

# Pluto: Rooting Out Our Deepest Problems (Revised Repost)

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When I began to study astrology in 1970, the existence of Pluto had been known to astronomers (and astrologers) for only 40 years. Its symbolism in astrology, however, was already well-established, if not yet fully refined. Pluto's astrological meanings included emotional intensity, psychological extremism, behavioral dominance or submission, obsession-compulsion, absolutist attitudes or fanatical beliefs, radical change, profound endings and beginnings, and death-experiences followed (sometimes) by phoenix-like risings from the ashes. Plutonian eruptions emerge usually after a long period of invisible build-up, such as occurs within the magma chamber of an active volcano. Symbolically, Plutonian "transformations" are provoked by confrontations with irresistible power — either psychological disruption, like earthquakes from the personal unconscious, or literally circumstantial challenges, when force majeure in the collective is arrayed against an individual life.

One example of such a confrontation could be the state dictating confiscation through forced sale of an individual's home under the eminent domain laws concerning private property requisitioned for public works. A less tangible example might be the long-term repercussions of obsessive-compulsive drives and habits in a person's life, where we meet the one seemingly insurmountable enemy — ourselves. The most classic Plutonian events involve the end of a path of experience through the death of a relationship. Sometimes that means the actual death of a partner, family member, or beloved, but more often it takes the form of symbolic rather than literal death through dissolution of the partnership and formal separation of the partners.

Any significant ending involving a radical change in status can apply: retirement from a career, last visit to a cherished vacation spot, emigration to a new country, even release from prison. The method here is not invariably the deterioration of good situations to bad. The change could just as easily be from bad to good, for improvements can be as disorienting as downturns. The piously puritanical minister caught with the hooker in his hotel room is certainly a Plutonian fall from grace, but so is the trailer park single mother lottery-winner whose life is turned upside down overnight. What Pluto assassinates is our habitual expectation that reality will be — and stay — a certain way. The

prisoner who has adjusted to years of incarceration with all its regimented rules may be profoundly disturbed by his parole or release back to the relative freedom of outside society, where the rules are unclear and freedom may be felt as nauseating chaos. In these ironic twists, Pluto reveals its love of the strange and perverse. Normalcy is not a Plutonian realm.

Now, another 53 years has passed since 1970. Sweeping advances and innumerable discoveries in astronomy have resulted in Pluto's demotion from a full planet to the reduced status of a "dwarf" planet, while elevating Pluto's moon Charon to the same level of dwarf. The two bodies are now often considered a binary object or double dwarf. This change in designation was chosen for various reasons, including more accurate assessments of Pluto's mass (only 1/20th that of Mercury) and the presence of a whole class of other similar Kuiper Belt Objects (KBOs), now called Plutinos. Turns out that Pluto is not the final planet in the system, but the doorway to a whole new class of planetary objects located far from the Sun, out on the fringes of the solar system. They move in a perpetual night-time.

Similarly, those five decades since 1970 have refined my understanding of Pluto, largely through the direct experience of doing 13,000 astrological sessions with individuals. Such anecdotal experience is admittedly not scientific, but it gives me a unique professional database that goes far beyond the typical textbook recitation of Plutonian meanings.

For instance, I know now that in natal astrology Pluto often operates as a psychological blind spot. Individuals frequently cannot recognize or "feel" their own Pluto positions, although others outside the individual both see and feel the expressions of that person's Plutonian intensity. This is a kind of hide-and-seek where the ego isn't able to perceive or acknowledge expression of the unconscious directly into the outer world without the ego's mediation.

When we are young, we are more likely to discover our Plutos intellectually, through study of our charts and/or conversation with those who know us well. Thus, we learn vicariously that we are more intense, dominant, extreme, or obsessive in certain arenas of life (houses occupied and ruled by our natal Pluto, or planets in major aspect to that natal Pluto). Later in life, direct experience becomes the Plutonian teacher, but even then we may not fully realize our own intensity and extremism in certain realms of life. Our personal unconscious sometimes remains invisible and mysterious, at least to ourselves.

Similarly, important Pluto transits do not manifest uniformly in the lives of individuals. Especially during youth and young adulthood, they may not manifest at all, or, at least, not with the sheer force of eruption that tends to occur later in life. When Pluto transits are eruptive during childhood, the corresponding events are often associated with the family or parents rather than with the child. In addition, I have found no chart factors that accurately and reliably predict when

in the first half of a life Pluto transits will manifest fully, partially, or not at all. While I may have a hunch about this with some clients during certain Pluto transits, with other clients during other Pluto transits it's a complete crapshoot.

