
THE HERBST NEWSLETTER

astrological-cultural-spiritual-political views & opinions

--- Thoughts, dates, and reminders about our lives as members of the craziest species on this lovely planet. Like a message in a bottle washing up on the sandy shores of consciousness ---

Issue #109; March 2009

Dear friends,

I had intended this month's newsletter to be a sort of confessional about my love of automobiles. Events continue to unfold hot and heavy in the economic and political realms, however, fairly screaming for more astrological perspective, so I'm going to save my unwritten automobile essay for another time.

--Bill Herbst

Commentary: **Keeping Perspective**

I write this month to a fairly specialized group of readers. My audience for these commentaries is hardly ever the general public, but I do try to make the essays informative and accessible even for them. My natural audience is limited to those who study astrology, as well as those who are aware of what's coming in the collective, regardless of the sources they studied to inform their opinions concerning the massive changes that lie ahead in the way we live.

How many people are members in the second group, in America and around the world? I don't know, but I would hazard a guess at 10 million in America and another 50 million globally.

These people understand that we humans are consuming our world as if there were no tomorrow (which there may not be for all too many of us if we do not redirect our rapacious appetites and learn to live in harmony with nature). The challenges we face include peak oil (which has nothing to do with running out of oil, but everything to do with the end of abundantly cheap fossil fuels), climate

change, ozone depletion, watershed destruction, topsoil erosion and desertification, toxic waste pollution, agricultural disaster with resulting famines, species extinction, death of the oceans, resource wars with nuclear weapons, disease pandemics,— the list goes on and on. Add to these the implications from civilizational astrology of serious breakdowns in corporations, government, and other social institutions grown too large, monolithic, and unwieldy to adapt to rapidly changing conditions, resulting in economic collapse and civil unrest that may precede or follow natural catastrophes, but are intertwined with them in cascading chains of cause and effect.

Some of us have longstanding awareness of these unpleasant possibilities, tracing as far back as the 1960s. Others are more recent converts in concern.

The past eight years under the two Bush administrations were very difficult. Government worked to undermine science, often in flat-out denial. American participation in international cooperation reached an all-time low. Other nations made progress in implementing policy and strategies to improve the future of humanity by slowing the rate of environmental destruction, but our government derided all these efforts. America became the equivalent of a rogue state. Despair was widespread, especially as the housing bubble ended and the highly-leveraged derivative debt packaging began to reveal massive losses, resulting in the sudden collapse of an entire category of financial institutions. In a single year — 2008 — investment banks disappeared, either vanishing from the scene entirely through implosions of sudden bankruptcy or ending up neutered and hamstrung in a credit freeze that crippled the economy.

Politics and Money

For many, renewed hope arrived in the person of Barack Obama. Swept into office on the heels of the economic debacle, Obama promised to bring change. Hard-working, well-spoken, and even more well-intentioned, President Obama has tried to surround himself with a bipartisan cabinet composed of the “best-and-brightest.” And therein lay the first indication that celebration might be premature. Too often, Obama’s cabinet choices have been sullied by scandal, with numerous candidates resigning before confirmation hearings even started. Or they turned out to be the very same “experts” whose beliefs and policies helped get us into the mess we’re in now.

Watching video of Obama’s February 25th speech before the joint houses of Congress, I was reminded that — for all Obama’s welcome eloquence in giving a great speech — we had moved from the “politics of oblivion” with Bush back to “politics as usual” with Obama.

The bank bailouts to rescue Wall Street criminals that started under Bush will continue under Obama. And the "stimulus package" passed by the Democrats over stonewalling Republican protest reveals precious little vision of the long-term, fundamental changes in the economy that need to occur if we are to restructure American culture to deal effectively with the huge challenges that loom ahead. Instead, we appear to be taking on ever more massive debts in a stupendously misguided effort to save a status quo that is already moribund. In other words, the government's efforts are nearly guaranteed to make matters worse rather than better.

So, to my friends, colleagues, and cohorts who see those looming challenges and are frustrated by our inability to collectively address them with any plans that are even remotely adequate to the task, let me offer a small salve to the wound: What is happening comes as no surprise and must be understood as part of the inevitable breakdown leading to 2012.

Over the past 30 years, our government has been sold to the highest bidder. "Public service" is now a ticket to personal riches in corporate consulting and lobbying. "Cashing in" has become accepted practice by even the most diligent public servants. This takeover of government by moneyed interests was made possible by two Supreme Court decisions — the first handed down more than a century ago that mistakenly (and illegally) gave corporations the same rights as living human individuals, and a second, more recent decision that equated money with free speech. The result is that the federal government no longer serves the needs of "the people," but rather the interests of the wealthy.

In that spirit, I offer up this link to a five-minute video on YouTube of one of the late George Carlin's most biting and trenchant bits of social comedy. If you've seen this concert, you'll recognize the famous piece and laugh again. If you've never seen it, spend the five minutes to see unvarnished reality with open eyes.

