

Skies On Fire

Dancing the Twelve Steps of Soul, Part Two

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March 2009

I would believe only in a God that knows how to dance.

Friedrich Nietzsche



As Pluto moves into Capricorn we are essentially experiencing the end of a Pluto Era and the beginning of a new one, and all the signs are there in the world of profound change in process.

Pluto represents a range of possibilities as wide and as profoundly diverse as compulsive attachment and deep emotional stuckness, through to direct experiential knowing of fully transformational potential. This is so because Pluto represents the deepest unconscious security within the Soul. To understand this we must move beyond our mundane notions of security, (how do I pay the mortgage, does what I am wearing suit me, did I say too much after the second glass of wine at last night's party?) and strive instead to imagine the element of consciousness incarnating in multiplicity in order to experience itself in a variety of different ways. We must in short imagine why we are here. This is not always so easy.

Crucial elements of our deeper psyche remain unconscious – remaining by definition outside of our awareness. So whilst our day to day dilemmas may contain an aspect of the story there is always another dimension with Pluto. For example, what you said at the party last night may point toward a deeper truth, even if it feels overwhelmingly embarrassing in the cold light of morning. Taking it further, the Pluto in Virgo soul coming to maturity and still struggling to find the right work may be bringing into awareness the limitations of the existing types of work 'out there', and precipitating how things might need to change up to and including the level of the civilisation that provides said work. Alongside any personal insights about commitment or individuation that such a person may need to take on board, they may be groping towards an act of 'seeing through' at the collective and transpersonal level too.

Pluto represents our deepest, primarily unconscious sense of security: as individuals our most primary motivations, as societies, our deepest potentials and prejudices and as a civilisation, our primary sense of direction. All of this depth of possibility applies now to the Capricorn archetype, as Pluto occupies its early degrees. Capricorn is the mid-heaven of the archetypal zodiac, it is the zenith of the chart and in a natal chart we would look to the 10th house, Saturn and Capricorn to understand the potential in an individual's relationship to the world, their career, to the parent who goes out to work or represents authority, (traditionally read as the father). We would also note issues surrounding emotional maturation, responsibility (or

guilt) and how a sense of personal boundaries gets defined. Essentially how an individual structures their consciousness, the conditioning patterns that inform that understanding of their own consciousness and the capacity of the individual to take responsibility for their own life and experiences, is to be uncovered through this process. From certain perspectives (including the materialism of our prevailing culture), this might seem to be the place of maximum agency and action in a chart analysis, since it is full of information relating to the apparent interface of self and world, the contact boundary through which meaning is generated on the basis of 'mine' and 'other'. Yet this dualism is but a part of the whole story.

On a collective level Capricorn represents the nature of civilisation, the man-made world and the expectations and conditioning pressures that such a world exerts upon its citizens. Such conditionings are fed to the individual through the family system, the localized community and the larger country/society within which the individual lives. Pluto in Capricorn, from 2008 until circa 2023, implies an intensification of the issues represented by conditioning, by the direction implicit within society, and the issue of responsibility for both individual and collective levels. Individual and collective responsibility is the capacity expressed through maturation to accept the implications, joys and burdens of one's personal and collective life, and this field is highlighted as critical for the next decade and a half. How do the choices I make impact upon You? How does your government/company/city make choices upon your behalf? What if no-one is making those choices consciously? And what if the massively complex webs and interpenetrating systems of commerce, governance, military power, science and technology prevent anyone from ever 'being in control'?

That this is a critical transition or tipping point in the nature of civilisation itself is clear with an understanding of the nature of planetary nodes. The most well known and discussed nodes are of course those of the Moon. The north node of the Moon when it rises above the ecliptic (the oval pathway of the constellations) and the south node when it falls again below that line, in its observable position. So the nodes are essentially abstract points in space representing the moment when a planetary body rises or falls against the line of the ecliptic. All of the planets have nodes. The descending, or south, nodes of Jupiter, Saturn and Pluto are all in Capricorn. From this we can draw a number of conclusions. Firstly, the original nature of these planets, their past (south node) if you like, has roots in the origins of the civilisations symbolized by the Capricorn archetype. Secondly, for these planetary agencies to function coherently within the life of an individual in this era, the issues of maturation and existential responsibility are at the forefront of necessity, and, critically, for that maturation to occur it is essential that the nature of any and all prior conditioning is understood clearly.

