

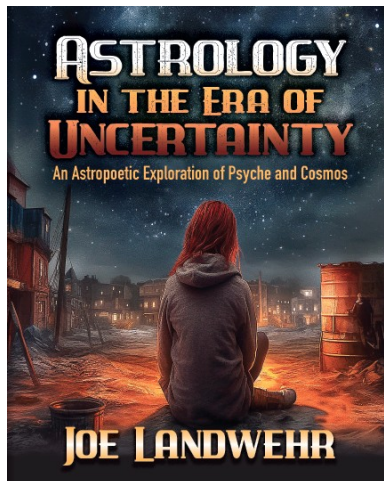
# The Astropoetic School of Soul-Discovery

## News From The Astropoetic School Volume 13 Issue 1: March 2024

Greetings from **The Astropoetic School of Soul Discovery** in the Missouri Ozarks, where freezing rain and plummeting temperatures one month, followed by 85-degree weather and thunderstorms the next make knowing what season we are in increasingly difficult.

### My New Book Now Available

My new book – *Astrology in the Era of Uncertainty: An Astropoetic Exploration of Psyche and Cosmos* – has finally made it into print, and is now available for purchase.



In the book, I explore the awkward relationship between astrology and science, which had been co-evolving for millennia before diverging in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. I also show how, in a postmodern era, in which quantum theory and other developments have made science's authority far more tenuous, astrology has a new opportunity to more fully embrace its own identity as a way of knowing radically different than science, but far more useful in exploring the inner landscape of the human psyche. Lastly, taking this idea further than it normally extends in current practice, I also demonstrate how we might enter into a more exploratory and more numinous relationship with the gods and goddesses whose sacred presence in the psyche is mapped by the birthchart.

About the book, **The Midwest Book Review** (January 2024) said:

*Especially and unreservedly recommended for personal, professional, community, and college/university library Metaphysical Studies*

*collections, "Astrology in the Era of Uncertainty" is as inherently fascinating as it is thought-provoking and will be of special value to readers with an interest in astrology and New Age mysticism.*

The book is being printed by an author-centric company called Draft2Digital, and includes worldwide distribution in the English-speaking world, as well as through [Amazon](#) and other online venues. You can also order directly through me on my website at <https://www.joelandwehr.com/books> (a much better deal for me financially).

Also on my website, you can read the [table of contents](#), the [preface](#), the [introduction](#) and all [endorsements and reviews](#) to date, including (by way of full disclosure), [my first negative review - ever - with my response](#).

I would again like to thank everyone who contributed to my [Go Fund Me campaign](#), which subsidized the editing, cover design, and other preliminary expenses related to bringing the book to print. The campaign remains open for anyone who wants to support the promotional phase of the process – which will include sending out complimentary copies for review, possible advertising, and other strategies yet to be devised that will create greater awareness of the book's existence.

**If you read and appreciate my book, posting your review on Amazon, Goodreads, Library Thing, Facebook or whatever other community forums you frequent will earn my gratitude.**

## Imaginal Meandering



Imaginal meandering is the term I coined in **Astrology in the Era of Uncertainty** to describe a counterbalance to astrology's longstanding interpretive focus, in which symbols are basically decoded to provide meaning that the conscious mind can immediately grasp. Imaginal meandering is a much slower process of allowing the symbolism to reveal itself in its own less obvious way and in its own time.

Imaginal meandering begins with a process described by psychologist James Hillman as "opening the archetypal eye." The archetypal eye is what allows us to "see" beyond surface appearances, and to feel a deeper, more intuitive sense of resonance with the symbols. Hillman's primary method for opening the archetypal eye is to immerse oneself in the myths and stories related to the archetype. Given that

astrology is rooted in the Greco-Roman mythological tradition, there is a rich repository of stories to explore in relation to anything astrological we might wish to understand along this slower path toward resonant understanding.

In my adaptation of this idea to the practice of astrology in a postmodern world, I see no reason to limit ourselves to Greco-Roman mythology, when the rest of the world also has much to offer. Some people find a deeper sense of resonance with images from the mythology of their ancestral heritage. I have found this kind of resonance, for example, in Norse mythology, and have written a great deal about my relationship to Odin in relationship to my chart. Beyond mythology, we also have the archetypal themes in folklore, fairy tales, literature, poetry, art, film and even music. All of this provides a rich reservoir of images and associations, some of which may, in fact, be quite uniquely meaningful to you.

At some point, the archetypal stories will trigger memories from your own story, which in turn, can often be associated with one or more astrological cycles. Dreams, moments of synchronicity, and chance encounters with people, ideas, or talismanic objects can also become a part of the process of imaginal discovery. This is where the fun begins. Within this resonance, there are sensory experiences, feelings, psychological patterns, resources for healing and self-actualization, and numinous openings to a relationship with the sacred.

Unlike more traditional astrological analysis, imaginal meandering revolves around questions, rather than answers. The process begins with an important enigma that you want to explore, and no final destination other than to allow your questions to evolve into a quest. When this happens, your birthchart becomes a map that can guide your exploration through an archetypal field of possibilities, and your intention a magnet that will draw relevant resources to you.

To explore this idea further, I have started writing a new book, as usual feeling my way into it as I go. As part of this exploration, I am seeking a few clients who want to explore the birthchart as an archetypal field through which it is possible to take an imaginal journey.

The journey will begin with an overview of your chart, the various patterns in your chart that call for exploration, and an indication of which patterns are being most strongly activated by current transits and progressions. This part of the process will be similar to a more traditional reading, or in my case, what I previously called a Chakra Pattern Overview, given that I will reference the chakras in this analysis.

