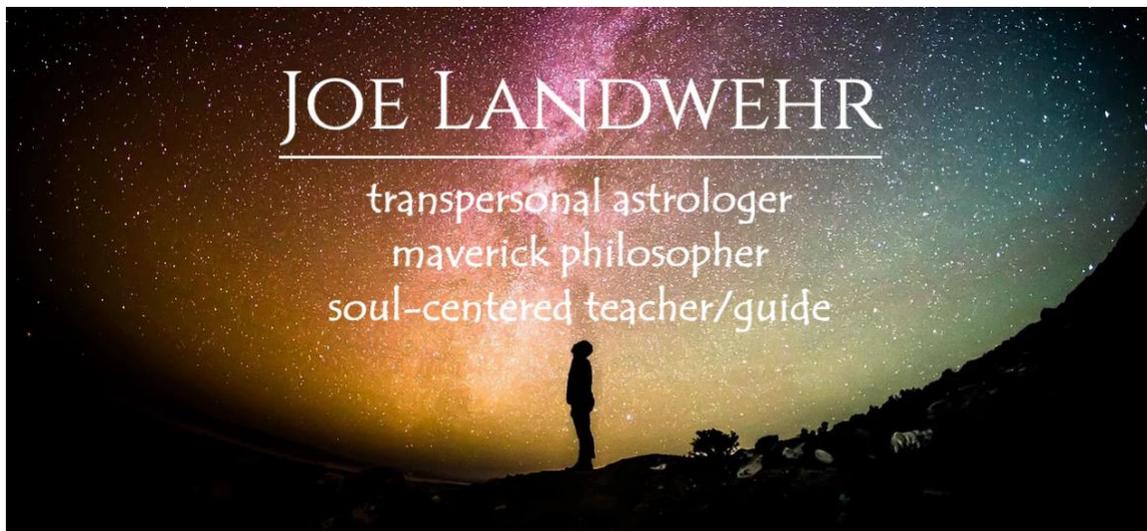


The Astropoetic School of Soul-Discovery

News From The Astropoetic School January 2021

Greetings from [The Astropoetic School of Soul Discovery](#) in the Smoky Mountains of western North Carolina, where if you squint real hard, you can see the light beginning to return at the heart of the darkness – or at least this is the longing in your heart.

Announcing the Launch of My New Website



One of my Covid-19 “lockdown” projects of 2020 has been to revise my website on a new platform under a new URL – simply www.joelandwehr.com. The new website includes everything previously contained in my old websites – **The Astropoetic School of Soul Discovery** (www.astropoetics.com) and **Ancient Tower Press** (www.ancient-tower-press.com). All of my books, articles, consultations, courses, and more can be found in one place, along with several new offerings not on the old sites. Check it out and share you feedback, if you have any. I would love to hear from you.

To launch my site, **I am offering a 20% discount** on all [books](#), [consultations](#), [courses](#), or anything offered at my new [SHOP](#). Just use the code **NEWSITEOFFER** at checkout. This coupon is good for one purchase only, but a purchase can contain as many items as you like. The offer expires on Valentine’s Day.

I will make special note here of [my correspondence course](#) which is **opening to 3 new students in 2021**. If you are interested in learning astrology, not as an abstract exercise, but at a deeper level, within the context of your own life experience, this is the course for you. Each 30-40-page lesson comes with a homework assignment to which I provide a written response, plus a 90-minute Skype call during which we can explore your questions about the lesson, about anything astrological, or about how what you are learning applies to you. Other courses are available if what you want is information. This course takes you more deeply into yourself, using astrology as a language of self-reflection.

You can start reading about the [Basic Course](#) [here](#). Then just follow the links to the registration page. If you are an astrologer, and wish to learn my more advanced system for integrating astrology and the chakra system, you can sign up for my next [Tracking the Soul Webinar Class](#) [here](#).

