

The Astropoetic School of Soul-Discovery

News From The Astropoetic School May 2022

Greetings from [The Astropoetic School of Soul Discovery](#) in the Missouri Ozarks, where winter just won't let go, even though the unstoppable green revolution has begun in earnest.

Mad Hatters & Daisy Chains

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While the last couple of years have been dominated by the drama of the Saturn-Pluto conjunction that ushered in the Covid-19 pandemic (see the May 2020 and September 2020 issues of this newsletter); the Great Mutation of the 20-year Jupiter-Saturn cycle into air signs, a once-every-800-year event (see January 2021); and the Saturn-Uranus square, which I associated with our current moment of radical political polarization and the crisis of democracy it is precipitating (see September 2021); another planetary cycle has – true to its nature – slipped into our collective space, like fog.

I refer here to the Jupiter-Neptune conjunction in Pisces, exact on April 12, 2022, but likely encompassing a larger window from May 2021, when Jupiter first entered Pisces this go-round to December 2022, when it leaves Pisces for the next 12 years. The conjunction begins a new cycle between these two planets, which is not uncommon, and occurs about once every 13 years. The conjunction in Pisces, however, which both planets co-rule, according to the tenets of traditional astrology, is more potent than most. It is also a relatively rare event, last occurring in 1856,

and not occurring again until 2188.

In this article, we will look briefly at the nature of Jupiter and Neptune, how they might interact in Pisces, how this planetary alchemy manifested at the previous conjunction, and how we are challenged to work with it now.

Jupiter

Astrologically, Jupiter is associated with growth, expansion and increase. It is a progressive force that at its best, strives to bring all potential to its full realization in actuality, moving whatever it touches toward a more humane, more enlightened, and more fully realized expression of its creative potential. Traditional astrologers consider Jupiter the great benefic, unparalleled among the planets in its capacity to make the world a better place, or an individual life an unmitigated success.

There is, however, within this impulse, sometimes a lack of discrimination between what might be worthy of blessing and what might not, so Jupiterian impacts within a society may conversely be manifest through runaway inflation, over-population, the rapid spread of a virus, or aggressive colonization of neighboring countries – to name a few possibilities. Within an individual life, under the right conditions, Jupiter can, at times, just as easily lead to obesity, hyperactivity, or metastasis of cancer, as it can vibrant health, economic prosperity, or cultural sophistication.

Emotionally, Jupiter governs the experience of joy (joviality), optimism, hope for the future, generosity and altruism, but it can also contribute to melodramatic or exaggerated feeling states and volatile mood swings. Mentally, Jupiter's involvement in an appropriate astrological pattern can indicate curiosity, intelligence, insight, perspective, persuasiveness, and gregarious interactivity, but when stressed, can also be prone to exaggeration and hyperbole, sloppiness with regard to detail, prevarication, rationalization and rose-colored denial.

Although Jupiter tends to be treated by many astrologers as though he were an unmitigated source of good, it is good to remember his association with shapeshifting. In his promiscuous pursuit of countless love interests, Zeus took the shape of everything from an eagle to a bull to an ant to a flame. As with all astrological archetypes, Jupiter manifests on a wide spectrum of possibilities, and which will be in play at any given time depends in part upon astrological context, in part upon the situation in which Jupiter is an agent, and in part upon the consciousness that is brought to bear upon its function by those through whom it expresses itself.

In Greek myth, Zeus was essentially a liberator, freeing not just his divine siblings out of the belly of their father Cronus, but also the Cyclopes and the Hundred-Handers, monstrous giants, imprisoned under the Earth by the old order of the gods, the Titans, to aid him in fighting them. Eventually, with their help, he prevailed and installed the new regime of the Olympians, the more familiar Greek pantheon, written about by the Greek mythologists, Homer and Hesiod.