From there, however, the journey itself will evolve organically as various clues and signs present themselves in the course of our conversation about your chart and your life. Some of these clues may involve a deeper dive into astrological symbolism, but many likely will have a life of their own that transcends what can be related to the chart in a linear way. Over the course of at least six sessions, we will follow these clues in relation to the central questions and intentions that you bring to your quest. Where we wind up will likely be a surprise to both of us. This, in fact, is no small part of the appeal of an imaginal journey into the unknown.

If this idea appeals to you, and you want to play with me, you can contact me via email at [joelandwehr@socket.net](mailto:joelandwehr@socket.net) and we can discuss the particulars in more detail.

## Pluto's Not-for-the-Faint-of-Heart School of Do-or-Die

In the January 2023 issue of **News from the Astropoetic School**, I started a new series of articles called [The Shifting of Our Collective Archetypal Field](#), about Pluto's evolutionary crash course, as it has moved relatively rapidly through the signs since its discovery in Cancer in 1930. I was moved to start this series by the advent of Pluto's passage into Aquarius, which is taking place in typical back-and-forth motion, between March 2023 and November 2024, after which Pluto will remain solidly in Aquarius until March, 2043. During this transitional period, as I suggested at the beginning of this series, it is our opportunity to revisit Pluto's earlier passage through the signs from Cancer to Capricorn, in order to assess what we have learned or failed to learn so far. As I see it, this is the best possible preparation for what comes next.

In January of last year, we looked at Pluto's passage through Cancer from 1913 - 1939; in May we took a similar look at Pluto's time in Leo from 1937 - 1958; and in September, we explored Pluto's sojourn through Virgo from 1956 - 1972. In this issue, we will explore Pluto's reign in Libra from 1971 - 1984. Like this current passage into Aquarius, all of these periods generally have a 1-2 year overlap when Pluto moves back and forth between the sign it is leaving and the sign it is about to enter. From October 1971 - July 1972, Pluto was moving from Virgo to Libra; and from November 1983 - August 1984, it was transitioning from Libra to Scorpio.

As in past installments, before we look at some of the key events of the Pluto in Libra period, in this series - [Pluto's Not-for-the-Faint-of-Heart School of Do-or-Die](#) - we will take a closer look at some of the lessons Pluto offered us in Virgo that now still contribute to the challenges we face as Pluto moves through Aquarius.

As noted last time, when Pluto moves through any sign, what seems to emerge is a shadow reflection of the archetypal essence of that sign. This shadow reflection, in turn, raises questions about fundamental issues we might associate with that sign. Addressing these issues in a more effective way, on a collective level, then becomes the pivot point of Pluto's challenge while in that sign. Not addressing these issues, or addressing them inadequately, inevitably leads to a compromised global reality, and adds another layer of complexity to our human predicament which lingers, and continues to fester, even as Pluto moves on.

In Cancer, we can easily see how our unmet need for sanctuary has become manifest today as rabid nationalism coupled with xenophobia; an outsized defense budget that supersedes all other human needs; an out-of-control consumer culture fueling the very opposite of sanctuary for thousands of species; an agricultural system focused on production at the expense of the environment and the workers in the fields; and an inhumane immigration system designed to discourage if not prohibit people from crossing national borders in search of sanctuary. This can all be understood as Pluto's shadow legacy from its time in Cancer.

In Leo, we can see how the fundamental quest for self-realization can become distorted into rampant, solipsistic, even narcissistic individuality, in which life revolves around I, me and mine, often at the expense of the common good. Such a distortion led, in the Pluto in Leo years to the rise of corporate culture, and its outsized

influence on US and global politics, as well as the evolution of human culture. As Pluto moves through Aquarius one half cycle later, corporations hold enormous power over our lives, influencing what we think, what we think we want, and what we collectively prioritize. The shadow side of Leo also contributes to the rise of autocracy around the world in which strongmen like Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, Kim Jong-un, Narendra Modi, Benjamin Netanyahu and others in 57 dictatorships around the world (<https://planetrulers.com/current-dictators/>) threaten the democratic ideals for which Aquarius is famous.

### *Pluto in Virgo's Quest for Accountability*

The hard reality underlying Leo's desire for self-realization is that this only really works on the collective level when each of us is accountable to the rest of us. The freedom to become all I can be, in other words, comes with a responsibility to be aware of how my actions impact others and to take reasonable measures to ensure that my own well-being does not come at the expense of those around me. As Pluto moves through Aquarius, through the omnipresence of technology, those "around me" can easily include those on the other side of the world. It also includes all the denizens of what ecologists call the more-than-human world, the countless species whose habitat is shrinking and whose survival is threatened by human enterprise.

This is a huge, sometimes complicated responsibility, and one that even with the best of intentions, is not always easy to negotiate. Simply typing these words requires electricity that must come from somewhere. Despite all the rhetoric about the need to wean ourselves from fossil fuel in order to mitigate the worst potential impacts of climate change, most of the electricity in this area still comes from coal, or "natural gas." Mining coal is a nasty business that razes mountains, destroys habitat for countless creatures, pollutes the air, water and soil for countless humans, and makes coal miners sick, aside from its notorious contribution to global warming. Natural gas is even more insidious in its contribution to global warming, releasing methane both in production and through countless outlets in a leaky distribution system, with methane being 20 times more potent a contributor to global warming than carbon dioxide in the short term.

Even assuming all the electricity necessary to power my computer came from solar, let's say, there is still a significant environmental impact in the production of solar panels, including the use of toxic chemicals like hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, nitric acid, hydrogen fluoride, 1,1,1-trichloroethane, and acetone; loss of habitat, especially in the evolution toward increasingly larger arrays; some health hazards to workers who inhale silicon dust; and even some contribution to climate change through manufacturing, materials transportation, installation, maintenance, decommissioning and dismantlement of solar systems (<https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/environmental-impacts-solar-power>). Solar, of course, is still a better choice than coal or methane gas, but is by no means a choice free of adverse consequences for which accountability is still necessary.