A Barbarian Invasion

No doubt, amidst the ongoing news about the arrival of several Covid-19 vaccines, the election and its unprecedented contentious and violent aftermath, the massive hack of US government systems by Russian agents, and all the rest of the incredible news now unfolding, you have also heard talk of the recent Jupiter-Saturn conjunction exact at the time of Winter Solstice (chart below, set for Washington, DC). In this newsletter, I wanted to offer you a few thoughts about this conjunction and its possible implication for the years ahead, particularly here in the US.



The Relative Importance of This Particular Jupiter-Saturn Conjunction

The first question to ask, in order to place this conjunction in its proper context, is how important is this particular moment in time? Aside from whatever we might think or feel is going on, the answer to this question, comes in part, through an understanding of just how rare this event is.

In ancient times – that is to say, prior to 1781, before the discovery of the first invisible transpersonal planet, Uranus, followed by Neptune and Pluto, and their Kuiper Belt successors – the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction occurred between the two outermost planets that were then known to exist. As such, this conjunction – called the Great Conjunction – was thought to mark the passing of the ages, especially in relation to the current political climate. Even now, aside from their function in individual birthcharts, Jupiter and Saturn are considered to be the planets most associated with the ever-changing interplay of social, economic, cultural and political conditions on the collective level. So even though we have since added a number of larger planetary cycles to our lexicon in the last couple hundred years, we can still mark this relatively frequent 20-year cycle as a kind of astrological milestone.

If we look back 20 years, to the last Jupiter-Saturn conjunction on May 28, 2000, before the bombing of the Twin Towers, the ensuing Patriot Act and the rise of the surveillance state, the War on Terror, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the destabilizing Trump Administration and its threats to our democratic institutions, and the Covid-19 pandemic, it is not hard to recognize the world as a different place than it was 20 years ago. To some extent, we can understand these changes within the context of the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction that sets the cycle in motion. Twenty years from now, the world will have changed just as much, if not more, and to get a sense of the general direction of those changes, from an astrological perspective, we can look to this current Jupiter-Saturn conjunction.

Beyond that, we can also note, as many astrologers have, that this particular conjunction marks the beginning of a larger cycle – called the Great Mutation – through which the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction moves through signs of a given element for about 200 years, and all four elements in about 800 years. From July 5, 1802 – May 28, 2000, the conjunction took place in earth signs (with the exception of the conjunction on December 31, 1980 which took place at 10° Libra). This current conjunction marks the beginning of a 200-year sojourn in air signs. The last such air phase started in November 8, 1186, when the two planets conjoined at 13° Libra, with one last dip into earth on April 16, 1206 at 26° Taurus, before entering air for good on March 5, 1226 with the Great Conjunction at 3° Aquarius.

The third factor that makes this particular Jupiter-Saturn conjunction one of note is the fact that this conjunction will be very close in the sky – about 0.1° apart (that is to say in astrological parlance, close not just by zodiacal conjunction, but also by declination) – and visible. The last time the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction was this close would have been July 16, 1623, but because the conjunction took place near the Sun, it would not have been visible in the night sky. The last time the conjunction was both close and visible would have been the first of the last continuous series of air conjunctions on March 5, 1226.

Putting these three factors together makes this particular Jupiter-Saturn conjunction relatively rare, and thus more important than it would be otherwise. I do not believe, as some are suggesting, that it heralds the dawning of the Age of Aquarius, which is an event marked in relation to the precession of the equinoxes, as they align with various constellations – a 26,000-year cycle, called the Platonic Year, with each zodiacal age roughly 2,165 years in length. This is a much larger cycle with nothing to do with Saturn and Jupiter.

Speculations about the exact date when the equinox moves from Pisces to Aquarius stem back as far as the 16th century, with little agreement among authors. 18th

century Freemason Francois-Henri-Stanislas de l'Aulnaye believed that the Age of Aquarius began in 1726; Rudolph Steiner, at the other end of the spectrum, believed it would not occur until 3573.

