

The Cosmically Stressed Election of 2008
by Barry C. Orr



Election Day 2008 is marked by a planetary combination symbolizing the angst-generating tension between stasis and change.

Every four years, the global community of astrologers does its best to predict the outcome of the U.S. presidential election. Given that astrology can be as much a mantic art as it is a science, and that astrologers are as subject to political prejudices as anyone else, the results are sometimes mixed. However, often the most interesting information gleaned from an astrological analysis of an election is not who will win, but a description of conditions surrounding the winning.

For example, in 2000, a number of astrologers clearly foresaw the uncertainty and "irregularities" surrounding the electoral process. Jim Shawvan, a San Diego astrologer, published the following on the astrological web site StarIQ.com (<http://www.stariq.com/>):

The election may be so close in some states that it may be several days before the actual electoral college votes can be tallied with accuracy. This could involve the counting of absentee ballots, and possible charges of fraud or irregularities in some places. As of election night, it may look very much like a Bush victory, but uncertainty may develop as the count goes on.

There were other notable hits. Astrologer Jacob Schwartz (<http://asteroidman.com/2000.html>) of Philadelphia predicted a long delay in the electoral decision, a situation not usually anticipated in a typical election. Uncannily, he also predicted that Gore would win the popular vote, yet still lose the election. Astrologically, the biggest factor behind these predictions was a profoundly screwed-up Mercury, the planet associated with communication, information processing, and by extension, voting machines.

In 2008, astrologers are again energetically analyzing the astrological charts of the presumptive candidates, John McCain and Barack Obama. A big impediment has been the lack of reliable birth times for all of the candidates, but there is a bigger problem. This year, something doesn't seem right. No one feels good about the astrological conditions on election day, nor the conditions on inauguration day. There is a shadow looming over the charts.

"A Primal Antagonism"

In 2008, the major planetary configuration of interest is a Saturn-Uranus opposition that occurs on election day itself, November 4th. (From a geocentric perspective, the planets will be 180 degrees apart, or directly opposite each other.) This event begins a series of five such oppositions that end in July 2010. This is a combination that occurs approximately every 45 years. This year, the Saturn-Uranus combination is the astro-elephant in the room. It tells us quite a bit about the energies surrounding election day, and thus the next four years.

Astrologers see the Saturn-Uranus opposition as particularly problematical because the natures of the two planets are so different. While planets beyond Saturn relate to more unconscious and universal themes beyond our individual control, Saturn itself describes the structures and boundaries that define our limits within the physical world. In some sense, Saturn fits the definition of reality as given by Philip K. Dick (http://deoxy.org/pkd_how2build.htm): it is "that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away." It is the leaden symbol of conservatism, resisting change and yearning for stasis, if not the past.

Conversely, Uranus is the archetype of change, deviance, and rebellion. Often acting in a lightning-fast manner, it seeks to tear down the type of restrictions that are represented by Saturn. In his writings, the philosopher and cultural historian Richard Tarnas (<http://www.cosmosandpsyche.com/AboutTheAuthor.phphttp://>) sees Uranus as Prometheus, the figure who stole fire from the gods and gave it to men. He calls Prometheus the "Awakener."

While researching material on Ralph Waldo Emerson for a recent article, I received the gift of a synchronicity. Curiously, I found that Emerson used the Saturn-Uranus polarity in a cogent political analysis in which he describes the "primal antagonism" between Conservatives and Reformers. In his 1841 essay "The Conservative," he relates the following:

There is a fragment of old fable which seems somehow to have been dropped from the current mythologies, which may deserve attention, as it appears to relate to this subject.

Saturn grew weary of sitting alone, or with none but the great Uranus or Heaven beholding him, and he created an oyster. Then he would act again, but he made nothing more, but went on creating the race of oysters. Then Uranus cried, 'a new work, O Saturn! the old is not good again.'

Saturn replied. 'I fear. There is not only the alternative of making and not making, but also of unmaking. Seest thou the great sea, how it ebbs and flows? so is it with me; my power ebbs; and if I put forth my hands, I shall not do, but undo. Therefore I do what I have done; I hold what I have got; and so I resist Night and Chaos.'

'O Saturn,' replied Uranus, 'thou canst not hold thine own, but by making more. Thy oysters are barnacles and cockles, and with the next flowing of the tide, they will be pebbles and sea-foam.'

'I see,' rejoins Saturn, 'thou art in league with Night, thou art become an evil eye; thou spakest from love; now thy words smite me with hatred. I appeal to Fate, must there not be rest?' -- 'I appeal to Fate also,' said Uranus, 'must there not be motion?' -- But Saturn was silent, and went on making oysters for a thousand years.

After that, the word of Uranus came into his mind like a ray of the sun, and he made Jupiter; and then he feared again; and nature froze, the things that were made went backward, and, to save the world, Jupiter slew his father Saturn.

