

ASTRO*SHAMANISM - PART 8

Lineages: Outer Planets

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In a very real sense, these outer planets' cycles are of a duration longer than an average lifetime. For sure, the 84-year cycle of Uranus is now within range of the average lifespan, at least here in the West, but that was not necessarily true when it was discovered. Neptune and Pluto's orbits are, of course, well beyond any one person's lifetime. We don't personally live that long.

This fact, itself, is of interest. We could say as fact that a single person will not manage to encompass all the degrees of the zodiac these outer planets cover within their personal experience in a lifetime, and that, because of that, in a real sense we do not and cannot personally "know" the whole nature of these planets.

I suggest that this may very well be why there are groups, brotherhoods, and lineages of an esoteric nature. Some of this information, which we cannot experience ourselves, may be passed on from mouth to ear, above ground so to speak, and may not travel through the womb-birth process. This is pure speculation on my part, but something that makes a certain amount of sense. Does it not? There are indeed many whispered stories of what is beyond life.

Outer Planets in the Chart

One common question that we can clear up right away is: If the outer planets are not physical in the sense that Saturn and the planets it contains within its orbit are physical, how can we use them in the astrology chart? That is: if the outer planets' only purpose is to reveal the true nature of the inner planets, then what do they mean in themselves? Do they have no intrinsic meaning?

First, most of you are already using the outer planets in the chart, and nothing you will learn here will alter that fact. The point to grasp is that, since we can agree that Saturn rules the physical, the outer planet meanings will still be communicated mostly through the physical, through some form or another, which is all the touchy-feely-ness that we know in this life.

All form comes or is expressed through Saturn, of course. We could equally say the same thing about Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, and Jupiter. They do not represent or rule the physical, but are revealed to us through the everyday physical life each of us lives. When we get physical, we are speaking of Saturn (perhaps interdependent with another planet), and if we want to examine the physical effects of planets like Mars or Neptune, then Saturn (form) will be involved in some way. This, again, is by definition.

How Do Outer Planets Manifest?

So the question to ask is how do the outer planets (Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto) manifest to us, physically or in any other way? And the answer is: just as they already are manifesting, and have been manifesting in our astrological charts, since their discovery.

We are not replacing any experience we might have with these outer planets, but just enhancing

(or fulfilling) that experience. Here we are showing how these outer planets can be used to tell a shamanic story, a journey each soul takes. That is what we should take away from this presentation: that aside from separate planetary concepts, these outer planets describe or point out an inner journey of discovery we all take, that we all are taking. It is that journey that we are pointing to here, and that story is part of any Shamanic Astrology. For clarity's sake, let's summarize what has been presented here relating to the outer planets.

As we pass the age of 30 years, our sense that time is a linear line running from birth to our death at old age begins to fade. When we are past our physical prime, there is nothing more physical being added on. We stop growing physically. In the physical sense, we have nothing more to look forward to.

Up to this point, we may have intellectually thought about this fact, but we have not known it through experience. Now we begin to experience it. Suddenly we are past our prime, however marginally this might impact us at first. This fact may be unspoken, but its silence speaks volumes.

Suddenly the life line we have been on does not have the same kind of future it did when we were growing up, when we were within Saturn's orbit and grip. We are looking at decline and eventual failure, not at growing (physically speaking) any more or better. This fact gives us pause. No longer does the linear line of life point onward toward "more."

In fact, it points onward toward less, and to ever increasingly less. Most of us are not in a hurry to go there.

In fact, perhaps for the first time in our lives, we pause and perhaps even turn around and begin to look back, back at where we came from. We can't go back into what we came out from, but we (most of us anyway) begin to view our past with more appreciation. Nostalgia of some sort usually sets in. Where before we always looked forward toward the future, now we begin to look back at the past, but with a new understanding.

The three outer planets, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto are waypoints or markers on that linear journey we have been on up to this point. Rather than adding something more on, these transcendental planets take something away, if only our ignorance. In turn, they gently (Uranus and Neptune) and then not-so-gently (Pluto) inform us to "go no farther" in this linear direction, but instead to turn or circle back on what we came from, and to cherish that.

If all the earlier years we thought that we were going somewhere in our line of life, the outer planets reveal to us ever increasingly that there is no place to go to other than where we have already been. Another way to say this is that the place we have to go to is to value and cherish what we have already been given. We will be given no more, other than that information.

Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto bring us that message, at first through this insight described here (Uranus), then through acceptance of the fact (Neptune), and finally through direct experience that life is circular or cyclical and not linear (Pluto). A whole book should be written about this outer-planet journey. Here we will just briefly say something about these three metaphysical planets.