Given that most astrologers associate the Age of Pisces with the Christian Era – although the actual birthdate of Christ is also a matter of some speculation – it seems reasonable to me to assume a ballpark somewhere in the 22nd century, about 2,165 after his birth. Bringing this discussion of dates full circle, there are some that believe the Star of Bethlehem heralding Christ's birth was marked by another Great Conjunction at 21° Pisces on May 29, 7 BCE. Whether or not this is an accurate assessment, it seems implausible to assume, given the math, that we are anywhere near the beginning of the Age of Aquarius now, despite the proliferation of the perennial New Age pronouncements. Be that as it may, we need not consider this possibility in order to assess the meaning of this relatively rare Jupiter-Saturn conjunction – albeit on a time scale of 800 years, rather than 26,000.

So, What Does It All Mean?

Having established that this is a worthy moment to spend some time with, let's begin to feel our way into it. If we start with the premise mentioned earlier that Jupiter and Saturn are the planets most associated with the ever-changing interplay of social, economic, cultural and political conditions on the collective level, we can begin to parse the nuances.

Within this dance, which renews itself every 20 years, Jupiter represents those forces within a culture that might be considered progressive – in our time, working toward universal health coverage, worker's rights, consumer's rights, a more equitable distribution of wealth, gender and racial equality, human rights at home and abroad, good environmental stewardship, a vital and healthy democracy that is inclusive, transparent and fair, and so on. Saturn, by contrast, governs those forces that are naturally more conservative and protective of the status quo – working toward fiscal responsibility, national security, increased military might, corporate strength, global dominance, consolidation of elite power and privilege, maintenance of traditional social and religious values, law and order, and so on.

These goals are, of course, not necessarily mutually exclusive, but historically they have tended to constellate on opposite ends of the political spectrum, and at 20-year intervals, the polarity tends to shift or, in some cases, to take a decided turn in one direction or another. In 1961, with Jupiter conjunct Saturn at 26° Capricorn, shortly after John F. Kennedy narrowly defeated candidate Richard Nixon, we saw a short-lived swing to the Jupiterian pole that got derailed by Kennedy's assassination and the escalating Viet Nam war. By the end of 1980, with Jupiter conjunct Saturn at 10° Libra, we entered the decidedly more Saturnian era with Ronald Reagan's landslide victory over Jimmy Carter. In 2000, with Jupiter conjunct Saturn at 23° Taurus, we nearly had a swing back to the Jupiterian pole when Al Gore won the popular vote, but lost the election to George W. Bush by 1 electoral college vote after a recount in Florida was settled in Bush's favor by a 5-4 Supreme Court ruling.

Now, in 2020, with Jupiter conjunct Saturn at 1° Aquarius, we have an election that, despite vociferous unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud, and violent protest, Joe Biden defeated Donald Trump. While Biden can be considered a centrist neo-liberal at best, it appears we may expect a modest swing to the progressive end of the Jupiter-Saturn spectrum, largely due to the influence of democratic socialist Bernie

Sanders on the Democratic party. This shift is given more momentum with the Democratic victories in the recent Georgia Senate races, which will give the Democrats a majority in both houses.

It is clear, despite this victory that the country is radically divided between two very different visions of what we want this country to be, and that our democracy has been pushed to the wall and possibly fractured by the last four years, in which for the first time in our history, a sitting president actively worked to undermine and sabotage democratic institutions; willfully ignore the rule of law, govern in ways that served his own business interests; cast doubts on the veracity of the press and the electoral process; incite violence; ignore scientists in making decisions that ought to be based on scientific evidence; and consciously stack the courts, the administration and the bureaucracy with people antithetical to the mission of those institutions. While politicians on both sides of the political spectrum have, from time to time, bent the rules in their own favor, no one has been as blatant about it as Trump, and no one has done quite as much damage to the systems on which our democracy depends. The fact that he is the only president in history to be impeached twice, the second time with the greatest bipartisan cooperation of any impeachment (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/14/briefing/impeachment-capitol-trump-china-who-wuhan.html>) attests to fairly wide and growing agreement about this.