Memory can be more selective than manifestation. I've asked many clients what happened in their lives during important Plutonian periods. Admittedly, these periods are sometimes decades past, and people can be forgiven for not having instant recall of specific years. Still, when I ask clients what happened during say, the three-year period of 1991-1994, the response of silence on the other end of the phone that I often get is slightly disconcerting. Even more disconcerting, however, was my receiving an email the next day from that same client, informing me that once she thought about those years for awhile, she remembered "a couple" of major events: 1. death of both her parents, one right after the other, 2. a miscarriage she had the next year, followed by 3. her marriage ending in divorce, and then finally 4. a move from one coast to the other to begin a new job. Oh my. This is what she couldn't remember when asked directly. And, let me assure you, men are as likely as women to forget crucial events in their pasts.

Curiously enough, while that hypothetical example may seem extreme, it is not rare. About one in four of my clients has some trouble recalling periods of profound Plutonian change. Apparently, something in us does not like cataclysmic change in our lives, which are better banished from instant recall to the cold storage of deep memory banks. It's as if we sometimes hide those memories from ourselves to minimize our trauma. Other times, the opposite is true. We may obsess over certain occurrences in our lives, unable to reconcile them or let go and move on.

The last special insight I'd like to include here is critical: In some textbooks, Plutonian change through the death-rebirth process is made even more important through the addition of finality, (or at least the sense of a full and complete ending) as if Pluto were the ultimate step in life's rich drama, the last stop on our journey of evolution. But, as we saw in the astronomical revision of Pluto's status from last planet to doorway into a new class of objects, that is not invariably true.

Plutonian change may feel final during the death phase, where the devastation to one's identity can seem total, but then turns out to be just the ending of a chapter within the larger story. Even the rebirth phase is not infallible, and when it does occur, that phoenix-like "rise from the ashes" may take longer and progress much more slowly than most people would like. In reality, Plutonian transformation is only one more phase in the evolutionary chain. A big one, obviously, but hardly a final one.

This idea is relevant to civilizational astrology in a direct way that immediately opens to fan across a broad spectrum of realization. Pluto is not the end of the

road, but is instead a gateway into new and kaleidoscopic possibilities for consciousness to operate. Welcome to the Kuiper Belt. Rather than our last chance to get something right, Pluto may indeed represent our first chance to shine light into the darkness to illuminate what's been buried in our unconscious, both personally and collectively, in the form of simplistic misunderstandings and wrong-headed assumptions, whether they were coded in our genes or shaped by our social beliefs.

Like a truffle-rooting pig, Pluto finds and reveals the most powerful facets of human potential. As with a Geiger counter, Pluto registers our symbolic or psychological radioactivity. Unconcerned with morality and human conceptions of right and wrong, Pluto searches only for potency, highlighting whatever it finds — good or evil, light or dark, beautiful or ugly. Unlike other, more circumscribed or civilized planetary symbols, Pluto is uniquely endowed to teach us about ourselves by revealing what we are capable of doing (both good and bad) — to ourselves, to each other, and to life around us. Society, which has taken over from bio-genetics as the engine driving human evolution, must then use that knowledge to reevaluate different parts of the human psyche. It may encourage or discourage certain qualities and/or values. For instance, we need no further encouragement of human aggression, since civilization already expresses more than we can handle of that quality.

As we teeter on the brink of self-annihilation, I daresay that not one of the inherent, core problems of humanity has yet been addressed by modern civilization. The 13-year transit square between Uranus and Pluto (2007-2020) certainly challenged the existing order and re-shuffled the deck, but its main effect was to take us much further down the road toward the elites becoming all-powerful and the rest of us being disenfranchised. Remember during the mid-1960s when J. Paul Getty was the world's only billionaire? Now, there are 2,640 billionaires in the world. That doesn't bode well for any practical equality in wealth distribution.

If the most powerful Uranus-Pluto alignment in more than 1,000 years wasn't able to bring out something better in us than we've seen so far in the 21st century, then I have no hope at all for an astrological event as relatively milquetoast and generic as Pluto's recent entry into the zodiacal sign Aquarius. Rather than the renewal of viable community, Pluto in Aquarius is more likely to give us A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) up the wazoo.

But maybe I'm wrong. Perhaps the coming Plutonian collapse will actually change our course as the phoenix rises from its own ashes. Who can tell right now? Finally, every prediction about our collective future, no matter how cogent and well-informed it seems, is mere speculation more than inspired insight — just another story we tell ourselves about ourselves.