

The Astropoetic School of Soul-Discovery

News From The Astropoetic School September 2023

Greetings from [The Astropoetic School of Soul Discovery](#) in the Missouri Ozarks, where the slow seasonal turning of the leaves gives hope that beauty is still possible in a time of deadly business as usual and willful ignorance throughout the world.

My New Book Coming Soon

Since the last newsletter, I have been working to bring my new book – *Astrology in the Era of Uncertainty: An Astropoetic Exploration of Psyche and Cosmos* – into final form. Progress is being made, although there have been countless details to attend, most of which are invisible to the average reader – which is as it should be.

In any case, since May, I have finished incorporating the perceptive suggestions of my editor, Deborah DeNicola; turned over 400 references into chapter endnotes; finished the interior layout of over 400 pages; obtained a PCIP block for the verso page, used by libraries to catalog books; finished the front matter, including endorsements, acknowledgements, author bio, dedication and table of contents; assembled my bibliography of about 300 sources; put together a first draft of my index of about 25 pages; and hired my friend and artiste extraordinaire Josef Tornick to create a cover image with the aid of AI software. Now I am fine-tuning the index, with hope of soon turning over a final page count to my cover design artist, Anne Marie Forrester, who is waiting in the wings for my signal. I am hoping to get all files off to the printer within the next month or so, gods and goddesses be willing.

As reported in my last issue, I started a Go Fund Me campaign to help finance this venture. To date I have raised about \$2,400 through 24 donations and spent close to \$2,000. My goal is to raise \$4,200 altogether, which will pay for editing, cover design, printing, and possibly a bit of promotion – which will probably mostly take the form of an ongoing ad in *The Mountain Astrologer*. If you wish to play a more active part in bringing this creative project into manifestation, please consider making a donation and/or telling your astrological friends about it.

Anyone who donates \$50 or more will receive an autographed copy of the book when it comes off the presses.

For a donation of \$200 or more, you will receive my entire library of astrology books – five counting this one – plus mention on my acknowledgment page and my website.

Lastly, Angel Donors who contribute \$1,000 or more will receive all of the above, plus a free [Chakra Pattern Overview](#), which provides a

detailed exploration of your birthchart as a template for spiritual growth.

To contribute, go here: <https://gofund.me/6fbc1f0f>.

One of the five endorsements I have obtained so far comes from Keiron Le Grice, professor of depth psychology at Pacifica Graduate Institute, California, author of *The Archetypal Cosmos* and co-editor of *Jung on Astrology*:

Joe Landwehr is one of those rare individuals who, working independently and largely against the spirit of the times, has dedicated his life to the advancement of a field of study. **Astrology in the Era of Uncertainty** is a book of considerable breadth and careful reflection, illuminating astrology's theoretical premises and purposes in relation to science, and demonstrating the author's rich mythopoetic approach to astrological practice. What emerges from his work is a sense of intuitive wisdom, shaped by his own life experience and informed by a nuanced imaginative and intellectual engagement with the archetypal energies of the universe.

To those of you who have been kind enough to participate in this campaign, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Please feel free to spread the word to anyone you think might be interested – via email and/or social media.

Announcing A New Webinar Class



To counterbalance the sometimes-mind-numbing work of indexing, I have started writing my next book, the working title for which is **Imaginal Meandering: Following in the Footsteps of the Gods**. Imaginal meandering is the term I coined in **Astrology in the Era of Uncertainty** to describe a counterbalance to astrology's longstanding interpretive focus, in which symbols are basically decoded to provide meaning that the conscious mind can immediately grasp. Imaginal meandering is a much slower process of allowing the symbolism to reveal itself in its own less obvious way and in its own time.

Imaginal meandering begins with a process described by psychologist James Hillman as "opening the archetypal eye." The archetypal eye is what allows us to "see" beyond surface appearances, and to feel a deeper, more intuitive sense of resonance

with the symbols. Hillman's primary method for opening the archetypal eye is to immerse oneself in the myths and stories related to the archetype. Given that astrology is rooted in the Greco-Roman mythological tradition, there is a rich repository of stories to explore in relation to anything astrological we might wish to understand along this slower path toward resonant understanding.

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

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

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

If this sounds a bit vague, it is because I am still working out the particulars – which is what tends to happen when I write a book. Some authors may begin knowing up front what they want to say. I have always found writing to be a way of getting clear about what is worth saying. Teaching has often worked the same way for me.

As I set off on this adventure, it occurs to me that it might be fun to include a few of you in my process by teaching a webinar class in the art of imaginal meandering. I have a few ideas to get us started, and then where it goes from there will in part be a co-creative process. This will be your opportunity, not just to explore your inner landscape, but also to contribute to the emergence of new ideas. With your permission, I may include anonymous examples from our work in the class to illustrate my points. You won't become famous, or even known to anyone outside our small circle, but you might be a co-midwife to the birth of something exciting.

I would like to limit the group to no more than 6 participants, and anticipate starting in January. The experiment will run for an entire year with a 2-hour Zoom call each month. The class will include a 1-hour one-on-one session with me each month about what comes up for you in the class, designed to help you fine-tune your quest. A knowledge of astrology will be helpful, but not absolutely necessary.

The cost of the program will be \$720, but for anyone who signs up in the next 30 days, I will knock off 10%. If you refer a friend, I will knock off an additional 10%.

When I have 6 committed people, enrollment will be closed. If you are interested and/or have questions, you can contact me via email at joelandwehr@socket.net.

