

# Saturn Opposite Uranus: Changing Times — and Minds

by Gary P. Caton

Thomas Paine wrote in *The Crisis*: “These are the times that try men’s souls.”<sup>1</sup> Clearly, it feels as though we are currently living through similar times. Ever since Pluto made the ingress into Sagittarius, all three of the transpersonal planets have been occupying the transpersonal signs of Sagittarius–Pisces. The outer planets are called transpersonal because it takes longer than the average individual lifespan for them to make a complete revolution around the Sun — thus, they are seen as signifiers of collective issues. Similarly, the last four signs of the zodiac are all about collective issues. The first four signs, Aries–Cancer, are *personal* signs, where the relationship is to self — through dealing with primal, instinctive, survival-based issues (Jupiter and Saturn were in this part of the zodiac at 9/11). The second four signs, Leo–Scorpio, are *interpersonal* signs, where the self relates to another through dealing with social and relationship issues. Again, the last four signs, Sagittarius–Pisces, are *transpersonal* signs, where the self relates to the collective through dealing with universal, transcendental issues.<sup>2</sup>

So, just like the last time Pluto transited the transpersonal signs (1749–1822), we have been asked to integrate some very high-order energies. However, this time, both Uranus and Neptune have added their particular dynamics to the transpersonal emphasis. The focus has been on the forest — not the trees. This has been a time of corporate scandals, regime change, global war, and natural disasters — not a time of anything “for the people.” After 2008, the transpersonals line up in reverse planetary order (with Pluto in Capricorn, Neptune in Aquarius, and Uranus in Pisces), occupying the last three signs of the zodiac in a transpersonal crescendo. Pluto will have returned to the sign it occupied when Paine

wrote his immortal words. Pluto’s ingress into Capricorn is the crossing of the winter solstice point, the absolute darkest time of the solar year (in the Northern Hemisphere). Yet, there is indeed light at the end of the tunnel. In 2010, a 15-year period of transpersonal emphasis will end dramatically as the final Saturn–Uranus opposition in Libra–Aries moves across the cardinal axis.

The intense polarizations we have recently experienced from Saturn’s oppositions to Pluto and Neptune are then likely to ignite. Saturn and Uranus are basically antithetical principles. Saturn is primarily cold; it takes away energy. Uranus is primarily hot; it excites. When hot and cold meet in nature, we have thunderstorms. The Native Americans called this interplay the Thunder-beings. They believed that these beings brought vitalizing energy from the Sky to the Earth — to be used by humans. In Western mythology, the interaction of Earth and Sky is no less intense. Uranus was the God of the Sky. Each night he descended upon Gaia, Goddess of the Earth, and out of their frequent union came many monstrous progeny. Uranus was displeased and stuffed the undesirable offspring back into Gaia’s womb. Saturn was given a sickle by his mother (Gaia) to put an end to his father Uranus’s denial. Saturn castrated Uranus — unleashing the Furies from the spilled blood. In the final phase of this myth, Saturn cast the severed phallus into the sea, and Venus was born from the sea foam that arose from Uranus’s immortal flesh.

It is rather easy to see this stormy energy of the archetypal myths in action in the last two sets of Saturn–Uranus oppositions in the 1920s and ’60s. Following the Napoleonic wars, European powers became increasingly intertwined, and pre–World War I Europe was a constellation of royal families who were

related by marriage. No one imagined that they could war against each other. Yet, when the 1920s dawned, the old world order had been wiped away by Saturn opposite Uranus. During the 1960s, we witnessed the release of the Furies, as the limiting (Saturn) governmental and entrenched, racist social forces attempted to castrate the limitless (Uranus) freedom-based approach of the civil rights movements. Of course, this process also led to the emergence of Venus — which we saw in a flowering of the arts — culminating in “the Summer of Love.” The upcoming Saturn–Uranus oppositions will even occupy the same signs (Virgo and Pisces) as the last two sets, until both planets cross the cardinal axis in 2010.

### Opposites Instruct

When planets are opposed, it means that we are being challenged to develop our awareness. The opposition, by nature, is an aspect of tension. Nowhere is this more evident than at Uranus’s opposition to its natal position when we are in our early forties. We stand at the nexus of our existence — half of it before us and half of it behind us.<sup>3</sup> At this point, many people no longer want or need to respond to the parental/societal programming of the first half of life. Yet, the rejection of this programming entails a huge responsibility to redefine ourselves and our place in the world. The anxiety this can evoke is clearly referenced in the familiar term “midlife crisis.”<sup>4</sup>

Unlike the square, where we are often forced to choose one path over another, the opposition often presents no clear way out of a situation. We are hit from both sides in a barrage from which there is no obvious means of escape. It is easy then to become besieged by doubts and even guilt — thinking that the situation is somehow a result of a karmic mistake we’ve made. What are we to do as we find ourselves pinned down by forces that seem to surround us and arrest our movement and development? Well, in my opinion, the first and best thing we can do is to give ourselves a break by recognizing that this is a fundamental part of the process of being human.

