

# The Fade-Out of the Saturn-Neptune Square

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In August of 2016, during the dog days of the U.S. Presidential campaign, I wrote and posted a commentary entitled "The Saturn-Neptune Square of 2015-2017." The theme of that essay was that the Presidential campaign and election were being held at a time when illusions and realities were so entwined that we couldn't tell them apart.

Saturn is hard realities — not necessary ultimate truths, but solid, pragmatic, verifiable *facts* that constitute a reality-based approach to experience. Saturn is distinct and particular (clearly separating *this* from *that*), as well as unemotional and unsentimental. In other words, Saturn has firm and often hard boundaries. Saturn says, "***This*** is reality, and ***that*** isn't."

Neptune, on the other hand, is indistinct and generalized (erasing the clear boundaries between *this* and *that*). It's also a deeply emotional archetype based on beliefs rather than facts. Neptune is an archetype of ultimates and universals. This is the realm of ideals, hopes, dreams, fantasies, worries, fears, and all the illusions that go with them. These include the quest for spiritual reunion or aesthetic perfection (yearnings that are definitely part of our nature, but which usually turn out to be beyond our reach as animals in bodies), to secrets that are either hidden from view or, just as often, hidden in plain sight, and the lies — whether inadvertent or intentional — that shield those secrets and keep them obfuscated. With Neptune, nothing is ever quite what it seems. Almost always, there's more going on than meets the eye, and appearances can be deceiving.

I'm not suggesting that Saturn is "good," while Neptune is "bad." Every astrological symbol has positive and negative correspondences, meaning possibilities we like, and other possibilities we don't like. Saturn represents maturity and long-term success through sustained effort, but it also symbolizes abject failure and painful rejection. Neptune can be inspirational and highly creative, but it can also be cruelly deceptive.

Saturn and Neptune have a 36-year cycle. Roughly every nine years, we come to another quarterly phase change in the Saturn-Neptune cycle. Each time that happens, we see correspondences and manifestations in civilization that reflect

the inherent paradoxes and/or conflicts of these two very antagonistic archetypes. What seems to be real during the transitions may turn out later in hindsight to be distinctly unreal.

Human perception and interpretation of hard reality is, of course, *always* affected by our various non-realities, including beliefs, fantasies, illusions, philosophies, dreams, and other factors from the realm of imagination. Our biological hard wiring makes that inevitable. But astrology holds that when Saturn and Neptune are aligned — especially at the quarterly transitions of their shared cycle, and most problematically during the two perpendicular alignments that occur at the second and fourth quarter transitions — the boundaries between reality and fantasy are likely to be erased to a much greater extent than normal, resulting in confused thinking, misperception, and opinions not grounded in fact.

The current Saturn-Neptune cycle began in October 1988 through December 1990. The most obvious historical correspondence noted time and again by astrologers that occurred synchronously with the birth of this cycle of “new collective dreams” was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the presumed death of communism, which ushered in a period of extreme celebration for capitalism. Both the collapse of the USSR and the astrological conditions at the time were much more complicated than merely the onset of the current Saturn-Neptune cycle, however, and much that has transpired since then has muddied the waters of capitalism’s apparent “victory.”

For instance, the “peace dividend” that was supposed to occur because of the end of the 40-year Cold War never materialized. What we have instead is endless new wars. In addition, the great increase in wealth that was predicted from capitalism’s “productivity” being unopposed has gone mostly to the wealthy. Meanwhile the middle and lower economic classes have slipped down a significant number of rungs on the ladder. Wealth disparity has never been greater and gives no signs of abating. We seem to be headed toward the re-creation of Middle Ages feudalism, with a tiny percentage of Lords and a huge population of Indentured Serfs.

How much of this can be laid at the feet of the Saturn-Neptune cycle? Some, perhaps, especially in the religious conflicts of our times, but many factors led us down this rocky road. Life is complicated, and so is astrology. Finally, we are where we are because we weren’t smart or wise enough to avoid it and arrive somewhere better.

Now, almost three decades after the early 1990s, we have entered the last quarter of the current Saturn-Neptune cycle. The last-quarter transition in every astrological cycle is analogous to the change from autumn to winter. In much the same way that autumn in temperate climates closes out in a burst of glorious colors as the leaves turn, after which they quickly pale, die, and fall to the ground as winter sets in, so the reality correspondences implied by astrological

cycles at that same phase change go over the top in brilliance just before dying away.

The precise timing of the last-quarter transition in the current Saturn-Neptune cycle, where Saturn has been 90° behind Neptune, occurred in a three-pass transit from November 2015 through September of 2016. Using a 10° orb, however, the *effective* period of the transit extends another year on either side, from **November 2014 through September 2017**.

