**Wheels Within Wheels**

*Current Astrological Influences with Their Roots in the Past*

By Deike Begg



We are standing at the brink of a new age. The old Piscean order is fading out and the new Aquarian Age is fast taking over and Janus-like we are looking both ways. Changes of this magnitude take a few hundred years to take root. Beginnings of new astrological Ages, as well as their endings, are fraught with danger, anxiety and complexity. It’s like the turning of a kaleidoscope, slowly rotating, the old image gradually disintegrating into so many random pieces of multi-coloured glass, all tumbling over one another, until they settle and form a beautiful new mandala. Today we experience this as wars and rebellions across the globe, a seeming fight for freedom, a mass movement of people all looking for greater safety or simply a better life, as well as the incredible technological advances that are almost impossible to keep up with. There is no doubt that we are facing – or are in the midst of – apocalyptic changes, the biggest crisis in a generation as we are frequently reminded by politicians, economists and the media.

From an astrological perspective this present period is one of extraordinary importance because it is quite unique in the history of our planet. Two major cosmic cycles are overlapping, one of approximately 25,000 years, and the other of about 2,300 years, and, crucially, both cycles are pointing to the constellation Aquarius. This double emphasis will have an impact on the developing consciousness of humanity that is as yet utterly impossible to imagine. The first whispers of the new age probably date back to the discovery of Aquarius’s ruler, Uranus, in 1781, which was also a period of great world unrest and revolutionary changes.

The properties of the sign Aquarius will condition planetary and individual unfoldment for the foreseeable future and far beyond. Although we cannot possibly know what impact these new influences will eventually have thousands of years hence, we can, however, consider some of the characteristics associated with Aquarius, the essence of which is the one humanity, one world, sharing, compassion, revolution, freedom from slavery of all kind, technology, telepathy, intuition, inventiveness and activity and speed. The glyph is made up of two free-flowing lines without a beginning or end, reminding us of wavelengths, frequencies, energy and movement, one line representing that of earthly activity, and the other connections with higher worlds and higher levels of consciousness.

Influences from Aquarius can be seen all around by the way life has

gathered speed in recent decades. In 1997 I personally did not know a single person who had email or a mobile telephone. A year later these had become an everyday thing for many. This is less than twenty years ago. Since then the speed with which technology has changed the way we connect with one another is simply mind-boggling. The amount and type of instant communication now taken for granted many consider the forerunner of eventual telepathy. And now we also have cars that steer themselves, remotely operated drones that deliver packages, survey our planet and drop bombs. We are told that our solar system has gathered speed on its journey around our Galaxy, the Milky Way, which is affecting our way of life, too. We are increasingly pressured not only by the multiple demands of daily existence, but also by an impersonal pressure from way outside our solar system. The cumulative speed of Earth through galactic space, taking the sum total of the various rotations our Earth performs and is part of, including spinning on its own axis, is no less than 2,500.000 miles per hour.1 It appears that humanity is increasingly becoming sensitive to, and caught up in, this greater speed.

But Aquarius does not only represent technological progress. As the man with the pitcher it also symbolizes the *Water of Life, poured forth for thirsty men*. The musical *Hair* with its on-stage consumption of drugs, rock music, nudity and big hairdos, and with its hit song *This is the Dawning of the Age of Aquarius*, made a huge worldwide impact in the 1960s. It was a protest against conscription for the Vietnam War and restrictive, conservative and authoritarian parenthood, as well as a celebration of rebelliousness. The lyrics speak of sympathy and understanding and that *love* will rule the stars one day. It was a *Zeitgeist* musical, the first of its kind, although the 1955 movie *Rebel Without a Cause*, starring James Dean, who became an iconic Aquarian role model for many young men, was also a portrayal of a youth that had become increasingly disillusioned and unwilling to listen to its elders and unquestionably adopt their values.

We shall be under the influence of Aquarius for many thousands of years. It channels and transmits a particular energy that eventually will bring together the highest and the lowest, the above with the below and the inner with the outer. Its esoteric ruler is Jupiter, planet of expansion, wise rule, optimism and abundance, but its highest symbol is Cygnus the Swan, the ultimate promise of Aquarius, of purity, truth and cosmic awareness, of altered states of consciousness and higher intuition.