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 will take place in typical back-and-forth motion, between March 2023 and November 2024, after which Pluto will remain solidly in Aquarius until March, 2043. Pluto is currently retrograde in Capricorn, along with five other planets and Chiron also retrograde – an excellent time in general to be looking backward. During Pluto's 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, we looked at Pluto's passage through Cancer from 1913 - 1939, and in May we took a similar look at Pluto's passage through Leo from 1937 - 1958. In this issue, we will move on to Pluto in Virgo from 1956 - 1972. Like this current passage into Aquarius, all of these periods generally have a 1-2 year overlap when Pluto moves back and forth between the sign it is leaving and the sign it is about to enter. From October 1956 - June 1958, transiting Pluto was transitioning from Leo to Virgo; and from October 1971 - July 1972, it was transitioning from Virgo to Libra.

Before we look at some of the key events of the Pluto in Virgo 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 Leo that now still contribute to the challenges we face as Pluto moves through Aquarius. Leo and Aquarius are directly opposite each other in the zodiac, and in many ways, the seeds that were planted then, for better or worse, are now reaching their peak expression.

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

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

understood as Pluto's shadow legacy from its time in Cancer. The same dynamic will be in play in relation to its time in Leo.

Pluto in Leo's Quest for Self-Realization

The fundamental issue around which the archetype of Leo is constellated is the quest for self-realization. In 1952, with Pluto in Leo, the Alsatian polymath Albert Schweitzer won the Nobel Peace Prize for his philosophy of "Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben" or "Reverence for Life". The phrase came to Schweitzer on a boat trip through French Equatorial Africa (now Gabon), as he was contemplating what might be the basis for a universal human ethics. As defined by his biographer James Brabazon:

Reverence for Life says that the only thing we are really sure of is that we live and want to go on living. This is something that we share with everything else that lives, from elephants to blades of grass—and, of course, every human being. So, we are brothers and sisters to all living things, and owe to all of them the same care and respect, that we wish for ourselves.

Imagine what the world would be like if we actually lived this way. It is a great concept, but one that may be beyond the capacity of humans to achieve. Implied within the idea of reverence for life, as I read it, is the corollary realization that each blade of grass, elephant and human being has an essential part to play in the overall living vitality of the whole, and fills a niche that no other creature can fill. Reverence for life, in other words, cannot be for just my life, at the expense of other lives, or it doesn't work. It must be reverence for all of life.

Also implied in this concept is the idea that each of us is striving to become more fully what we essentially are, not just so that we can personally thrive, but also so that we can contribute all that we are to the good of the whole. In a sardonic sort of way, we might applaud the Marines for at least latching onto an excellent slogan that encapsulates this worldview, even if in practice, it distorts and manipulates the idea to nefarious ends. Be all you can be. As Schweitzer realized that day on the river in Africa, that is what every living creature on the planet wants to do.

Moving Beyond Anthropocentrism

The environmental implications of this fundamental need are fairly obvious, and have since become thankfully embodied in bedrock environmental laws here in the US, such as the Endangered Species Act, NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act), the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and other laws designed to ensure the livability of habitat for both humans and animals. This is, of course, also a sanctuary issue, because self-realization is impossible without sanctuary. But it is, in addition, an earnest attempt to live in harmony with the natural world, where countless species reach for self-realization, each in their own way.

As Pluto enters Aquarius, and as the world faces a global climate crisis, many of our bedrock environmental laws are under attack, not just by climate change deniers on the fringe, but by courts up to and including the Supreme Court, whose allegiance is to a corporate culture built on fossil fuels, defense spending and rampant

consumerism. This mindset, which we as a culture have not yet transcended, is no small part of Pluto in Leo's unresolved legacy.

In the intervening years, the movement toward ecological balance has always been undermined by business interests that have often been rather damaging to the environment in many well-documented ways, and beyond that, by a mindset that considers humans to be superior to animals, certainly to plants, and without question, to all so-called inanimate features of the geological landscape – rivers, mountains, wetlands, deserts, savannas, prairie, etc. All of this, according to this mindset, is for human self-realization, if need be, at the expense of everything else. There is a long philosophical history here that I won't go into. Suffice it to say, that this mindset is still rampant throughout our culture, even if it has, since the days of Pluto in Leo, also been counterbalanced by a strong environmental movement that has become mainstream, and a growing general awareness of the interdependence of all life. Ultimately, the ongoing struggle between these two counterforces in our culture will be a race against time running out.

None of Us Are Free

On a strictly human level, Pluto in Leo challenges us to create a culture in which we treat each other with dignity and respect, and beyond that with the awareness that it will take all of us working together to experience the full collective potential of this human experiment. I call what we are doing here an experiment because, just as many species have come and gone on this garden planet, humans are not exempt from extinction, as the prolific, intelligent creativity at the heart of the biological engine keeps striving for its own self-realization. Just as all systems within a human body must work together, each doing its job at an optimal level, with support of the whole, for a human to achieve vibrant health, so too must humans learn to function together seamlessly, inclusively, and in sync with each other, for this world to continue to be a place where humans can thrive.

Obviously, this is not the world we live in today. Since humans first arrived on the scene, some humans have sought to dominate or in extreme cases, eliminate others, judging them inferior, unfit to live, somehow less than worthy of the same rights and privileges they would claim for themselves. The histories generated by the five megalomaniac dictators mentioned in the last issue of this newsletter – Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, Hirohito and Zedong – are public examples of the shadow side of Leo, write large on the world stage for all to see, but the real issue is more insidious than that.

Every day, blacks and other minorities experience systemic racism, whether through a chance encounter with a violent police officer, or institutionalized discrimination in employment, education and housing choices, or endless cycles of generational poverty that exacerbate intolerable living conditions. Every day, women work the same jobs as men for unequal pay, experience the self-righteous arrogance of white men in positions of power telling them what they can and cannot do with their bodies, and routine sexual harassment that is largely taken for granted, ignored or denied. Every day, homeless people, people who cannot afford a toehold in what used to be the American dream, experience harassment, discrimination, and judgments that limit their possibilities in life. Every day, LGBTQ+ individuals risk their very lives just to be who they are.

