

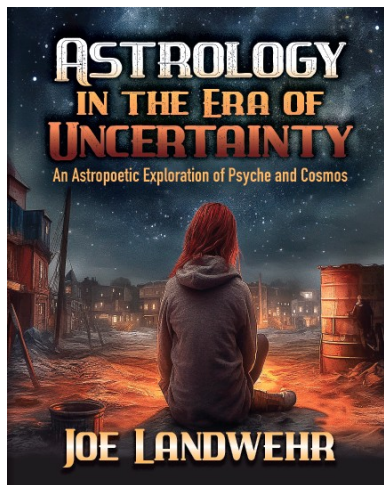
The Astropoetic School of Soul-Discovery

News From The Astropoetic School Volume 13 Issue 2: October 2024

Greetings from [The Astropoetic School of Soul Discovery](#) in the Missouri Ozarks, where I have had to change this message several times, as seasons roll by with relentless insistence, while I appear to be slowing down.

My New Book Still Available

My new book – *Astrology in the Era of Uncertainty: An Astropoetic Exploration of Psyche and Cosmos* – is slowly making its way into the world, although as always attaining any kind of visibility is difficult at best. Nonetheless, I persist, and with the help of my readers - whoever you may be - hope it will eventually strike whatever chord it is meant to strike.



In the book, I explore the awkward relationship between astrology and science, which had been co-evolving for millennia before diverging in the 17th 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, reviewer Joseph Crane (Astrology Institute) (March 2024) said:

I would recommend Astrology in the Era of Uncertainty to any astrology student or beginning astrologer who would like to know more about astrology's traditions, influences, and intellectual currents. This work is also a serviceable introduction to archetypal psychology when applied to the symbols of astrology. The seasoned astrologer may find much merit in the exploratory process outlined later in the book. I enjoyed reading his perspectives about the background, range, and application of astrological thinking. Even when I disagree with the author, working with this book has been a profitable journey for me.

You can read the full, more nuanced review, [here](#).

In a private email (April 2024), fellow author Brad Kochunas (*Dark Skies: Select Readings in Psychotherapeutic Astrology*) said:

A marvelous job. You're such a good writer. Despite our differences in metaphysical assumptions, I find your books amazing in terms of such a wide mastery of so many fields of knowledge. I loved the new work and I found your honesty and vulnerability in Part Three refreshing. Overall, this may be your best work.

Lastly, in my best review yet, Armand Diaz (NCGR Memberletter, Spring 2024) writes:

Once you read Astrology in the Era of Uncertainty, you'll understand far more about how astrology works, how it fits into contemporary culture, and how you can use it for your personal development as well as for your clients. It would make great summer reading for any and all astrologers, with endless opportunities to chew on the ideas presented.

You can download the NCGR Memberletter, and read the full review [here](#).

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](#).

*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



An Excerpt from the Introduction of My Next Book

In my previous book, *Astrology in the Era of Uncertainty*, I outlined an approach to astrology I call astropoetics. Astropoetics acknowledges the necessity for analysis of astrological symbolism, as governed by rules of symbolic logic – which is generally how astrology has been practiced for the last two millennia. But it also recognizes the same symbolism as an invitation to an imaginal exploration through which a deeper level of understanding becomes possible. Taking such a path does not obviate the necessity for a sound and seasoned knowledge of astrological principles, but rather builds upon it in the same way that poetry extends any language into territory that does not easily lend itself to pedestrian speech.

Most practicing astrologers must deal with clients who have real life concerns, rooted in the raw facts of their existence, and who just want to know how best to navigate a life that has become somewhat inscrutable, stressful or overwhelming. To address these concerns, the astrologer must necessarily focus their astrological inquiry in ways that take them at face value and provide pragmatic solutions to specific problems. And yet, even in the midst of such immediate triage, larger questions loom about the deeper meaning of the issues a client wrestles with and the possibilities for psychological and spiritual growth through consciously addressing them. These issues, and the particular facts through which they reveal themselves, are - seen in a certain way - merely an opening to an archetypal meeting of psyche and cosmos that is profoundly meaningful because it transcends the facts themselves, and ultimately even the issues around which they constellate.

Most facts cannot be fully understood based solely on what can be observed. To state a fact bluntly is often less revealing and less interesting than to circle around that fact and get to know its experiential nuances. Any fact must be placed into a broader, somewhat subjective context in order to give it deeper meaning. To get beyond mere appearances, facts must be approached in a way that takes into account an instinctual, many-layered, sometimes self-contradictory emotional response, perhaps as well as irrational sensory reverberations in the body, and an intuitive awareness of metaphors with multiple levels of possible application. Other facts seem to echo archetypal patterns in play since the beginning of psychic time; beg for imaginal embellishment; and/or serve as invitational gateways to deeply

significant encounters with primal, spiritual intelligences - call them gods or archetypes - reverberating at the heart of what we might otherwise deem "ordinary" reality. To truly understand the "facts" of our existence, in a way that makes them personally meaningful, all of this must be considered.

As astrologers we naturally lean in this direction when faced with a client that wants to make sense of a seemingly complicated situation, or when we face our own existential conundrums, questions with no immediate answers, chart in hand. At such times, to merely analyze the birthchart according to the rules of astrology can easily fall short of epiphany or enlightenment in the same way that reading yet another book we think might change our lives will leave us wanting more.

This is especially so to the extent that we approach the chart as a straight-forward commentary on the circumstantial details of life. That can be useful on a certain level of inquiry, but it does not address the deeper existential questions that haunt a life through its endless procession of particulars. To get to the core of what we really want to know in relation to these deeper questions, we must enter into a dialogue with the chart at another level, where we are touched by the living numinosity of its symbolism in our bodies, hearts and souls, as well as our minds. In such a venture, what we know already or think we know is less important than what we are willing to discover.

Balancing Quick Analysis with Slow Discovery

This is an enticing possibility that can only be achieved when clear, focused intent is directed toward the familiar astrological landscape with patience and with what James Hillman has called the "archetypal eye" open. The archetypal eye is what allows us to see beneath the surface of the obvious, using all of our faculties. When we are able to do this, patterns of memory, metaphor, mythopoetic imagery and allegorical story begin to coalesce into a much richer tapestry than the analytical mind - even the well-trained astro-logical mind - can produce by itself.

In outlining this more balanced approach in *Astrology in the Era of Uncertainty*, I evoked French philosopher Paul Ricoeur's dual approach to hermeneutics. Ricoeur proposes that in order to truly understand anything symbolic, we must approach it with our analytical and critical thinking faculties at full alert - along a path he called a "hermeneutics of suspicion." Yet at the same time, we must also allow the symbolism to reveal itself in its own way in its own time, along a path he called a "hermeneutics of faith." Faith in this context requires us to suspend what we think we know, so that the deeper, slower, less visible, more unconscious truth that lies buried beneath the surface appearance of things can reveal itself more completely, in full anticipation that if we allow it to, it will. This is especially important in relation to a symbolic language like astrology, where layers of meaning easily get lost when we rely exclusively on the quick reflex action of the analytical mind.

Within this philosophical framework, we can safely postulate that astrology is mostly practiced today as a hermeneutics of suspicion, that is to say, as a matter of analyzing, interpreting and/or decoding symbolic logic. If, for example, we encounter a Mars-Neptune opposition in a natal birthchart, we might speculate, among other possibilities, that whatever this aspect signifies within the overall context of the birthchart considered as a whole, the personality of the native might well be marked by low self-confidence, ambivalence and/or an attitude of tentative

uncertainty. Ironically, perhaps, we can say this with some confidence, because as astrologers we understand that Mars, at its best, represents confidence and bold, unequivocal certainty, while Neptune can erode or undermine the expression of these qualities. Synthesizing what we know as astrologers about Mars and Neptune, in other words, allows us to make a reasonable astro-logical guess about what Mars opposed Neptune means, at least potentially in the abstract.

If we then place this aspect and the chart that contains it into a living context, we can either validate or refute our astro-logical speculation. If I told you, for example, that the chart in question was for the moment I began writing this book, then as an astrologer, you might venture a guess that out the starting gate, perhaps, I myself might be feeling "low self-confidence, ambivalence and/or an attitude of tentative uncertainty." And you would be correct.

Feeling into it a bit more, I realize that in starting this project I am standing on the edge of unknown territory, a bit uncertain of the path forward. Rather than write or re-write the same old astrology book yet again, I hold the intention of breaking new ground. Yet in doing so, being truthful with myself and with you, my dear reader, I must acknowledge that I don't yet know where I am going or how to get there. This is, for me, part of the excitement of writing a book. But it is also the source of the uncertainty that necessarily marks the beginning of any creative project worth pursuing.

Stepping back a bit into our more analytical mode, as astrologers, we can now make the observation that what the symbolic logic suggests might be true, as we analyze it along a path of "hermeneutics by suspicion," is confirmed by actual experience. In other words, astrology "works." This will, of course, come as no surprise to any astrologer, as we all take this reliable dimension of our craft for granted.