*Wheels within Wheels*

The planets are evolving, too. As they make their journey around the zodiac, periodically visiting one constellation after another. It is a curious thing that it was supposedly created during the Big Bang and yet each planet has its utterly unique and individualistic characteristics, even though they are all made from the same stuff – stardust! With hindsight we can see that our astrological interpretations of the various planets have undergone significant changes. With the addition of transpersonal and archetypal psychology to our astrological toolkit we opened up an entirely new way of seeing the horoscope. For instance, before 1930, before the discovery of Pluto, we did not know about the Uranus-Pluto revolutionary connection. But the children born during the present tumultuous times, just as those born in the 60s, will come in with this specific signature. They will have revolutionary changes programmed into their DNA, and maybe in time figure out how to bring about a *benign* revolution.

*Pluto’s Importance*

Pluto is the great purifier, rectifier and reckoner. He can be ruthless and unforgiving, but he is also the sower of the new seed and will nurture its growth underground until he can hand over further growth to the Sun. In each sign Pluto power will combine with the characteristics of that sign, and now in Capricorn, Pluto focuses its powers on breaking up, destroying and turning upside down anything that is in need of total transformation. As Capricorn is the most materialistic of all signs, this will obviously affect the way we deal with money and property. This became apparent the moment **Pluto moved into Capricorn in 2008** with the collapse of Lehman Brothers, followed by world-wide fiscal chaos that still remains to be resolved. Everyone in their own way has already experienced changes of one sort or another, some highly dramatic, others more subtle. If we cast our minds back over the last decade we will see that so much is no longer the same, whether this is in our personal lives or on the world stage. Obvious, striking and often heart-breaking and devastating cracks began to show with their inevitable consequences. And mostly we didn’t see it coming and no one seriously listened, and so we carried on regardless. Northern Rock, the first bank to go under in the UK, was an apt symbol of this collapse, for Capricorn is the steadfast mountain, the immovable, a secure place to save for one’s old age or for a mortgage, to trust with one’s money no matter how meagre or ample the sum. When Pluto and Uranus thus aligned, from 2010 onward, a heavy blow split this mountain asunder, and the fall-out quickly infected the rest of the banking world. Job losses and evictions from homes multiplied daily; children were taken out of private schools; the second car had to go; in short, for many all those ‘things’ they had relied and taken for granted went up in a puff of smoke.

As an astrologer I became quite busy with clients, both in the UK and abroad, who had lost their employment and saw no way of gaining a fresh foot-hold in the old market. The question frequently asked was “Where do I go from here?” Many people had no alternative but to sit it out and hope for better times. And, of course, the tide slowly began to turn; political systems did change and are continuing to change; money was printed; banks were bailed out. A precarious safety net appeared, one that we are still not sure of, and certainly cannot totally rely on or be complacent about, as the influence of the combined forces of Uranus and Pluto, both the positive and negative, will affect our planet for the foreseeable future.

The question then arises, *what is it all for?* Are we to learn something from this other than trying to survive the storm? Or are these challenges a call to proceed on our own personal purification journey through hell? Could this be the psychological and higher purpose of Pluto’s passage through Capricorn, which will last until 2023? Is there meaning to our personal tragedies or is it all just bad luck due to bad management by the banking system and political mistakes? Whether our personal upheaval is due to the death of a loved one, a serious illness, a life-changing accident or whatever, it is the personal experience that is the true teacher, the *gnosis,* which alone brings the needed understanding of what the universe is trying to tell us.

Pluto, the great intensifier, the bringer of shocks powerful enough to change forever our experience of who we are and our view of the world, demands a death. Pluto, as ruler of the underworld, first prepares the soil in secret, behind the scenes, often cunningly and often with bad intentions, as in criminality. It can be a force for evil and destruction in the hands of those bent on personal power and enrichment. Although he is also a bringer of wealth and nourisher of souls, he can at the same time manifest greed, self-glory and over-estimation of one’s own importance and capacities. It was during its recent sojourn through Sagittarius (1995 -2008), the sign of *Völkerwanderung*, of mass migration, that the present flight of large numbers of people to a safer or better life in Western Europe had begun. But it is usually in the *following* sign that we see the unmistakable results. We are now witnessing the greatest uncertainty in a generation. Are we altogether powerless in the face of what is transpiring? Maybe not entirely.