Considering the fact that choosing to use a computer is only one choice in an endless procession of choices large and small that each of us must make day in and day out, both individually and collectively, it quickly becomes clear that accountability is at best a matter of harm reduction, and of balancing needs, wants and consequences accordingly. Every choice is a trade-off, and awareness of the true price to be paid,



not just personally, but by others, for the choices that we make, is a good first step toward accountability.

Beyond that, we must actually care about something more than our own wellbeing, with the implicit understanding that true wellbeing is not possible without due consideration of the wellbeing of the intricately interconnected whole. As with Cancer's need for sanctuary and Leo's need for self-determination, Virgo's need for accountability is an ideal we can only actualize together, with a common agreement about its necessity as a prerequisite for the kind of world any sane person would want to inhabit. Short of that, a lack of accountability hurts us all.

With Pluto in Virgo, transpersonal pressure came to bear for a time on this fundamental need and our collective efforts to achieve it. During the Pluto in Virgo years, we saw the rise of a massive anti-war movement, a concerted push toward civil rights for blacks and other minorities, a new wave of feminism, and the birth of the environmental movement. The war in Vietnam was effectively stopped; nuclear non-proliferation, testing ban and strategic arms limitation treaties were signed; many seminal non-profits and activist organizations were formed; the Environmental Protection Agency was created; and landmark legislation - including the Civil Rights Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Wilderness Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act - was passed, followed closely by the Endangered Species Act at the very beginning of Pluto in Libra. All of this was testimony to our collective reach for greater accountability to each other and to the other more-than-human creatures with whom we share this planet.

Of course, we know that despite these achievements, we all still live in a world where accountability is the exception rather than the rule. The fossil fuel industry, tobacco lobbyists, manufacturers of toxic chemicals, pharmaceutical companies, mining interests, defense contractors and many other segments of the economy routinely lie about the adverse impacts of their products, and spend enormous amounts of money to avoid accountability, and/or simply operate beyond public scrutiny. Phone companies, internet providers, insurance agencies, hospitals, predatory lenders, and many other corporate carpetbaggers often exploit their customers in the name of profit. Police are not held accountable for the crimes that they commit; the legal system does not always hold criminals accountable, and frequently punishes those undeserving of punishment; elected officials are less and less frequently accountable to those who elect them. We live in a culture that encourages individual self-aggrandizement, competition over cooperation, and those who triumph in such a culture are often those who get away with thumbing their nose at any attempt to reign in the collateral damage of their achievements. All of this undermines the accountability that Virgo requires, and will continue to compromise our collective wellbeing as Pluto moves through Aquarius.

## The Shifting of Our Collective Archetypal Field

In the last issue of this newsletter, we considered Pluto's passage through Virgo from the years 1956 - 1972 in some detail, along with defining moments in the history of that era that shaped the cultural tenor of a generation. In this installment of this series, we will take a similar look at Pluto's passage through Libra, from 1971 - 1984, including the transitional phases, during which Pluto went back and forth between Virgo and Libra, and from Libra to Scorpio.

## Pluto in Libra: A Time of Transition into Darkness

As we begin looking at the Pluto in Libra years, it is worth first noting that Libra marks an important point of transition in the Earth's cycle around the Sun, at which light and dark are in balance. As the cycle moves through Libra and beyond, there is a shift toward increasing darkness which peaks at the Winter Solstice in Capricorn.

Darkness can, of course, be understood as a metaphor for many possibilities, including incubation in a womb or liminal space before rebirth; movement toward a place of stillness or quiet; or as a manifestation of what seminal astrologer Dane Ruhdyar called the Night-Force, in which humans come together as a collective force. Certainly evidence of all these possibilities can be seen during the Pluto in Libra years and beyond. Since it is Pluto, Lord of the Underworld, that is passing through Libra, however, we might surmise that this descent into darkness is also a severe test of our humanity, our decency, our capacity to make a positive contribution to the wellbeing of the planet we share with other life forms and that given half a chance would sustain us all.

It is my overall sense that during the Pluto in Libra years, significant efforts were made toward greater accountability to each other and to the more-than-human world, but there was also a significant turn toward darkness as a global culture in ways that have progressed to become the web of interconnected crises that now plague our world on the cusp of Pluto in Aquarius. In the rest of this article, I will focus on what I see those developments to be.

### Vietnamization

A primary focus in our previous discussion of the Pluto in Virgo years was the rise of the military industrial complex, fueled in the aftermath of World War II primarily by the Viet Nam War. During the transition period between Virgo and Libra, without admitting defeat, the US was embarked upon a policy of Vietnamization, which essentially meant turning the war over to the South Vietnamese. The Paris Peace Accords were signed in early 1972, officially ending US involvement in the war, although bombing of Cambodia continued for another 6 - 7 months. Saigon fell to North Vietnamese forces in 1975; Laos fell to communist rule shortly thereafter; and in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge overthrew the existing government, ushering in the short, but brutal reign of communist dictator Pol Pot.

Before he was ousted in 1979, Pol Pot forced the urban population to move to the country and work on collective farms. Money was abolished; all citizens were forced to wear the same black clothing; and a combination of forced killings of perceived political opponents, mass starvation, and poor medical care resulted in the Cambodian genocide, during which a quarter of Cambodia's population - 1.5 to 2 million people - were exterminated. The newly united Vietnam invaded Cambodia in late 1978, pushing the Khmer Rouge into the jungles near the border of Thailand, where they continued to fight a guerilla war for the next 20 years. Pol Pot was never held accountable for his crimes, and died of ill health in 1998.