This is not an expression of reverence for life, or a path to self-realization for anyone. All of us, regardless of who we are, or what rights and privileges we enjoy, suffer in a culture built on intolerance, hatred, and assumed superiority. In many respects, who we are is defined as much by how we treat others, as it is by what we do with the opportunities that are given to us. Unless we each have the consciousness to live by the Golden Rule, treating others as we would want to be treated ourselves, we will forever be incomplete and fail to realize our full potential as human beings. Buddhists talk about the vow of the bodhisattva, which essentially means postponing our own personal enlightenment to work for the alleviation of the suffering of all sentient beings. Ultimately, the challenges of Pluto in Leo, still reverberating today, will not be met until we all take that vow. Short of that, as the famous rhythm-and-blues song goes:

*None of us are free
None of us are free
None of us are free, if one of us is chained
None of us are free.*

Reaching Toward Inclusive Diversity in a Polarized World

Creating a world in which everyone has a place is not the same as achieving equality, although attempting to level the playing field, wherever that is possible, is probably a good idea most of the time. The truth is we are not equal; we are distinctly different from one another. Women absolutely deserve the same opportunities, the same pay, the same respect as men, but women and men are quite different in lots of fundamental ways, and a system in which women have the opportunity to become more like men in order to get ahead is ultimately not going to make our culture whole.

In communities of color, there is a phenomenon called "passing," short for passing for white, which, when possible, allows a wider range of options for the oppressed in a culture built on racial inequality. But people of color – blacks, Latinx, Asian, indigenous – are not white. They have a different history, a different culture, a different psychological mindset, a different set of experiences predicated in their belonging to a different ethnic group. Until all peoples have the societal support for embracing their diversity, we are all impoverished by that loss.

Until they find the courage and/or support to "come out of the closet," many gays, lesbians and transgender individuals have had their own version of "passing." Among a growing subset of the population, gender is no longer a binary choice, and within this group, I imagine that "passing" is no longer even an option, because what exactly are you going to pass as?

In an ideal culture, one that has mastered the challenges Pluto in Leo poses, there would be a tolerant and caring space for a process of sorting all this out – embracing your gender identity, embracing your ethnicity and cultural heritage, embracing all the various identities that make you who you are. There is, thankfully, a slowly growing awareness of the value of embracing our diversity, although given the oppression built into our culture, the actual process of fully owning our differences also requires a certain amount of difficult dialogue that as a culture we are not often prepared to do. There are techniques and processes – such as those employed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, or various systems of

guided mediation, that, if we had the collective will, we could explore our differences more intentionally and learn how to live in inclusive harmony with one another.

Whether we have the collective will or not is in question. On the other side of the political divide from those who would lean in this direction we have a horrifying rise in white supremacy in this country, and around the world, along with an increasingly violent intolerance. Mass shootings in this country, many of them racially motivated, have increased dramatically in the last 20 years. Book bannings are at all-time high, having shot up 38% from 2022 to 2023, with most of the titles banned being written by and/or about members of the LGBTQ+ community and people of color. The rise of supermajorities in many states, where one party is dominant to the virtual exclusion of the other is troubling. Voter suppression laws, gerrymandering, and an especially alarming slide toward the possibility of an autocratic strongman government (such as was in exaggerated play during Pluto in Leo with Hitler, Mussolini, Hirohito, Stalin and Zedong) are all signs that as a culture, we are moving away from the kind of inclusive diversity that would allow us to meet Pluto in Leo's challenge of self-realization for all in a conscious way. The fact that democracy itself is on the chopping block means we are losing a world in which self-realization is possible for everyone. Maybe it never was, but unless we move in that direction, we diminish the quality of life for all of us.

Authenticity

Lastly, as part of the subtext of the quest for self-realization, Pluto in Leo demands authenticity, as well as the courage of the lion to be fully who we are and stand in a truth that is not always comfortable to own. We live in a culture that does not support authenticity. Since the rise of consumer culture in the Pluto in Leo era, the idea of authenticity has been co-opted by marketing strategists, who promote the illusion of individuality, while selling brand allegiance. Now, on the cusp of Aquarius, one half cycle later, we have social media influencers, doing the work of corporate marketers for them, while those who are not easily influenced remain on the sidelines. While the mechanisms by which conformity is ensured are more sophisticated and invisible than they were in the 50s, the challenge Pluto in Leo still remains for each of us to discover who we are at our core, and learn to live from that place, not just for ourselves, but for the good of the whole.

This is harder to do in which our leaders increasingly don't even bother to hide the fact that they are lying, pretending to be something they are not, and milking the system for all they personally can get. In some circles, duplicity has become a badge of honor, and being truthful a mark of stupidity. Being authentic in such a world is an immense challenge, but in the end, being inauthentic in order to gain some kind of perceived advantage is the antithesis of self-realization. You may win in the short term, but your legacy will haunt your descendants and the rest of us for whatever time we have left.

The Shifting of Our Collective Archetypal Field

In the last issue of this newsletter, we considered Pluto's passage through Leo from the years 1937 – 1956, 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 Virgo, from 1956 – 1972, including the transitional phase, during which Pluto went back and forth between Leo and Virgo.