*Saturn and the Ladder*

# Saturn, the great Teacher of the zodiac, is also known as the planet of restriction, constraint and limitation. He is at present coursing through the above mentioned sign, Sagittarius, which was vacated by Pluto in 2008. As the great frustrator, Saturn is putting necessary boundaries around those issues that need to be limited. Saturn hates anything with the suffix *über*. We can see this happening on the collective level by the erection of miles of razor fences, of talks to suspend the Schengen rules, by increasing border securities, by perhaps committing inordinate sums of money and making previously unthinkable ‘deals’ to ensure the safety of individual countries.

# The same is true of our personal boundaries. How do we protect or insulate ourselves from unstoppable collective movements over which we have no control? Saturn will remain in Sagittarius until the end of 2017, and unlike the effects of Pluto, which take sometimes years to manifest in any real sense, Saturn’s influences are more immediate. By the end of its journey through Sagittarius, the question of boundaries, both collective and from a personal viewpoint, will be much clearer. Saturn as the maker and protector of law will ensure that constraints and limitations are honoured and boundaries not transgressed.

The I Ching hexagram No. 60 counsels that:

*Unlimited possibilities are not suited to man;*

*if they existed, his life would only dissolve in the boundless.*

*To become strong, a man’s life needs the limitations ordained by duty and voluntarily accepted. The individual attains significance as a free spirit only by surrounding himself with these limitations and by determining for himself what his duty is*.2

Saturn as the *informing* principle gives realistic structure to ideas and notions, hence the need for limiting one’s field of activity and for a laser-like focus on where our duties lie. We rebel, complain and wonder why we so frequently come up against a brick wall. This constraint will become increasingly noticeable while Saturn is in freedom-loving Sagittarius, the sign of unlimited possibilities. Saturn, in his guise as the gardener knows that in order for something to grow and endure it needs a safe and secure environment in which to flourish, a place where the seeds sown by Pluto will grow to their full potential. And as each stage of new growth is carefully nurtured, each one of the rungs of Saturn’s ladder become stages of initiations. By one step at a time the seeker moves onward and upward in his or her personal evolutionary journey.

But this gradual upward movement might come to a sudden halt, an impasse. An abyss looms beneath, which is sometimes shown in dreams when we’re high up on some ledge or cliff edge with nothing beneath and nothing to hold on to. What is then needed is a rope from above, if only it were there, a rope to leap for, which will take us to that higher level and to safety. But this empty-handed leap of faith is not an easy feat, not something we would undertake easily, as shown in our dreams when we are too petrified to move. This type of dream might show up time and again, as well as dreams of bad timing, missing boats, trains or planes. These are times of emergency, in both senses of the word: danger and opportunity.

*Work on what has been spoilt*

A skilled astrologer will point out what higher influences we are under at any given time. Astrology can roughly be divided into two modes: exoteric astrology, which deals with the personality aspect of an individual, with the phenomenal world, ego desires and aspirations, and esoteric astrology, which is the astrology of the soul, and which deals with the purpose and journey of a lifetime. If Saturn is acting on our charts from the personality perspective we are urged to correct what has gone wrong in our lives, as the I Ching would say: *Work on what has been spoilt*.3

Saturn in his role as limiter will ensure that certain lessons are learned before we move on. It means that we need to review our present life situation and ascertain what is missing or getting in the way of further progress, or what it is that we need to get rid of to clear space for the new. Saturn as Lord of Time eats up the hours, minutes and seconds, reminding us that life is finite. We are challenged to review the use of *time*. Are we taking life for granted? Do we feel that time is just a fleeting moment in the large scheme of things, or maybe that time passes by too slowly?

From an esoteric or transpersonal perspective Saturn brings opportunity for greater service. When he is acting on our charts and we are ready for the next challenge, it might bring a well-deserved promotion, the start of an important project or some other significant new beginning. The medieval alchemists called Saturn the black Sun, and talked of his benign influence in his capacity as the healing waters that dissolve all hardness. It is our very being that attracts our lives, and, according to our level of being, Saturn will either offer further harsh tests or bring the just rewards we deserve and have long struggled for.