In short, although millions of dollars were spent, and as many as 1.3 million lives lost, supposedly to defend the democratic countries of southeast Asia from communism, in the end, communism prevailed anyway, and it can be argued that

life in these countries was worse after the war because of US involvement. This has been a common pattern throughout the world since the Pluto in Leo years, a pattern that was exacerbated with Pluto in Libra and beyond.

### Ongoing Tensions in the Middle East

In the Middle East, the Pluto in Libra years were kicked off in late 1973 by the brief Yom Kippur War, in which a coalition of Arab States, led by Egypt and Syria attempted to regain territories in the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights lost to Israel in 1967. Israel was backed by the US, while the Arab states were backed by the USSR, thus engaging two nuclear powers in yet another dangerous proxy war. During the war, which lasted only 19 days, both superpowers beefed up their presence in the Mediterranean with over 150 vessels, some of which carried cruise missiles armed with nuclear warheads.

The Arab coalition was humiliated by a quick defeat, while Israel took the attack as a wake-up call, continuing its own military build-up with continued US support, eventually becoming a nuclear-armed military superpower in its own right. Then as now, the US (then under the influence of Nixon's secretary of defense Henry Kissinger) pursued a schizophrenic policy of arming Israel to the teeth while urging restraint so as not to inflame tensions in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, although it has become politically incorrect to say so, Israel has essentially become a terrorist state, accused then and now of numerous war crimes, including intentional targeting of civilians, killing prisoners of war and surrendered combatants, murdering journalists, torture, wanton destruction, and genocide.

Then as now, the US has been complicit in this evolution, aiding and abetting Israel's war crimes, and conflating any attempt to hold the Israeli state accountable with anti-semitism. It is not the Jewish people who are committing these atrocities, but the Zionist state of Israel, just as on the other side, it is not the Palestinian people who are responsible for the despicable actions of Hamas. The Jewish people absolutely do have the right to sanctuary and self-determination, but so do the Palestinians and all those the state of Israel deems its enemies. Until both sides - or more accurately speaking, all sides - are willing to be accountable to their neighbors, the Middle East will continue to be one of Pluto's favorite killing fields.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the Yom Kippur War, the true state of affairs was recognized internationally when the UN passed resolutions 3236, recognizing the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination; 3237, inviting the PLO, then led by Yassar Arafat, to become a non-member observer participant in the UN general assembly; and 3379, equating Zionism (leading to Israel's forced occupation of Palestine and mistreatment of its people) with racism. The US voted against all three resolutions, and to this day, continues to resist any accountability by Israel for the slow genocide of the Palestinian people, accelerated in this recent attack on Gaza. As I write this, the US is the only country opposing a UN resolution calling for a cease-fire in the current conflagration. Meanwhile, the Gazan health ministry estimates 30,000 Palestinians have been killed - 25 for every one killed by Hamas.

A brief respite from tensions in the Middle East occurred under Pluto in Libra during the Carter administration in 1978, when Carter brokered an historic peace agreement between Israel (represented by Menachin Begin) and Egypt (represented



by Anwar Sadat), known as the Camp David Accords, made possible when Israel agreed to return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. For this effort both Begin and Sadat were accorded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978. Sadat was sadly assassinated on 10/7/81 by members of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, a terrorist organization opposed to peace between Israel and Egypt.

Meanwhile, Begin - aided and abetted by the Reagan administration - went on to bomb a nuclear reactor being built in Iraq in 1981; and invade Lebanon in 1982 in order to destroy the growing military capability of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Both acts of aggression were rationalized by what became known as the Begin Doctrine, "a precedent for every future government in Israel" that effectively justified the use of pre-emptive strikes against any action by an Arab nation that could be perceived as a threat against the Israeli state. In September 1982, after the Sabra and Shatila Massacre killed thousands of Palestinians in a refugee camp in west Beirut, hundreds of thousands of Israelis took to the streets in Tel Aviv to protest. The Kahan Commission eventually held Ariel Sharon, Begin's Minister of Defense, accountable, and pressure began mounting for Begin's resignation, which finally took place in October 1983, just before the transition period that moved Pluto from Libra to Scorpio began.

In addition to this primary conflagration between Israel and the PLO; the Pluto in Libra era was in general, a rather volatile time in the Middle East. Before and after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Lebanon itself was embroiled in a civil war from 1975 - 1990, resulting in 150,000 casualties and an exodus of one million refugees, as various rifts between Christians and Muslims, Sunni and Shia Muslims, and other factions erupted, complicated by the presence of the PLO and other Palestinians in Lebanon, and interference by other states such as Israel, Syria and Iran, all of whom sided at various times with different factions.

It was also a time when various strongman dictators came to power - Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 1977; Sadaam Hussein in Iraq and the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in Iran, both in 1979. From 1980 - 1988, the Iran-Iraq war began when Hussein's Iraq invaded Iran, partly as a territorial dispute, partly as a struggle for regional dominance, and partly to prevent the Ayatollah's influence from spreading throughout the Middle East, as was his plan. The UN unsuccessfully tried to intervene, and then in 1982, Iran invaded Iraq. The war dragged on for five more years after that, eventually resulting in a stalemate, and 500,000 dead. The US supported Iraq in this conflict, along with the UK, the Soviet Union, France and Italy - a coalition of convenience that would turn later against Sadaam under George W. Bush's misguided quest for weapons of mass destruction during the Pluto in Sagittarius era.

US duplicitous policy in the Middle East was of course, not unique to this region, for we have a long history of backing the wrong horse - the worst, most brutal, most autocratic political leaders around the world, when our own "interests" - mostly dictated by business concerns - made it expedient to do so.