The Outer Planets: A Step toward Interpretation

Although this section is not primarily material on outer-planet interpretation, it would be a shame to leave you without a quick tour of that realm. Here are some keyword-style interpretations for

each of the outer planets, and a just a bit of their shamanic story.

The Uranus Journey

Uranus Keywords: "To see eternity in a grain of sand."

Uranus represents our keyhole beyond day-to-day reality into the future, and has to do (so modern astrology tells us) with discovery, invention, and insights. "To see eternity in a grain of sand," that is Uranus, finding new uses for everyday objects. It has come to stand for anything out of the ordinary: the unusual, eccentric, unconventional, novel, and innovative. It also brings independence, rebellion, and revolution. It is the opposite, reverse, or undoing of Saturn.

Uranus is the first planet beyond the Saturn cycle, and it brings the first glimpse of the breaking up of the saturnine grip on us, with flashes of insight and recognition, brief glimpses of the more general awareness that is to come.

Through Uranus, each bit and part of Saturn's physicality becomes a lens through which we can peek and see a glimpse of eternity, the eternal process of awakening that awaits each of us beyond time or Saturn. Uranus is ever the planet of inventors and inventions, of lightning-fast insights, of discovery, and new ways of seeing things. Makes sense, does it not?

When Saturn releases its hold on us, and starts to break up, when we begin to glimpse or see through the chinks in time's armor to what is beyond time, that is the function and sign of the planet Uranus. It is the lightning insight, where physical time itself becomes the lens into something beyond time. "To See Eternity in a Grain of Sand" as the poet William Blake put it; that is the work of the planet Uranus.

Every grain of Saturn, every physical part and form, in and of time, becomes a window for us into eternity. At first, there are just lightning flashes that light up our awareness for brief moments, glimpses into another world, the timeless. But these flashes, as time progresses, as time fails to hold our gaze, become longer and light up more and more of our inner sky, until at long last the great Sun dawns, and we have constant light. It dawns on us. We get the idea. Our spiritual life begins. This constant light is the province of Neptune, which we will get to next.

The Neptune Journey

Neptune Keywords: "The dewdrop slips into the shining sea."

Neptune traditionally represents compassion, acceptance, unity, and universal love. "The dewdrop slips into the shining sea," is what this planet is about, anything to do with communion, and non-separateness. Neptune rules the imagination, dreams, mysticism and inspiration, including music, movies, film, and anything related to our ideas and images.

If the Uranian experience involves flashes of insight, then experience of Neptune dawns slowly and evenly. Neptune is more like the finale at a fireworks but without the flashes; it ever-increasingly lights up our entire inner sky. Through Uranus, we break through Saturn and began to discover our inner life. With Neptune comes the dawn, and it is like the Sun coming up. With Neptune we can at last get our arms around the whole idea, in this case the whole world. Our process of self discovery has gone beyond counting mere glimpses and insights, and into a cacophony of light. We finally get the whole idea that beyond life as we knew it we find that same life, alive and well, but now within us — our inner life. As Sir Edwin Arnold so aptly put it, "The Dewdrop Slips into the Shining Sea." Neptune is the archetype of the "big picture," the Grand Trine illumination of the planets.

With Neptune, we reach the point where we not only realize that we are now outside time or Saturn, but that we have (and we have always have had) an inner life, and that the same hard-edged life we grew up in (and through) is now something to be cherished and cared for.

Neptune embraces life, and with no exceptions. It is pure compassion, and everything is valued equally. In the Buddhist hierarchy, Neptune represents the Bodhisattva, the one who vows to care for and cherish all sentient beings until every last one reaches enlightenment.

The idea here is that what we discover in the planets beyond Saturn is not something out there beyond Saturn to “get,” but the true fact that there IS nothing else out there. This is what we can call the turning point, and as we turn, we discover the life we left and grew up in and through, to be the only game in town. As the philosopher Parmenides so eloquently put it: “Being alone is.” In other words, there are not two, but only one. Neptune is our finally discovering that one. Or as the great jazz musician Les McCann sang “Compared to What?”

Uranus provides insights and flashes into this fact, and Neptune illuminates our inner sky with full daylight as to this truth, which leaves Pluto.

The Pluto Journey: Identification is Circulation
Pluto Keywords: “Touch me if you dare!”

In the tradition of astrology, Pluto points to deep inner change and transformation, always touching the raw nerve, just where we are the most sensitive and vulnerable. If we can't stand to look change in the eye, Pluto brings it about by force, if necessary. For many, this has to do with our thoughts of death, dying, and what rebirth is all about.

Thus far, each planet beyond Saturn brings home the point to us that looking outside or down linear time will never work. Uranus and Neptune point out that we must turn around and look within to find what we are looking for. Therefore, speculation about finding more and more planets beyond Pluto, whether they be large or small should be tempered with the fact that we cannot hope to get any different message from them, even when they are found.