*Uranian Shocks*



Whatever happens as a result of Saturn’s influence, Uranus will not be outdone and sooner or later will throw its lightning bolt our way in an attempt to give us a necessary shock.

While Saturn is the informing principle, Uranus is the great Reformer, the revolutionary, destroyer of all that has outgrown its usefulness. It is Uranus that administers the awakening shocks that shake us loose from inertia, apathy and old habits that we have grown so used to that we no longer notice them. The image of the Tower of the Tarot deck (also known as the *House of God*) shows lightning striking the top of the tower (the ego), depicted as a crown, a construction in which two individuals were previously happily and obliviously ensconced. At first glance this seems to be a disaster. Their home is destroyed, and they are falling to their certain death. All seems lost. This is exactly what happens when Uranus becomes active on our birth charts and in our lives. We are shocked to the bones. At first we have no idea how to react and how to accommodate the new situation. It’s similar to what happens in an accident with seemingly catastrophic consequences, a devastating medical diagnosis, or any other shattering news. But once the dust has settled, when we have calmed ourselves and are able to view the bigger picture, when we have accepted the new situation, we can usually see that Uranus’s strike was necessary for the soul’s evolution. It was something that wanted and needed to happen for life to go on. It has forced us to readjust our thinking, our way of life and our relationship with the powers that be. We realise that we are not masters of our own house after all. Uranus is that influence in our lives that comes uninvited and without warning. (Some Tarot decks show the falling couple followed by a shower of gold.)

Uranus forces us to take that empty-handed leap of faith into the unknown, that leap for the rope that extends from higher regions, but of which we have so far been unaware. When we take that leap, realising we have nothing to lose, or that there is no other way out, we might take that heroic step into the dark, that very necessary step that we could have taken all along but did not have the courage to. It is interesting to note that at this present time, with the future of Europe and elsewhere hanging in the balance, we are collectively, as well as individually, under forceful Uranian influences. No one knows what the future holds. Whichever way those in charge will choose to steer us, the consequences of that choice will reverberate, for good or ill, for generations to come.

*A new beginning*

But in order for something new to enter our existence, something that gets us out of our psychological cul-de-sac, we also need to create something within our own being that can act as a receptacle for the new, something that can magnetically attract fresh conditions and laws to live by. Uranus first destroys the old order and then inspires us to new endeavours, making it easier to let go of all that went before. New attitudes and expectations can then develop. And with an adjusted vision of what is possible we also put ourselves under a different law of cause and effect, attracting the appropriate synchronicities. Uranus can bring the impulse, encouragement and daredevil attitude necessary to enable us to take the first few trusting steps toward an unknown future.

Without changing our thinking, without a certain *metanoia*, everything will stay the same. Even with the strongest encouragement from the outer planets it is possible to strengthen our barricades, both inner and outer, against a new form of thinking that is trying to take root within us. Uranus is that helping hand stretching out from above when we are standing at the very brink of the abyss. But the hand always seems to be just out of reach, thus effort and a leap of faith are called for.

*Transpersonal Planets*

The outer planets, those beyond the ring-pass-not of Saturn, namely Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, are not under our conscious control. We cannot know in advance what these three ambassadors of the galaxy have in store for us. It is always a surprise when they make their move. They are the emissaries of the yet unknown, something we could not possibly have planned for, and most often wouldn’t even dream of opting for given the choice. No astrologer can predict precisely what influences these three have in store for us.

We know, however, in general terms, what to expect: Uranus brings sudden and unexpected changes; Neptune will spread great uncertainty and emotional upheaval; Pluto offers death and rebirth, the ending of one chapter and the beginning of a new one. While we cannot avoid these influences, we do have a choice as to how we respond to them. Therefore it does help to know what influences we are under. This is helpful both for individuals as well as a country. **At the time of writing (April 2016)** **we are facing enormous changes in the UK with the approaching EU referendum in June 2016. A quick look at the ancient 1066 chart for England (there are various other charts also used) shows Uranus, instigator or revolutionary changes, as the most active planet this year. Thus changes are inevitable, but which way they are likely to go cannot be discerned by looking at the horoscope. No astrologer can predict the future exactly. The only choice we have is to decide *how* we will allow ourselves to be influenced by the outcome, and of course those who have a vote can use it. One hint though could be gained from the exit polls at 10 pm on 23rd June: the ‘ruler’ of that chart is Pluto, known for bringing one cycle to end and birthing a new one. All outer planets, and Pluto is one of them, are unpredictable in their actions and will have their own agenda. And to add to this, the Moon, which represents the people of a country, at that time is in the freedom-seeking sign Aquarius. So, it’s anyone’s guess. The only sure thing is that the outcome will come as a surprise to all.**