During the Pluto in Libra years, for example, this included a US-backed coup in 1973 to overthrow Chile's democratically elected leader Salvador Allende, that put Augusto Pinochet in power for the next 17 years. During his reign of terror, Pinochet tortured tens of thousands of political opponents, imprisoned as many as 80,000 people, and made life hell for many thousands more. In addition, upon Pinochet's request, the US launched Operation Condor in late 1975, a CIA initiative to

undermine and overthrow leftist governments throughout South America. It is not unlikely to assume that our current immigration crisis, with way too many people fleeing intolerable conditions in Central and South America, can trace its roots back to this misguided policy.

### The Iran Hostage Crisis

Meanwhile, back in the Middle East, tensions between the US and Iran were mounting, in part because of US support for Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war, but also because of the US's longstanding support for the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, deposed during the Iranian Revolution that brought the Ayatollah Khomeini to power. The Shah, who had taken power during a previous coup in 1953, and had exiled Khomeini in 1964, was no less oppressive, brutal or corrupt than his successor. US Support for the Shah began to wane under Carter, who made US aid contingent on upholding human rights. Carter nonetheless granted the Shah political asylum and admitted him to the US for cancer treatment in October 1979, after he had been ousted by Khomeini. This act immediately raised the ire of Iranians across the political spectrum, and greatly exacerbated tensions between the US and Iran.

In November 1979, a group of 200 Saudi militants occupied Mecca's Masjid al-Haram (the Grand Mosque), the holiest place in Islam. They were driven out by Saudi military forces after bloody fighting that left 250 people dead and 600 wounded. Khomeini spread rumors that the US had occupied the Grand Mosque, and US Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan was mobbed and set on fire. Other riots broke out in other Islamic cities as anti-US sentiment reached a feverish pitch. In Tehran, the militant group Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line stormed the US embassy and took 52 American diplomats hostage, triggering a diplomatic stand-off between the US and Iran that lasted 444 days, and after a couple of failed rescue attempts and ineffective diplomatic efforts, led to Carter's landslide loss to Ronald Reagan in the 1980 US election. The hostages were finally released literally minutes after Reagan was sworn into office.

### The Iran-Contra Scandal

While the coincidence was more than enough to raise eyebrows, the actual behind-the-scenes events proved to be even more embarrassing and damning to the Reagan administration, although ultimately not much of consequence ever came of it. While publically supporting Carter's arms embargo of Iran in response to the hostage crisis and initiating Operation Staunch in 1983, which aimed to persuade other nations not to sell arms to Iran, the Reagan administration was in fact illegally selling arms to Iran under the table. The US had been the main supplier of arms to Iran under the Shah, and with in its war with Iraq, its needs were rising. There were those in the Reagan administration who argued that cutting off the flow of arms to Iran would push them toward the Soviets, and that despite the very real threat that Khomeini posed to the stability of the entire Middle East, this was the most expedient course of action. It was, however, an illegal act in defiance of the arms embargo, which Reagan publically supported, so it was all done under the table, until he was busted in November, 1986, after Pluto had moved into Scorpio.

But that is not all. It also eventually came to light that a second illegal act occurred when the money raised through the sale of arms to Iran was used by the Reagan administration to funnel money to the Contras in Nicaragua, who were trying to

overthrow the leftist Sandinista government of Daniel Ortega. The sale of arms to Nicaragua was made illegal when Congress passed the Boland Amendment in 1982, and so these two illegal acts - both notably involving weapons sales - converged in a late Pluto in Libra government scandal known as the Iran-Contra affair.

Subsequent investigations by Congress, the Tower Commission appointed by Reagan himself found no evidence that Reagan knew anything about these illegal activities, although large volumes of documents about the Iran-Contra affair were destroyed or withheld by his administration. Reagan's lawyers argued executive privilege in matters related to the conduct of foreign policy - an assertion that has reverberated since as an ongoing debate about whether Congress or the President has the ultimate power to wage war. In late 1973, at the beginning of Pluto in Libra, Congress overrode Nixon's veto of War Powers Resolution, which limited power of the president to wage war without Congressional approval. Despite the law, since then, this has remained an open question, and the law has been flaunted by numerous presidents from both political persuasions.

In the wake of Iran-Contra, a number of Reagan administration officials were convicted, though later pardoned by George H. W. Bush. Reagan himself was never held accountable. Meanwhile, the question remains about whether or not some kind of back-door deal was cut with the Khoumeni administration, or perhaps with Hezbollah. In any case, the release of hostages held until the end of the Carter administration ensured his downfall and Reagan's election, and secret arms sale began shortly after Reagan was elected.

### Increasing Government Duplicity

In retrospect, this seems like a relevant question that remains part of the legacy of the Pluto in Libra years, which began with a similar illegal act by another Republican administration. On July 17, 1972, the Nixon administration authorized a break-in of the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate Office Building, a similar rupture in the trust placed in a government supposedly of the people, by the people and for the people, that had begun to seriously erode in the Pluto in Virgo years with the assassination of Kennedy, incidentally or not, also a Democrat.

In this case, however, eventually justice was served - through concerted obstruction by a defiant and belligerent president, caught red-handed with voice-activated tapes filled with damning evidence. In the end, 69 people from Nixon's administration were indicted, and 48 convicted. After the House Judiciary Committee approved three articles of impeachment, including obstruction of justice, abuse of power and contempt of Congress, and impeachment seemed evident, Nixon became the first president to resign from office. He was pardoned by his successor, Republican Gerald Ford, and like Reagan, otherwise was never really held accountable for his crimes, which aside from the break-in, included using the FBI, CIA and IRS in order to monitor and in some cases, thwart the activities of his political opponents.