The fact that some have applauded and rationalized his behavior, and that despite his loss, he still has a very large following in this country, suggests that at this particular turning of this particular Jupiter-Saturn cycle, we are at a crossroads. Personally, I can't say that I am excited that Joe Biden, and not Bernie Sanders is our new president, but I am relieved that we might possibly return to some semblance of normalcy – provided we can find the political and social will to address the very large issues that plague not just our country, but the world at large.

Despite the incredulous denial of some, and the weariness of us all, we are still in the middle of a global pandemic that is not yet slowing down, and may in fact be accelerating, despite the advent of vaccines. Democracies here in the US, and around the world are being threatened by angry despots, capitalizing on the chronic angst of disgruntled and desperate people who mistakenly feel they have nothing to lose by burning down the house. Economic disparity is widening, fueling this desperation throughout all but the most elite strata of our society. Institutionalized racism, sexism, homophobia and xenophobia, still govern how many people of color, women, LGBTQ people, immigrants, and others on the fringe of our culture are treated. Climate change threatens us all with massive storms, perpetual wildfires, droughts, species extinction, and the proliferation of new cross-species viruses.

None of this is going away; and all of it creates a much larger context for the consideration of the shifting polarity of the Jupiter-Saturn cycle. Aquarius is a sign known for fierce, rebellious individualism on one hand, but also tribal consciousness on the other. We perhaps saw an advent of this way of being in both the Black Lives Matter protests this summer in the wake of George Floyd's death and that of countless other blacks at the hands of out-of-control police; and the storming of state capitals and the halls of Congress by violent, gun-wielding, alt-right protesters, who also are angry about stay at home orders, election results, and other supposed infringements on their rights. Whatever the political persuasion might be, the Aquarian mentality is, "No one is going to tell me what to do, and I will do what it takes to protect my rights." With Aquarius a sign of fixed air, I would expect this

kind of stand-off of ideologies in defense of personal freedoms, however they are conceived, to continue and to intensify over the course of the next 20 years.

On the other hand, I also personally believe that democracy is one of those fixed air ideals, thankfully more durable than I might have given it credit for, before it was tested. I, not unlike most people in this country, I imagine, have taken it for granted. But in recent days, I have taken heart in the fact that a small army of dedicated election officials in tens of thousands of precincts around the country dutifully reported election results to their county officials, who in turn, reported them to state electoral commissions, who in turn, certified them; in the fact that over 50 court cases pushed by Trump's band of lawyers, no doubt the best in the business, went nowhere for lack of evidence, many of them thrown out by Republican judges, some of them judges that Trump himself appointed; that the Supreme Court - with two judges appointed by Trump, one in the 11th hour - refused to hear a case by Texas and 17 other states attempting to overturn other states' results, correctly noting that one state does not have legal standing to contest another state's election results; that Trump's own Attorney General, William Barr, who has been rightly criticized for misusing his office to defend Trump, in the end, has stated publicly that there was no credible evidence of election fraud; that the attorney general in Georgia refused to bow to Trump's illegal pressure to rig the vote in his favor; that the electoral college did its job and voted for the candidate that won the popular vote; that despite the unprecedented, imminent danger of the mob, and a futile protest within the House, Congress also did its job and certified the results of the election; that a bipartisan majority voted to impeach Trump again for "incitement of insurrection;" and that conviction by the Senate is not entirely out of the question. This is democracy working as it should, despite having a rogue president who has spent the last four years attempting to undermine and game the system.

