

## Talking Cosmic

### What The Hell is Going On Out There?

Almost every week this past year I've had a friend or client phone me: "What the hell's going on, Penny? Is it me or is there something crazy happening with the planets?"

Well, it's no big secret. The cosmos is in a bit of a state and in keeping with the aphorism - as above, so below - so are we.

To be a little more precise most of the slow-moving planets - the big change-bringers, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto - are occupying similar degree areas so that as soon as one of them is contacted by a faster-moving planet the whole shooting match goes off. Imagine having a dinner party with five people from different backgrounds, of different ages and with different interests. You'll either have a fantastic event because of the diversity of temperaments or you'll have a disaster. And so it is in the cosmos.

Let's break down the planetary picture a little more.

### The Jupiter-Pluto Effect

Pluto, the slowest mover of all, is currently perched between 10 and 12 degrees of Sagittarius. (We'll deal with what this means for you as a person later but for now we're talking collective, global.) Jupiter, a speedier customer but a planet that packs an equally powerful punch, is at the opposite point in Gemini. The effect is rather like putting two Sumo wrestlers in a ring surrounded by strategically placed phials of nitroglycerine. Pretty explosive.

To flesh out the picture even more, Pluto correlates to anything of an underground nature, which means quite literally underground political movements and less obviously the rich mineral deposits to be found within the earth itself, like oil. (And there are many, many other correspondences upon which we can draw in time to come. But for now, let's deal with oil and politics.)

What Pluto may ultimately do while he transits Sagittarius (until January 2008, just for the record) in the way of transformational events remains to be seen but these two astrological themes represent profound change on the one hand (Pluto) and in the areas of long-distance travel and communications on the other (Sagittarius). (How do you fancy a fortnight in the Sea of Tranquillity at the Lunar Inn? And yes, we might indeed be speaking to alien intelligences by way of a Moog synthesizer.) The Internet is perhaps the most obvious manifestation of Pluto in Sagittarius so far. And even if you're a mite sceptical about a planet millions of miles away from Earth having any effect on the life of its inhabitants, you've got to admit the World-Wide-Web has transformed business, communications and education. And that's absolutely what you'd expect from a Pluto/Sagittarius combo.

Jupiter's presence in Gemini contains an echo of the above - the expansion (good Jupiter word) of communications and travel (Gemini). So the current alignment has much to offer us in the way of the advancement of our civilization. However, any astrological principle, be it a sign, a planet or an aspect, has a positive and negative effect. Let's take nuclear power for example (quite appropriate as it happens since that's another of Pluto's correspondences), this force can be put to the good - it can energize or it can annihilate. So that while we can experience terrific growth, psychologically, spiritually, intellectually - every which way - thanks to the combined force of Jupiter and Pluto, we can also spiral out of control and hasten the advent of the Great Conflagration!

But I digress.

You may have been getting my drift when I mentioned oil and politics earlier. Unless you were off the planet in September, you will remember there was a teeny-weeny crisis over oil. If you lived in England, the Dunkirk spirit was roused once again when the Brits found themselves without petrol and in some cases without bread. And all because the oil potentates in the Middle East decided to cut back their output, thus rocketing the price of oil globally. Across Europe lorry drivers blocked the roads in protest over the soaring cost of petrol. The crisis simmered down, with concessions made by some European governments and threats by others. But, of course, the oil issue has not gone away.

At the same time, the Yugoslavian people voted with their feet (and petrol bombs) successfully ousting Slobodan Milosevic from power and ushering in a new era of democracy. All very reflective of the Jupiter/Pluto opposition, which was at its closest on the 4th of September.

Now, this particular astrological aspect is not a nine day's wonder - it occurred for the second time on October 13th and will do so again on May 6th 2001. But rather than focus on precisely what happened and what is yet to happen on these dates, we should be a little more fluid with our expectations. We need to consider that between July of 2000 and June of 2001 a powerful theme is being played and it will resonate on many different levels. Certainly the flaring up of the conflict between Israel and Palestine (October 12th) was

a one such resonance and the severe fall and rise of stock markets across the globe during that same period was another.

And although November did not contain an exact meeting of these two mighty planets the effect was surely there in the choice of the USA's President, Republican, George Bush - a party and an individual poles apart from his predecessor, Bill Clinton. A U-turn that I suspect will be repeated in other countries that have elections during this span of the Jupiter-Pluto opposition.

