

America's Future

by Bill Herbst

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Viewed solely through the lens of civilizational astrology (meaning the ten long-term outer-planet cycles within mundane astrology), what chance is there of slowing down or stopping the authoritarian coup d'état now fully underway in America? The answer I see in astrology is ZERO. I make this assertion despite the obvious corruption and incompetence of those now in power. Trump and his Minions cannot possibly achieve their full aims, for they are the Gang that Couldn't Shoot Straight. That said, however, they have already done serious damage, and, even after they are pushed off the stage, other, more capable Human Demons are waiting in the wings. So, not only is the right-wing crazy train not stoppable, but also, zero chance exists astrologically of repairing the terrible damage that's already been done to both government and culture, nor of preventing further damage in the near-term or foreseeable future. Efforts will be made, of course, but nothing I see astrologically suggests that a new dawn of sanity is coming soon.

Surprisingly, however, the longer term outlook might be at least a little more positive. That's not certain, of course. Over my lifetime, I've been sorely disappointed by America's decisions and policies, so even symbolic optimism may prove fruitless. But we don't know that yet, so I'm willing to give the benefit of the doubt to the Better Angels of humanity. I won't be around to see what happens, but perhaps it will be better than I fear.

Anyway, I want to discuss the timeline for the future based on what I call "Civilizational Astrology,"

Of the ten long-term outer-planet cycles that together comprise Civilizational Astrology (which is to say, the astrology of the general zeitgeist or Jung's collective unconscious, which applies to all of us together in the human species), four of those ten cycles are symbolically relevant to America's present and future as either a representative democracy or an authoritarian autocracy, as an oligarchy, plutocracy, or theocracy. Two of those four cycles are primary in symbolic relevance. Two others are secondary.

The two primary cycles are Saturn-Pluto and Uranus-Pluto. The two secondary cycles are Saturn-Neptune and Saturn-Uranus. I'll start my discussion with the two secondary Saturn cycles.

The Saturn-Neptune and Saturn-Uranus Cycles

A new 36-year Saturn-Neptune cycle begins in 2025-2026 at 0° Aries. That cycle is always about the merging of reality with illusion through ideals, memes, propaganda, and outright lies, all of which are believed by some (and often many) Americans as if they were Truth. The symbolism varies from one cycle to another in terms of where in society and culture the confusion and loss of boundaries occurs. The great majority of these illusions are created and perpetuated by well-meaning individuals, groups, and institutions. They use their fictions to influence both public perception and governmental policy, and they do so without much concern about the existential or moral downsides to their falsehoods. For a whole host of reasons, they believe their untruths are necessary.

Do such people believe the lies they promote? I'm sure that some do, but most probably don't.

The previous Saturn-Neptune cycle now ending began in 1989. The conjunction between Saturn and Neptune that marked the beginning occurred in mid-Capricorn, opposite the natal Cancer Sun in the U.S. natal chart of July 4th, 1776. This meant that the organizing principles and central meaning of the U.S. as a nation and the principles and meaning of that Saturn-Neptune cycle were polarized — literally opposite. Over the 36 years of that cycle, the illusions created via Saturn-Neptune tended to undermine the coherence and power of the U.S. as a country, but particularly as a government (the cycle began in Capricorn).

In 2025-2026, that Saturn-Neptune cycle ends, and a new 36-year period starts

Because this particular new Saturn-Neptune cycle starts at the very beginning of the zodiac — the first degree of the sign Aries — linking it strongly to the most fundamental of all cycles about humanity (that of the earth's one-year journey around the Sun through the four seasons) most astrologers see the upcoming cycle as more significant than earlier Saturn-Neptune cycles of centuries past. I agree. Since it is so rare for any interplanetary cycle to begin at 0° in the ecliptic, this cycle symbolically carries more weight for humanity. Some astrologers are optimistic, seeing this new Saturn-Neptune cycle as bringing a fresh start to America and the world toward clarifying and improving our ability to distinguish reality from fantasy. Thus, they see it as positive.

I strongly disagree. In my assessment, this new Saturn-Neptune cycle takes us much further down the road toward a complete and total eradication of our admittedly limited ability to accurately separate fact from fiction. One obvious concern is that AI (Artificial Intelligence) will be a primary driver in the destruction of our understanding the difference between what is real and true and what is not. Even now, AI is producing "fakes" in images, sounds, and text

that too easily pass as “real.” Over the coming years, AI’s dubious but potent skill in producing something that appears to be reality but isn’t will increase dramatically, almost exponentially. I fear that the ravages already wreaking havoc to society through our collective embrace of falsehoods as if they were truths will dramatically worsen in the future, to an extent and in ways that we can hardly imagine today. Even more than most humans, Americans in particular have always been easy marks for con men and snake-oil salesmen, and that vulnerability is about to expand to encompass the entire body politic.

The algorithms of Social Media have already allowed the transition of conspiracy-thinking to grow beyond the realm of fringe phenomena to become mainstream. AI is very likely to accelerate that expansion so much that mistrust of authority will become the norm rather than the exception. Institutions, which form the bedrock of any mass society, are going to confront profound difficulty in organizing our society.