And yet, as I want to suggest in the introduction to this book, without a corresponding and counterbalancing "hermeneutics of faith," our understanding of this aspect – or anything else we might say off the top of our heads about the chart on the basis of astrological analysis alone – is incomplete. Nothing astrological reveals its full meaning at at once just because we ask - as an astrologer might typically do, sitting in front of a chart that begs for interpretation. Rather, the birthchart and everything in it is merely a nested symbolic signature for a complex archetypal unfolding that must be lived before it can be fully understood. This unfolding takes time, and to get the full story about what a birthchart means, we must be willing to allow the rest of the story to unfold.

Letting the Rest of the Story Unfold

It has, in fact, been just over eight months now, since I started this book, and having a better idea of where I am going with it than I did back then, I have decided to revisit this introduction and tweak it. As I do, I realize that in just this short time, there is far more to the story than could be summed up by my initial analytical interpretation. For since then, despite an initial rush of creativity that has by this point, taken me 150 pages into the book, those early debilitating feelings of "low self-confidence, ambivalence and tentative uncertainty," actually deepened for a while. In digesting the feedback that slowly rumbled in from my previous book, feeling intensely invisible, at times misunderstood, and increasingly hopeless about

the possibility of ever finding an audience for my work, I entered into a dark night of the soul, questioning my identity as a writer, and losing my motivation to write.

In the midst of all this, I reached out to a few friends and colleagues, who either know me well, and/or who I knew could identify with my struggle. The feedback I received from these friends helped put everything into perspective. As one friend - a fellow author - put it, regardless of the response we might or might not get to our work, we have to keep writing "because the law of our being demands it!" Another friend - also a fellow author - surprised me with an unsolicited gush of praise for my work taken as a whole.

Then just this morning, in the *New York Times*, I read an article with a quote from Steven Levine's classic book, *A Year to Live* - which I first read in another period of deepening uncertainty, before I wrote my first book, over twenty years ago: "Once you see what the heart really needs, it doesn't matter if you're going to live or die, the work is always the same."

Reading this, I realized that this, too, is an expression of Mars-Neptune. Mars, the hero of his own story, must follow his heart, along an uncertain path, regardless of where it leads, in order to pay proper allegiance to Neptune. He must allow himself to be moved by a sense of calling that takes him through the fog of his own self-doubt, through the indifference of those around him, through illusion after illusion about what he is doing and why, past countless horizons that prove to be mirages, until he at last arrives at a place he could not have anticipated when he set off on his journey. This is the nature of Mars-Neptune unfolding through time - or one possible unfolding - and how I think about it now. This is an understanding I could not have conjured out the starting gate, even though as astrologers, we can recognize that this new assessment also fits the same symbolism that I interpreted differently before.

What is really interesting about all this, however, is that today happens to be the day when Mars and Neptune are exactly conjoined in the sky, exactly one-half cycle from where they were when I began this book. I did not know this until I looked just now, so the timing is actually a bit spooky. It turns out this revelation and the breakthrough that accompanied it is right on track, even as it takes a form that I could not have anticipated one half cycle ago. This is what astrology looks like along the path of a hermeneutics of faith, which it is only possible to walk when, after our initial astrological analysis, we hold a space for the rest of the story to unfold.

For those who want to help me develop the ideas
to be presented in this book
I am offering an introductory course in Imaginal Meandering
of 6 personal sessions.

Contact me at joelandwehr@socket.net if you are interested,
and we can discuss the details.

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; in September, we explored Pluto's sojourn through Virgo from 1956 - 1972; and in March we will cover 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 November 1983 - August 1984, Pluto was transitioning from Libra to Scorpio; and from January - November 1995, it was moving back and forth between Scorpio and Sagittarius.

As in past installments, before we look at some of the key events of the Pluto in Scorpio 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 Libra that now still contribute to the challenges we face as Pluto moves through Aquarius.

Pluto in Libra's Quest for Inclusivity

Since Pluto's discovery in Cancer, around the time of the Great Depression and in the very early days of Hitler's rise to power, we have been slowly gravitating to the realization that we are inextricably bound to each other on a planet that grows smaller as our human capacities evolve. Throughout all the wars, pandemics, technological breakthroughs for better or worse, and changes in the cultural zeitgeist, human proliferation and dominance impact other species with whom we share the biosphere. Meanwhile, within the human presence, racial, ethnic, economic, gender, and ideological divides allow some of us to win in the short term, but leave increasing numbers of us homeless, destitute, starving, displaced, disrespected and struggling to survive. This is not a world that anyone with a beating heart would choose to live; and yet, collectively, this is what we have created.

As Pluto moved through Libra, our efforts to meet the challenges of the previous signs, and our failures, continued to compound. Cancer's need for sanctuary; Leo's need for self-determination; and Virgo's need for accountability were all stymied by a less than fully conscious understanding of the ways in which every success achieved at the expense of someone else ultimately produces failure.

Billionaires can buy islands, while the merely wealthy can live in gated communities, but no one walks through town without tripping over the homeless, encountering refugees from other countries with no place to go, or bears and coyotes picking through garbage cans. Corporate CEOs enjoy a fantasy lifestyle in which nothing is lacking and every wildest dream can be fulfilled, while Amazon workers, Starbucks barristas and Walmart stock clerks struggle with multiple jobs, and still have trouble feeding their families, much less attaining anything remotely resembling a life of creative self-determination.

White males with enough wealth and the right political connections can do what they do with impunity, avoiding any semblance of accountability to the rest of us; while black men don't even need to look cross-eyed at the police to wind up dead. Large corporations routinely dump toxins into our air, water and soil, without any meaningful oversight, unaccountable to nearby communities where people are dying of cancer and other avoidable diseases. Powerful nation states wage wars that decimate civilian populations of people with no power, and there is no accountability for that.

For the winners, this might seem to be a viable system, but for anyone else, it is not. Considering the possibility that winning is ultimately meaningless in a world careening in perpetual catastrophe, it really doesn't work for anyone, unless Libra's need for a fair system, a level playing field, and an inclusive, mutually respectful sense of equality in which all stakeholders have a seat at the table at which decisions are made, is also met. As long as only the select few have access to sanctuary, enjoy the opportunity for self-determination, and can expect the rest of us to be accountable to them, Pluto's capacity for destruction will increasingly render our world unfit for an ever-larger percentage of our species, and way too many other species.

Libra is routinely associated with the scales of justice, but justice itself is meaningless if it is not applied in equal measure to everyone, and if species with no voice of their own that can be understood by humans aren't also somehow included and represented within the justice system. Switzerland was the first country to include animal rights in their constitution in 1973, followed by India in 1976 (both with Pluto in Libra), followed by Brazil (1988), Slovenia (1991), Germany (2002), Luxembourg (2007), Austria (2013), Egypt (2014) and Russia (2020), so while some progress has been made, this is by no means the norm, nor is there a trend in this direction (<https://harvardlawreview.org/forum/vol-134/rights-of-nature-rights-of-animals/>).

On a purely human level, the fact the former president Donald Trump has been indicted on 34 felony counts, and is still running for president, with three more serious cases pending, blaming everyone but himself for his own legal predicaments demonstrates in glaring red letters just how far we are from inclusivity in our justice system. This has been compounded by the Supreme Court decision to grant immunity to presidents, who commit crimes in the course of their "official duties." While the Pluto in Libra mantra of "no one is above the law" makes a good campaign slogan, the jury is still out on how Trump (and all those who can afford to play the system with endless legal defense) will be held accountable for his actions, if indeed, he ever will be.

Meanwhile, Israeli president Benjamin Netanyahu, responsible for the [deaths](#) of over 40,000 Palestians and Hamas leaders, and about 1,100 Israelis have been issued

warrants by the International Criminal Court, along with Vladimir Putin, responsible for the [deaths](#) of between 31 - 70,000 Ukrainians and upwards of 350,000 Russian soldiers. Whether any of these men will ever be actually held accountable for their crimes against humanity remains doubtful, as has historically been the case with countless brutal dictators throughout the world, as documented by previous issues of this newsletter.

As a consequence, moving into Pluto in Aquarius, the unresolved legacy of unequal justice for powerful perpetrators of death, destruction and mayhem remains a problem compounding and complicating our cumulative dilemma.

The Shifting of Our Collective Archetypal Field

In the last issue of this newsletter, we considered Pluto's passage through Libra from the years 1971 - 1984 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 Scorpio, from 1983 - 1995, including the transitional phases, during which Pluto went back and forth between Libra and Scorpio, and from Scorpio to Sagittarius.

Pluto in Scorpio: The Collapse of the Soviet Union and the Transformation of the World Order

Ironically, as seems to be the case when Pluto moves through a fixed sign, the world order becomes anything but fixed. In fact, it seriously rearranges itself. During the Pluto in Leo years (from 1937 - 1956), we saw the demise of Nazi Germany as a dark force of empire and genocide, the rise of the Cold War rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union, and the attendant rise of the military-industrial complex, culminating in a nuclear stand-off between two dominant superpowers.