Now, before you lose all hope of discovering what this all means to you as an individual here comes the personal 'bit'.

It is entirely possible that without your knowledge you have a planet in the same degree area as the aforementioned opposition, thus you are going through a period of sharp extremes, apparently for no good astrological reason. But if you have a birthday between the 29th May and 1st June, the 31st August and the 3rd September, the 1st and 4th December or the 27th February and the 2nd March, you are directly in the sights of Jupiter and Pluto. Translated this means that some area of life will either produce a bumper bundle or spiral out of control. Think boom/bust, win all-lose all and you won't go far wrong. It may be tempting to go all out to achieve your ends under this influence - and I'm all for huge efforts and great courage - but putting yourself at risk of losing all in the process is not advised. You must have a fall back position.

Then again, I cannot really talk about Pluto and Jupiter without mentioning the thorny issue of Fate. As Twentieth Century smarty-pants, we like to believe that we have control over our destiny. After all we have the power to clone ourselves, delay ageing and we have walked upon the moon and discovered that it is definitely not made of green cheese. Fate, luck, chance and the rest belong to an epoch where superstition ruled, where you were lucky if you survived childhood. But if you have ever had something happen to you, something over which you had no control; it was neither your choice nor in your philosophy, then you will have wondered whether indeed destiny has struck. And there is something decidedly destined about the Pluto effect. Usually, over a period of two years you will find that you have been moved to an entirely different space.

Let me give you an example: when Diana met and married Prince Charles in 1981 Pluto was hovering around her Ascendant (rising sign). Her life was utterly transformed between August of 1980 and July of 1981. She went from being a 'commoner' to a princess and within a month of marriage, she became pregnant, setting the stage for another role transformation, from blushing bride to mother of the future King of England (June of 1982). And while at the time her transformation seemed like a fairy-tale, in reality it was a bit Grimm. Likewise, some fifteen years later when Pluto once again made an appearance in her chart ('squaring' her natal Mars-Pluto conjunction) she underwent another transformation - from married to divorced. A new life was begun in 1996 and eighteen months later it was extinguished in the Alma Tunnel in Paris.

Now, I am not suggesting for a minute that if you have Pluto and Jupiter on your case right now that you will marry a Prince, become pregnant or lose your status - or worse - but I am implying that you will be at a cross-roads of some description in which Fate, or circumstance, plays a part. And the best way to handle such an experience is to recognize that you have been dealt a certain hand, but how you play it is your choice. And by becoming 'bigger' than the situation, you will play it well.

### The Uranus-Neptune Effect

If you are an Aquarian born somewhere between the 21st of January and the 11th of February you will have met these two planets once or twice during the course of the past four years. And how will you know? Well, if the rug has been suddenly pulled out from beneath your feet, people keep moving goal-posts and situations have dangled tantalizingly in front of you then slipped between your fingers the moment you reached out for them, you've been 'unepted'. But we'll come to the personal effects of these two extraordinary planets shortly.

Until the discovery of Uranus in 1781, Saturn was considered to be the most distant planet in our solar system. So the moment one more was discovered - and a planet that did not move in a uniform way - it overthrew all the previous laws and understandings man had nurtured about the cosmos. The discovery of Uranus revolutionized our perceptions and preconceptions. And it wasn't long before astrologers, working with this brand new influence, began to see that Uranus was the great iconoclast of the planets. And when this planet was powerfully angled by others, great sweeping changes took place.

Uranus entered the sign of Aquarius (its home territory) in 1996 - an event that many astrologers took to be the starting point of the New Age - the Age of Aquarius. (We'll take this up at another point in time, by the way.) And while we can but pray that all the wonderful hopes of the New Age will be fulfilled, for the moment we are negotiating a very bumpy ride with the overthrowing of established orders and the implementing of new ones. And this is a process going on in politics, society, the arts, science, medicine - every which way.

But before I lose track of our theme - what the hell's going on out there? - Uranus is not acting in isolation. Every time this planet is 'nudged' by another, all that potential for upsetting the apple cart is released. And

since Uranus is not so far away from the rest of the gang (Pluto, Jupiter et al) in terms of degree areas, you have a kind of tidal wave effect, or maybe a domino effect provides a better image. If a situation is simmering, it will bubble over with a Uranus trigger. And if you want an example of this, cast your mind back to events between the 4th and 11th of November! See what I mean.