From this myth, I draw the idea that Jupiter's primary archetypal function is to draw forth that which lies below the surface, or below the threshold of consciousness, bring it to the fore, amplify it, exaggerate it, often writ larger than life, and set it loose, so we cannot help but acknowledge and respond to it. If we do, we are

blessed with resolution; if we don't, but instead continue to remain in denial about what is increasingly obvious, whatever we willfully choose to continue to ignore will go from bad to worse, often in a rather dramatic way.

Neptune

As a transpersonal planet, Neptune is even harder to give a neat and tidy synopsis for, ranging as it does in expression between its orchestration of some of the most sublime, mystical experiences it is possible for a human being to have, at one end of the spectrum, to the most horrendous psychopathologies – bipolar disorder, PTSD, addictions of all stripes and persuasion, hysteria, narcissism and masochism, at the other. Regardless of where it falls on this spectrum, when Neptune is afoot, you can be sure that what you see is not necessarily what you get, but a much more complex mix of altered states, a reality sandwich in which truth is layered between elusive folds of illusion, compounded misperceptions, and distorted unconscious filters.

Ultimately, Neptune represents a longing within each of us for something exquisite and divine; for a return to the womb-like embrace of the Ultimate Source, out of which all of Creation springs; and/or for a realized state of being in which we feel our interconnectedness to All of Life. There are, of course, myriad substitutes for this often elusive, perhaps even unattainable ideal, and to the extent that we settle for or allow ourselves to be seduced by these substitutes – wealth, sexual bliss, drug-induced euphoria, power, glory, fame, glitz and glamour, nostalgia for some mythical golden age – we may eventually find ourselves lost in a quagmire of illusion with no easy exit. Emotionally, Neptune can be associated with loss, disillusionment, and grief. Like the ocean tides, it can sometimes be an erosive force, eating away at the shore, washing sand castles out to sea.

As a psychic faculty, Neptune governs the use of imagination, which at its best, can fuel a kind of visionary creativity that draws forth something sublime from the ethers, so to speak, and at its worst, can lead to a radical disconnect from consensus reality. Neptune is very idealistic, again manifest across a wide spectrum of possibilities – everything from an all-inclusive democracy to an exclusionary fascist quest for racial purity; from a deeply transformative spiritual faith to susceptibility to brainwashing by a cult; from a community-wide effort to protect biodiversity to a quasi-religious quest to eradicate the wolf. Whatever you believe, under Neptune's influence, it can easily become a kind of hysterical myopia.

Politically, Neptune has been associated with socialist forms of government, with the ideal being an egalitarian society, where individuals are expected to contribute the wellbeing of the whole community. In actuality, the ideal often distorts into repressive systems of government such as those currently and historically propagated in Russia and China, under megalomaniac leaders like Stalin or Putin, Mao Tse Tung or Xi Jinping. In its association with Dionysus, Neptune can be assumed to be in motion wherever mob mentality prevails against a more rational order. Revolution is more often associated with Uranus, but the pent-up emotional frenzy that breaks through the wall is often Neptunian.

Jupiter & Neptune Together in Pisces

When Jupiter and Neptune operate together as a pair, Jupiter will tend to exaggerate

and amplify Neptune's function, for good or ill, while Neptune can undermine and erode Jupiter's agenda, or conversely elevate it to a quasi-religious pitch of significance.

At their best, these planets can work together, with great compassion to elevate the disenfranchised, level the playing field for those in need, and work toward a more egalitarian culture in which all can thrive. Altruistic tendencies are amplified, and social cohesion makes possible a genuine evolution in the direction of shared ideals. Life can assume a more tangible spiritual dimension that is realized as people reach, both individually and collectively, toward a way of being that embodies what is most noble within human nature. Guidance seems closer to the surface, more accessible, and writ large for those with eyes to see. Inspired, even visionary creativity can reach new heights of sublime possibility.

If all this seems too good to be true, or real, or genuinely possible, this is also an expression of this same planetary combination at work. Jupiterian optimism can easily be based on nothing but vapor in a Neptunian bubble of romantic delusions. Secondary agendas, largely unconscious, can derail or corrupt sincere efforts toward betterment. Irrational fears can erupt in the midst of changes that might otherwise significantly improve a situation long in need of transformation. Inspired revolutions can spawn equally fervent counter-revolutions. The line between creativity and madness can become thinner. Wild leaps forward can fall flat and lead to frenzied instinctual despair.