During the Pluto in Scorpio years, we saw the unraveling of the Soviet Union, with a domino effect throughout Eastern Europe and elsewhere in the world, as former Soviet States and satellite countries renounced communism and embraced democracy. Despite the astrological expectation with Pluto in its own sign, that these years would be especially brutal - which they were - it was in many ways also a surprisingly hopeful era in our collective human history.

This changing world order began with internal changes within the Soviet Union itself, and more specifically with the election of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary by the Politburo in March 1985, some seven months after Pluto entered Scorpio for its 10-year-plus uninterrupted sojourn. Charged with the task of reviving a stagnant Soviet economy, Gorbachev initiated a number of liberal reforms, including *demokratizatsiya* (democratic elections involving choice between multiple candidates), *glasnost* (with no subject off-limits to the media) and *perestroika* (an adoption of a more market-based economic model). These policy changes led to a backlash from the old guard, as well as increasing restlessness among Soviet states that had previously been kept on a short leash by their master. Contrary to intentions, it also led to food shortages and the iconic images of downtrodden Russians waiting in endless lines in the middle of winter for ill-fitting shoes and toilet paper.

Meanwhile, satellite states were starting to rebel. The Singing Revolution in the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - in which spontaneous gatherings of political dissidents gathered to sing together in the evenings - eventually led to the succession of all three states from the Soviet Union. At one point in 1989, two million people from these countries formed an uninterrupted 600 km human chain called the Baltic Way, all demanding freedom and independence from Soviet occupation. The Soviets fought these changes, sending troops into all three countries, but ultimately to no avail, as the Baltic states continued to push unrelentingly toward independence, which they eventually attained by 1991.

Student riots broke out in Kazakhstan. The Solidarity Movement shut down business as usual with a mass strike of workers in Poland. Hungary opened its western border with Austria to refugees from East Germany, triggering massive demonstrations in that country, culminating in the eventual fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the reunification of East and West Germany in 1990. The so-called Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia led to the democratic election of Vaclav Havel in 1990, and the further peaceful division of the state into two separate states: the Czech Republic and Slovakia, each serving as a homeland to separate ethnicities.

By the end of 1991, Romania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia had all gained their independence. The Soviet Union itself dissolved by the end of 1991. The communist parties in Romania and Bulgaria won their elections, with the former rebranding itself as a socialist country, and the latter resulting in the re-entrenchment of hard-line communism. Similarly, Belarus elected an autocratic dictator who has maintained close ties to Russia ever since. A bloody ethnic conflict broke out between Azerbaijan and Armenia shortly after independence, marked by numerous atrocities and pogroms on both sides, leaving 30,000 dead and more than a million people displaced.

The Breakup of Yugoslavia

By far the most arduous transition took place in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which after the collapse of the Soviet Union, broke up into six independent countries: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia. As in Czechoslovakia, this further splintering was precipitated by long-standing ethnic conflicts, which were no longer contained under Soviet rule. Unlike Czechoslovakia, the transition was anything but peaceful, resulting in the nasty ten-year Yugoslav Wars, often described as one of Europe's deadliest conflicts since World War II, ultimately resulting in the deaths of 140,000 people, as well as major refugee and humanitarian crises.

During the initial stage of the break-up, the Yugoslav People's Army sought to preserve the unity of the former republic with its ethnic complexities, but under the influence of Slobodan Milosevic, a movement toward Serbian nationalism began to replace Soviet rule. Tensions between the Serbs and the Croats stemmed back at least to World War II, when fascist Croatian genocides against Serbs, Jews and Romani resulted in the death of 200-500,000 Serbs; 30,000 Jews; and 90,000 Romani people, many of whom were killed in Nazi-style concentration camps.

After Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia in June 1991, war broke out between the Yugoslav People's Army and rebel Croatian Serbs on one side, and the

newly independent nation of Croatia on the other. The Serbian rebels set up an independent state within Croatia called the Republic of Serbian Krajina that was not recognized internationally, but that served as their base for attacking Croats. By January 1992, the UN had stepped in and restored a temporary peace, although the conflict raged on intermittently until 1995. According to Human Rights Watch, in the early stages of the war, up to 250,000 Croats and other non-Serbs were forcibly removed from their own country, and/or **killed**. Then in 1995, after Croatian forces had regained most of their former territory, 150,000 to 200,000 Serbs were expelled from the country, with those refusing being tortured and/or murdered by the Croatian army.

Another deadly ethnic conflict erupted after Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence from Yugoslavia, and the three major ethnic groups within Bosnia-Herzegovina could not agree on their country's fate. As in Croatia, Serbs overwhelmingly wanted to remain within the larger Republic; Croats and Bosniaks overwhelmingly wanted to secede. The Serbs boycotted the referendum, and then mounted a successful military offensive after the rest of the country voted for independence. Supported by Milosevic's Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Serbian army managed to place most of the country under its control by 1992, along the way engaging in a campaign of genocide against the Bosniaks and Bosnia Croats. The victors established concentration camps where inmates were subjected to violence and abuse, including rape. More than 8,000 Bosnian men and boys were massacred in Srebrenica in 1995, and an uncounted number of women were raped. Peace was finally established after a NATO intervention, and eventually 21 Bosnian Serb commanders charged with genocide and wars against humanity by the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

The other former Yugoslavian republics - Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia - had all declared independence from Yugoslavia, with much less conflict, by 1992. Eventually Montenegro and Serbia chose to form a new state called the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The Troubles in Northern Ireland

Although not directly related to the break-up of the Soviet Union, it is worth noting that The Troubles in Ireland that began during Pluto in Leo (1969), started winding down in the latter years of Pluto in Scorpio. "The Troubles" was a euphemism for 30-years of violent confrontation between loyalists (mostly Ulster Protestants) who wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK and successionists (mostly Irish Catholics) who wanted independence. The ongoing skirmish was fought mostly between various paramilitary groups, engaging in guerilla warfare, and acts of terrorism, which in many ways became a kind of template for a new kind of conflict, much more localized and far less obviously a matter of nation states with armies wearing uniforms.

Over the three decades in which it raged, the conflict took about 50,000 lives in Ireland, Great Britain and parts of mainland Europe. The successionist Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) had ties and received arms shipments from the PLO, Libya, North Korea and the Soviet Union, while loyalist troops were supported by the US, Canada and Scotland, as well as Great Britain, who secured arms from South Africa. Although the conflict wouldn't come to resolution until a few more years into Pluto in Sagittarius, a significant though temporary cease-fire was declared by the

IRA in August, 1994, and was reciprocated a few weeks later by loyalist forces. In 1998, the Good Friday agreement restored self-government to Northern Ireland, in keeping with a pattern in the general trend throughout Pluto in Scorpio.

The Violent Struggle for Democracy Around the World

In concert with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the general turning of former satellite states from communism to democracy, similar movements around the world during the Pluto in Scorpio years sought to throw off the shackles of authoritarian and/or colonial oppression. Some of these efforts were successful; many took place at great cost; and some continue on to this day.

South & Central America

Military rule ended and democracy was restored in Argentina at the end of 1983.

Uruguay held its first democratic election after 12 years of military rule at the end of 1984.

That same year, over one million people occupied Sao Paulo and demanded democratic elections during the military dictatorship of Joao Figueiredo in Brazil. Democratic elections were held the following year, and Brazil was returned to civilian rule. Nearly a decade of political instability followed primarily because of economic chaos, which finally settled down by the end of the Pluto in Scorpio era.

The Sandinistas, who had been accused of numerous human rights abuses in Nicaragua since wresting power from autocrat Somoza in 1979, were finally voted out in 1990.

Brutal dictator Augusto Pinochet also lost a national plebiscite on his rule in Chile, and finally relinquished power in 1990.

In 1992, democratically elected president of Peru Alberto Fujimori carried out a self-coup, dissolving congress, imposing censorship and arresting political opponents. His government became known for forced sterilizations of indigenous women in the rural Andes, and violent suppression of the Shining Path, a Maoist guerilla group, resulting in 50,000 - 70,000 deaths.

A 12-year civil war in El Salvador between the US-backed government and socialist rebels fighting for greater economic equality ended in 1992, leaving 75,000 dead, along with 8,000 disappeared persons at the hands of US-trained death squads. Accountability was hampered by a 1993 law, which granted amnesty to those who had committed war crimes.

In 1993, Paraguay got its first democratically elected president in nearly 40 years. In 1992, however, the Archives of Terror were discovered and released by lawyer and human rights activist Dr. Martin Almada, documenting atrocities committed by Paraguayan dictator Alfredo Stroessner, as well as by other Latin American dictators in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, all aided and abetted by US intervention during a CIA clandestine campaign of state-terror and political repression called Operation Condor from 1975-1983 during the Pluto in Libra years.