Pluto in Virgo: Viet Nam and the Rise of the Military-Industrial Complex

In 1956, during the transitional period between Leo and Virgo, the Republican Dwight Eisenhower, a 5-star general during World War II, was elected president of the United States for a second term, vowing to stop the spread of communism and reduce federal deficits. During his first term, with Pluto still in Leo, he briefly considered using nuclear weapons to end the Korean War, and may have threatened China with a nuclear attack if an armistice was not reached quickly. The Korean War was a proxy war between the Soviet Union and China supporting North Korea and the US supporting South Korea; in retrospect, a precursor to the Viet Nam War, which dominated the Pluto in Virgo era. Eisenhower supported the French in their attempts to fight the communists in Viet Nam, before subsequent administrations took a more active role. In response to the launch of Sputnik by the Soviets in 1957, Eisenhower was instrumental in forming the NATO alliance, which in turn, eventually led to the Space Race to beat the Soviet's to the Moon. Ultimately, the proxy wars in Korea and Indochina, the embrace of nuclear weapons, and the Space Race were all part of the beginning of a more formally institutionalized prioritization of military and defense over all other national concerns.

Ironically, in his farewell address to Congress as he passed the reins of power to John F. Kennedy, Eisenhower warned against the rising "military industrial complex."

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist.

The rise of the military industrial complex began as the US mobilized during World War II, and then continued to evolve under the pretext of fighting communism – an agenda that required the ongoing development of weapon systems, including nuclear weapons, weapon delivery systems, and ultimately the capacity to dominate in all areas of technological expertise, most of which was employed to address military needs. By the time Pluto went into Scorpio in the 1980s, the military industrial complex had become institutionalized in its own right, beyond its original mission, as an entrenched intrinsic part of American culture. As historian George F. Kennan wrote in his preface to Norman Cousins 1987 book *The Pathology of Power*:

Were the Soviet Union to sink tomorrow under the waters of the ocean, the American military-industrial complex would have to remain, substantially unchanged, until some other adversary could be invented. Anything else would be an unacceptable shock to the American economy.

Given that the current 2023 US budget includes \$842 billion for defense, which is higher than the next ten countries combined, and considered sacrosanct by Democrats and Republicans alike, this is perhaps taken for granted today, and no longer mentioned, except by a few lone wolves crying in the wilderness. It is, however, a legacy of the Pluto in Virgo era, in which Virgo's capacity for technological prowess and pragmatic intelligence became harnessed to a deadly

agenda, ongoing and insidious. Billions of dollars are spent each year in all 50 states, and voting against defense spending is generally not considered a good political move, given that in many states it contributes significantly to the economy.

The primary catalyst for this development during the Pluto in Virgo years was the Viet Nam war, which like World War II during Pluto in Leo, became the defining event of a generation. Beginning in late 1955, the war lasted nearly 20 years, with US involvement ending in 1973, at the beginning of Pluto in Libra. At first US involvement was slow, with a gradual build-up of 23,000 military advisors under Kennedy to over 500,000 troops at the height of the war under Johnson.

When Nixon first got elected, he initially escalated and expanded the war through an invasion of Cambodia in spring of 1970, but by then mainstream public sentiment for the war had all but evaporated, and antiwar protests had ramped up significantly. By the end of his administration, Nixon began shifting the burden of the war to the Vietnamese, gradually ending US involvement by 1973. At this point, the US was essentially exiting a war that the government finally decided we could not win. Two years after the US withdrew its final troops, North and South Vietnam reunited and became a socialist state under the Communist Party of Viet Nam.

Meanwhile, during the war, many lives were lost. Although estimates of total casualties vary, depending on the source, the range is generally between 1 – 4 million, including about 58,000 US soldiers – like all wars before and since, a reckless waste of human life and potential, not counting the 42,000 people who have been estimated to have been killed by unexploded ordinance left after the war, nor the million or so Vietnamese who were harmed by the use of Agent Orange and other toxic chemicals used in the war, not to mention the number of US soldiers who returned alive, but suffered from ongoing physical maladies and/or PTSD.

While not so good for those who got sucked up into the war machinery, the machinery itself was quite profitable for the emerging international arms trade. The B-52 bomber, developed by Boeing; the F-4 Phantom, made by MacDonnell Douglas; Bell's UH-1 helicopter, dubbed the "Huey;" the M-16 rifle, redesigned to perform better in the wet, dirty conditions of ground combat in Viet Nam, made initially by Colt; the M-60 machine gun, made by Saco Defense; the M-48 tank, made by Chrysler Defense Engineering; the M-113 armored personnel carrier built by FMC Corporation; and other weapons all came online during the Viet Nam War. During the 10+ years of the US involvement in the war, military spending by the government increased by 75%.

The companies that supplied the weaponry used by the US also supplied the US allies, and while the defense industry was not born during the Viet Nam war, it definitely came of age as a result of the war. Dow Chemical, the company that made napalm, was initially a small unknown company in Michigan, but by the end of Viet Nam, it had become a household name. Boeing, Lockheed, McDonnell Douglas, Bell Helicopter and a number of obscure companies like the Texas-based Brown & Roots, which had ties to Lyndon Johnson and was awarded massive contracts building new ports, bases, and airports throughout Viet Nam, all profited immensely from the war, and by the end of the Pluto in Virgo era had become established as the foundation of the military-industrial complex that Eisenhower had railed against.

Pluto's Deadly Dance Around the World

The Viet Nam War was not the only conflagration on the world stage during Pluto in Virgo. What follows is a brief summary of some, but not all, of the most important conflicts. In late 1956, during the transition from Leo to Virgo, the Hungarian Revolution, an unsuccessful revolt against domination of Hungary by the USSR, lasted only 12 days, but resulted in thousands of deaths with another quarter million people forced to flee the country. In 1968, a Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia by the USSR, Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary after Prague Spring – a revolt similar to the Hungarian Revolution a decade earlier – didn't result in many deaths, but caused about 700,000 Czechs to flee the country. The Troubles, a 30-year war in Northern Ireland, between those who wanted to remain a part of England, and those who wanted to reunite with the rest of Ireland, began during Pluto in Virgo and resulted in about 50,000 casualties, as well as perpetual disruption of normal life for an entire generation.