In the intervening years between Watergate and Iran-Contra, it appears the Republican party had become a bit more cocky in its embrace of extra-legal support for policies not approved by Congress, or embraced by the American people. It also became more savvy in its execution of those illegal activities and its ability to cover its tracks and impede the investigation of its misdeeds. This pattern continued through a subsequent history which we will cover in future installments of this

newsletter, and brings us to the present day in which yet another Republican president, who was impeached twice during his first term, will be the Republican nominee for a second term, despite facing 91 charges in 4 indictments, including conspiracy to defraud the US government, conspiracy against civil rights, and obstruction of justice (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/trump-charges-jan-6-classified-documents/>).

In a pattern that emerged during the Pluto in Libra years, Trump has argued - so far unsuccessfully - that his executive privilege grants him immunity from any crimes committed while in office. Even if he is convicted of these serious offences, it is not likely he ever spend any time in jail, and if elected, he would undoubtedly use the power of the presidency to absolve himself of all culpability. If this flagrant defiance of accountability to the American people becomes entrenched in actual fact, as it has in autocratic dictatorships around the world, it would likely mark the end of democracy in the US, as a natural consequence of entrenched government duplicity that began during the Pluto in Libra years. Despite all long-standing, taken-for-granted, sleepwalking protestations that "it can't happen here," it is in fact a distinct possibility during Pluto in fixed Aquarius that the US will become yet another dictatorship, not unlike the ones overseas we have supported at least since the "noble" Pluto in Cancer and Leo wars that more earnestly resisted them.

### The Rise of the US Domestic Fossil Fuel industry

Meanwhile, back to our Pluto in Libra story, as a direct response to the Yom Kippur War in 1973, and the US support of Israel, the Arab members of OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) imposed an oil embargo, resulting in long lines at the gas stations, soaring gas prices, runaway inflation and a major downturn in the US economy, effectively ending the prosperity ushered in by the Second World War.

Historically, the US had relied on its domestic oil production, with quotas imposed on imports, mostly from Venezuela and Canada, and very little imported from the Middle East. By 1973, however, US oil production had peaked, and the US was importing most of its oil from the OPEC countries in the Middle East. Meanwhile, the prices of oil had remained steady throughout the 1960s, and Americans had been lulled to sleep by relatively cheap gas. This made the US quite vulnerable when the OPEC countries pulled the plug. The embargo lasted only six months, but in that time, the price of oil rose 300%, with prices in the US significantly higher than the global average.; the stock market sank; a half-million people lost their jobs; and the world would never be the same.

"The oil crisis set off an upheaval in global politics and the world economy. It also challenged America's position in the world, polarized its politics at home and shook the country's confidence" (WSJ/Opinion, "Daniel Yergin: Why OPEC No Longer Calls the Shots," October 14, 2013). Before the crisis, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia had threatened an oil embargo unless the US could convince Israel to return all the Arab land captured in the Six Day War of 1967, but he was not taken seriously by Richard Nixon or his soon-to-be Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. The oil embargo itself got their attention, and eventually led to a rethinking of US strategy, both in relation to the Middle East, and in relation to US domestic oil policy.

Kissinger met with King Faisal, and offered to be more "evenhanded" in its treatment of the Arab states in exchange for an end to the embargo. Being more

"evenhanded" turned out to mean selling weapons to Saudi Arabia that were previously prohibited for fear they would be used against Israel. Now the US was willing to supply both sides in the ongoing conflict, shifting its allegiances in response to the inter-Arab politics that determined the flow of oil.

At the time of the embargo, the US was allies with Iran under the Shah, and as a consequence, Iran refused to participate in the embargo. After Khomeini came to power and relations with Iran began to sour, the US began cultivating closer relations with Iraq under Sadaam Hussein. Sadaam then became the enemy during the George W. Bush years with Pluto in Sagittarius. And so it goes to this day. US politics in the Middle East and elsewhere became less and less a matter of principle, and increasingly a matter of crass political expediency - with Arab states, Israel and other nations around the world quickly learning to play the game. Oil became another weapon used to twist arms, and the entire Middle East, Israel and Arab states alike, became an extremely lucrative market for arms manufacturers.

From this time forward, threats to the flow of oil in the Middle East were considered a direct threat to US national security, having since led on numerous occasions, not just of proxy support for Arab nations, but also of direct military conflict - in Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan, to name only the most obvious.

The second major shift that occurred in the wake of the oil embargo was a shift toward less reliance on imported oil. Initially, one month into the embargo, Nixon called upon the American people to practice energy conservation: turn down the thermostat, turn off lights, carpool and use mass transit. He lowered the national speed limit to 55, and initiated the first fuel efficiency standards for cars. He also spurred research into the development of wind, solar and nuclear power. After the meltdown of a nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in 1979, nuclear energy became a non-starter. Meanwhile, solar made it to the roof of Jimmy Carter's White House, eventually to be taken down by Ronald Reagan as a sign of "weakness." For a while, during the Pluto in Libra years, the US became a global leader in wind and solar technology.

In the same 1979 speech, however, Nixon started steering the US toward increasing energy independence, which essentially meant ramping up domestic oil production. Suddenly, the price of oil was no longer stable, generally skyrocketing in the Pluto in Libra years, which created incentives for oil companies to drill in more remote places, including Alaska, the North Sea, the Gulf of Mexico and the Canadian oil sands reserves. Fracking came on board in the 1990s, and by 2005, US imports had peaked. Today, the US is the world's largest producer of oil, followed by Saudi Arabia and Russia (<https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=709&t=6>), and exports methane gas to 46 other countries. World oil production in general is 50% higher today than it was in 1973. Despite the rhetoric about making a transition to a green energy economy, oil and gas production have boomed under President Biden, and surpassed their previous production peaks under Trump.