In Haiti, the contentious election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide ended three decades of military rule, followed several coups, US military intervention, and a final restoration of Aristide to power in 1994.

After the Soviets began withdrawing troops from Cuba in 1991, the Castro regime struggled to regroup and maintain power, enduring its first serious protests since 1959 in 1994, but ultimately prevailed. The end of Pluto in Scorpio marked the first time in history that all Ibero-American nations (except Cuba) had elected constitutional democracies simultaneously, although some of these proved to be brutal reactionary governments. These were often backed by the US and trained by the CIA to fight against socialist rebels, seeking to regroup after the fall of the Soviet empire, with way too many civilians caught in the deadly crossfire.

Asia

In 1983, just before the transition period into Scorpio, a civil war broke out in Sri Lanka, when the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebelled against the Sinhalese-dominated government with a long history of discrimination and violent persecution of the Tamil peoples. By the end of the war, an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 were dead, with the Sri Lankan government maintaining control of the country, and never fully accounting for their war crimes, which included bombing civilian targets, abduction and massacre of Tamils, and widespread sexual violence.

In 1984, toward the beginning of Pluto in Scorpio, half a million people demonstrated in Manila against the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, and by the beginning of 1986, the People Power Revolution finally ousted him after 20 years in power, with Corazon Aquino becoming the first female Filipino president.

Also in 1984, long-standing tensions between India and Pakistan erupted anew when India launched Operation Meghdoot, and captured all of Siachen Glacier in the Himalayas, which the Pakistanis unsuccessfully attempted to regain over the Pluto in Scorpio years. Throughout this period, India and Pakistan also supported opposing sides in the Soviet-Afghan proxy war, with the Pakistanis joining Afghan rebels (along with the US) in opposition to Soviet occupation - another bloody conflict that left three million Afghans dead and millions more homeless.

Throughout this period, India also waged war against the Sikh succesionists in northern India, who wanted to form an independent state in Kashmir. In 1984, Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two Sikh bodyguards in New Dehli, after which anti-Sikh riots broke out, killing 10,000 to 20,000 Sikhs in Hindu-dominant areas.

In 1990, additional riots broke out between Indian troops and Muslim separatists in Kashmir, with 100,000 Hindus forced to flee after being targeted by Islamic extremists. To this day, volatile tensions between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs on India continue to tear apart the largest country in the world.

In 1988, the 8888 Uprising in Burma (now Myanmar) brought hundreds of thousands of monks, students and housewives into the streets to protest the totalitarian government of General Ne Win. The uprising was squelched by a bloody coup that left thousands dead. During the crisis Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi emerged as a national hero, and led her party to win 81% of the vote in a 1990 election, which

the ruling military junta unfortunately failed to recognize. The democratic resistance that began with the uprising, however, continues to this very day.

On a more positive note, in 1987, 38 years of martial law in Taiwan finally came to an end. In 1989, Mongolia became the second oldest communist country in the world to become a democracy. In 1990, the People's Movement in Nepal brought the first multi-party legislative election since 1959. That same year, military dictator Hussain Muhammed Ershad of Bangladesh was forced to resign following massive protests. After taking power in a military coup in 1991, Thai President Suchinda Kraprayoon was ousted a year later in the wake of massive demonstrations in which 200,000 Thais took to the streets in protest. In 1992, the first non-military candidate was elected president in South Korea since 1961.

Even, in China, one of the last bastions of hard-core communist control, more than a million people protested in Tianamen Square in 1989, followed by a bloody crackdown, commemorated by the iconic photo of an unknown Chinese protester, dubbed Tank Man, standing in front of a column of military tanks, temporarily halting them.

Africa

In South Africa, yet another iconic "moment" occurred when apartheid was dismantled, Nelson Mandela was freed from prison in early 1990, after 27 years of incarceration, and eventually became president in 1994. These triumphs were built on decades of struggle that intensified throughout the Pluto in Scorpio years, and culminated in an unstoppable wave of black South Africans demanding freedom from white minority rule.

Elsewhere in Africa, multiparty elections were held in Algeria in 1990 (the first since 1962); in Cape Verde in 1991 (the first ever); and in 1993, Eritrea gained its independence from Ethiopia.

Meanwhile, longstanding feuds, ethnic tensions, and political rivalries seemed to boil over on the continent during the Pluto in Scorpio years, leading to unprecedented bloodshed, and tenuous victories won at enormous cost. Eritrean independence from Ethiopia was a daunting case in point. At the very beginning of Pluto in Scorpio, widespread famine broke out in Ethiopia, affecting 7.75 million people. From 400,000 to 600,000 were left dead; 2.5 million people were internally displaced; another 400,000 refugees were forced to leave the country; and almost 200,000 children were orphaned. According to Human Rights Watch, this tragedy was greatly exacerbated by human rights abuses perpetrated by the ruling military junta against anti-government forces in the middle of the 17-year Ethiopian Civil War, which including the famine, ultimately led to 1.4 million dead by 1991, a third of Ethiopia's population at the time.

In 1980 (during Pluto in Libra), the Ugandan Bush War began when loyalists of brutal dictator Idi Amin launched an insurgency to try to retake the government. After multiple coups and counter-coups, and half a million dead, the war finally came to a relatively stable pause when Yoweri Museveni became president in 1986.

Throughout the early 1980s, harsh policies by the military regime of Siad Barre against the Isaaq, the main clan in Somalia, led to widespread hit and run guerilla warfare, largely waged by Isaaq rebels from Ethiopia. The conflict greatly intensified

during the late 1980s, culminating in a genocidal campaign against the Isaaq from 1987 - 1989 that resulted in the complete leveling of the second and third largest cities in Somalia, 50,000 - 100,000 dead and another 500,000 people forced to flee to Ethiopia in one of the fastest and largest forced movements of people ever recorded in Africa. Women were raped; men were burnt alive, and entire villages were annihilated. Barre was eventually overthrown at the beginning of 1991, but this led to more bloodshed, as well as US and UN intervention during the Clinton administration from late 1992 to early 1995.

In 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, a group of Tutsi rebels stationed in Uganda invaded northern Rwanda and began the Rwandan Civil War, fighting against the Hutus with whom they shared longstanding political tensions. For the next three years, neither side gained an advantage, but after Hutu president Juvenal Habyarimana was assassinated in 1994, the Hutus mounted a fierce campaign of genocide against the Tutsi, ultimately resulting in 500,000 - 800,000, and an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 women raped. The remaining Tutsis retaliated, and in 1996 launched an offensive into neighboring Zaire, home to exiled leaders of the former Rwandan government and many Hutu refugees, killing another 200,000 people. In the aftermath of these atrocities, over one million people (nearly one-fifth of the remaining population) were considered potentially culpable for a role in the genocide, overwhelming the prison system, marked by what was deemed "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment" of prisoners by Amnesty International. The UN also established a tribunal to try high-level government officials and leaders of the armed forces that were responsible for what happened, with their work not ending until the end of 2015. The grieving and trauma from this horrific genocide continue to haunt survivors to this day.

Middle East

As always, during the Pluto in Scorpio years, the situation in the Middle East was mind-numbingly complex, but ultimately a deadly entanglement of various ethnic, tribal and political factions, with countless skirmishes, civil wars, and larger conflicts, often fought over disputed territories and/or oil and gas resources. Perhaps the most important of these, during this time frame, was the ongoing rivalry between Iraq and Iran. Over the course of Pluto's sojourn through Scorpio this conflict eventually morphed into the first Gulf War, which ultimately involved a coalition of 42 countries led by the US against Iraq, and with Kuwait - one of the richest, most cosmopolitan and culturally liberal of the Arab states - caught in the crossfire.

The Iran-Iraq War began in 1980, with Pluto in Libra, beginning with Iraq's invasion of Iran in reaction to the fear that the Iranian Revolution bringing the Islamic fundamentalist Ruhollah Khoemini to power would spread to Iraq, then led by Saddam Hussein. Ancient ethnic rivalries between Sunni and Shia Muslims were also enflamed within the conflict, which was a struggle between the two countries for dominance in the Persian Gulf. For the first three months, the Iraqi offensive appeared to be successful, but by the end of Pluto in Libra, Iran had regained all the territory it had lost, and then launched its own offensive in defiance of a UN resolution calling for a cease-fire. The war dragged on for 5 more years, ending - or rather pausing - in 1988, with 500,000 - 1.25 million dead, including over 100,000 civilians, most of them in Iran. A significant number of them were killed by chemical attacks perpetrated by Saddam's Iraqi government, specifically targeting civilians. In this war, Iraq, the original aggressor, was supported by both the US and the

Soviet Union, as well as the UK, France, Italy, Yugoslavia and a majority of Arab countries.