Not that there won't be additional ongoing challenges, some from fixed air types with other ideas, but this is durable fixed air at its best. The real challenge, as I have said before in previous newsletters, is for all to come together in genuine dialogue. It is not at all true that those who were storming the American bastille don't have some legitimate gripes that need to be addressed; it is true that we need a more inclusive system that provides an open venue for hard discussion about what we want our future to be. This goes beyond politics; it is about hashing out a collective vision that belongs to all of us. Can it happen? Will it happen? Your guess is as good as mine. But that is what I see the opportunity and the immense challenge to be during this next Jupiter-Saturn cycle.

Barbarians at the Gates

It can also be helpful in getting a feel for this moment in history, to look back to previous periods when the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction took place in air signs. The last would have started in 1226 with the conjunction at 3° Aquarius and ended in 1405 with a conjunction at 24° Aquarius. The US, of course, didn't exist at this time - which in and of itself, ought to be an historical lesson in collective humility - as what was happening in the world then and what will likely be happening at the beginning of the next air phase of the Great Mutation, sometime in the 29th century, won't have anything to do with our national soap opera at this time.

Having said that, we can perhaps draw some parallels. In 1226, the world was reeling from the aftermath of Genghis Khan, who had just created the Mongol Empire, the largest contiguous empire in human history (twice the size of the Roman

Empire), through bloody campaigns throughout Asia and Europe, including widespread massacres of civilians, mass exterminations, and the first recorded example of attempted genocide against the Western Xia culture in northwestern China. Genghis Khan died in 1227, passing the reins on to his third son, Ögedei Khan, under whose reign, the empire continued to expand through further conquests pushing farther into Persia, China, Russia and eastern Europe.

The era of conquest gradually gave way to a Pax Mongolica in 1275, which ushered in half century of relative peace, increased trade within the bounds of the Mongolian Empire, as well as cultural stability and intellectual creativity. Eventually by the mid 14th century, however, political rivalry between the various khanates (smaller subdivision within the Empire), religious intolerance, and the outbreak of the Bubonic Plague throughout Europe and Asia brought the legacy of Genghis Khan to a inglorious end. Essentially then, the previous 200-year air phase of the Great Mutation encompassed the rise and fall of the Mongol Empire.

As astrologer Jessica Davidson notes:
(<https://jessicadavidson.co.uk/2020/11/09/the-jupiter-saturn-cycle-and-the-transition-into-air/>)

The fall of empires at the hands of barbarians is a theme that repeats in every air cycle. In the 5th century, the shift from earth into air saw the fall of the Roman Empire due to repeated waves of barbarians, amongst other things. And before that, in the 4th century BCE Alexander the Great broke up the Persian Empire and invaded Egypt, creating a new empire and trading network.

Given this theme, we might anticipate that the next 200 years will bring about the end of the American Empire – manifest somewhat more subtly than the Mongol Empire as US economic, political and military dominance around the world – if not the United States as a viable political entity. It is not hard to see the barbarians already beginning to storm the gates in the recent attack on the Capital, egged on by our very own Chief Barbarian.

The Bubonic Plague

A second parallel between then and now is the existence of a pandemic, which in both cases has been a force contributing to massive shifts in the very fabric of global society. Between 1338 – 1350, the Black Death, a bacterial infection – swept through Asia, Europe and Africa, caused the deaths of up to 100,000,000 people, and decimated one third of the population of Europe. The plague was believed to have originated in Mongolia at the heart of the Mongol Empire.

While the current pandemic didn't originate in the US, since the early days, the US has led the world in cases and deaths, and become its major epicenter – currently, as of this writing (January 12) with 22,000,000+ cases and 367,000+ deaths (Covid Tracking Project - <https://covidtracking.com/>). Worldwide, deaths are nearing 2,000,000, which pales in comparison to the Plague, but which does put this pandemic into the top 10, at this point, about on a par with the worldwide Asian Flu/influenza pandemic of 1957-1958.

What seems more interesting and perhaps more immediately relevant is the association between pandemics and violence. Some historians believe that society

subsequently became more violent during the Bubonic Plague as the mass mortality rate seemed to cheapen life, and probably led to a kind of PTSD response in the general population (although they wouldn't have called it that), thus increasing warfare, crime, revolt, and persecution of minorities (see Cohn, Samuel K. "The Black Death: End of a Paradigm." *American Historical Review*, Vol 107, Issue 3 (2002), pp. 703–737).