This development, which sits at the heart of our global climate crisis, all began during the Pluto in Libra years, and now fuels what has essentially become a suicidal economy based on fossil fuel consumption. The rise of the fossil fuel economy dovetails with the rise of the military industrial complex that came on board during the Pluto in Virgo years to create greater political instability around the world. It is likely, during the Pluto in Aquarius years, as the climate crisis accelerates and possibly becomes irreversible, that the consequences of our stubborn reliance on

fossil fuels, more firmly entrenched during the Pluto in Libra years, will come home to roost in increasingly dire ways.

## The Dawn of the Computer Age

Meanwhile, a third development during the Pluto in Libra years has also forever changed the global cultural landscape, in many ways for the better, but also creating a new level of complexity and with it, challenges related to the management and navigation of that complexity. I speak here of the rapid evolution of computer technology. In 1971, at the end of the Pluto in Virgo years, I graduated from a college where the campus computer was housed in a building of its own. In 1983, at the end of Pluto in Libra, I purchased my first personal computer - with essentially the same technology - now fitting neatly into a box I could place on my desk. At the time it felt like an astonishing technological miracle, one that would change my work habits and my life, along with billions of other people, in ways we could not imagine.

Today, of course, we take computers for granted, as they are ubiquitous and essential, and we use them without giving much thought to the ways they shape our interactions with each other and with the world around us. Not only do we have access to more information at our fingertips than our brains can easily process, but to some extent, bemoaned by parents, educators and anyone chained to their office cubicle 9-5, the information that flits across our screens has, to some extent, begun to distort or even replace our interactions with hard reality, the world out there that still exists when we lift our eyes from our screen.

Today most of the systems that make daily life possible - communication, transportation, medical, energy and financial, to name a few of the most obvious - all increasingly rely on complex computer technology, making them seem both harder to understand and, in some cases, harder to control. As the world has become increasingly complex, we rely more and more on our computers to tell us what is true and what is not, and navigate the world. Yet, as we all know, with the advent of any technology our capacity for misuse of that technology for diabolical purposes - including government surveillance and control, the spread of mis- and dis-information, corporate fraud, and political manipulation - is increased commensurately, and adequate protections against misuse is slow in coming, often only against great resistance.

This, in fact, is one issue that will likely become even more exacerbated as Pluto moves through Aquarius, like Libra an air sign, associated with technological advancement, particularly as related to the processing of information and communication. The emergence of AI as a major game changer during Pluto's transition from Capricorn to Aquarius is one obvious example of this intensification.

In retrospect, we can observe that in the Pluto in Libra years, the technological genie was let out of the bottle, launching a still-evolving revolution in which the computer has been central. This was acknowledged in a symbolic way in 1982, near the end of Pluto in Libra, when Time Magazine's Man of the Year award was given for the first time to a non-human, you guessed it - the computer (1982).

In addition to computers themselves, the Pluto in Libra years also saw the launch of the first satellites devoted to transmission of global television signals (1976) and GPS (1978); the fiber optic cable (1977); the birth of the modern internet as its



precursor ARPANET adopted the TCP/IP protocol (1983); and the development of the mobile phone, introduced commercially for the first time in 1983, all of which provided infrastructure for or current global telecommunications network.

Lastly, we can note that all of this technological development completely rewired our economy. Many of the companies that sit at the top of the Fortune 500 today didn't exist when Pluto moved into Libra. Cray Research (builder of high performance supercomputers) was started in 1971; Microsoft came into existence in 1975; Apple Computer was incorporated in 1976; Oracle in 1977; Micron Technologies (producer of computer memory technology) in 1978; Charter Communications (the largest provider of cable television), LAM Research (wafer-fabrication for semi-conductors) and DISH Network in 1980; Cypress Semi-Conductor in 1982; Dell Computer, CDW (Computer Discount Warehouse) and Cisco Systems in 1984; and so on. At the dawn of Pluto in Libra, only a few stalwarts such as IBM, NCR and Intel made computer equipment, and then, only large mainframes for institutions that could afford them. Today, there is not a company on the planet, large or small, that does not depend upon computer technology, and if our computers go down, it would not be an exaggeration to say, so does civilization as we now know it.

It is not unlikely to assume, as has already been the case in Ukraine and Gaza, that future military campaigns with Pluto in Aquarius will increasingly target computer-based infrastructures. This was in fact the subject of a "fictional" dystopian movie, called *Leave the World Behind*, produced by Barack Obama, outlining a 3-point campaign for destroying an enemy state (which could easily include the US). Step One is to spread mis-information so no one knows who the real enemy is. Step Two is to debilitate computer-based infrastructures - communication, transportation, financial systems, etc, - which would generate widespread chaos. Step Three is to sit back and watch the enemy state, now plunged into chaos and/or civil war, simply destroy itself. Some say that this was Obama's warning, on the cusp of Pluto in Aquarius, extracted from inside information he obtained while president.

Whether or not this is true, it is clear that we are already well into Step One, which would have been far more difficult to orchestrate before the computer revolution of Pluto in Libra; and that Step Two, made into a viable strategy because of that same revolution, will not be that implausible a scenario with Pluto in Aquarius over the next twenty years.

### The Counterforce to Step Three

The counterforce to this game-over outcome is to take the lessons of Pluto in previous signs seriously, continue working toward sanctuary (its Pluto in Cancer lesson), a universal right to self-determination (its Pluto in Leo lesson) and accountability (its Pluto in Virgo lesson), as well as additional steps yet to be revealed in future installments of this newsletter. Whether or not humanity as a whole is ever able to rise to Pluto's challenge before it destroys itself and takes countless other species with it, remains an open question, and is probably a longshot. And yet, in counterbalance to the bad news that has been rising into likelihood through our willful ignorance since Pluto became known to us in Cancer, there have been and continue to be important developments that offer some hope.