The Middle East, always a favorite playground for Pluto, was quite volatile during its sojourn in Virgo. Around this same time, Israel invaded Egypt, followed by Britain and France, in order to secure the Suez Canal after Egypt's president Nasser had nationalized the canal, and blocked it to all shipping by sinking 40 ships. In 1958, Eisenhower sent 14,000 troops to Beirut, Lebanon along with an intimidating array of military hardware to fight communist insurgents and threats from Syria and Egypt. Later, in 1967, 17,000 died in a Six Day War fought between Israel and a coalition of Arab States, primarily Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Thousands more died as Israel continued fighting Egypt, Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from 1967 – 1970. The North Yemen Civil War, fought from 1962 – 1970 led to another 200,000 deaths.

In 1959, the Tibetan Uprising to protest Chinese domination resulted in heavy fighting and around 85,000 casualties, causing the 14th Dalai Lama to flee and seek exile in India. In the midst of the Cuban Missile Crisis, China and India waged a one-month border skirmish, triggered in part by India's decision to grant asylum to the Dalai Lama, resulting in another 1 – 5,000 dead, depending on which side you ask. The Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, a war of self-determination by the Bengalis in East Pakistan left from 300,000 to 3 million dead.

A proxy war in the newly independent Republic of the Congo from 1960-1965 resulted in about 100,000 deaths and the installation of Joseph-Desire Mobutu, a corrupt autocratic dictator who tried to eliminate all traces of colonial culture in the country. The South African Border War, from 1966 to 1990, a complex war involving several countries in Southern Africa, as well as proxy support from both sides, over Namibia's independence from South Africa, resulted in about 14,000 casualties. Another war of independence, the Nigerian Civil War fought as Biafra attempted to secede, led to as many as 100,000 combatants dead, with another 2 million dead from famine during a Nigerian naval blockade, and an additional 2 – 4.5 million people displaced as refugees. Meanwhile in South Africa, the apartheid regime evicted about 3.5 million blacks to "tribal homelands" or bantustans from 1960 to 1983, with Nelson Mandela sentenced to life imprisonment for conspiring to overthrow the state in 1962. In 1971, toward the end of Pluto in Virgo, a coup d'état in Uganda began Idi Amin's brutal regime. Largely considered one of the most vicious dictators in modern history, his corrupt reign was characterized by rampant human rights abuses, political repression, ethnic persecution and extrajudicial killings, and is estimated to have resulted in from 100,000 to 500,000 dead.

The Guatemalan Civil War, which began in 1960 and didn't end until 1996, resulted in the "extraordinarily cruel" (according to Human Rights Watch) genocide of 166,000 Mayans by government forces, backed by the US, fighting against leftist insurgents. Next door, the Nicaraguan Revolution – that would eventually lead to the Iran-Contra scandal of the Reagan administration – in which the Sandinistas were fighting to overthrow the Somoza regime, was just beginning. In 1965, while the Viet Nam War was raging, the US briefly occupied the Dominican Republic to prop up a military dictator, after allegations that those opposing him were supported by communists, resulting in another 6,000 dead.

Pluto, the merchant of death, was hard at work during the Pluto in Virgo years, although it does seem that a number of the deadly conflicts documented above were about newly emerging nations or ethnic groups attempting to throw off the shackles of colonialism, claustrophobic domination by the US or USSR, and/or freedom from a repressive regime. Some of these conflicts bought some breathing room for the oppressed peoples of the world; others made matters worse, as the oppressors either took over or consolidated their control. This theme was amplified as Pluto's passage through Virgo included a Uranus/Pluto conjunction in opposition to Saturn in Pisces from 1964 – 1968.

Going MAD

Although thankfully, nuclear weapons were not used during these wars, the nuclear arms race, begun immediately after World War II (with Pluto in Leo), began to accelerate during the Pluto in Virgo years. By October 30, 1961, in testing the 58-megaton Tsar Bomba, to that point, the most powerful nuclear weapon ever created, the Soviet Union had essentially caught up to the US. By the mid 60s, both sides had enough nuclear capability to obliterate the other, supported by the development of more sophisticated delivery systems – bombers, intercontinental missiles, and submarines armed with nuclear warheads. This insane nuclear stand-off, essentially holding the whole world hostage to the military and political paranoia of the Cold War on steroids, was officially known as MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction), an acronym coined by Donald Brennan, a strategist working at the conservative think tank, the Hudson Institute, in 1962. In addition to the US and the Soviet Union, the UK became the world's third nuclear power in 1952 (during Pluto in Leo), with France joining in 1960, and China in 1964.

In 1959, the communist revolutionary Fidel Castro became the dictator of Cuba, and tensions between the US and Cuba rapidly started to deteriorate as Cuba became increasingly aligned with the Soviet Union. In 1962, a US spy plane discovered the construction of nuclear missile sites in Cuba, within easy range of US soil, and the US responded under Kennedy with a naval blockade around the island – a stand-off known as the Cuban Missile Crisis. This was the first real test of MAD, with the US nuclear arsenal set to DEFCON 2 during the height of the crisis. The newly created DEFCON system was designed as a 5-stage program of readiness for imminent nuclear war, with DEFCON 2 indicating that we were one step away from a nuclear confrontation, with armed forces ready to deploy within 6 hours. Thankfully, through intense negotiations between Kennedy and Khrushchev and their staffs, the Soviets eventually backed down and agreed to withdraw all nuclear missiles from Cuba.

