primavera

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Flowing With Pluto

Everyone has talent (Taurus). What's rare (Aquarius) is the courage (Leo) to follow it to the dark places where it leads (Pluto). — Erica Jong

Just as Saturn can be anthropomorphised as the Father to better understand what it asks of us, the same can be done to Pluto, which as the feminine counterpart is best approached as a Cosmic Mother. You don't argue with your archetypal Mother, you don't struggle or talk back. You do as she says and trust that she has your best interests at heart. Pluto is concerned with our personal evolution, with making us more than we are now or have ever been. This is the force through which a child becomes an adult, a tyrant becomes a King or foolish ideas get shaped into wisdom. Pluto embodies the truth that we are not beings who are set in a permanent way, we are fundamentally beings of transformation. Whether slowly over decades or rapidly after the onset of a crisis, we are constantly being reshaped and never return to a previous form. The ouroboros, the snake that eats its own tail, is not so much an abstract concept as an image that represent our true nature.

This is where the way in which we encounter Pluto is critical, for whether these changes wash away our limitations and leave us authentic and inspired or fill us with resentment and cynicism depends on how we manage this relationship. The struggle with Pluto, which is just as difficult in its passivity as wrestling Saturn in its activity, is to accept. Accept that things we treasured and attachments we have, be them to things, people, ideas, careers, homes or anything else have a finite lifespan. These things are brought into our life not to possess, but to experience. When these experiences have been had, they must be given up so that new ones can be created. What we generally experience as death and destruction can be embraced as change and creation if we have the will to accept it and we trust in the Universal creative force, the Cosmic Mother, to provide for us. The essence of this idea is captured beautifully by William Blake in his four line poem 'Eternity':

*He who binds to himself a joy,
Does the winged life destroy,
He who kisses the joy as it flies,
Lives in eternity's sunrise.*

If analysed through the lens of archetypal language, one can see that Blake intuitively sees these archetypal interactions perfectly and captures the contrast between the harmonised and de-harmonised Fixed cross.

De-harmonised Fixed Cross:

He who binds to himself (Taurus) a joy (Leo)
Does the winged life (Aquarius) destroy (Pluto)

Harmonised Fixed Cross:

He who kisses (Taurus) the joy (Leo) as it flies (Aquarius)
Lives in eternity's sunrise (The vital Leo, tranquil Taurus, eternal Scorpio, insightful Aquarius)

This is how it is with the Cosmic Mother. If we cling to what we have been given out of the fear that letting go means blessings will never come again, we cut ourselves off from the natural flow of life. Then Pluto must come along and break up our self constructed dam so that the river may move again. We may experience this as unjust destruction, but it is the logical consequence for clinging too tightly and not trusting in the Universe to provide for us. Instead we must love what we have while we have it, and when it leaves, allow it to do so gracefully. If we can accept this, we begin to move in the flow of life, where all creation takes place.

This is how we must accept the first Pluto issue, however there is a second form of acceptance that must be practiced. The acceptance of who we are. What this means is to quit waging war on or repressing the parts of ourselves that we find ugly or shameful and wish to extinguish. The playwright August Wilson captures this archetypal interplay well when he states;

Confront the dark parts of yourself (Pluto), and work to banish them with illumination (Aquarius) and forgiveness (Pisces). Your willingness to wrestle with your demons (Leo) will cause your angels (Aquarius) to sing (Taurus).

Where with Saturn we must wrestle it in order to overcome our fear, with Pluto to wrestle it is to bear to embrace it as a part of yourself. To wrestle with our concept of who we are is to open our eyes to all that we are, including the darker elements of the collective unconscious that we form a part of. The goal is not to annihilate aspects of the self, but to raise them into our awareness. For on the inner level, Pluto provides the material for the expansion of consciousness, and this occurs through bringing the light of awareness to the dark corners of the psyche. The more this is done, the less influence those elements hold over you, and thus by accepting them you free yourself from their compulsion. This leads to the breakthrough of our talents, for the treasure is always locked behind a door we are terrified to open. As we gain the bravery to overcome our fears, and the trust to accept transformation within our lives we become free and vitalised. These are the challenges which are posed to us, and it is in their answering our purpose unfolds before us.