At the beginning of the Pluto in Libra years, that hope took the symbolic form of the famous Blue Marble photograph of Earth taken from Apollo 17 mission on 12/7/72.

Although the original image has been verified by NASA to be a composite, made from multiple images taken in low orbit, the image itself has become one of the most widely distributed photos in existence. A prior image of the illuminated Earth, taken in 1968, was used by Stewart Brand for the cover of his *Whole Earth Catalog*, which became the bible of a countercultural movement, working in many ways, to stop the slow slide into irresponsible, willful ignorance that now becomes a warning we can no longer afford to ignore. More specifically, however, when the Blue Marble photo was released, it became the symbol for a powerful environmental movement that arose during the Pluto in Libra years, predicated on the emerging awareness depicted by the photo that despite our differences, we all share - and are all responsible for - the planet on which we all live.

Numerous environmental organizations came into existence during the Pluto in Libra years, including Earthjustice, Earthwatch Institute, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace (all in 1971), Trust for Public Land (1972), TreePeople (1973), Green America and Pesticide Action Network (1982). In 1974, a group of peasant women in India used their bodies to surround trees to prevent loggers from felling them, giving rise to the Chipko movement. In 1982, a Nuclear Disarmament Rally, and concert with performers Jackson Browne, James Taylor, Bruce Springsteen and Linda Ronstadt drew 750,000 to Central Park; and the International Whaling Commission decided to end commercial whaling by 1985-86.

The Endangered Species Act (1973), the Safe Drinking Water Act (1974), the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act (1975), the Toxic Substances Control Act (1976), National Energy Conservation Policy Act (1978), CERCLA - the act under which the Superfund program was launched (1980) and the Nuclear Waste Policy Act (1982) were all part of a positive movement toward the creation of a liveable sanctuary for humans and the more-than-human world. Many of these laws, and the Environmental Protection Agency created by Richard Nixon, of all people, at the tail end of Pluto in Virgo, have all since come under attack, primarily when Republicans held the White House and/or one or both chambers of Congress. In counterforce, there has also been a small army of staunch environmental activists working to persevere these laws, and build upon them.

There were also great strides made during the Pluto in Libra years toward a more level playing field for self-determination, particularly for women and LGBTQ+ individuals. In 1972, the 92<sup>nd</sup> Congress sent the Equal Rights Amendment to the states for ratification, although the Republican party withdrew its support for the Amendment after Ronald Reagan won the nomination in 1980.

The recently repealed Roe Vs. Wade decision that established a constitutionally protected right to abortion was made by the Supreme Court in 1973, and held for 50 years. As Pluto enters Aquarius, that battle has obviously been renewed, with citizen petitions re-establishing abortion rights state by state, including a number of red states, and mail-order sales of mifepristone replacing banned clinical procedures. It is curious to observe in vitro fertilization (IVF) come under attack during the transition period into Aquarius, since the first IVF baby was born in 1981, during Pluto in Libra.

It appears that many steps taken toward sanctuary, the universal right to self-determination, and greater accountability during Pluto in Virgo and Libra are now on the chopping block, and this will likely intensify with Pluto in Aquarius.

Gay rights likewise took a leap forward against a few significant episodes of backlash. The rainbow flag celebrating LGBTQ+ rights flew for the first time at the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade in 1978. The Gay & Lesbian Solidarity March was held that same year in Sydney, Australia to mark the 9th Anniversary of the Stonewall riots, and later became an annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Tens of thousands joined the National March for Gay Rights in Washington DC the following year, when gay rights laws were passed in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

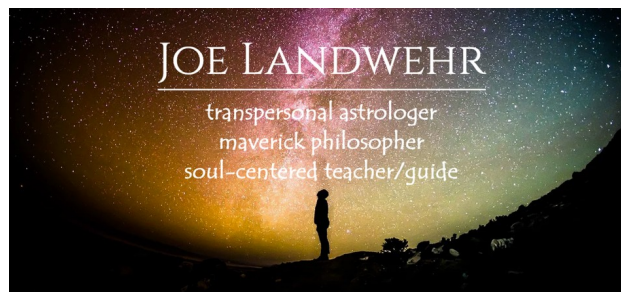
The passage of these bills was sadly prompted by the assassination of Harvey Milk, the first openly gay man to be elected to public office in California, along with San Francisco mayor George Moscone toward the end of 1978. The year before, singer and anti-gay activist Anita Bryant mounted a successful campaign to repeal an anti-discrimination ordinance in Miami-Dade County, Florida, but there was a huge backlash that damaged her public image, and she lost her contract with the Florida Citrus Commission. The most serious blow to the gay community, however, was without question the discovery of the HIV/AIDS virus, which made its appearance at the end of Pluto in Libra, but is really - as I see it anyway - a Pluto in Scorpio phenomenon, about which I will have more to say in the next installment of this series.

In 1975, the Helsinki Accords established Europe's commitment to human rights. In 1976, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) passed by the UN General Assembly ten years earlier, took effect, committing its parties to work toward the rights of all people, including health, education, and an adequate standing of living. As of July 2020, the Covenant includes 171 nations. Four countries, including the US, have signed but not ratified the Covenant.

Moving forward, any and all steps any of us can take, large and small, that contribute toward the creation of sanctuary for all living beings; honor and affirm the right to self-determination for all species, including humans, regardless of gender, age, religious or ethnic background, and other categories used to divide us; and/or demand accountability for our actions from ourselves and each other, we will be part of the counterforce to the increasing darkness enveloping this planet, as our species struggles to integrate Pluto's life-or-death lessons so far.

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Stay tuned for the next exciting episode as we look at how the lessons of Pluto in Libra continue to matter today; and how Pluto's passage through Scorpio upped the ante on everything we need to be consciously vigilant about.



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