Neptune's proximity to Uranus in the same sign, adds to the generally unstable climate affecting many Aquarians, Leos, Scorpios and Taureans. (Again, more about this in personal terms in a moment.) Neptune's effect is to erode and to elude. We get a glimpse of heaven and hell with Neptune: it's thanks to the visionary properties of this planet that great minds have made great leaps; yet it is also at this planet's feet that we must lay the blame for the great follies man has committed - and the great deceptions.

Neptune will be wending its mysterious way through Aquarius until February 2012 and while we can hope to raise our spiritual sights during this time, we shall no doubt lose sight of the plot on more than one occasion. Big time.

Neptune is the fourth part of this 'tidal wave' of planets that we are coping with as we enter the twenty-first Century. So it is no use expecting life to be easy. We are being swept along by the overwhelming force of change and we can relate to this in terms of global events and in our own lives.

So, if you are among that happy band of Aquarians, Scorpios, Leos and Taureans born in late January, April, July and October or between the 5th and 11th of February, May, August and November, you are probably hanging on to your sanity by a thin thread and wondering when and from where the next crisis is coming. I'd like to say that it's fun on the roller coaster but until the ride is over it's plain terrifying. You want to stop the world and get off. And I speak from experience here.

Many years ago I had the great good fortune to have Neptune and Uranus simultaneously on two main areas of my chart. I set off to work in South Africa (heading into new and uncertain territory, across the water!). But when I got there, beautiful as the country was, stimulating and warm as the people were, I was in a Lewis Carol Looking Glass, world. I knew no one and no one knew me. Fine. Except that most people believed I was a bit of a fantasy merchant. (Somewhere between Heathrow and Jan Smuts airport I had gone up a dress size and by the time I'd been in Johannesburg for a month I was positively Juno-esque. Yet I claimed to have been in the Royal Ballet Company. It was true, but strange given the evidence of my appearance.) I changed apartments with the seasons, had a major car accident, was sued (and won), lost and found jobs in a heart beat and my relationships The boyfriend I'd gone out to join met me at the airport and confessed he was in love with someone else. I was then heavily pursued by a handsome photographer, to whose charms I easily succumbed, only to be told that he was the betrayed lover of the woman now living with my ex. He'd just wanted to right the balance, you see. I then fell madly in love with a homosexual. And so on ad nauseam. The one sensible action I took was to guard my return air ticket to England, which was a considerable achievement since at times I had barely enough funds to keep a roof over my head.

So, take the advice of a seasoned traveller of life and an astrologer and expect the world to be a little crazy and uncontrollable when Neptune and Uranus are in your life. I'm not sure I would have appreciated this little gem of advice at the time but it is almost certainly the case that you are changing along with the external realities of life. And it is a necessary evil so to speak. Given half the chance, we'd stay in our safe little ruts and never be thrown out of the nest to see if we could fly. But once Uranus and Neptune have done their best and worst, you will, like me when I arrived back on England's shores some two years later, be thankful for everything that happened. And much changed.

## The Saturn Effect

Spend a little time learning the basics of astrology and it won't be long before you come to realize that Saturn is not a jolly guest at the astrology party. He's the one standing in the corner with a glass of prune juice, wincing at the displays of hedonism and making sure no one is drinking and driving. The nuisance is that once everything goes pear-shaped everyone wishes he had followed Saturn's rule. Knowing your limits and not exceeding them is Saturn's brief.

Saturn takes roughly two and a half years to move through each of the signs. Until March of 1999 this planet was transiting Aries - and giving Rams, Goats, Crabs and Scaly people (Libras) a generally hard time. Since then Saturn has been scything his way through Taurus (and once again, giving them and the Scorpios, Aquarians and Leos of this world a seriously trying set of experiences). In April of 2001, Saturn will enter Gemini, thereby providing a useful learning curve for these airy members of the zodiac - and the Sagittarians, Virgos and Pisceans among us. (I'll give you a little more on the personal effects of this planet shortly.)