All of this becomes even more Mad-Hatterish with these planets in Pisces, which as noted earlier, both planets traditionally co-rule. Pisces is a mutable water sign, one in which the volatile emotional dimensions of both planets are in amplified play. In the cycle of the seasons, Pisces is the zodiacal station in late winter, just before the balance between light and dark begins to shift again in the direction of increasing light. Thus, within Pisces is an innate tendency to reach, with great longing, toward the light – knowing, and wanting to believe it is there, and embrace it, with every fiber of its being. At the same time, however, here, too, is where the darkness fights back with its most intense ferocity, and where the boundaries between light and dark often get blurred. Pisces, in fact, must learn to negotiate its way through a foggy shadowland where nothing is clearly defined, and where everything is multi-dimensional, often not what it appears to be. To negotiate this liminal space, Pisces is faced with the task of finding a central point of reference within the swirling transformation that otherwise threatens to consume it.

Looking Backward

The last time Jupiter and Neptune were conjunct in Pisces was 1856, a time in the US when political tensions were high in the run-up to the Civil War. In what surely must be a master-stroke of irony, the Republican Party at the time was determined to limit the spread of slavery to the territories that had not yet become states; while the Democratic Southern states were threatening to secede from the Union if the Republican candidate, Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 election – which of course he did. The rest is history, but in 1856, just as now, there was a sense, in the air, of long-building tensions that could no longer be contained or held back.

Slavery, of course, was not new in 1856. It had been an issue since the founding of the nation, and many of the Founding Fathers – George Washington, Thomas

Jefferson, James Madison, Ben Franklin, among them – all owned slaves (<https://slaveryadvocate.com/list-of-founding-fathers-who-owned-slaves/>), some while advocating publicly for their release. The abolitionist cause, drawing upon Puritan principles, got a great impetus from the American Revolution, and within it, it is easy to see Jupiter's role as the great liberator, being driven by high-minded moral principles at a Neptunian pitch of spiritual idealism. At the same time, within the Confederate defense of slavery, it is easy to see Jupiter's shadow side tendency toward prevarication, rationalization and rose-colored denial coupled with Neptune's capacity for irrational tenacity in the face of inevitable change, and dark mob mentality fighting back.

All of this tension was coming to an unsustainable head in 1856. This was the year that Representative Preston Brooks, a pro-slavery Democrat from South Carolina, used a walking cane to attack Senator Charles Sumner, an abolitionist Republican from Massachusetts, who had given a fiery speech a few days before condemning slavery. At the time, this was considered symbolic of the breakdown of reasoned discourse in the government, and the increasing use of violence. Shortly after that, an abolitionist militia called the Pottawatomie Rifles killed five pro-slavery settlers in front of their families in Franklin County, Kansas. A few months later, 250-400 Border Ruffians, a pro-slavery militia attacked the town of Osawatimie, Kansas, killing five Free-Staters, looting and burning the town. All of this was part of a period called Bleeding Kansas, shortly after Kansas became a state, in which pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces fought over whether the new state would allow slavery or not. Bleeding Kansas in turn was a forerunner to the full-out Civil war, during which emotions were boiling over, civil discourse was in short supply, and violent energies were unleashed. Sound familiar?

It can often seem uncanny how history repeats itself, especially when lessons are not learned, or allowed to fester beneath the surface without ever really being addressed, or resolved. This, it seems to me, is the essence of what happens during these Jupiter-Neptune conjunctions, as the demons held in check by the false thin veneer of polite idealism break free and reveal what really lies beneath.