George Carlin: The Real Owners of America

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?gl=GB&hl=en-GB&v=6uPnSpID4kI>

The fault in all this does not lie with Barack Obama, with the possible exception of his ambition to be president in the first place. Shortly before his death, novelist Kurt Vonnegut wrote that "only nut cases want to be president," which is one of those jokes that contains more than a grain of truth. Other than that derangement, however, Obama is pretty much squeaky clean on his moral/ethical rap sheet. I read that he spent \$800 million to win the election, roughly half of which was taken in through small contributions from individuals. The other \$400 mil, however, came from corporations, to whom Obama is now beholden. This is simply how politics works in modern America.

We Are, After All, Just Animals...

Beyond the slap-in-the-face truths of politics are other, more universal truths of human nature, and, indeed, of Nature Herself. How did we come to believe that *homo sapiens*, unlike any other species that ever existed, had the intelligence to do anything with more foresight than mere knee-jerk reaction to an immediate crisis? Why should we assume that humanity at large can prepare for the future by making wise decisions in the present? Wasn't that part of the illusion of religion, this notion that humans were the shepherds for all other animals, who were rightly under our dominion? And if we shuck that illusion, doesn't it mean going back to the understanding that, despite our big brains, we are merely one more species living from moment to moment?

Lions and tigers don't say to themselves, *"We're killing all the game in this region too quickly. We must move to new hunting grounds because game here is getting scarce. That way, we'll let the game here repopulate for our later return."* No, lions and tigers simply hunt until the game is gone, then they move on. Occasionally they die, because they can't find fertile new hunting grounds soon enough.

Humans are not much different. Oh yes, we have some "smart lions" among us who see the future with clarity and move to new hunting grounds alone or in small numbers, but the larger pride itself does not leave until forced to by circumstances. And so it is with collective humanity. As long as grocery stores are filled with food at affordable prices, few Americans will return to gardening as their primary food source. And why should they? Just because some prophet of disaster predicts that corporate agribusiness will collapse in the near future??

Well, I am one of those prognosticators who sees a crisis coming in agriculture, yet I am not rushing to start my own garden. For one thing, I had a damned stroke, and I'm physically crippled. For another, I can still drive to the grocery store. Yes, I belonged to the food co-op system in Minneapolis, and I joined the food co-op that recently opened in the tiny Oregon town where I now reside. And yes, I fully endorse CSA plans (Community-Supported Agriculture, where farmers are paid in advance by community groups to provide them with certain crops) as soon as that becomes either viable. Yes, I praise everyone who grows some or all of their own food, but I don't *expect* anyone to do so until it proves necessary.

The wisdom of foresight is simply not a trait built into our genes. Individual wisdom and foresight, perhaps, at least sometimes. Mass wisdom and foresight, no, hardly ever. Remembering that might help reduce our frustration, especially when society at large seems to ignore or deny what we see individually.

Civilizational Astrology

Finally, there is the astrology of where we are and where we're headed collectively. While all my different world-views influence my outlook (history, psychology, etc.), astrology is the world-view that shapes my public writing more than any other, since that is the arena where I am most expert. I do my best to translate and make available the information from the stately progression of outer-planet cycles in civilizational astrology.

Right now, that information is clear as a bell in suggesting that two configurations are setting the archetype tone, one of which tends to float above us, calling to our better selves, while the other hits us like a freight train from ground level.

Jupiter, Neptune, and Chiron are now aligning in a triple conjunction for about a year in late Aquarius, from February 2009 through February 2010. This configuration brings hope for healing, awakening an egalitarian concern with well-being for humanity and all life in general. Compassion and the awareness of suffering are heightened.

Saturn and Uranus continue their opposition, which reached 10° orb in October 2007, and remains in effect through August 2011. Now Pluto moves toward perpendicularity with both, to form an immensely powerful and destructive T-square from August 2009 through August 2011. When I use the word "destructive," I mean to imply that quality as part of the innate meaning of the triangle — literally, the function of this particular T-square is to destroy existing institutions of government, business, and society.

We are watching that destruction gear up now in the economic meltdown, which has at least seven more years to run, and nothing anyone can do will stop it before its work is finished. This ruthless wiping-the-slate-clean is necessary for the many rebirths to follow during the seven exact passes of Uranus square Pluto from 2012 to 2015. Those rebirths (meaning creation of new economic, political, and social structures) will continue to emerge after 2015 out of a combination of powerful common-sense grassroots movements that work from the bottom up and inspire radical leadership decisions from the top down.

2009 is much too early for these populist movements to coalesce. Their seeds are already planted, with some shoots and roots already present, but they have not begun to grow visibly yet, and they are nowhere near coming to flower. In addition, the powers that be have not yet realized that their game must change fundamentally if they are to preserve any of their wealth. At this point, the ruling

elites still believe that they can call the shots and remain in power. That belief, like so many others, will be challenged over the coming years.

We have been through only a single year of the amazing transformation that will take more than a decade to play out in the economic and political restructuring of civilization. Not until well into the 2020s will we know the outcome. As Winston Churchill so famously stated when the air battle with the German Lufwaffe in the skies over Britain concluded in 1940:

"Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

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