During the war, Kuwait had sided with Iraq, with which it had strong economic ties around the production of oil. But within Kuwait were pro-Iranian forces - essentially Islamic fundamentalists for whom Khomeini's Iranian Revolution was a source of inspiration - that attacked the country from within. These forces were also aligned with Shia Muslims in Iraq and Lebanon. Kuwait was also directly attacked by Iran, with weapons from China, with whom it had aligned.

Three years after the Iran-Iraq conflict had ended in a stalemate, Iraq under Saddam Hussein, invaded Kuwait in a dispute over territory, oil production, and its huge debt to Kuwait incurred during the Iran-Iraq War, which Kuwait, struggling with its own financial difficulties, refused to forgive. Iraq's aggression was met with a massive international response, the largest military alliance since World War II, led by the US, including Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations. During the war, Iraq fired missiles into Israel, hoping to provoke other Arab nations to leave the coalition, but the effort failed, and by early 1991, the coalition was victorious and Iraq withdrew from Kuwait.

In retrospect, the First Gulf War, during the administration of George Bush, Sr. was only the warm-up for the nefarious Second Gulf War, in which George Bush, Jr. attacked Iraq again, looking for non-existent "weapons of mass destruction." We'll leave it here for now, however, and return to the next chapter of the story in my next newsletter, when we explore the Pluto in Sagittarius years.

Meanwhile, immediately following the First Gulf War, there was a massive uprising in Iraq, against the oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein, led by Shia Muslims and Kurds, both treated badly by the Sunni-dominant government. Within the first two weeks of the uprising, rebel forces had taken most of Iraq's cities and provinces, but then fell apart due to in-fighting among the various factions, and a lack of anticipated support from the US or Iran. During the First Gulf War, both Bush, Sr. and Khomeini had called for the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam, but when push came to shove, neither country lent more than superficial moral support to the effort. As a consequence, the month-long uprising was soon squashed by the Iraqi Republican Guard, killing tens of thousands and displacing another 2 million people.

In 1986, another short, but deadly conflict broke out in South Yemen, a country long supported and sustained by Soviet influence, killing 4,000-6,000 people and causing 60,000 to flee the country. This conflict, an 11-day civil war, was initially between various factions of the South Yemeni socialist government, beginning with a failed coup d'etat. Over the course of the next 8 years, it eventually became a broader conflict involving those in favor of unification with North Yemen, and those, generally southern separatists, opposed. The two countries united in 1990, but civil war broke out again in 1994. Extremists in the north essentially wanted a united Yemen to an Islamic state, while the south tended to be more moderate, still essentially guided by Marxist ideology, although by no means unified. The South lost the 1994 civil war, and the two countries remained united, although tensions remain high, as the South Yemen Movement continues to push for separation.

Throughout the Pluto in Scorpio years, ongoing, relatively low-level conflict continued raging between Israel and Palestine, mostly taking the form of small acts of terrorism, hijacking of buses and flights, taking of hostages, and the occasional

bombing of an embassy or mosque. Remarkably, however, significant progress was made toward peace when, in 1991, Israel agreed to participate in the Madrid Conference of 1991, an attempt to revive the Israeli-Palestine peace process, hosted by Spain, co-sponsored by the US and the USSR, and also involving Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. As a precondition to its participation, Israel had demanded that the UN revoke Resolution 3379, which had previously declared Zionism a form of racism in 1975.

The Conference ended on a cautiously optimistic note and eventually led to the Oslo Accords two years later. The Conference resulted in the acceptance of Israel by the PLO (excluded from the Madrid Conference) and by Israel of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people, with both becoming partners in ongoing bi-lateral negotiations. The Palestinian National Authority was created, and given limited responsibility for self-governance in parts of the West Bank and Gaza. Despite this promising step forward, the Accords stopped short of recognizing Palestine's right to exist as a separate state, and were opposed by a large portion of the Palestinian peoples, including radical groups such as Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, as well far-right Israelis. Less than 6 months after the Accords were signed, an Israeli extremist killed 29 Palestines in the Cave of the Patriarch massacre, followed by a retaliation suicide bombing by Hamas. Hamas continued a series of attacks over the next couple of years, designed to derail the peace process, and in 1995, an Israeli extremist assassinated Yitzak Rabin, the Israeli leader who negotiated the Accords with PLO leader Yassar Arafat.

Those who opposed the Accords have argued that they gave Israel the right to continue occupying Palestinian territory, which indeed has proven to be the case. Immediately after the Accords, Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza began increasing, nearly doubling in size by the year 2000. The Israelis also maintained a strong military presence, and imposed severe restrictions on the movement of Palestinian goods and services, essentially setting up the apartheid system that has prevailed and exacerbated tensions up to and through this current genocide.

The Ending of the Cold War and Easing of Nuclear Tensions

It should perhaps come as no surprise that Pluto in its own sign would precipitate so many bloody wars and fuel so many ancient animosities. Most of these conflicts were seeded when various peoples were constrained to live in close proximity to each other in artificial nation-states, some under colonial rule, many of them established in the wake of World War II, during Pluto in Leo. Throughout the world during the Pluto in Scorpio years, many of these groups fought valiantly for their right to exist in their own undisputed homelands, some succeeding, others collapsing back into sputtering stalemates destined to reignite down the road, not unlikely to resume in the coming Pluto in Aquarius years. Meanwhile, we can note that in its own dramatic bi-polar way, the Pluto in Scorpio years were also a global attempt to stabilize the overall atmosphere in which the human race itself stood on the brink of holocaust.

The Pluto in Scorpio years began with the Cold War brinksmanship between the US and the USSR at a feverish pitch, exacerbated in no small measure because of the nuclear arsenals that made both countries enemies whose global reach threatened everyone on the planet. Indeed, many of the struggles around the world against oppressive, authoritarian regimes, as documented above, were essentially proxy

wars in which superpowers backed various factions fighting against each other. In this battle, the US often backed right-wing autocrats in their attempt to squash the efforts of generally leftist insurgents with brutal force, up to and including massacres and genocides.

While nuclear weapons were thankfully not part of this proxy war equation, they were a significant part of the more direct stand-off between the US and the USSR themselves. Just before Pluto entered Scorpio, US President Ronald Reagan announced his plan for the development of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), commonly referred to as Star Wars, which got under way in earnest as Pluto entered Scorpio. The idea was that through advanced technology, some of it decades away from actual development, a defensive "shield" of counter measures would render a nuclear attack impossible. Reagan's official hype about the program promised to make nuclear weapons obsolete, and end the "suicide pact" of MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) between the US and the USSR that had prevailed during the Pluto in Virgo and Libra years. In reality, the idea fueled a new strategic arms race, in which the Kremlin concluded that space-based missile defenses would make nuclear war inevitable. Thankfully, with the final collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the ending of the Cold War, nuclear arsenals began shrinking, and the momentum behind Star Wars fizzled.

Even before that, domestic support for the program became badly eroded. In 1987, after a report by the American Physical Society suggested that it would be another decade before we even knew whether or not such a system was feasible, Congress voted to cut the SDI budget. In 1993, Clinton ended the program altogether. The idea was revived in 2019 during the Trump administration, and presumably would be again, if he were to be re-elected president.

Meanwhile, during the remaining Pluto in Scorpio years, the overall trend was toward reduced nuclear stockpiles and greater international cooperation to mitigate the possibility of nuclear war. Talks began in Iceland as early as 1986 between Reagan and Gorbachev to discuss scaling back intermediate range missiles, but largely because of the spectre of Star Wars, ended in failure. A treaty was finally signed in 1987, the same year in which New Zealand declared itself a nuclear-free zone, the first of its kind in the world. In 1991, Bush, Sr. and Gorbachev signed the START I treaty to reduce strategic offensive arms. Shortly after that, Bush, Sr. called for a unilateral reduction in short range nuclear weapons, and the Soviet Union responded in kind. In 1992, Boris Yeltsin announced that Russia would stop targeting US cities with nuclear weapons, and the US responded in kind. In 1994, Clinton and Yeltsin signed the Kremlin accords, which stopped the preprogrammed aiming of nuclear missiles toward each countries targets, and provided for the dismantling of the nuclear arsenal in Ukraine.

As tensions eased between the US and the former Soviet Union, other countries also felt less compelled to arm themselves with expensive and deadly nuclear weapons, or for that matter, to gear up so frantically for war in the first place. Not that the forward momentum of the ruling military industrial complex, now a global enterprise, was about to end any time soon. But for a brief moment in our collective history, during the Pluto in Scorpio years, and especially in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, we were at least able to take a breath.

In 1990, at the Open Skies Conference, NATO and Warsaw Pact representatives met in Ottawa to discuss lowering troop levels in Europe, along with German

reunification. That same year, the US and USSR agreed to end production of chemical weapons and reduce most of their stockpiles. In 1993, South Africa officially abandoned its nuclear weapons program. In 1994, Russia and China agreed to detarget their nuclear weapons against each other. By 1995, more than 170 countries had agreed to extend the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty indefinitely and without conditions.