The other planet prominent on the collective horoscope is, of course, Pluto, which is still combining forces with Uranus at the time of writing (March 2016) to incite an *enantiodromia* of cosmic proportions. The combination of these two planets is by far the most powerful known to astrologers. Pluto is the god that brings lives, systems and whole cycles to a timely end, only to plant fresh seeds for a future of which so far we know precious little. Its action is neither good nor bad, it just *is*, taking its instructions from a yet greater life and intelligence. All we know as mere mortals is that when Pluto strikes no one gets away scot-free. We each and every one of us have been touched to variant degrees by the colossal *tsunami* that has been sweeping across the globe. The actions of Pluto’s superhuman powers, in cahoots with revolutionary Uranus, have filtered through to every nook and cranny of our existence. And each one of us has a little patch of life to tend, which is the hand of cards we have been dealt at birth.

*When Fate strikes*

One thing that we can do when *force majeure* strikes a blow is to take a good look at the way we live, how we treat ourselves and others, how we view the world, whether we are on the ‘right’ path and so on. Our *response* to dramatic collective unfoldment is something that we *do* have a choice about. Without an occasional shock things might stay the same forever. Why bother to do anything if one has all one needs, or if the alteration of one’s life circumstances seems too much trouble? Why fix what ain’t broke? But Pluto/Uranus alignments seem to want us to do exactly that: if it ain’t broke, break it! They want to destroy what we have become accustomed to, what has gone stale and rotten, and what has become the enemy of change. When Pluto first entered Capricorn in November of 2008 many relationships began to show cracks and were subjected to an almighty inertia-sundering tremor. I certainly saw, and still see, a great deal of this in my own practice. Sometimes a partner has died, often suddenly, or one of the pair decided it was time to move on. The discontent brought by Uranus and Pluto (and after all, this alignment calls for a much needed revolutionary shift in the working pattern of one’s life) has filtered through to every stratum of life.

Those that did not lose out financially still had their fair share of suffering in one way or another. The variety of the type of individual load that is our lot is endless, but with Pluto in the equation a death of sorts seems to be inevitable. Ideally, of course, our responses would be primarily internal, the experience of an *inner* death of a kind. But the psyche is conservative. Nothing wants to die. Only a shock, strong enough to shake one loose and awaken one, will make this leap to an altogether different level of consciousness possible. Our own psyche invites such consciousness-shifting shocks, even though it brings utter chaos and the need for more action than the mere moving around of the deck chairs. The death demanded by Uranus/Pluto needs to be radical enough to enforce a major shift. If we don’t respond creatively, willingly and courageously, we shall have no choice but to become the victim of collective circumstances rather than co-creators.

*Wheels Within Wheels*

From an astrological point of view all is cyclical. All planets come around repeatedly to the same point where they were located on our charts at the moment of birth, according to their own individual orbit and speed, only each time, it is hoped, their influence will lift us a bit higher on the spiral. And as the planets journey through the various zodiacal signs they take on some of the qualities of that sign, which are transmitted to Earth via the Sun. Planets and signs affect one another in the same way they affect human beings. All is evolving and in a constant state of flux. No one moment in time is repeatable, ever. Each birth moment, whether of an individual, a country, a company or a project, is a unique occasion. Astrological interpretations are not the same as they were thousands of years ago. Saturn used to be regarded as an evil influence, while today he is viewed more as the great Teacher, the one who dispenses needed lessons through direct experiences for further development. Neptune is more likely interpreted as the planet that encourages non-identification with matter and closer union with deity, rather than the force that destroys and washes away all before us, bringing utter chaos.