Looking Ahead

The spectre of racial hatred that continues to haunt this land one full Jupiter-Neptune cycle later is, of course, only one of the demons being released at this time. As of this writing, the Supreme Court is set to overturn Roe V Wade, after 50 years of a legal right to abortion, turning the decision over to the states, further dividing whatever union might still exist within the no-longer quite so United States. Democracy itself is on the chopping block, as Republicans work to undermine voting rights for blacks and other disenfranchised groups, who historically vote Democratic.

According to the latest Democracy Index, an annual assessment of the state of democracy in 167 countries and territories (<https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2021/>), currently only 12.6% of these countries, representing only 6.4% of the world's population, have a fully functioning democracy; 35.3% of these countries, representing 37.1% of the world's population (nearly 3 billion people) live in authoritarian regimes; the rest are somewhere in between. The US is currently ranked #26 among these countries, below Chile, Mauritius, and Taiwan, and is rated a flawed democracy.

Meanwhile, autocracy seems to be on the rise around the world, as Vladimir Putin's Russia barbarically slaughters civilians in Ukraine, while attempting to take over the country. China pursues a Zero-Covid policy, with severe lockdowns of large cities like Shanghai and Beijing, in which ordinary people are forced into crowded, squalid shelters and left to fend for themselves. Under the new Taliban regime, over 90% of Afghans are facing food shortages and severe poverty, while women are forced to return to the days of forced invisibility, and are being denied even a basic education. Although no longer in the news, people in Syria, Venezuela, South Sudan, and Myanmar, as well as many other places in the world are also suffering. Amnesty International estimates that there are now 26 million refugees worldwide, half of which are children (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/global-refugee-crisis-statistics-and-facts/>).

None of this is new, of course, as we humans seem to have a long history of treating each other inhumanely, not to mention the planet, which is now reeling from increasingly dire effects of climate change – unparalleled storms, wildfires, droughts, rising temperatures, rising sea levels, and some would argue, the possibility of future pandemics (<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/c-change/subtopics/coronavirus-and-climate-change/>).

We are also collectively suffering from the past two-years of life in the shadow of *this* pandemic, which has taken, not just a physical toll, but also a psychological toll (<https://www.med.ubc.ca/news/the-psychological-toll-of-the-pandemic-will-we-ever-shake-hands-again/>):

We are really just beginning to grasp the psychological toll of COVID-19. While the estimates of the impact vary, data emerging from different parts of the world suggest that between a third to half of the population are reporting significant anxiety symptoms, up to a third are describing depressive symptoms, a quarter are reporting substance use, and up to 20 per cent are experiencing post-traumatic stress symptoms.

The astrology of all this extends far beyond Jupiter-Neptune, but the basic sense of being overwhelmed by uncertainties and forces beyond our control is well within the astrological scope of a Jupiter-Neptune conjunction. Looking out into the world today, one can be forgiven for collapsing into a kind of dark and foreboding cynicism, muffled by numb, depressed lethargy, but this is by no means the only possible response to this planetary combination. With more consciousness, and without denying the dire circumstances in which we find ourselves, we can harness these same archetypal energies to reach for something more enlightened.

Reaching for a More Enlightened Response

Neptune at its best is about feeling connected to the rest of humanity, and the larger circle of Life in which we are privileged to participate, and responding to the pain and suffering of the those around with compassion. This is not the kind of compassion that seeks to lend a helping hand to those less fortunate (what American Buddhist nun Pema Chodron calls idiot compassion), but rather a response that arises from the realization that we are all in the same boat. Feeling this requires an open heart, one that is strong enough to feel the pain and suffering in the world, as well as is sensitive enough to feel the interconnections that transcend our differences.

Being in this place is not easy, because it requires vulnerability and inevitably unleashes an almost unbearable heart-break. In this place, it is impossible not to grieve for all who are suffering – whether halfway around the world or next door, the planet itself, the country, the community, our own families, and ourselves for that matter – and for everything that we stand to lose by pretending that if we just remain calm and carry on, everything will be OK. No. It won't be, unless we as a species learn to do something different than we have done since Cain killed Abel.