There were, of course, exceptions. As the First Gulf War showed, both Iran and Iraq had intense interest in the development of nuclear weapons, if not yet the full capability, and this would precipitate the Second Gulf War during the Pluto in Sagittarius years. In the meantime, it was also clear that Iraq at least had a strong chemical weapons program, which it employed against both Iran and Kuwait.

In 1993, North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and refused to allow inspectors access to nuclear sites, beginning the 1993-94 North Korean Nuclear Crisis, which threatened to lead to war between North Korea and the US. Eventually a deal was brokered by former president Jimmy Carter and the immediate crisis was averted, although unresolved tensions remain between the US and North Korea that continue to fester as Pluto moves into Aquarius.

Also in 1993, China performed a nuclear test, ending a worldwide de facto moratorium - another potential source of conflict in the Pluto in Aquarius years, as China remains committed to its nuclear weapons program, and has the potential to fuel a new nuclear arms race with the US, as tensions between the two countries remain unresolved.

In 1995, French President Jacques Chirac announced the resumption of nuclear tests in French Polynesia.

It is perhaps telling to note that in 1989, the same year that the Soviet Union began to collapse and the Cold War was winding down, the FBI raided the Rocky Flats nuclear facility for numerous environmental crimes. Today, one quarter of a Pluto cycle later, Rocky Flats and the entire nuclear complex is gearing up for another round of nuclear escalation, fueled by a \$1.7 trillion plan to rebuild the US nuclear arsenal with ever-more sophisticated and deadly warheads. As reported in *The Progressive* (August/September 2024), if just one of these warheads were triggered above Times Square, it would "destroy most of Manhattan and kill more than 1.2 million people."

This will be a major residual legacy from the Pluto in Leo years that will need to be put to rest once and for all during Pluto in Aquarius, or it may well possibly result in massive death and destruction on a scale that only the most diabolical of minds have dared to imagine.

The Dawning of the Age of Terrorism

Meanwhile, as tensions revolving around the use of weapons of mass destruction began to subside globally, except for these significant hot spots, during the Pluto in Scorpio years, many smaller conflicts began to employ what would eventually become identified as terrorist strategies. These are defined loosely as the use of violence against non-combatants, often by small groups or individuals usually (but not always) not officially aligned with governments, to achieve political aims, both in

war and during times of relative peace. The intent was also often to instill a overall sense of fear among a certain population through unpredictable acts, which could occur any place, any time. While such tactics had become more common since the Pluto in Libra years in places such as Northern Ireland, the Basque country of Spain, and throughout the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, suicide bombings; hijacking of planes, buses and other forms of public transportation; the taking of hostages; targeted political assassinations; and other seemingly random acts of violence started ramping up during the Pluto in Scorpio years.

In 1988, Pan Am Flight 103 was blown up over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270 people, in what was the deadliest terrorist attack in the history of the UK. Eventually, only after much international brouhahah, a Libyan intelligence officer was tried and convicted of the crime in 2001. Prior to that, in 1986, the Berlin discotheque La Belle, a known hangout for US soliders was also bombed by Libya, leaving 3 dead and 230 injured. In 1987, Basque separatists exploded a bomb in a Barcelona market, killing 21, and injuring 45. In 1992, the Capaci bombing in Sicily killed 5 people, including anti-Mafia judge Giovanni Falcone. In 1994, a bombing in Buenos Aires, targeted against Jews, killed 85 people. Also in 1994, members of the Aum Shinrikyo cult executed their first sarin gas attack at Matsumoto, Japan, killing 8 and injuring 200, the deadliest terrorist attack in Japanese history. And so on. These are just a few examples of a trend that became widespread during the Pluto in Scorpio years.

With some notable exceptions, some of them noted above, a large portion of the terrorist attacks during Pluto in Scorpio were orchestrated by Islamic terrorist organizations that came on line in this era. Hezbollah emerged in 1982, inspired by the Iranian Revolution and the teachings of Ayatollah Khoumeni. Hezbollah in turn, inspired the formation of many smaller terrorist groups, most notably the Islamic Jihad in Lebanon, which began operating in 1983 during the Lebanese Civil War. Hamas was formed by Palestinian Imam Ahmed Yassin in 1987. Al-Qaeda came on board after a series of meetings in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1988. The Taliban emerged in 1994 as prominent faction in the Afghan Civil War. All these groups are still active now, and additional groups have arisen since.

Often, the line between terrorist organizations and the governments that harbored them became thin or non-existent. Hamas, Hezbollah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad - all active today - would not be able to function without intensive state sponsorship. During the Pluto in Sagittarius years, the Taliban controlled large portions of Afghanistan; today it rules the entire country. Pakistan has been implicated in unofficial state sponsorship of both the Taliban and ISIS, which came on line during Pluto in Sagittarius. Saudi Arabia, often treated like an ally by the US, is a prolific sponsor of terrorist organizations such as al-Queda, the Taliban, ISIS and others. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, upon which it was largely dependent, Syria became a pariah state under the dictator Hafez al-Assad, exercising severe oppression against the Syrian people, while sponsoring terrorist groups, mostly those aligned with Iran, throughout the region. Iran itself was essentially a terrorist state under the Ayatollah Khoemini, who famously issued a fatwa calling for the death of Indian-born British author Salman Rushdie in 1989, placing a \$3 million bounty on his head, for writing *The Satanic Verses*. Today, during the current conflict in the Middle East, Iran is the sponsor of many of these formerly rogue terrorist groups. During the Pluto in Libra and Scorpio years, Libya set up training camps for a wide variety of terrorist groups, including the Provisional Irish Republican Army and the PLO.

In its treatment of the Palestinian people, the Israel government itself has increasingly become a terrorist organization, as the current genocide in Gaza attests. Since the Cold War, the Soviet Union and later Russia both have sponsored terrorist organizations via clandestine operations of the KGB through the world, as has the US via similar operations orchestrated by the CIA, as well as through official government support for dictators conducting terrorist campaigns against their own people.

The Rise of South American Drug Cartels

Another form of terrorism arose as drug cartels in South America gained enormous power after the introduction of crack cocaine into the Los Angeles area in 1984. While the illegal drug trade has probably existed in one form or another wherever drugs were made illegal, a thriving trade in marijuana that dominated the South American underground in the 1960s and 1970s suddenly took a quantum leap during the 1970s and 1980s, when cocaine came on board. Unlike marijuana, cocaine was lighter, easier to transport, and far more lucrative. It was also a drug derived from coca, a plant endemic to South America, and thus more immediately amenable to control and monopolization by more local criminal groups like the Medellin cartel in Columbia, led by the legendary figure Pablo Escobar.

Dubbed the king of cocaine, Escobar was one of the wealthiest criminals in history, having amassed a personal fortune of \$30 billion by the time of his death. He controlled enormous political power and waged all-out terrorist war, including bombings, acts of arson and assassination attempts against the Columbian government. Meanwhile, aside from living an ostentatious lifestyle, Escobar contributed a great deal to the local community, and spent his own personal money to rehabilitate Medellin's poorest neighborhoods, building housing complexes, parks, football stadiums, hospitals, schools, and churches. Escobar was finally apprehended and killed by US authorities in 1993, toward the end of Pluto in Scorpio. At the same time, he was often considered a Robin Hood type hero to his people, 25,000 of whom attended his funeral.

Another seminal drug lord during this period was Panamanian strong man Manuel Noriega, ruling as a de facto unelected military dictator behind puppet presidents from 1983 - 1989. Noriega was both a CIA operative and a king pin in the drug trade, as well as a conduit for illicit weapon sales to US-backed forces throughout Latin America. As a leader, he was a quintessential autocrat, repressing the media, persecuting his political opponents, expanding the military, and using his power over the government for enormous personal gain at the expense of the people. Eventually his relationship with the CIA started to sour, and as is so typical of US foreign policy, he became yet another expendable pawn serving secret extra-legal agendas beyond the scrutiny or accountability of American citizens. In 1988, Noriega was indicted by grand juries in Miami and Tampa on charges of drug smuggling, racketeering and money laundering - all offenses to which the CIA and the US had previously turned a blind eye. When he refused to step down after his annulment of Panama's election in 1989, the US invaded Panama, captured and tried Noriega and sentenced him to 40 years in prison.

The Rise of Domestic Terrorism, the Alt-Right and a Culture of Violence

Within the US itself, there were a number of terrorist events throughout this period, most of them largely forgotten. From 1982 to 1985, during the early years of Pluto in Scorpio, a splinter group of the Weather Underground, calling themselves the May 19 Communist organization, committed a series of bombings, the most notable of which was in the US senate on November 7, 1983, with the intent to kill Republican senators. From 1978 to 1995, former mathematician Ted Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber, killed 3 people and injured 23 others in a nationwide mail bombing campaign directed at those he believed were responsible for the technological destruction of the natural environment and human freedoms. In 1993, the first Trade Center bombing, carried out by Al-Qaeda, was intended to make the North Tower collapse into the South Tower, but failed, though it did manage to kill 6 people and injure over a thousand. This was the precursor to the much more fatal bombing of the Twin Towers that was one of the defining moments of the Pluto in Sagittarius years.