Emerson goes on to summarize the meaning of the passage:

This may stand for the earliest account of a conversation on politics between a Conservative and a Radical, which has come down to us. It is ever thus. It is the counteraction of the centripetal and the centrifugal forces. Innovation is the salient energy; Conservatism the pause on the last movement.

(<http://infomotions.com/alex2/authors/emerson-ralph/emerson-conservative-730/>)

Substituting John McCain for Saturn and Barack Obama for Uranus (and perhaps wars for oysters), the above dialogue makes perfect sense in today's political context. If we work with Emerson's metaphors, we can see the 2008 election as a critical turning point in the face-off between the forces of stasis and change, which Emerson describes as the "two poles of nature." (Notice how often the already-tired phrase "agent of change" has been used in the campaigns.) But, this time, the perennial conflict between conservatism and reform seems to involve something more than the usual empty arguments, and the polarity seems likely to come to some kind of real *denouement*, perhaps resembling a sudden release of tension.

In his recent book *Cosmos and Psyche* (<http://www.cosmosandpsyche.com/>), Richard Tarnas presents an exhaustive correlation of historical and cultural developments with planetary transit cycles. (See the review in Reality Sandwich by Daniel Pinchbeck -- http://www.realitysandwich.com/psyching_out_cosmos .) Tarnas describes the Saturn-Uranus combination as follows:

Historical periods in which Saturn and Uranus moved into dynamic aspect were marked by certain distinctive themes that were readily intelligible in terms of the archetypal principles associated with these two planets: the exacerbation of tensions between authority and rebellion, order and freedom, structure and change. Often the two archetypal principles combined and interpenetrated in contradictory ways: repressive revolution, erratically unpredictable authority, and so forth, as evident during the Terror in revolutionary France and the Cultural Revolution in communist China just mentioned. Especially frequent with this cycle were crises and the sudden collapse of structures, crashes, and accidents, grim awakenings, and sudden breakdowns, whether political, economic, or psychological.

Think 1965-1967, the time of the last Saturn-Uranus opposition. Unfortunately, Saturn-Uranus energies often manifest with all the subtlety of a *grand mal* seizure. This is not the kind of energy that is conducive to a smooth electoral process. We are entering a stressful time.

The Election Day Chart: Can *Everyone* Lose?

In May, a panel of astrologers at the recent United Astrology Conference (<http://www.uacastrology.com/>) in Denver offered their opinions about the 2008 presidential election. The astrologers used a variety of approaches, but one topic that was discussed is a method commonly used to predict the outcome of an election: cast a chart for election day, then analyze the charts of the candidates in relation to that one.

In the case of the chart for November 4th, the astrological indicators were unfortunate for *everyone*. So, while panel members gave varying opinions as to whether McCain or Obama would win, the process was not unlike picking a winner in a horse race being run in a mine field.

For those who know a bit about astrology, here are some of the highlights of the planetary morass on election day:

The Saturn-Uranus opposition, previously discussed, becomes exact at 8:33 AM EST. Significantly, on this day, it acts synergistically with a number of major structures in the chart, forming an uncomfortable relationship with the planet Venus, implying stresses on the social order or (perhaps) international tensions.

Mercury, our trickster friend from 2000, moves from the sign Libra to Scorpio at 11:00 AM EST. This places it in something of an unsettled cosmic state, introducing the possibility of the kinds of information "irregularities" we saw in 2000.

In the morning, the Moon is in a sign of its detriment (Capricorn), and is void of course. It changes signs about an hour before most of the polls close on the east coast (7:01 PM EST). This suggests, in the worst case scenario, that the public will not benefit from the election, and imparts a certain pointlessness to the day's activities.

There is a Mars-Neptune square aspect (90 degree separation), symbolizing misdirected or exploitative energies, and possible feelings of discontent or wasted effort.

So, what will be the outcome of the election? No one really knows -- all astrologers can do is lay out possibilities, and describe the prevailing energy patterns in effect in that time. It's kind of like forecasting the psychic weather. Most astrologers don't accept determinism, and believe that one can consciously work with the symbolism of the planets to effect a desired outcome. It's a complicated subject, but the basic idea is that knowledge of upcoming patterns expands your range of future possibilities. (Or, in a Borgesian sense, the number of paths to choose from in your garden -- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Garden_of_Forking_Paths.)

That being said, it is true that certain planetary energies are more difficult to handle than others. This is certainly the case with the Saturn-Uranus combination. The combination tends to build up tensions which are later released in sudden and sometimes disconcerting ways. The release isn't always destructive, but its exact nature is usually unexpected.