In other words, we've been living through a three-year period where illusions challenged and in many ways dominated realities. Fact and fiction have intertwined in a very seductive way, and we've seen an unprecedented explosion of "fake news," where lies are presented as truths. In addition, the number of people who are confused in their thinking has been much greater than normal. In general during this period, people have been much more susceptible to any propaganda narrative that reinforces or supports their own beliefs. Those beliefs may be reality-based or pure imagination, but the reasons offered in the political narratives to support them are often bogus, and sometimes downright looney-tunes. Millions of people believe those lies, however, because Neptune is undermining, evaporating, and dissolving the solid foundations of Saturnian reality.

I understand all too well that human beings have been lying our asses off throughout history. The struggle for dominance between competing propaganda narratives is hardly a new phenomenon. Winners write the histories, and those stories are often largely fictional, even when laced with facts and some truth. But this past two and half years in politics have been extraordinary in the sheer extent of shameless lying, in the aggressive, almost shocking way those lies were put forward, and in the susceptibility of the public to swallow the lies and believe them.

In the aftermath of the Presidential campaign, the election, and the initial six months of the Trump administration, I've felt concern that we might be settling into a permanent state of unreality. In fairness, I'm not ready to believe with any certainty that such a sorry future may not come to pass. And yet, the timing of this past week's revelations and their tight alignment in time with the waning months of Saturn-Neptune's effective period might suggest otherwise. Viewed strictly through the lens of astrology, the impending collapse of various houses of cards is worth noting.

The revelations to which I refer are obviously the admission by Donald Trump Jr. that he, along with Jared Kushner and Paul Manafort, met with a Russian lawyer under the assumption (and the lawyer's apparently false claim) that she had dirt on Hillary Clinton that might help the Trump campaign. The continued denials from the Trump administration concerning "collusion" with the Russians on the

part of anyone in the Trump campaign are unraveling with stunning suddenness and acceleration. The administration is already back-pedaling in high gear.

This is not, however, the only potential scandal involving lies and secrecy. The list of falsehoods and fictional narratives from the 2016 Presidential campaign spreads like a massive stain in the American character — not just into every nook and cranny of standard politicians, but throughout the entire landscape of social media. Finding someone of any political persuasion who is squeaky-clean may be about as fruitless as Greek philosopher Diogenes' "search for an honest man." Just about anyone who participated in the 2016 Presidential campaign may have been tainted by the free-for-all mud-slinging. While I'm well aware that politics is a nasty business that frequently brings out the worst instincts of human nature — namely, the desire to win at any cost, where the ends justify all means, whether ethical/legal or based on lies and deception — the whole 2016 election, all twelve months of it, left me heartsick and disgusted.

Viewed from an astrological perspective, as Saturn moves away from its perpendicular relationship with Neptune and the cycle heads into its last quarter (until the next Saturn-Neptune cycle begins in 2026), we're looking at nine years where, one by one, many of the existing narratives in American society and global civilization will be revealed as fictional. I won't speculate here as to which of the many insane presumptions that permeate our social discourse and shape policy will be revealed as bogus, but I will suggest the causes of their outing and eventual rejection. As Saturn and Neptune stop fighting and return to their respective corners of the ring, reality will again intrude on our fantasies. I'm not implying that we will become sane — not likely, given how far gone we seem to be — but I would offer the possibility that events will make it more and more difficult to remain distracted, in denial, or lost in absurd fantasies.

An unknown is how dire these events will be, and how much collective suffering they might cause in jarring us awake from our escapist dreaming. Although I've held the belief for some years that reform of our current dysfunction is unlikely and effectively impossible, and that institutional breakdown and collapse are the only developments that will be powerful enough to get our attention, I do not relish the thought of widespread suffering. The current debate in Congress over healthcare provides ample evidence of the willingness of certain elite factions to throw people under the bus for money.

So far, breakdown and collapse have been subtle and in slow-motion. Some people don't even realize that those entropic processes are underway. Perhaps they will remain incremental and gradual through the coming decade of the 2020s, maybe even the 2030s.

The point to the entire commentary is this: Over the waning three years of this Uranus-Pluto decade, with Saturn and Neptune moving into the last quarter of their cycle, we are rapidly heading into a period where reality will once again get

the upper hand over our fantasies. The return of reality may be harsh and blunt for some people or simply matter-of-fact for others. Many of us will discover that at least some of our beliefs — whether comforting or disturbing — have been false all along. As this occurs, the sense of disillusionment and betrayal that accompanied the Saturn-Neptune square (as people looked for others to blame) may tend to wane and be replaced by the more pragmatic question "*What can we do now?*"