Lastly, in what is by no means a complete list, on April 19, 1995, toward the end of Pluto in Scorpio, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols detonated a rental truck filled with explosives near the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people, injuring 680, and destroying more than a third of the building, which subsequently had to be demolished. McVeigh and Nichols were white-supremacists and anti-government terrorists, angered by the 1992 FBI investigation of fellow right-wing activist Randy Weaver, and the 1993 siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, led by cult leader David Koresh, which resulted in the burning and shooting death of 75 people, including over 20 children at the hands of the FBI - an event also as the Waco massacre.

It can be argued that this was the beginning of the same alt-right movement that now includes numerous groups such as the Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers, and others involved in the Trump-inspired insurrection at the US Capital on January 6, 2021, and that now has virtually taken over the Republican party, bringing terrorist sensibilities and an open embrace of domestic violence to further political agendas within the US government itself.

This infiltration of the Republican party by a more aggressively extremist contingent began during the late Pluto in Scorpio years when Georgia representative Newt Gingrich rose to power as House Minority Whip in 1989, and then became House Speaker in 1994, orchestrating a takeover of both the House and Senate by Republicans for the first time in 40 years. As part of his aggressive agenda, Gingrich issued a memo in 1990 entitled, "Language, a Key Mechanism of Control," in which he encouraged his fellow Republicans to speak of Democrats in demonizing language. With his Contract With America (called a "Contract On America" by Clinton and opponents), Gingrich and his cronies ushered in the era of smaller government, lower taxation, and less regulation of corporate malfeasance. This was an agenda also embraced by the Koch Brothers, who in 1984, founded Citizens for a Sound Economy, a conservative political group led by Ron Paul, considered the "intellectual godfather" of the Tea Party Movement in the Pluto in Capricorn years, the Tea Party in turn being a major source of political support for the election of Donald Trump in 2016.

Aside from their general mistrust of government, Tea Party Republicans also tended to be racist, evangelical, and intensely mistrustful of Democratic elites, around whom a bewildering shitstorm of conspiracy theories tended to swirl, leading to further polarization and contributing to an atmosphere of ongoing political tension, across

which sparks of violence were prone to fly. While this again is a later development that belongs to the Pluto in Capricorn story, its roots can be traced back to Newt Gingrich, the Koch Brothers, and others like Ron Paul, who deliberately encouraged political polarization, non-cooperation, and other radical tactics in which escalation to violent confrontation is the logical end.

The US, it may go without saying, has long embraced a culture of violence in which those not part of the mainstream narrative have not only been marginalized, but also often subject to abuse, violence and institutionalized negation. This has particularly been true of Black Americans and other people of color, who endured unspeakable indignities and horrors during the era of slavery and endemic, if more subtle forms, of racism ever since.

Aside from the re-emergence of white supremacy as a more overtly deadly force during the Pluto in Scorpio years, perhaps as a "new wave" of old school KKK cross burnings and lynchings, the infamous beating of cab driver Rodney King in March 1991, caught on video, vividly told the story of largely racially motivated police brutality on television to a much wider audience. When the four police officers involved were acquitted a year later, massive rioting erupted in Los Angeles, lasting 6 days, and causing over a billion dollars in damages.

This story, which has resurfaced many times since, and has not changed much since then, remains an unresolved festering issue that will likely continue to demand rectification during Pluto in Aquarius. This is, however else we might wish to euphemize it, another form of state-sponsored domestic terrorism continuing to mar the narrative of "freedom" this country espouses, but does not practice in an equitable way. In fact, as Donald Trump's open support for white supremacy has demonstrated, it is an issue that sits very much at the heart of what a significant portion of this country is now tragically all about.

While the incidence of mass shootings in the US has dramatically increased since 2011 - an escalation of the culture of violence in the US that belongs to the Pluto in Capricorn saga - two of the most deadly mass shootings in US history took place during Pluto in Scorpio. In 1984, 21 people were killed and 19 wounded at a McDonald's in the San Ysidro neighborhood of San Diego by 41-year old conspiracy theorist and self-proclaimed survivalist, James Huberty, who kept a house full of loaded firearms with the safety catch disabled. This remains the most deadly mass shooting in California history. In 1991, 35-year old George Hennard drove his pick-up truck through the front window of a Luby's restaurant in Killeen, Texas, killing 23 people and wounding 27 others. Hennard was a reclusive and belligerent, out-of-work merchant Marine, who hated women, blacks and Hispanics. 15 of his victims and many of the wounded were women.

These heinous crimes are obviously made possible by the easy availability of guns in the US, which has the highest number per capita in the world - 120.5 guns for every 100 people - and 18 times the average homicide rate in other developed countries. The NRA has been a major factor in the evolution of these statistics since its inception in 1871, but until the Pluto in Libra years, the organization was largely politically neutral. Since then, and on into the Pluto in Scorpio years, the NRA became increasingly political, largely aligning itself with the Republican party, which has since vociferously opposed any attempt at common sense regulation of gun ownership.

Despite this increasing influence, the importation of assault weapons into the US was banned in 1989 by George Bush, Sr., and in 1994, Clinton signed the Federal Assault Weapons ban, which prohibited the manufacture of some assault weapons for ten years. The NRA lobbied successfully for the ban's expiration in 2004.

Globalization and Widening Income Disparity

While the forces now in play that lead to increased racial and ethnic tensions, xenophobia and increasing acts of gun violence are complex and multi-faceted, one major contributing factor was a trend that rose into widespread awareness during the Pluto in Scorpio years - namely the rise of globalization. Globalization is primarily an expression of the increasing interconnectedness of the world, involving trade, the widespread exportation and global reach of corporate culture, increasing interdependence of world financial markets, political and military alliances, shared communications and transportation infrastructure, increasingly homogenized cultural norms, and large complex problems such as nuclear proliferation, terrorism, drug trade, human trafficking, global pandemics such as AIDS (which surged during Pluto in Scorpio), climate change and other environmental crises, to name a few that do not stop at national borders.

While one trend during Pluto in Scorpio, as documented above, seems to involve an ongoing battle for the rights of splintered ethnic factions within somewhat artificial nation-states to increasing autonomy and self-determination, globalization tends to move the world in the opposite direction, toward more effective unity and functional interdependence. These two seemingly contradictory forces can, in part, be understood as an expression of the signature astrological event of this era - namely the Uranus-Neptune conjunction, exact in 1993, but in play for many years before and after. Uranus brings increasing independence, liberation from oppression and autonomy; Neptune tends toward increased unity and interconnectedness.

Politically the trend toward increasingly globalization is typified by the evolution of the European Union, which currently encompasses 27 countries, over 1.6 million square miles, about 450 million people, and a GDP of \$16.6 trillion. While movement toward greater unification of the countries of Western Europe had been in play at least since World War II, an important formal step was taken in June 1993 (with Uranus and Neptune within a degree of each other) as the Maastricht Treaty was signed by 12 member states, with Sweden, Austria and Finland admitted before the end of Pluto in Scorpio. Trade barriers were eliminated between countries in the EU, and a single market was created across member states in 1993. The Schengen Area was established in 1995 toward the end of Pluto in Scorpio, and the euro was introduced as common currency among most member states in 1999, during Pluto in Sagittarius.

The formation of the EU in Western Europe took place in stark contrast to the collapse of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe, and was preceded by the military alliances of the Cold War - NATO and the Warsaw Pact. While military/political alliances continue to flourish in the wake of the Pluto in Scorpio restructuring of the world, and in some ways are starting to re-intensify on the cusp of Pluto in Aquarius, during the Pluto in Scorpio years, the alliances contributing to globalization largely revolved around increasing interdependency of trade and economic ties.

In 1988, the Arab Maghreb Union (largely dormant now) was signed between Arab countries in North Africa - Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. In 1991, a South American trade agreement called Mercosur was signed between Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay. The NAFTA trade agreement between the US, Canada and Mexico was formally signed toward the end of 1992. In 1993, the Uruguay Round of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade reached a successful conclusion after seven years; to be replaced by the World Trade Organization in early 1995.

In part, these trade agreements were an expression of the triumph of capitalism over the state-run economies that were the norm in communist countries. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia began moving toward a more Western-style capitalist economy in 1985 under the then revolutionary policies of *perestroika* under Mikhail Gorbachev. A similar revamping of the economy took place in China at the end of Pluto in Libra and beginning of Pluto in Scorpio under Deng Xiaoping, widely regarded as the architect of modern China, which now accounts for 17.9% of the world's wealth (2nd only to the US), second also in the total number of billionaires and millionaires, and first in the sum total of imports and exports, as the largest trading partner to 124 countries. China's rapid economic and political rise, which began under Pluto in Scorpio now sets the stage for its new rivalry with the US, certain to intensify with Pluto in Aquarius.