We can fight amongst ourselves in senseless battles that dredge up ancient festering animosities, or we can find ways to forgive our enemies, reach across the lines that divide, be kind and caring toward each other, and work together, however we can, to make the world a better place for everyone. It sounds simple, and probably simplistic, and history shows us just how hard it is. But we have hit the iceberg, the ship is going down, and there aren't enough lifeboats to go around.

So, the question for all of us is: how are you going to respond? Are you going to think only of yourself, and connive your way into what might appear as a personal salvation? Or are you going to somehow muster whatever open-hearted strength you have to do what you can to help?

Jupiter-Neptune in Pisces may well offer you a seductive, seemingly easy way out. But it will also challenge you to keep your heart open, and to join a daisy chain with other open hearts, wherever they may exist. You may wonder what I'm smoking as I write this. But given what is at stake, anything less is a Mad Hatter's suicidal folly.

From the Vault: When the Heart is Full



an excerpt from my unpublished manuscript

Full Moon Meditations: Musings on the Journey Toward Godbeing
compiled from essays written during the period 1977 – 1992

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When the heart is full, the dreaming can begin. Love becomes more tangible, and the world as we know it "disappears." Love erases all boundaries, and includes all possibilities within its embrace. Love is a journey of openings, a luminescent path that swallows its own tail and glows more brightly from within at each trembling step into the heart of mystery. Love is an adventure, a call which cannot be ignored. Love is the death of certainty, an all-encompassing vulnerability that dreams the world into being.

Love dreams the world into being, again and again, because Love is the original primal energy with which Creation began. When the Creator gave this world its form, S/he did not have a plan. S/he did not set out on Day One to do the logical thing. S/he had simply reached the point where S/he was so full of Love, that Love had no place to go but to expand into Creation. The Creator had no choice but to permit a world in which Love could be savored as a fermenting and fertile brew, as lifeblood moving mountains and churning beneath tempestuous seas. In truth, the Creator did nothing but surrender to that which was already beyond His/Her control. Love had its own energy, its own spontaneous direction, its own compelling destiny to manifest. The Creator could only consent to Love's vision and offer Him/Herself as a channel through which Love could proceed with manifestation. Love did all the rest, and now continues its journey in undiminished potency, although we must each first experience love in order to see that this is so.

The Love that first propelled the world into motion, propels the continuing re-creation of the world in each moment. This Love cannot fail to permeate our experience. It is the very substance of this world, continually regenerating itself through an endless procession of forms. Love is eternally vital, cannot be diminished, throbs with unfathomable compassion, and heals (makes whole) everything it touches.

Where human hearts are crusted over by fear, barriers to the regenerative flow of Love are erected. These barriers cut off the juicy nectar in which this world is eager to be bathed. Life support systems break down; damage is done. Fear is the great coagulant damning all burgeoning rivers of Life, which left to their own devices, would overflow every bank, flood every discernible pathway, inundate this world. All fear is fear of this inundation, fear of drowning in the mystical Ganges of reunion, where my boundaries and yours have no distinct demarcation, but rather interweave with each other to produce a blending of essences, a synthesis of ineffable beauty, a choreography of exquisite complexity.

Wherever we are afraid, we are foolishly resisting our own regeneration. Just as the Creator could only step aside for the inundation of Love, so must each of us step aside to conquer fear. The rhythm of Love within our personal lives is no less potent than that which gave the stars their place in heaven, or the fish their place in the sea. We need only give our consent to this rhythm to participate in the ongoing regenerative dance of Creation. Healing the planet is not a matter of doing something we would not ordinarily do, but of allowing Love to do its work through us unimpeded by fear. In this state of surrender, whatever we do will be an act of healing. We are part of the Creator's ongoing surrender to Love, and as we give our consent to this process, the inundation of Love's compassionate rush will make us

whole. Our wholeness, in turn, will re-create and heal the world.