In essence how we structure our consciousness comes about in two primary ways: from our familial imprint and early childhood experiences and then from the collective dimension of the society and civilisation within which we live. Whilst the two levels obviously interpenetrate in a number of critical ways, it is useful to distinguish between them. Within the Psychosynthesis model of psychotherapeutic healing these two levels can be named the personal and transpersonal levels of synthesis. The personal level is mainly revealed through the emotional body, populated by the various sub-personalities that we develop in order to live our lives, along with the critical sub-personality (or archetype) of the Inner Child, and through transferential material within the therapeutic space. The personal unconscious is the primary vessel in which the alchemical work of personal psychosynthesis occurs. Beyond this space-time point, the transpersonal level of synthesis work occurs within the realm of the larger world dynamic within which we all exist, politically and socially, but also, critically, in terms of subtle dimensions, spiritual qualities and invisible presences.

The other critical point to draw from this confluence of planetary south nodes in Capricorn is that over the next fourteen years or so Pluto will actually conjunct these planetary nodes, including, most interestingly of all, its own south node. That we know Pluto is sensitive to its own planetary nodes is evident in Pluto's own discovery chart. Remember that when Pluto was discovered (through the assiduous work of Clive Tombaugh) it was conjunct its own north node. That it will soon conjunct its own south node implies a confrontation with its own karmic past, and the origins of that karmic past lie in the origins of our present civilisation and the conditioning imperatives that civilisation has produced and supported. This holds no less a potential than for a confrontation with the meaning of the social experiment that we have

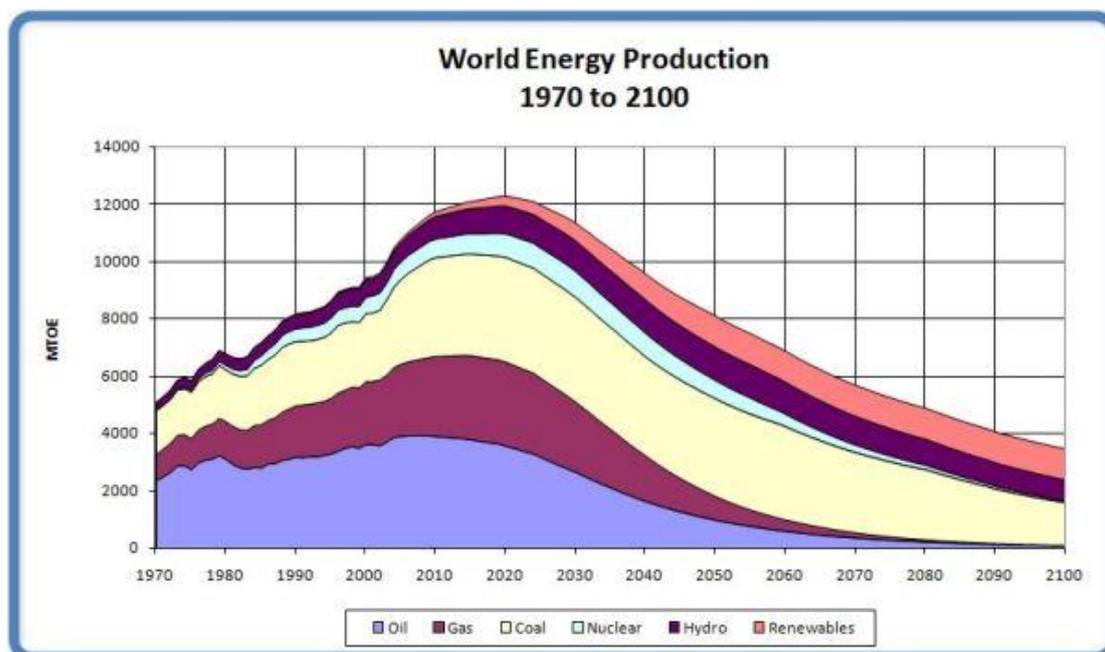
collectively undertaken for close to the last 10 000 years – starting with the origin of the first agricultural communities and proto-city states following the last major ice age. Certainly it bodes for a confrontation with the meaning implied since the last time Pluto conjoined its own south node in the 1770s, when the foundations were laid for the industrial revolution that has shaped society so profoundly ever since (through the rise of technology, science, urbanisation, specialisation, alienation, rationality, speculative capitalism, imperialism and the increased exploitation of natural resources, to name but a few major threads of that weave).