When the plague hit, the Mongol Empire was already beginning to unravel, and its acts of desperation were no doubt fueled in part by the general background miasma of the Plague. Jani Beg, Khan of the Golden Horde (one of the subdivisions of the Mongol Empire after Genghis Khan), apparently threw rotting corpses infected with Plague over the walls at Kaffa, a Crimean city he was attacking in 1343. Infected soldiers fleeing the city subsequently sailed to Genoa, Messina, Constantinople and other ports in Europe, along with the usual assortment of stowaway rats, thus spreading the Plague to Europe.

I cannot help but see a reiteration of this historical anecdote in the recent events at the Capitol, during which desperate violent people, wearing no masks and perhaps made more violent by the pent-up frustration of an ongoing pandemic that they refuse to take seriously, attack their "enemies" and, at the same time, help to further spread the pandemic. Aside from the political implications of the attack, this perhaps unwitting or uncaring super-spreader event takes place within the more general context of a mobile population, not sailing (except in the early days for various cruise ships), but mostly flying around the world.

None of us want to limit our freedom or mobility, but we are now, as we were then, the enablers of a mortal agent running amok through the human world, changing our way of life, exposing cracks in our institutions of government and our culture, testing our resiliency, and pushing us, individually and collectively to a breaking points.

The Inquisition

The other global phenomena that dominated the last air phase of the Great Mutation Cycle was the Inquisition, a concerted effort by the Catholic Church to stamp out what it considered to be heresy, through diabolical methods of torture and violence. The Inquisition began in 12th century France to combat the religious dissent among the Cathars and others, but soon spread throughout Europe, Asia, Africa and eventually the Americas, mostly in response to the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation, but also aimed at various sects of Catholics deemed to have gone astray, as well as Muslims and Jews, who were forced to convert, and then sometimes killed anyway when the sincerity of their conversions came into doubt. Although the Salem Witch trials in Massachusetts did not take place until the late 17th century (during the fire phase of the Great Mutation Cycle), the practice of burning witches at the stake was widespread throughout Europe during this period, as part of a larger campaign by the Church to stamp out paganism.

While the influence of the Church is far less overtly dominant today that it was in the 13th and 14th centuries, what we see reflected in the Inquisition that is relevant to our times is the high level of intolerance for differences of opinion that has throughout the year of this Jupiter-Saturn conjunction, led to violent confrontation. As noted earlier in this article, here in the US, our country is severely divided, not just over differences of opinion, but radically different worldviews and perceptions of reality, as well as huge inequalities that have long been festering. There is a grand

shadow play going on now, not just within the nation as a whole, but within communities and families, during which those on the opposite side of any particular argument being demonized and ostracized.

This shadow play is being fueled by cumulative stress in the midst of a pandemic. According to QJM – An International Journal of Medicine (<https://academic.oup.com/qjmed/article/113/8/531/5860841>):

The psychological reactions to COVID-19 pandemic may vary from a panic behavior or collective hysteria⁶ to pervasive feelings of hopelessness and desperation which are associated with negative outcomes including suicidal behavior.² Importantly, other health measures may be compromised by abnormally elevated anxiety.²

It seems to me that much of the current polarized political climate is fueled by collective hysteria, elevated anxiety, hopelessness and desperation. This is not to say that the long-standing issues that are coming to the surface are not real, just that in our collective psychologically stressed condition, it becomes more difficult to deal with these issues effectively. As with most complex challenges, the answers probably lie somewhere in the middle of the radically divergent spectrum upon which our polarized views are defended to the death.