This re-creation begins, of course, with our own lives. Giving our consent to Love, we cannot help but empty our lives of meaningless content. Like the accumulated debris that announces the movement of a flood, the changes that Love precipitates are simply the clearing away of the flotsam and jetsam of our lives. Relationships that have served their purpose will dissolve so that Love can be released for healing elsewhere. Jobs that bind our passion with the fetters of insecurity will explode in the face of our expanding outward thrust. False responsibilities that lock energy bent on adventure into needless patterns of routine will fall upon the endless wayside of the cosmic traveler. All will be taken care of, everything will fall into place, Love will permeate every crack and crevice of our world.

Make no mistake. This Love is not the sentimental stuff of which Hollywood movies are made. Love is a powerful director that trashes the most polished script in order to experiment. Fear tends to want to consolidate control, while Love burns away all limitations so that as many creative possibilities as possible can be realized. Love is interested not in the triumph of a few box office hits, but the proliferation of a pantheon of fascinating alternatives. The movies that evolve through the direction of Love defy the rational laws of moviemaking, showcasing characters that play spontaneously improvised roles, scenery that shifts with each new summersault of imagination, plots that move toward multiple resolutions at once. An audience in the grip of Love's movie cannot predict the ending beforehand, because Love Itself does not know where it is going, moves on the lubricated rails of trust, may jump track at every opportunity if a more compelling twist or turn of plot suddenly presents itself.

Consenting to Love's presence in our lives requires great attention and great honesty, for what is true in this moment may not be true in the next. To be in love is to be in constant movement, to embrace only truth and beauty, not to know what comes next, and to be content in not knowing. Love requires courage, demands spontaneity, and trusts in the wisdom of its own creativity. To live from this place of love is not easy, for Love inundates the familiar terrain of our ordinary lives, wipes clean the slate of planning and preparation, opens a door not before opened. Yet to live from this place of love is, in the end, our destiny, because Love eventually sweeps all into its embrace. From ashes to ashes, from dust to dust, from Love's womb to Love's spiral nebulae of emanation.

We must all live from a place of love if this planet is to heal, because only Love can dissolve the incrustations of fear that have blocked the earth's capacity to regenerate herself. This does not mean, however, that we are to walk around with forced smiles upon our faces, spouting platitudes dressed in fashionable jargon, adhering to some unwritten code of conduct. Love embraces anger, likes to arm-wrestle with resentment, takes mischievous delight in ripping the covers off jealousy, insecurity, and unhealthy attachment. There is no particular package that love has not occupied. Love simply honors truth, and in so doing, allows energy to move.

If you are angry, anger expressed from a place of love will heal. Anger held back by some false image of what love is supposed to look like will toxify and maim. If you are insecure, acknowledgement of insecurity from a place of self-love, allows the necessary antidotal strength to gather. If you deny your insecurity, that insecurity becomes a shackle upon your foot. The healing of the earth with love may not always look like a story book depiction of sunshine and benevolence. The incrustations of fear often need sandpaper, strong acid, the blow torch, even

dynamite to set them loose. Let us not be afraid of these tools, for Love, the Vulcanic blacksmith has used them many times before, finds them a comfortable fit in His swarthy hands.

When the heart is full, the dream we have been sleeping comes alive. The shards of our incubation chamber shatter in the reverberating light of truth, and we emerge - whole, reborn, washed clean. The inundations of Love have stripped away the pretensions of self-importance, the illusion of tomorrow, the self-possession that fortified us against change. When the heart is full, the rain falls again, regenerates the fertile valley, refreshes the immortal stream from which our dream cattle drink. When the heart is full, the feet skip along the mountain path fearlessly, protected by innocence from a precipitous tumble, though the avalanche crash overhead, though the rattler stings below. When the heart is full, we slip through suddenly seamless cracks, and fly into the heart of dreaming itself, where Love has always just finished brewing the wine of creative fermentation, and invites us to fill our cup.

Mad Mercury Mini Retrograde Sale **through June 2, 2022**

For the past thirty years, my focus as an astrologer has been teaching others the language of astrology – not so they could hang out their shingle and start doing readings for others, but so that they could find their way to genuine self-knowledge. While knowledge of the world is necessary to be able to navigate it successfully, knowledge of the self is what makes the difference between a life that actually fits and one that is adopted by default. In this quest, astrology can be an immensely valuable set of tools.