In the coming period we will need to examine whether this experiment, this myth of ongoing progress implicit in the movement of civilisation, has fundamentally worked out for us as a species, as human beings. Furthermore we are going to be asked to make personal and collective decisions pertaining to our role within the coming changes within civilisation. A critical issue contained within the earth triad, as Pluto in Capricorn relate back to Taurus and Virgo, is a survival crisis emerging on a planetary scale. Taurus as an archetype relates to biological survival, Virgo to crisis (and the resultant mental analysis stemming from such crisis, the search for techniques to enable emergence from the other side of crisis). Pluto in Capricorn emphasizes the power and the specific issues involved within the meaning of the earth triad, for which Capricorn is the culmination.

To illustrate the point, it is worth taking a moment to reflect on exactly what is meant by examining the myth of ongoing progress, since this conflation of cultural memes is so well rooted in western materialist culture as to often become invisible (or to be viewed as 'common sense', or 'self evident truth'). So, briefly, what are we to make of the period since the Industrial Revolution (since the last time Pluto conjuncted its own south node)? Certainly there has been 'progress' in a certain manner – the rise of science and technology has undoubtedly brought many benefits in medicine, agriculture, housing and so on – but it has also had massive unintended consequences in terms of pollution, degradation of the environment, alienation of human from nature and from other humans. War has not been eradicated (in fact, its everywhere – and of course the scale of technology now leaves us with the option for total planetary annihilation), neither has poverty, nor disease, nor the 'boom and bust' cycle of economics, nor a thousand other things we were promised. Freedom is not the norm, and everywhere states continue to condition, repress and engage in activities such as torture. Yet the myth of progress tells us 'things can only get better'. This, in so many ways, is simply untrue. Whilst en masse, we in the first world may have become used to living like minor royals of a previous age, such a 'lifestyle' is based upon some deeply unsustainable activities, and a set of equally questionable assumptions and schemas of conditioning. For example – our human population stands at around seven billion at the time of writing, an unprecedented number that is still growing apace – there is an elephant in the living room.

This simple situation has enormous consequences, since it has been achieved only through the relatively cheap and abundant food supply allowed by massively bloated agricultural practices dependent upon huge fossil fuel inputs (something like ten calories of fossil fuels in the form of natural gas derived fertilisers and sprays, and oil-based transportation systems, per calorie of food produced and eaten). These same practices deplete the natural resource base (not only fossil fuels, but topsoil, landbase nutrients etc) and create dependencies upon the continuation of the cycle (the psychology of previous investment, as it has been termed). However, the cycle cannot continue. The resources which have fossil-fuelled the 250 year party, are themselves depleting and dwindling. Our peak energy moment may well be behind us, a rapidly receding shimmer in the rear-view mirror. What we have taken to be 'normal' may now be revealed as little more than a brief window of history, and the cycles of the future may look a lot more like our deep past than we have cared to consider. In the meantime, there is a profound denial afoot, especially among the political classes, and 'business as usual' is the great rallying cry. Yet we have seven billion plus mouths to feed (and growing) as the systems that created the scenario begin to fail. We have a human race in which, for the first time, now more people live in urban settings than in rural ones (i.e. more dependency and specialisation, less self-reliance and survival skills). Old diseases are making a come back (cholera, TB, smallpox) and new ones are manifesting (bird-flu, BSE & CJD etc) from our systemic failures. Meanwhile we are promised nuclear fusion power so cheap it won't be metered, flying cars, 'clean coal' (ha!), a cure for cancer, in fact a cure for death itself – eternal life, just around the corner. I think you can see how, as the law of diminishing returns