Saturn is also part of this formidable group of planets, this 'tidal wave', holding sway in these opening years of the century. And as you can imagine the rush to the new and the different, as inspired by Uranus, is blocked as often as possible by the old guard, Saturn. This is the most frustrating of influences, which you can perceive when, for instance, an idea whose time has come is immediately rejected and ridiculed by the mainstream. Remember Copernicus? The earth revolve around the sun? No wonder this madman of his time

was cast to the far corners of the Earth. But with the predictability of the atomic clock, we shoot ourselves in the foot time and time again. Only now, some ten years too late for the beef-eating public is Dr Richard Lacey finally able to shed his crackpot status by being acknowledged by the scientific establishment as correct: BSE, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, ('mad cow disease') can indeed cross the species, mutating as CJD (Creutzfeldt Jakob Disease) in humans. And yes, because his theory flew in the face of earlier beliefs and was almost unanimously rejected we could face an epidemic of CJD in the years to come.

Saturn's proximity to Jupiter creates a similar push-pull effect, although in many ways this is a rather useful combination in that it checks inflation and encourages growth where previously there was doubt and drought. However, this useful two-some is waning in its effect since Jupiter is now coursing through the sign of Gemini making a far stronger connection with Pluto - a factor we have already touched upon. But since we are on the subject of money markets, while the Jupiter-Pluto effect is generating a boom/bust trend, eventually Saturn will take over from where Jupiter left off and do just the reverse, setting the stage for a major or minor global recession. The first meeting between Saturn and Pluto takes place on the 5th August of 2001 so if our cosmic clock is keeping time to the second, so to speak, we can expect the backwards slide to begin after that point. However, I have a feeling that we shall be seeing the signs of slump a little earlier than that, possibly around the time of the third and final Jupiter-Pluto opposition on the 4th May. So by my calculations - and who am I to advise anyone about money! - if you are still brave enough to play the market you've probably got until April to do so!

But back to the personal.

If you are a Taurus, Scorpio, Leo or Aquarius and you have a birthday at the end of your sign - say between the 15th and 21st of May, November, August or February - then Saturn is on your case. And life is unlikely to be a bowl of cherries. If you work like a dog and never step over the lines, you'll fare well under Saturn - indeed you may even get a reward, like a job with greater status and responsibility, you may become a Someone. Even so, you won't be having much fun. The more likely effect Saturn will have on you is that you won't get any of the breaks; you may experience a sense of frustration and self-defeat; you may even feel under the weather. Far from a rich and thriving existence, you seem to be short on almost all fronts - you already know all there is to know about recession! Like the great British winter, life is grey. Surely there must be an antidote. Well, if there is I'd like to take it because I'm labouring under a heavy Saturn transit and I won't get my exit visa until May next year! But if there isn't an antidote there is a way of dealing with the beast.

#### Here are ten tips:

- 1) Don't cut corners.
- 2) Don't take risks.
- 3) Don't underestimate the competition.
- 4) Don't assume you'll get by on your charms.
- 5) Don't expect people to stump up for you.
- 6) Do look at the details.
- 7) Do pay your taxes.
- 8) If it's wrong, fix it.
- 9) Take responsibility.
- 10) Take it on the chin. Your day will come.

#### And The Rest

Now, if you're an Aries, Libra, Cancer or Capricorn you must be wondering why you haven't been mentioned yet. Does it mean you are out of the firing line and destined only for the joys of life? Well, does it feel like that? Has life been pure, unbridled joy since the beginning of the 21st Century? Here, of course, we enter one of astrology's greyest areas. You may not have the sun in any of the aforementioned signs but if any of the above sounds all too familiar you probably have one of the other eight remaining planetary bodies somewhere in the hot zone. No, this is not a cop out, merely an explanation. Because although many people are experiencing great happiness, success and prosperity, there is an edge of darkness in every person's life. No one is 'having it good' all round.

Then again, the eclipses of the past twelve months have taken place in Capricorn and Cancer thereby producing events that can be classed as life-milestones for many of the members of the Cardinal signs - and that includes Aries and Libra too. Eclipses are often coincident with sudden changes in fortune and, dare I mention that word again, Fate. So if you are among this group and January, June and July of this year contained one of those life-defining moments, you can almost certainly look to the eclipses as the catalysts of those events. 25th December sees another (solar) eclipse in the sign of Capricorn so, especially if you have a birthday on or near then or around the 25th March, June or September, you can expect to be stirred and maybe lit up, along with the Christmas pudding! And it doesn't stop there. Yet another eclipse (full moon) on the 9th of January, promises to get the year off to a rousing start for the Cardinals - and we're not talking American football or baseball here - particularly if you were born on or near the 9th of July, October,

December or April.

But I shall keep you abreast of all the cosmic developments as we go.

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