Caroline Myss shows us that this process of questioning is integral even in the experience of our most shining spiritual exemplars. In her classic book on archetypes, *Sacred Contracts*, Myss reminds us that Abraham, Jesus, Muhammad, and Buddha walked a path that is archetypal — which means it is the same path that you or I must also walk.<sup>5</sup> Even these great leaders were not without their own doubts, fears, questions, and “stuck places” on their paths. In fact, the word “question” contains the word “quest.” Both are derived from the Latin *quaestus* (to ask or seek).

It can be construed, then, that the initial purpose of an opposition is to bring a person to a state of disorientation — only from there can the individual be initiated into new levels of awareness. In short, without some sort of stressor to induce anxiety (an anxiety to which there is no immediate solution), growth is simply not possible. It is from the anxiety of disorientation that growth and, indeed, spiritual awareness are born.<sup>6</sup> The Buddha had to witness sickness, old age, and death before he could follow his spiritual path. The opposition can ultimately be seen to represent the “call to adventure” (to quote Joseph Campbell) whereby “destiny has summoned the Hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown.”<sup>7</sup> Dane Rudhyar explained the process of the opposition in a very similar way: “There is for man ... a beginning in the darkness (unconsciousness, that is) of instinct, and there is a beginning in the full light of conscious intelligence ... *Form*, revealed in a moment of lucid perception at the ‘full moon’ phase of any cycle ... gradually releases its *meaning* or significance as the moon decreases in light.”<sup>8</sup>

We are collectively undergoing a *series* of oppositions. Because of the transpersonal nature of the planets and signs involved, this represents an extremely heightened transpersonal crescendo. This means that the call to adventure toward transpersonal or spiritual awareness is sounding on several levels. As Saturn opposed Pluto from the personal to transpersonal signs of Gemini–Sagittarius

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in 2001, we in the United States were faced with the grim reality of acts of terror on our home soil. Saturn's opposition to Neptune from the interpersonal to transpersonal signs of Leo–Aquarius gave us pause to ask: “Is there a higher path?” Is the suspension of habeas corpus and indefinite detainment of the accused a higher or a lower resolution?<sup>9</sup> Is an indefinite state of war a real solution, or just an Orwellian justification of a primitive path? Saturn's oppositions to Uranus begin in the interpersonal to transpersonal signs of Virgo–Pisces, but eventually we return full circle to the personal realm, as Uranus enters Aries in 2010. This suggests that our questioning, doubt, and fear must soon give way to positive action. The call to adventure must be answered.

Uranus, the Awakener, entering Aries signifies the waking of the people from their collective slumber. Aries is commonly associated with the myth of Jason, for obvious reasons: The Golden Fleece came from a Ram and was deposited in a grove sacred to Mars. Innate in the struggle of Jason is the overthrow of his “Terrible Father”<sup>10</sup> and his restoration as rightful heir. This is a parable for casting out the old ruling system — personal or social. Certainly, this will be a time of political unrest, as Saturn opposite Uranus has clearly demonstrated in the past. Yet, this does not mean that the call to adventure will have a political current for each and every individual — though it likely will for many.

### Elements of a Hero

Carol Pearson is the author of an enlightened series titled *The Hero Within*.<sup>11</sup> Through these books, Pearson shows that, despite the Western emphasis on the warrior/hero, there are indeed many ways to take up the hero's quest. I believe that Pearson's model is of particular interest to astrologers because she sees the heroic journey as ultimately combining these various heroic archetypes in a cyclical fashion. Better yet, I see her four basic heroic archetypes as corresponding to the four elements that have been integral to astrology since, at least, the Hellenistic era.

Pearson recognizes two “pre-heroic” archetypes, which describe a phase of nascent awareness, where one has either not clearly heard the call to adventure or has refused to answer it. The Innocent is one who exists in a state of unity with the cosmos. This may be due to a happy childhood or romantic or mystical experiences. The Orphan is one who has fallen from this state of unity and is seeking to return to the safety of innocence. The orphan wants to be rescued by someone else. Essentially, the orphan is one who refuses the call to adventure. The orphan tries to hide from the anxiety of the spiritual birth symbolized by the opposition. The hero, on the other hand, is one who takes responsibility for his or her own life purpose by setting out upon a path toward self-knowledge. Yet, even those who take up a heroic path may, from time to time, fall back into feelings of being orphaned. The path of the hero is a process, not a destination. As heroes, we must ever hearken to the call to adventure.