The collective situation on planet Earth today is a good example of how something that began decades ago - and then was seemingly overlaid by other events, such as a shift on the political and economic world stage – is continuing to work its way through in an underground stream, below the radar, quietly, silently, undetected, fooling us into believing it has gone away, while simply continuing undeterred in its determination to bring about an ever unfolding and expanding consciousness.

Money, position, race or nationality are no protection, as however small a chink in the armour there may be, the great universal slip-stick movement will find a way in. This is best noticed when there is a war or financial collapse as there was from 1914 right through to 1945, when the atomic bomb brought that wretched period to an end. The world saw changes of an unprecedented scale that fundamentally altered the way humanity saw and felt about itself.

1930 saw the discovery of Pluto ruler of nuclear energy, planet of Will and Power, lord of the underworld, gangsterism, depth psychology, wealth and plutocracy as well as nourisher of souls. He is the destroyer of what has outlived its time, and the planter of seeds for an entirely new era. As its orbit around the Sun takes 248 years, Pluto’s influence is very slow to manifest. But when Pluto’s path combines with the quick action of Uranus, which like a lightning bolt catches us unawares, and which occurred around 1930 and again in the 1960s, we witness an extraordinary speeding up of events, a gigantic and fundamental evolutionary and revolutionary shift. Among other changes the 1960s saw a breakdown of social structures and a removal of sexual constraints. On the darker side we narrowly escaped a nuclear war. And there were still other events that were entirely new to our consciousness. The UK also adopted the American counter-culture and anti-war slogan “Make Love not War”.

Since 2010 the paths of these two planets have crossed again no less than seven times. The German astrologer Reinhold Ebertin calls this contact: *The process of transformation; the collapse of the old order of things and the construction of the new; revolution.*4

These recent alignments seem to have quite a different agenda and feel about them. The 60s saw a collective liberation: people became sexually much freer and felt they had a right to do as they pleased. The trial of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* opened the way to greater freedom of expression in print, and over in California the Human Potential Movement was given birth to by such notable giants as Abraham Maslow, Fritz Perls, Aldous Huxley, Victor Frankl, Alan Wattsand many others. Butwe are in a different place now, at least in the modern world, while old structures in other parts of the globe, like the Middle East, are fast breaking down into many factions. We are facing altogether different issues; what we see happening across the world is hugely disturbing and unsettling. It has created an uncomfortable cultural anxiety.

Uranus in Aries, where it is now, means according to Ebertin:

*Sudden outbursts of energy, restlessness, fanatical fight for ideas, blind zeal, violence, dreamy enthusiasts and utopians*.5

And Pluto’s present position in Capricorn interprets as: *Concentrated energy, resoluteness, an almost fanatical concentration on certain aims, technical abilities and interests.*6

Certainly, when we put those two together, we can see in it our obsession with the various gadgets that most people, including children, now own and use routinely. Uranus, deemed to rule technology and inventiveness, surely has a great hand in all this, not to mention the much bigger issue of drones and nuclear technology. People born under an Uranus/Pluto alignment might be *pioneers, reformers, explorers, people who are very much out of the ordinary or who are endowed with universal genius.*7

The reader can be forgiven for considering the present astrological picture as entirely negative. While these are indeed dangerous times, as all periods of seismic change are, we can in our individual ways discern what significance unfolding **events have on our own** lives. We might want to insolate ourselves from the collective situation and concentrate on what is at war within us, what is important to us, what we are attached to and what deserves to die. These are the challenges each and every one of us is facing to a greater or lesser extent. And there is always Jupiter, the Hope that remained in Pandora’s Box. All that is happening around us has to be for *something*. To figure out how to play the hand of cards we hold, that is perhaps the question, the promise and the opportunity.

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1. Roy Gillett,*Astrology and Compassion, the Convenient Truth* (Kings Hart Books, 2007) pg.49.
2. Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951. pg. 232.
3. Ibid., Hexagram 18, pg. 75.
4. Reinhold Ebertin, *The Combination of Stellar Influences* (American Federation of Astrologers, 1972), pg. 198.
5. Ibid., pg. 54.
6. Ibid., pg. 63.
7. Ibid., pg. 198.

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