begins to assert itself, the factors inherent within Pluto in Capricorn and Neptune in Aquarius begin to play themselves out.



Assuming that we are where we are, and that we cannot return (as some suggest) to a pre-civilisation state of existence (as a permaculture teacher put it, even the aboriginal people cannot live aboriginal lives nowadays, since the very foundations of such lives are gone – the traditional foods or landscapes or ecosystems are not present now). So much has been lost. We stand in the midst of the largest species extinction event in planetary history – plants and animals pass from existence in their thousands each week, with barely any notice. Cultures and languages dwindle and die annually. Suffering of the grossest and most repugnant type increase year on year (torture, repression, persecution, punitive war, 'simple' starvation). This is a different world than the one the myth of progress promised us. And so that myth switches to its religious corollary – progress, which has been defined almost exclusively in materialist terms (better, faster, bigger, stronger, higher, richer etc) suddenly gets defined in apocalyptic and eschatological terminology. Within the power shadow that is one possible manifestation of the Pluto in Capricorn archetype, the moment of the elect, the elite, the chosen, the special – those whom the gods favour and choose decide all. Progress is now an afterlife deal, a deferred gratification. The daddy-god-in-the-sky – Pluto in Capricorn - (and his representatives on Earth) is angry and the fear/desire process is fully hooked up to the death-machine. One press of the button and we will be free – those worthy of saving will be saved, those others will get the hell they deserve. And so it goes on, in a mad spiral of denial, despair, futility, fear, desperation to the final curtain falling on the circus of horrors. Collective and personal levels get conflated and confused – an inflation occurs - these issues are too big, surely *my* life is exempt from these events? Yet this is another aspect of the conditioning, they, *He*, will sort everything out, not me, not us.

The conditioning is perhaps never stronger than when we face the very thing we are most conditioned to fear and despise (so, according to the myth of progress, in the face of the 'reality' of our current world and the broken promises of technology, the response is to recommit to technology – soon we'll all be aged 400, drinking bio-nectar on Mars, driving our solar-merkabahs and laughing about the fools back on Earth who said we'd never make it).

We have said nothing about the subtle levels of loss, or, for example, the psychic costs of living in a society where the average 'man in the street' can probably tell you in detail about what Angelina Jolie has tattooed on her buttocks, but will look at you blankly if you ask him to name three native plants indigenous to his area, or to show you where the nearest stream is.

These are vast movements and themes, and we have no wish to pretend that they are otherwise, nor any chance at all of dealing with them all in such a short essay. We are just naming some complexities and offering a few tools to begin the life-work of engaging with the converging crises (the 'clusterfuck', if you will) that will be defining of the twenty-first century.

A salutary thought comes from the work of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, known for her work on grief and death. Her oft-quoted five stage model of grief is useful to consider here, moving as it does through denial ('*you're lying to me, this isn't so*') to anger ('*how dare the world be so partial, I'll fight you if you keep on saying it*'), on to bargaining ('*OK, OK, well, if I can keep the SUV and fly whenever I like, I'll stop eating GM foods and give a tithe of my salary to charity*'), depression/grief ('*my god, what have we done? How can we have been so blind? We've lost everything, and for what – a lousy handful of dollars?*') and finally acceptance ('*we are here, what is important now? how can we move with all that is towards a better balance?*'). Could it be that this process holds at the level of civilization itself, a human cycle, as well as for individual nations, cities, families and people? Where are we within this cycle in relation to the Pluto/Neptune themes? Where are you?