Throughout the Pluto in Virgo years, attempts were made to lessen the possibility that a build-up of nuclear weapons would actually lead to nuclear war, with a number

of treaties signed between the nuclear powers. Before the Cuban missile crisis, in 1958, both the US and the Soviet Union agreed to suspend nuclear testing, with the Soviet Union breaking that treaty in 1961. After the Cuban Missile Crisis, a Limited Test Ban Treaty was signed between the US, the USSR and the UK, with all testing banned, except for underground. A Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed in 1968 to limit the spread of nuclear technology to non-nuclear states. In 1969, Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) began, resulting in an additional treaty signed in 1972 (SALT I) toward the end of Pluto in Virgo. Ultimately these treaties did not stop the development or spread of nuclear weapons, although they did probably contribute to preventing a worse-case scenario.

The Anti-War Movement

In response to the Viet Nam war, hundreds of thousands of young people (mostly of the Pluto in Leo generation) took to the streets to protest. In 1967, 300,000 marched in New York City and 50,000 protesters descended on the Pentagon, with over 700 being arrested. In October, 1969, 3,000,000 people demonstrated across the country as part of the Moratorium on the War, with another protest of 500,000 in Washington, DC the following month. After Nixon's decision to invade Cambodia, six protesting students were killed and dozens wounded at Kent State and Jackson State University. After that, all hell broke loose. Hundreds of college campuses shut down, thoroughfares were blocked, radical priests raided draft boards and destroyed records, and business as usual started to sputter a bit. Nixon withdrew troops from Cambodia eight weeks after the initial invasion, and all troops from Indochina within three years after that.

The war radicalized an entire generation, quite in contrast to the placid veneer of consumer contentment that largely marked the Pluto in Leo era. As the war climaxed in 1968, and as the body count increased, the anti-war movement spread from the fringes to the mainstream, as government officials, labor unions, church groups and middle-class families increasingly united in opposition to official government policy, and contributed to the ending of the draft and the gradual withdrawal of US troops. In the 1968 presidential campaign, both parties fielded anti-war candidates (George Romney for the Republicans and Eugene McCarthy for the Democrats). Romney lost to Nixon, and McCarthy to Hubert Humphrey, but the viability of both campaigns was testimony to the strength of the anti-war movement. Atrocities the Mai Lai Massacre of March 1968, in which unarmed civilians were killed by the US military; the student killings at Kent State; and the famous "Napalm Girl" photo of 1972, showing a 9-year-old Vietnamese girl screaming as she ran toward international journalists, all helped to turn the public's stomach against the war.

Civil Rights

Coincident with the rise of anti-war protest was a profound civil rights movement, led by Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Rosa Parks, James Meredith, Bayard Rustin, John Lewis, Malcolm X and many others. As with some of the wars mentioned above, fought for liberation from oppression, the Civil Rights movement in the US was about throwing off the shackles of oppression still largely in place a century after the Civil War. In the 1950s, blacks in this country could not easily vote, obtain decent jobs, buy property, attend the same schools as whites, or even drink out of the same drinking fountains. They rode in the back of the bus, suffered institutionalized discrimination in nearly every aspect of life, and lived with the threat

of constant violence from police, authorities, and white supremacist groups like the KKK. From 1882 to 1968, nearly 5,000 lynchings occurred in the U.S., according to records maintained by NAACP. Perhaps philosophically aligned with the slowly emerging revolt against the apartheid system in South Africa, led by Nelson Mandela, blacks in this country had had enough, and when Pluto conjoined Uranus in the sky – accompanied and supported by a significant number of ordinary white people as well as a small number of white activists – they took to the street.

The movement began heating up on a smaller scale during Pluto in Leo, when Emmett Till was murdered in Mississippi for flirting with a white woman, and a photo of his beaten body from his open-casket funeral was published in *Jet* magazine in 1955; the same year Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus in Alabama and triggered a year-long bus boycott. Before that, President Truman had issued Executive Order 9981 to end segregation in the military in 1948; and *Brown v. Board of Education* ended segregation in the schools in 1954. Like the Viet Nam war, there was a slow build-up in the latter years of Pluto in Leo that set the stage for the main conflagration which took place with Pluto in Virgo.

In 1957, with Pluto in Virgo, Eisenhower sent federal troops to escort and protect black students denied entrance to a high school in Little Rock, Arkansas; then five days later, signed the Civil Rights Act of 1957, allowing federal prosecution of anyone suppressing another's right to vote. In 1960, four black students, inspired by the nonviolent protests of Mahatma Gandhi, refused to leave a "whites only" lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, sparking similar sit-ins in lunch counters in other cities and states. In 1961, black and white activists called freedom riders traveled through the South, protesting segregated bus terminals, restrooms and lunch counters. In 1963, Governor George Wallace famously stood in a doorway at University of Alabama, attempting to block two black students from registering as President Kennedy sent the National Guard to campus, shortly before Martin Luther King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" to 250,000 people at the Lincoln Memorial. In 1964, President signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, preventing employment discrimination due to race, color, sex, religion or national origin.

Meanwhile, the backlash to this apparent progress, then as now, was brutal and unrelenting. In 1963, four young black girls were killed before Sunday service as a bomb went off at a church in Birmingham, Alabama. Over the next five years or so, race riots broke out in Harlem, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Philadelphia, Detroit, Watts (a neighborhood in Los Angeles) and more than 100 other bi-racial cities. In 1965, black leader Malcolm X was assassinated, less than two months before Bloody Sunday, when about 600 people marching from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in support of black voting rights were brutally attacked by the police. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders eventually sued and won their right to march, holding two more marches in the years ahead. King himself was assassinated in 1968, but not before President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law in 1965. A week after King's death, Johnson also signed the Fair Housing Act, again making it illegal to discriminate on the basis of race.