For anyone out there who may be drawn to study with me, but have been sitting on the fence, perhaps I can entice you to make your move with a 20% discount on your first six lessons (Module One). You can read more about the course [here](#) and when you are ready, sign up [here](#). If you sign up between now and June 2, use the code MADHATTER, and you will automatically receive your 20% discount.

Quotes of the Month

from *Our African Unconscious* by Edward Brice
published by Bear & Company, 2021

Beyond historical, anthropological, and ethnological data on our interconnectedness, there is also evidence from modern science concerning the very structured and intimate corridors of the human cell that reflect this common story and truth. The notion of the DNA "mother of humanity" has gained more and more acceptance in modern scientific and intellectual circles.

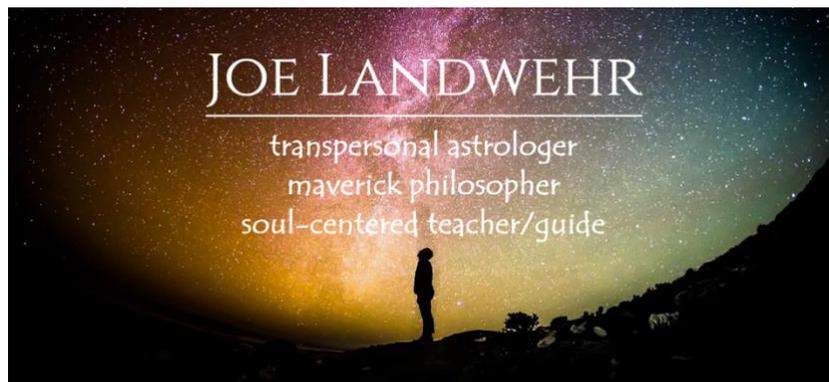
It would seem that this Eve . . . lived approximately 150,000 to 200,000 years ago and echoes in our blood today. The meaning of this is that all the diverse "races" with their colors and variations are unfolded from a common human or parent stock, who in all likelihood was a small, dark-skinned African. This is the personal lineage of every human being – an ancient dark mother. Y chromosome agent studies of

people throughout the earth also show little variation, strongly suggesting that ancient humanity formed a small concentrated population as recently as 270,000 years ago. According to computer analysis this mitochondrial "Adam" lived some 188,000 years ago. There is no polygenesis! In all probability he, too, roamed the changing savannas of Africa on his evolutionary trek to our era. It seems the first human families were also dark, or "moro" and "negrito," a psychic reality buried deep in the human psyche and held there today by strong repressive forces.

from *Horizon* by Barry Lopez
published by Vintage Books, 2019

The social and cultural development of H. sapiens over the past 55,000 years has been relatively swift. The rate of change in the man-made environment today is so great, in contrast, that the idea that one generation is meant to teach the next generation how to manage has begun to seem quaint. Also, evolutionary psychologists question whether all human beings have the same ability to adapt to such rapid change. Some people, then, might seem marked for marginalization if human societies continue to pursue higher levels of efficiency or adapt easily to increasing amounts of social control. We're reluctant to address publicly the inability of certain people to "keep up" for fear of being regarded as bigoted, intolerant, chauvinistic, or xenophobic. The failure to speak in defense of marginalized or persecuted groups is a constant in recent human history. It is also an act of cowardice that asks to be reckoned with before mankind faces truly staggering shortages of energy, freshwater and food.

If H. sapiens' future is threatened by environmental factors, both natural and anthropogenic, and if the ability of many people to cope with the complexity of the man-made environment is compromised, and if the need for cooperation seems great, how are we to tone down the voices of nationalism, or of those in support of profiteering, or religious fanaticism, racial superiority, or cultural exceptionalism? If economic viability trumps human health in systems of governance, and if personal rights trump community obligations at almost every turn, what sort of future can we expect never to see?



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