The other secondary cycle, Saturn-Uranus, begins anew in 2032. This 38-year cycle is always about the innate conflict between stability and change, security and freedom, the old and the new. The upcoming cycle that’s still seven years away begins at the end of Sagittarius, so it’s relevant to groups within society and norms of culture.

That cycle will probably correspond to an enlarged call for a reorganization of society through legislated reforms or possibly even through violent revolution in an overturning of existing government. The problem in discussing the cycle is that I can’t tell from which direction the call for reform or revolution will come, nor what the intended outcome might be. Will it be toward a return to sanity in our government and society or a wholesale capitulation to savage despotism, effectively the death-knell to any sort of democratic republic where the rule of law holds sway? I simply don’t know.

We’ll have six years of Saturn-Neptune already under our belts before Saturn-Uranus arrives, so what shape that new Saturn-Uranus takes will depend to a large extent on how Saturn-Neptune has played out first.

The Saturn-Pluto and Uranus-Pluto Cycles

But back to the two main cycles — Saturn-Pluto and Uranus-Pluto — that are symbolically meaningful in defining the natural time-frame of America’s downfall and possible turnaround toward rebirth.

Despite the current feeling of millions of Americans that what we are witnessing in the early days of Trump’s second term is horrible in its authoritarian zeal, the astrology I see suggests strongly that America has not yet reached nor come even close to the nadir of our failing constitutional republic. Yes, we are now seen by much of the international world as a rogue state, but our situation is

likely to get much worse before it has even a chance of getting better. The peak of the madness of increasing totalitarianism and conspicuously hateful cruelty in American government and society — not only toward the other nations, but also toward America's own citizenry — will probably occur during the full phase of the current Saturn-Pluto cycle. That period will be from 2035 through 2044, a duration of nine years, almost a decade.

That sad but foreseeable bottoming out could quite possibly seem total and permanent during the ten years of the peak (2035-2044). I'm hesitant to even attempt to predict all the many ways that institutional abuse of personal liberty might be expressed, but I imagine that the overturning of the United States Constitution and rule of law is not too far-fetched a possibility.

As with so many things in life that appear to be cast in stone and likely to last forever, however, change will intervene at some point, probably sooner than later. Such a shift could very possibly occur at the next quarterly phase of the current Uranus-Pluto cycle that began in 1965-66. Starting in 2046, the current cycle reaches its halfway point with the full phase and could usher in a symbolic challenge to the status quo. The authoritarian, oligarchic, and plutocratic madness (meaning the belief that America should be owned and run by and for the wealthy exclusively, and screw everyone else) that kicked off with the infamous Lewis Powell Letter in 1971 and then consolidated its hold over the country during the Reagan administration, has now reached full critical mass in the mid-2020s. One way or another, it will continue to wreak havoc over the two decades upcoming until the mid-2040s, when it could be challenged powerfully by a revolt sparked during the next activation of the Uranus-Pluto cycle.

The sea change that begins around 2046 could conceivably take the shape of armed rebellion by fed-up factions within both the civilian public and the military, resulting in the long-feared second American civil war, or it might emerge in other forms that will be less crude and violent, and might represent instead a more subtle undermining of the dominant status quo. However it manifests, though, the eruption will most likely begin as a surprise — an unexpected event or development — and gain traction quickly. That will then kick off a long-term struggle for America to recover what it lost by rising phoenix-like from its own ashes, a process which will take a further two decades, through the mid-2060s.

The previous activation of the current Uranus-Pluto cycle that occurred at the first quarter transition of the cycle (a rare and extended transit with seven major passes that lasted for 13 years, from 2007 through 2020) was a major disappointment. The radical reforms that began in the 1960s at the beginning of the cycle were not fleshed out at the first quarter. Instead, we saw a doubling down of so many of the factors in society and government that had already made life in America more cruel, wrong-headed, and dangerously unsustainable. The ultra-wealthy elites successfully beat back every challenge and further consolidated their privilege and power.

The full phase of the cycle that begins in 2046 marks the next period where reform and renewal will once again compete for our consciousness in a center-stage way.

What I've written here doesn't factor in any of the extraordinary possibilities that may occur to disrupt events and alter the timeline. Such events — war, disease, natural disasters, etc. — are perpetual wild-cards that can erupt seemingly out of the blue. My concern here has been only with what I consider to be predictable factors.

The problem I run into when considering these major interruptions in the natural timelines is that of major trauma. For any of the possible events to provoke a sustained uprising among the general public would require being kick-started by serious trauma for millions, perhaps hundreds of millions. That's not something I want to lobby for.

I want less human suffering, not more. Sadly, what America seems to have become as the American Century peaked and then gave way to the dissolution and fall of the American Empire is a land where even the big winners (the ultra-wealthy and powerful) are caught in a toxic brand of invisible suffering about which they are either unconscious or in denial.

Over my lifetime, I've witnessed the way that America has been held up and lauded again and again as the Great Exception, the shining City on the Hill, yet another iteration of God's Chosen People. I watched as other 20th century societies were contrasted as Evil and Monstrous compared to American goodness — Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia being the two most obvious examples of the assumption that "such Monstrous Evil can't happen here." And yet, in so many ways, it has happened here. America didn't just let it happen; we ourselves made it happen.

I wish future generations good luck in reclaiming what has been lost. They'll need all the luck they can get...