Befitting the weird planetary energies of the day, there are some wild theories brewing about what might happen. These did not originate with astrologers, but can currently be found on the web. These theories primarily fall into three categories:

1. **No Election:** The election will be postponed or canceled due to some "national emergency." This is a fairly popular theory; it usually involves the occurrence of a terrorist attack on the US or US military action against Iran. On BookTV.com, Chris Hedges recently pointed out that, thanks to the spate of national security directives the Bush administration has quietly put into place, we are "one or two terrorist attacks away from a police state" (<http://www.booktv.org/program.aspx?ProgramId=9432&SectionName=&PlayMedia=No>).

The astrologer Robert Hand (<http://www.arhatmedia.com/>) has noted that a solar eclipse that will occur on August 1st, 2008, falls on a very sensitive spot in George Bush's chart, one that

personally connects him to the behind-the-scenes power structures in the government. The period of time at least a month before and after this date should be watched carefully. One hopes that the eclipse is just a harbinger of the president's peaceful transition into retirement, and not a signal to action given by Bush's "shadowy overlords."

2. **Vanishing Candidates:** One or more candidates will leave the race. The unfortunate Obama assassination meme is already out there, and despite being amplified by the artless comments of Hillary Clinton, is too disturbing to discuss. More likely is some kind of scandal involving one (or both) of the candidates that may cause him to quit the race. McCain seems to be more subject to this possibility than Obama, but remember that we are expecting the unexpected.

Cape Cod astrologer Gary Christen (<http://alabe.com/>) has told me that he expects a dark horse candidate to materialize after some unfortunate event befalls the nation or the "orthodox" candidates. Jacob Schwartz, who did so well in calling the 2000 election, still publicly insists that Joe Biden will be the Democratic candidate. Now *that* would be unexpected.

3. **Fraud, Flaws, or Voting Fiascoes:** There will be rampant fraud or data foul-ups on election day, and yet another election will be stolen. Mark Crispin Miller is the editor of a new book, *Loser Take All: Election Fraud and the Subversion of Democracy, 2000-2008* (<http://www.amazon.com/Loser-Take-All-Subversion-Democracy/dp/0978843142>). If you want to confirm your suspicion that things are worse than you think, read this book. The democracy is in trouble.

In these times of copious *angst*, it's illustrative that the above possibilities, which would have once fallen into the domain of conspiracy theories, are being given serious consideration in wide circles.

Riding the Timewave into 2012

Terence McKenna's Timewave concept (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timewave>), based in the metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead, quantifies the ebb and flow of a process that culminates on December 21, 2012 -- the end of the Mayan Long Count. This process, called *novelty*, represents an invisible temporal quality that describes the degree of connectedness of entities within time, an idea described by Whitehead as *concrecence*. A novel entity exhibits *newness* and *creativity* -- an example might be a collection of people or ideas that have been brought together for the first time. Typically, periods of high novelty are marked by dynamic change and integration of new ideas. On the other hand, the lack of novelty connotes periods characterized by terms like *stasis* and *habit* -- times of low creativity and relative disjunction.

McKenna's description of novelty vs. habit sounds strikingly like Emerson's description of the "two poles of nature" encapsulated in the Saturn-Uranus polarity. If we entertain the premise that McKenna was on to something -- despite technical criticisms of the Timewave theory -- then the occurrence of the Saturn-Uranus oppositions from 2008 to 2010 may be the leading indicators of a final descent into novelty culminating in 2012.

Given that we will be in unfamiliar territory, how can we ensure the most positive possible future given the stressful nature of the next few years? On a recent YouTube video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oX9IvrFYVfl&feature=related>), Mark Crispin Miller makes some good practical suggestions:

I don't want people to freak out, or stay home and lock the door. On the contrary: It's crucial for us all to keep our heads, and have our eyes wide open. If these things take us by *surprise*, we are that much more vulnerable to being manipulated [and] pushed around, maybe with fatal consequences. If, however, we can be well aware of the nature of the people in charge, and not be surprised by the steps they take, we'll be strengthened by that kind of preparation, and we'll be able to resist.

His advice is based on a worst-case scenario view of where we're headed. However, in the opposing energies of Saturn and Uranus, there also exists the potential for positive revolutionary change, a new beginning.

Emerson writes:

The boldness of the hope men entertain transcends all former experience. It calms and cheers them with the picture of a simple and equal life of truth and piety. And this hope flowered on what tree? It was not imported from the stock of some celestial plant, but grew here on the wild crab of conservatism. It is much that this old and vituperated system of things has borne so fair a child. It predicts that amidst a planet peopled with conservatives, one Reformer may yet be born.

(<http://infomotions.com/alex2/authors/emerson-ralph/emerson-conservative-730/>):

Perhaps this is an eerie adumbration of a 2008 campaign speech written in 1841. But we will realize stranger things before the year is over.

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