The Composite Challenge

Let us hope that sometime over the course of this new 200-year air phase of the Great Mutation, we can find our way into meaningful, respectful dialogue, so that we don't have to repeat the horrible history of the Inquisition, where those in power main, torture, and burn those who disagree. Even if the American Empire is destined to self-destruct, we can – if we are conscious enough – affirm our humanity, and find our way to a more egalitarian, inclusive, transparent world, all of which would be reflective of the highest possible air ideals.

If we cannot, then perhaps, in the face of climate change, the increasing likelihood of more cross-species pandemics, and increasing global trend away from democracy and toward more totalitarian regimes (<https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>), we may be looking at more than just a demise of empire, perhaps up to and including the eventual extinction of the human species, or at least the end of our time as the dominant species on Earth.

Although the Great Conjunction takes place every 20 years, my sense is that how consciously we handle this current 20-year Saturn-Jupiter cycle will a critical turning point of immense consequences for us all.

Quotes of the Month

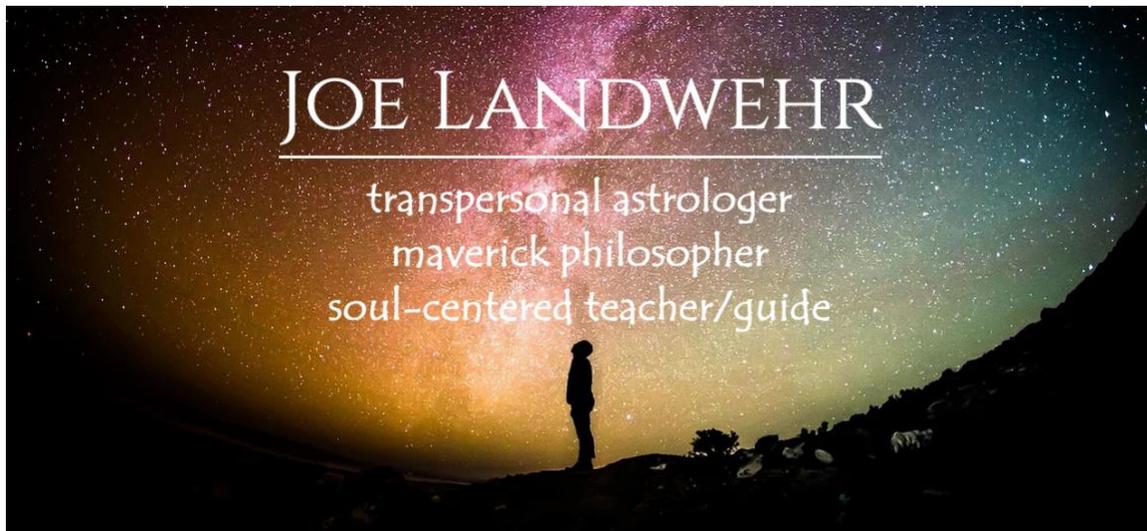
from *Spiritual Cannibalism*
by Swami Rudrananda

When a man feels a great calm within him during spiritual work it is an indication that he is not working. Work produces growth, not tranquility. Some people who meditate do so to quiet the self and achieve great peace. To grow spiritually involves destruction of the self. This is not a quieting experience. It is the greatest combat a man can be involved in, and it is never-ceasing.

from *The Journey of Soul Initiation:
A Field Guide for Visionaries, Evolutionaries and Revolutionaries* (p 134)

by Bill Plotkin

*The Shadow is at once a prison for what the Ego considers unacceptable and also a storehouse for preserving and safeguarding the inestimable psychological treasures that the Ego is not yet mature enough to embrace. Ultimately, **all** these unacceptables turn out to be treasures . . . But when elements of the Shadow – I call each element a "shade" – first becomes visible to our Ego, they appear to be either demonic or divine because . . . experiencing something as demonic or divine enables most Egos to perceive it as "absolutely not me" . . . Then, as the Ego gets to know the shade, the experience gradually moves from "not me" to "part of me," and eventually to "indispensable in order to be the **real** me."*



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