With Neptune, Pisces and the twelfth house again we see again a range of possibilities, from our highest potentials and aspirations all the way to our greatest follies and experiences of painful disillusionment and despair. Why these enormous ranges of possibility within the archetypes of astrology? Essentially because of how human beings respond to life – think about it, what do we do with what makes us happy? We celebrate it, we court it, we begin to want to keep hold of it – whatever it is (a person, a drug, an experience, even a momentary enlightening state) we begin to covet it and start to open ourselves to the suffering of what that thing is. So in wanting it, yearning for and grasping after it, the not having it then hurts us, and often hurts us to the point of destroying what it was that gave us the pleasure in the first place; in that way we participate in destroying ourselves.



Pluto represents the intense nature of the psychological attachment; our deepest security patterns tend to orientate us compulsively towards certain experiences, certain relationships and patterns of behaviour (because of the devastating insecurity that would emerge if we were to stop the pattern and really tune into ourselves). Neptune represents the ultimate dream or ideal that we chase, and of course anything less than enlightenment or returning to the source of all that is will ultimately prove temporary or unsatisfactory, and therefore produce a resultant state: disillusionment. Disillusionment is arguably the most painful psychological experience one can undergo, since it represents a doubling of loss (thing and self, mundane and transcendent, immanent and ethereal). In this way the archetypes that the planetary functions in astrology represent are the core archetypes of life and as such we can respond to them in any way we chose, or in whatever way our unconscious chooses for us. In this sense archetypal human experience is characterized by the level of understanding or karmic potential of the individual in relationship to the archetype. For one man fishing is the ultimate Neptunian goal, alone and quiet by the water. For another it is jazz, another heroin, whilst yet another searches endlessly for a woman who will somehow manage to continue to embody the 'in love' feeling he is hooked on. Yet another travels the world in an endless segue from spiritual retreat to ashram, and so it goes on. Archetypes contain potentiality, people live with the dilemma of how to represent or live through this potentiality.

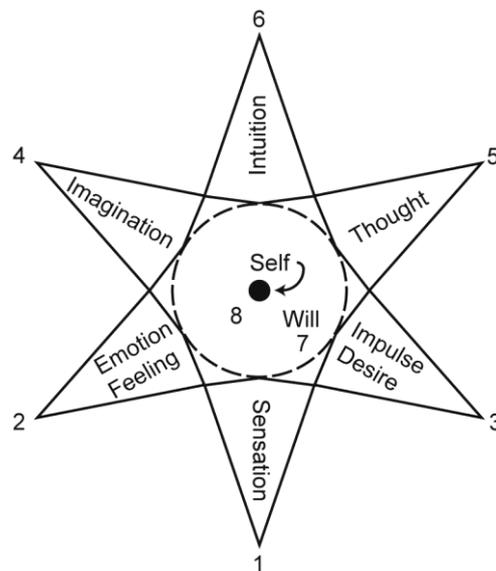
Neptune in Aquarius reveals that the ultimate issues of painful disillusionment and despair against hope and aspiration constellate around the Aquarian themes of the nature of humanity (its shared experience and common goals). The questions are around the nature of trauma and how to heal from trauma, the nature of detachment from purely individual concerns or processes in consciousness, and the nature of Individuation, of how, in essence, to become a whole person. The process of becoming one's own person is a process that once again, by definition, returns us to the issue of how to liberate oneself from conditioning (or at the very least - it being rather hard to escape from the time and society in which one lives - to understand the nature of that conditioning and develop choices based on that knowledge). This is one of the ways that Pluto in Capricorn and Neptune in Aquarius relate to each other at this time. Pluto in Capricorn holds to the level and depth of conditioning influences on the individual and the collective, and Neptune in Aquarius reveals the impulse towards painful awakening from such influences. This is painful in part because it is always a process of progressive disillusionment to realize who or what has shaped one's unconscious processes, and painful because the nature of society appears essentially conservative, and in many cultures throughout history any form of liberation has been achieved only through deep struggle.