Important gains were made and victories won during this period, but at the literal expense of blood, sweat and tears, not to mention human life. The animosities fueling the racial divide between blacks and whites have not been fully resolved or healed during this time or since, as a more recent rising tide of white supremacy at the highest levels of government as well as on the alt-right direly attests. With a broader perspective than was available at the time, the Pluto in Virgo years appear

to be those in which hundred-year-old wounds were exposed in broad daylight, and demanded to be addressed. We are still struggling with that challenge.

Feminism

The anti-war and civil rights movement were not the only forces at work for fundamental change during this tumultuous period. Women everywhere were also rising up. The feminist movement did, of course, not begin in the Pluto in Virgo era, but there did emerge a second wave in the 1960s. First wave feminism, during the 19th and early 20th century was focused primarily on the right of women to vote. Second wave feminism encompassed a broader range of issues, including work, sexuality, domestic violence, rape, inequalities in the home, the workplace and the political arena, as well as the ways in which patriarchy dominated public institutions and the culture at large. Authors and activists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Gloria Steinem, and Betty Friedan (whose book *The Feminine Mystique* is widely thought to have launched the movement in 1963) were the public face of this revolution.

Some progress was made. In 1960, the FDA approved an oral contraceptive, commonly known as "the pill," which made it easier for women to have careers, while postponing pregnancy or avoiding it altogether. Kennedy established a Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, led by Eleanor Roosevelt, that worked to promote paid maternity leave, greater access to education, and help with child care. The Equal Pay Act was signed by Kennedy in 1963; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had many clauses that applied to the rights of women. Additional gains were made in the Pluto in Libra years. As with civil rights and gay rights, the women's rights movement was part of an overall collective uprising that marked the tenor of this era. Ironically, the women's movement of the 60s and early 70s was often criticized for not including women of color.

In 1968, the Stonewall riots, sparked after the police raided a gay bar in Greenwich Village, became a powerful catalyst for the gay rights movement during Pluto in Libra and beyond.

Environmentalism

As with the other movements covered so far, it would not be accurate to say that the environmental movement began in the 1960s, although it would be accurate to say that it got a significant boost and started coming into the foreground of public awareness. The primary catalyst to this new visibility was the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, which drew attention to the havoc wreaked by pesticides, particularly DDT, on birds and other wildlife. DDT was not actually banned until 1972, at the beginning of Pluto in Libra. More immediately, however, it led directly to the formation of several groups fighting adverse environmental impacts in the courts – including the Environmental Defense Fund, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, which later became Earthjustice. In 1965, a US Court of Appeals ruled that "aesthetic, conservational, or recreational" interests can establish legal standing to sue, a precedent that led to growth of environmental litigation. In 1966, the Sierra Club led a campaign to prevent the US Bureau of Reclamation from building two dams in the Grand Canyon, rallying public opinion after the IRS suspended the tax deductibility of contributions to the group, and later successfully lobbying Congress to first postpone

and then prohibit dams in the national park. This was the biggest victory for the environmental movement to this point.

In 1963, Congress passed the first Clean Air Act, to be expanded later, and the Clean Water Act in 1972. In 1964, the Wilderness Act set aside 9.1 million acres to be preserved in perpetuity, followed by the creation of North Cascades National Park, Redwood National Park, the Wild and Scenic River System and the National Trails Bill, all on the same day in 1968.

In 1969, the same year that NASA landed on the Moon and returned photos of planet Earth, an oil rig in the Santa Barbara channel blew out, creating an oil slick of 800 square miles and killing 10,000 birds; the Cuyahoga River in Ohio caught on fire; and awareness of the true cost of pollution moves up a notch on the public radar.

In 1970, Congress passed the National Environmental Policy Act, which mandated environmental review of major development projects, like the Alaska Pipeline, which became its first test. Unfortunately, the campaign to stop the pipeline, led by David Brower, formerly of Sierra Club, now of Friends of the Earth, failed. But the bedrock law became an invaluable tool that has helped win many subsequent battles. With growing awareness of environmental issues, Nixon was compelled to create the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970, the same year that the Clean Air Act was expanded to establish air quality standards and regulate auto emissions.

Also in 1970, the first Earth Day was held, after being birthed as the brainchild of Senator Gaylord Nelson from Wisconsin, in response to the growing public awareness of environmental issues, and the need to address the damage done to the environment by corporate business interests, military and nuclear facilities, mining and logging operations, rampant consumer culture, and other threats.

Along with Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome previewed at the Montreal Expo in 1967, *The Whole Earth Catalog*, first published by Stewart Brand in 1968, and *The Mother Earth News*, first published in 1970 by John and Jane Shuttleworth, by the end of Pluto in Virgo, the environmental movement had become iconic. Of course, since then the battles have continued and considerably intensified, but during Pluto in Virgo, a whole generation saw the need, rolled up their sleeves and got to work.

The Psychedelic Revolution and the Rise of the Counterculture

Of course, for anyone who actually remembers, the 60s were not all about work. The same energy that was bursting forth in political activity took another form in the quest for a more internal kind of liberation. This quest was fueled primarily by experimentation with psychotropic substances such as marijuana, LSD, psilocybin mushrooms, peyote and its derivative mescaline. Throughout the 1950s, there was a groundswell of research into these substances, especially LSD, with promising results for the treatment of depression, alcoholism, trauma, schizophrenia, and other psychiatric disorders, as well as in facilitating mystical experiences under proper supervision. Between 1954 and 1959, *Time* magazine published six positive reports about the potential of LSD, and in the beginning, there was general consensus in the scientific community of the psychotherapeutic value of these substances.