Another tell-tale sign of globalization was the rapid spread of companies like McDonalds to the formerly communist world, opening its first store in Russia in early 1990 and eight months later in China. Amazon, which is now the world's one-stop online shopping experience, was founded by Jeff Bezos in 1994; eBay was launched by Pierre Omidyar in 1995.

Needless to say, globalization was greatly facilitated by the rise of the Internet and other global communications technologies. Microsoft introduced its ubiquitous operating system Windows in 1985, the same year the Domain Name System now managed by ICANN came online. The first transatlantic fiber optic cable was completed in 1988; the first GPS satellite placed in orbit in 1989; the first commercial dial-up internet service became available in the US, Europe and Russia in 1990, and in China in 1994. The World Wide Web began its development in 1990, with America Online offering users a gateway to the Web for the first time in 1994, the same year the first smartphone - the IBM Simon - was made available.

Closely aligned with the rapid rise of globalization and technology to support it was the widespread adoption of neoliberal economic policies, sometimes referred to as free-market or laissez-faire capitalism, advocated mostly by right-wing political parties and think tanks, but in practice, embraced nearly universally - at least in the US - by whichever party happened to be in power. Neoliberal policies, for example were espoused by Ronald Reagan at the beginning of Pluto in Scorpio, but greatly advanced by the Clinton administration. Such policies include the privatization of public resources, deregulation, free trade, austerity and reductions in government spending. These ideas were another step in the march toward the corporate state that began evolving in the Pluto in Leo years, right after World War II, and accelerated during Pluto in Virgo and Libra, with the ultimate goal of minimal government interference to the free flow of goods, capital and labor around the world in service to corporate interests. By the end of Pluto in Scorpio, neoliberalism was embraced by countries around the world, including many former communist states, with few wanting to be left behind as this widely adopted mindset made it difficult to be competitive in global markets without playing the game.

While this paradigm shift has been good for a small wealthy elite at the top of the economic ladder, it has been disastrous for those on the bottom, and during the Pluto in Scorpio years, income disparity between the rich and the poor began a long and steady rise. During the 1980s, the change in mean family income in the US was - 0.1% for the bottom 20% and + 3.2% for the top 5%. During the 1990s, the income of the top 5% grew 4.1%, while the bottom 80% saw their income rise about 1%, not nearly enough to keep up with inflation, essentially representing a [loss of buying power](#). Such trends were exacerbated by the sharp [decline in union membership](#) during this same time frame - from about 20% in 1983 to less than 15% in 1995, and trending downward toward 10% by 2015. [Homelessness](#), which started becoming a more widespread and visible issue in the 1980s is another manifestation of this issue.

Ironically, unlike the US, China's rapid economic growth has also lifted 800 million people out of extreme poverty since the advent of Pluto in Scorpio, which amounts to nearly 75% of all extreme [poverty reduction](#) worldwide.

Environmental Catastrophe

Aside from economic disparities, corporate neoliberalism has also resulted in increasing environmental catastrophes around the world. Of note during the Pluto in Scorpio years was the worst industrial disaster in history, when a 1984 leak at a Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India immediately killed 8,000 people and injured half a million more, with a final death toll at over 23,000. In 1986, a meltdown of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine killed at least 4,000, and displaced another 350,000, with radioactive fallout spreading to every country in the northern hemisphere. Also in 1986, a Sandoz chemical spill in Basel-Landschaft, Switzerland released toxic agrochemicals into the air and the Rhine, turning it red; and the MV Amazon Venture oil tanker spilled approximately 500,000 gallons of oil in Savannah, GA. In 1989, the Exxon-Valdez oil spill in Alaska's Prince William Sound spilled another 240,000 barrels of oil. Exxon and its shipping company were indicted on 5 criminal counts in 1990; eventually agreeing to pay \$1 billion toward clean-up a year later. These were just some of the most iconic and memorable disasters, in a trend that would become fairly commonplace by the end of Pluto in Scorpio.

At the same time, early signs of global warning were also beginning to take the form of severe storms such as Tropical Storm One, which killed 10,000 when it hit Bangladesh in 1985; and a geomagnetic storm in 1989 that caused the collapse of the Hydro-Québec power grid, leaving 6 million people without power for nine hours. Also in 1989, the Daulatpur-Saturia tornado, the deadliest tornado ever recorded, killed an estimated 1,300 people in Bangladesh; and Hurricane Hugo devastated the Caribbean and the southeastern US, causing 71 deaths and \$8 billion in damages. In 1990, a tornado outbreak in the central US produced 64 tornadoes across six states, including four violent F4/F5 tornadoes, leaving 2 dead, 89 injured, and over \$500 million in damages. In 1991, Hurricane Bob caused \$1.5 billion in damage in NC and New England. The Great Blizzard of 1993 brought record snowfall and other extreme weather from Cuba to Quebec, killing 184 people; while the Great Flood of 1993 a month later, inundated large portions of the Midwest as the Mississippi and the Missouri Rivers overflowed their banks; and a monsoon flood two months after that killed 3,000 people in south Asia. Later in the year, the Southland Firestorm, formed of more than fourteen separate fires burning simultaneously, destroyed more than

700 homes and 160,000 acres in southern California. In 1994, Tropical Storm Alberto hit parts of Florida, causing over \$1 billion in damages, and killing 32. As with the environmental disasters noted above, by the end of Pluto in Scorpio, such severe weather events were becoming the norm.

In addition to these more obvious environmental disasters, the vastly increased corporate footprint, unsustainable agricultural practices, loss of wildlife habitat, increase in human mobility both through travel and displaced refugee populations, and the impacts of climate change have ushered in a new deadly phenomenon, the rise of zoonotic diseases, caused by the transmission of viruses from animals to humans. While zoonotic diseases have existed since the domestication of animals first began, they have also risen dramatically since the Pluto in Scorpio years.

The recent Covid pandemic is an example of this, but so was AIDS, a major health crisis during the Pluto in Scorpio years. First recognized by the CDC in 1981, with its cause the HIV virus identified shortly after that, the disease was believed to have first made the jump from primates to humans in west Africa sometime in the early to mid 20th century. Since AIDS emerged on the global radar in the early Pluto in Scorpio years, it has killed at least 40 million deaths worldwide. While treatments have vastly improved since the early days, and AIDS no longer is necessarily fatal, almost 40 million people globally were living with [AIDS](#) in 2023, with over 1 million new cases and over 600,000 deaths still reported annually.

Meanwhile, "approximately 1.67 million undescribed [viruses](#) are thought to exist in mammals and birds, up to half of which are estimated to have the potential to spill over into humans" according to a 2021 study at UC - Davis.

Given these odds and prevailing trends, it is likely that zoonotic diseases, and new pandemics, will become even more prevalent during Pluto in Aquarius, along with increasingly deadly and expensive extreme weather events, and environmental catastrophes - all set in motion by globalization, neoliberal economic policies, and other trends seeded during the Pluto in Scorpio years.

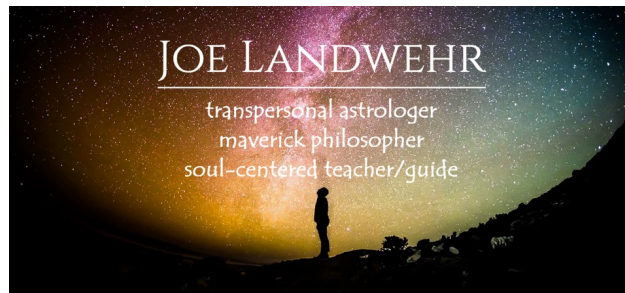
A Final Note of Hope

Lastly, to end on a more hopeful note, a more interconnected world has also resulted in at least the potential to deal with these global issues in a more coordinated way. After Queen's lead singer, Freddie Mercury died from AIDS in 1991, for example, a tribute concert held at Wembley Stadium in London and televised to over a billion people, raised millions for AIDS research. Earlier during the Pluto in Scorpio years, when the BBC first reported the Ethiopian Famine that killed thousands and left an additional 10 million people at risk, efforts by Bob Geldorf and Band Aid (recording "Do They Know It's Christmas" in 1984), Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie (recording "We Are the World" in 1985), and subsequent Live Aid concerts raised over 50 million pounds for famine relief. In 1986, in an event called Hands Across America, at least 5 million people formed a human chain from New York City to Long Beach, CA to raise money to fight hunger and homelessness.

When humans act together in coordinated compassionate acts of selfless generosity, we can indeed transform our world in ways that benefit us all. Increasingly in the Pluto in Aquarius years, this sort of integrated collective idealism backed by a fixed

and steady will, will be necessary, for us to leave future generations with any realistic chance at all of survival as a species.

Stay tuned for the next exciting episode as we look at how the lessons of Pluto in Scorpio continue to matter today; and how Pluto's passage through Sagittarius added yet additional layers of challenge to our learning curve.



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