The last time Uranus was in late Pisces was in the build-up to the Wall Street Crash (Oct 24 1929 it begins with Uranus Rx in Aries, Uranus in late Pisces 1925-27) revealing its capacity to represent waves of unrest, experimentation and ultimately evolutionary change within the collective. In this period hyper-inflation due to intense speculation within the marketplace had catastrophic effects ultimately on the economies of the western world, a theme not entirely dissimilar to the 'trial by fire' burning through the banking sectors of the western economies today. Here the mutual reception between Neptune in Aquarius and Uranus in Pisces reveals that the intention within these changes is to produce awakening... We may note in this sense that from an ecological and conservationist perspective economic slowdown may be the one way to guarantee the reduction of the impact of the Industrial world upon nature and the earth's resources. We may also note complex issues around the nature of the personal and collective conscious and unconscious in this symbolism whereby Neptune/Pisces (collective unconscious) and Uranus/Aquarius (personal individuated unconscious) are so intertwined. They are beyond the scope of this present essay to articulate but essentially illustrate that the life of the individual always has a role in some way in shaping the collective, but in transitional times this role may be emphasized or even magnified.

Jung's working definition of an 'archetype' was a "*preconscious psychic disposition that enables a (person) to react in a human manner.*" and we argue within this essay that the astrological archetypes function in such a fashion by describing the range of potentialities existing at a subtle level just beneath our conscious awareness. As such how we choose to work such existing potentials is essentially to decide how we will live our lives within the life of the time in which we live (the zeitgeist). In this time we hope to illustrate that via Pluto's

transition of Capricorn, its own south node and the south node of Saturn, the ruler of Capricorn, we can observe that as a civilisation we have arrived at some kind of fulcrum whereby we have to come to terms with the trajectory of society. In particular, we must attend to society as it has emerged since the Industrial revolution and through the planetary nodes, even further back, to the origins of the first settlements, and the first agriculturalists. The nature of this confrontation with our own past, just as when we are confronted with challenging material from our own personal past, leaves open a variety of possibilities: we can run screaming, bury our heads in the sand, party as the ship sinks, or we can take in our surroundings and make a choice. Society will always change, these changes may be far reaching, but how we respond is down to us. As a trainer or ours, a grey lion of a man once emphasized, you cannot decide your fate necessarily but you can choose whether you will undergo the process that will allow you to claim that fate as your destiny. When you say yes to your fate, it becomes your destiny. These words, from a man who has since died, illustrate the crucial nature of responsibility in a world where there is no ultimate control: you may not stop what will happen but that does not necessarily make you a victim. You may die of a long term illness, as he did, you may fall in the worlds many wars or in peace time atrocities, however this life is book-ended there is always the capacity for the human being to transform the material of their life into their story, their meaning, the healing fiction of their dance with fate becoming destiny, bringing meaning from the chaos, activating spiritual will.

In Psychosynthesis terms, such a process could be represented like so -



As a star growing out of chaos around the still point of the I-Self axis, with access to the personal will (and its six major areas of activity and personality functioning) and to the transpersonal (collective, spiritual) aspects in which they are nested.

Which brings us back full circle to Nietzsche, who once wrote, intuiting and anticipating these things:

“You need chaos in your soul to give birth to a dancing star”

Resources, Works Cited & Dues Paid...

Books By:

Roberto Assagioli
Jeffrey Wolf Green
Richard Heinberg
Derrick Jensen
C G Jung
Friedrich Nietzsche

Web-based:

<http://www.futurescenarios.org/>

<http://thearchdruidreport.blogspot.com/>

Film & Video:

What A Way To Go (<http://www.whatawaytogomovie.com/>)

The End of Suburbia