They will all tell the same story to us, and that is: Look no farther out there. Turn around and begin to look within, embrace what you already have. It is precious. That is the key. Of course philosophers and poets have been telling us this for centuries. Regardless of how many more bodies will be found out there at the edge of the solar system, their meaning will all be the same: turn and look within.

Pluto represents that message more clearly than the insights of Uranus and the embracement of Neptune. If Uranus is breaking out, and Neptune is turning back and embracing all that is, then Pluto is the knowledge that this whole process will repeat itself, endlessly. It is one thing to discover our inner or spiritual life (Uranus), another to embrace it fully (Neptune), but yet a very different thing again to grasp that we will do all this again, and that we don't only go around once, as the beer commercial would have it, but we go around again and again unless we want to do something about it.

Pluto is the planet of rebirth and that experience, not as an abstract idea on the pages of a book, but as a vital realization of the nature of life. Pluto is the experience that all life, all people, and all sentient beings are us, and that when we look into a young person's eyes, we are seeing ourselves, not as an abstract thought, but seeing ourselves in the (and through the) eyes of a

child. That is Pluto, daring to see that the “them” out there in the world is you. The light in the child’s eye is you looking at yourself.

Pluto has only recently been discovered (relatively speaking), and its message is still being sorted out. I associate Pluto with the rise of modern psychology and everything that this entails. This planet is still somewhat hard to put into words.

All of our life we have been the center and the light shines from our eyes outward – radiance. The Pluto initiation is that we see the light shining from other’s eyes and we have become the radiance. Think about that - a complete reversal, like turning a glove inside out, or a snake shedding its skin.

Uranus is pretty clear by now, as to its meaning in astrology. When our Saturn construct (physical body) begins to self-destruct and to fall apart (and it does for each one of us), Uranus has to do with the holes or chinks in time’s armor through which we begin to peer and glimpse a larger reality, something beyond time.

Neptune has to do with the state when the peep holes in Saturn’s grip are larger than what remains of our linear sense of time. When there is more light than shadow, the dawn comes and that has to do with Neptune, and the cherishing or embracing of all that is. We finally get it! In Neptune, we are outside and able to embrace our inner life, to savor each moment and fact. Yet up to this point we are still dealing with subject and object, self and other — whatever you want to name it.

Pluto carries us beyond the experience of cherishing, the experience of Neptune where we are the subject and the world and other people are the object of our care.

With Pluto, the distinction between subject and object is lost forever and the experience of our own inner light is identical with the light looking out at us from eyes of a child. Perhaps the best keyword for Pluto is “identification,” to identify yourself with another, without the dualism of subject and object.

And being now beyond the grip of Saturn, younger folk are not going to see the Sun in us, but only darkness or, if we are realized somewhat, they can see their own reflection in us. That is what a teacher is all about, the perfect reflection.

All these words here are very abstract and fail to communicate the very direct experience that Pluto provides us, the in-your-face presence of complete identification of “I am you” and “You are me.” As you can see, words fail, which is as it should be.

Let’s just say by way of Pluto that “identification is circulation,” the lifeblood of the cosmos knowing itself through us, through our eyes. Identification is nothing more than the circulation of cosmic knowledge, and the Pluto experience is as close as we come to realizing this fact. It is through constant identification that the universe we live in communicates with itself and continues to cohere or exist.

There you have a brief introduction to the outer planets, from more of a shamanic point of view. I close this section with a poem I wrote that is essentially about the experience of the outer planets. If you have read the last two blogs on Saturn and the outer planets, this poem should not be too mysterious.

The Point of No Return

Feb 14, 2006 2-4 PM, Grand Sextile Helio
A Poem for My Daughter Michael Anne

The point of the “point of no return” is that:
When you have reached the point of no return,
From which there is no return,
The point is to turn and return.

That is the turning point.

Every life has a turning point,
Whether it's in the echo of age,
Or in the very midst of life's prime.

As we reach our point of no return,
We pause,
Then we turn.

And, in turning, we begin to reflect.

In our reflection,
And rising into view,
Perhaps for the very first time,
The Sun.

Where before it was we who were seen,
And others seeing,
Now we are the mirror in which they see themselves,
And we can see our self in them.

What we once saw shining before us, as youths,
That which we gladly embraced in our prime,
And what we now see etched in the mirror of reflection,
Is our eternal Self,
The Sun,
Ever burning in the darkness of our life.

That's it.

I understand this.

What I find harder to understand,
Yet still believe is:

We didn't know it then;
We don't know it now.

We never knew it.

In truth,
It never was.

IT NEVER WAS;
It never will be.

It is not now,
And still, it is.

It still is:

This most brilliant illusion,
Shining in the mirror of the mind.

Michael