There was also great interest and enthusiasm in the late 50s, among beat poets like William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, and philosophers like Alan

Watts and Aldous Huxley, all of whom saw and experienced the potential for breakthrough spiritual experiences. In the early 60s, this thread of interest was picked up by people like Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert (later known as Ram Dass), and Ken Kesey, whose Merry Pranksters traveled the country with the Grateful Dead, conducting Acid Tests, with light shows, trippy music and an aura of communal sacrament. Culture heroes like the Beatles and numerous other psychedelic bands emerged, whose public experimentation was a compelling invitation.

By the mid 60s, the hippy culture had been born, admonished by Leary to “turn on, tune in and drop out.” Communes – experiments in communal living – sprung up everywhere, the most famous of which was the Haight-Ashbury district in San Francisco. With the help of resources like Steward Brand’s *Whole Earth Catalogs*, and *The Mother Earth News*, the same generation that was protesting the war attempted to live on the land, rejecting the Ozzy and Harriet/Father Knows Best suburban lifestyle of the 50s for a more organic existence, unplugged from the system, free to explore their spirituality and creativity, and experiment, not just with drugs, but also with alternatives to marriage, money, and other social norms. In retrospect, the entire experiment was, in the spirit of the Pluto in Virgo era, not just a protest against war, inequality, and human rights abuses; it was also an attempt to reach for something new, something better, the kind of world where we did all actually have a right to self-determination, and the support to achieve it.

In retrospect, we were probably a bit naïve in those years about what it would take, and ultimately, by the end of Pluto in Virgo, the experiment had started to go south. LSD had become illegal by 1966. The shiny, idealistic veneer of hippy culture was already starting to tarnish by the Summer of Love in 1967; and had almost become a caricature of itself by Woodstock in 1969. The Manson family murders of Sharon Tate and the LaBiancas; and the fatal stabbing of black teenager by a Hells Angels security guard at a Rolling Stones concert in Altamont, California all contributed to an anti-hippy backlash as the dark side of the experiment started to emerge.

Our Collective Loss of Innocence

This ultimate souring of the promise of the counterculture was compounded by what was going on in the world, which during the mutable Pluto in Virgo years, seemed to be insanely plunging into violent chaos everywhere, while here in the US, a broader breakdown in what might have been an imaginary contract between the American people and their government was taking place. This breakdown perhaps first surfaced during the assassination of President Kennedy toward the end of 1963, ostensibly by a lone gunman Lee Harvey Oswald, but in the minds of many then and now, an unlikely prospect, despite the conclusions of the Warren Commission after a 10-month investigation. Although not the first president to be assassinated, Kennedy’s death and its aftermath seemed to rip open a kind of Pandora’s box, never to be entirely closed again. The ensuing war in Viet Nam, the Kent State Murders, the bloody civil rights movement, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, John and Robert Kennedy were all testimony to a rising force – fueled by anger, pent-up frustrations, and the long overdue need for fundamental change in a system that just really wasn’t working for most of us.

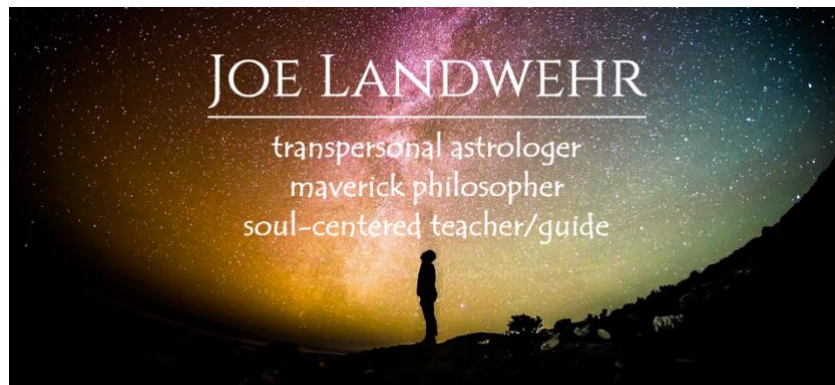
In the 1950s, during the height of Pluto in Leo, most people in this country seemed to want to believe in the good intentions of a government by the people and for the people, the shining promise of democracy, the many material benefits of capitalism

and the undisputed value of economic growth, even the noble intentions of our military leaders and the corporations that supported our troops abroad. All of that came to a deadly clash with reality during the Pluto in Virgo years, in which the underbelly to all of these naïve beliefs about the nature of our collective undertakings were exposed. If by the end of Pluto in Virgo, we hadn't had enough proof that we needed to keep our eyes open and our wits about us, the final act of this period came with the break-in of the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate Office building that would eventually lead to Nixon's resignation in disgrace and ignominy two years later during Pluto in Libra.

Now with a former president being indicted for among numerous other crimes, interfering with the peaceful transfer of power after being defeated in the 2020 election, conspiracy to defraud the US, and ultimately inciting an insurrection at the White House, perhaps we are all collectively, no longer capable of being shocked. The old mantra, "It can't happen here," has long since been proven untrue. And yet, Pluto in Virgo's legacy remains. All of the chasms that divided us then are still there, some widening further, some with shaky bridges across them. The wounds have not yet been healed. There is work to do, with far larger stakes now than there were in the innocent days of Pluto in Virgo. If we can somehow make it past the shit-show of the moment, who knows, maybe we can remember that at one time, as a culture, we were idealistic enough to shoot for the Moon.

In July 1969, we did land on the Moon, with the classic photo of a whole Earth as seen from space for the very first time, serving briefly as a symbol of our potential unity as a planetary culture, one in which all creatures large and small, all humans have a right to self-realization and contribute to the common good. That potential still exists, but we have yet to claim it. The good news and the bad news is that Pluto will ride our collective ass like Zorro until we do.

Stay tuned for the next exciting episode as we look at how the lessons of Pluto in Virgo continue to reverberate today and how Pluto's passage through Libra continued our quest, however unconscious, for something better that we could all be proud of.



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