Assuming that one hears the call to adventure and does not refuse it, there are four paths the hero can take toward self-knowledge and spiritual awakening. These are the Warrior, the Martyr, the Wanderer, and the Magician. The Warrior is the traditional figure we have come to identify almost exclusively with the hero. The Warrior fights, slays, or conquers and learns through competition. The Martyr appeases or sacrifices and learns by taking care of others. The Wanderer rejects what some would call safety — and flees it — learning, instead, by autonomy and independence. The Magician seeks to incorporate and affirm all paths and learns through peer relationship.

Pearson observes that the typical path for men is to assume the warrior role; for women, it's the martyr. This is changing somewhat in modern society. Ideally, the hero experiences each of the other three heroic archetypes and winds up with a fusion of awareness as the Magician. Pearson notes that many women spend less time going through the masculine archetypes of Warrior and Wanderer — and men may eschew the martyr role entirely, or at least until midlife. Pearson also notes that psychological type theory may explain some

individual differences in assimilating the four heroic archetypes. Feeling types have a greater affinity for the martyr role, and thinking types prefer the wanderer. Those of you who have seen delineations of Jung's four psychological types, according to astrological elements,<sup>12</sup> likely understand what I'm saying here.

The Warrior archetype most closely resembles the element of fire. The use of fire, after all, is largely responsible for differentiating our species from the rest of the animal world. It is also no coincidence that the Uranus-Pluto conjunctions shifting to the fire signs in 1090 heralded a subsequent explosion in population and possibilities for humankind. The shift of the Neptune-Pluto conjunctions to the complementary element of air in 1398 began almost 600 years of fire/air dominance in at least two of the three outer-planetary cycles. The capstone of this period began in 1650 when the Uranus-Neptune conjunctions moved to fire to form complete fire/air dominance among the outer-planet conjunction cycles for almost 200 years. During this time, Sir Isaac Newton's synthesis of the knowledge of the Scientific Revolution completed the transformation from an organic worldview to the mechanical world picture.<sup>13</sup>

It is interesting that, in worldviews preceding the now dominant Western one, water is given priority. The *Tao Teh Ching* often states the virtues of the water element: "The highest form of goodness is like water ... water knows how to benefit all things without striving with them ... the Tao is to the World what a great river or an ocean is to the streams and brooks ... nothing in the World is softer and weaker than water; but, for attacking the hard and strong, there is nothing like it!"<sup>14</sup> The Martyr most closely resembles the water element. Like the Martyr, the Eastern worldview stresses self-sacrifice, the collective, and taking care of others.

The air element most closely resembles the Wanderer archetype. The Wanderer is essentially an outsider who goes it alone and explores new ideas in his or her own way. This is the self-made individual. I already mentioned the compatibility of fire with air, so it



is no coincidence that this archetype is the most compatible with the Western worldview. In fact, the modern Western hero, the cowboy, is the perfect amalgam of the fiery warrior and the rebellious outsider. It is interesting that, as the Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions have begun to mutate to the air element,<sup>15</sup> "rogue nations" such as Iran and North Korea are asserting their rights to explore nuclear technology — much to the dismay of the original rogues who became fully industrialized around the Neptune-Pluto conjunctions in air (opposite Uranus in fire) in the late 1800s.

Yet, as desperate as the current world situation may seem at times, there is another story to enact that may counterbalance humanity's current legacy of excess fire and air. The most recent Uranus-Pluto and Uranus-Neptune conjunctions have occurred in earth signs. The malleability and affirming nature of the earth element is indeed ours to tap into collectively now. The earth element most closely resembles the Magician archetype. The Magician grows through peer relationship by affirming and incorporating the best that others have to offer. This is the person who thinks globally and acts locally. By supporting like-minded individuals and sustainable enterprises, the Magician weaves an enchanted web of community for those who eschew the extremes of fire/air competition and isolation. As to the wisdom of the earth element of the Magician, the *Tao Teh Ching* states: "Truly, humility is the root from which greatness springs, and the high must be built



on the foundation of the low ... in governing a people and in serving Heaven, there is nothing like frugality. To be frugal is to return before straying ... Because I am frugal, therefore can I be generous ... Difficult things of the world can only be tackled when they are easy. Big things of the world can only be achieved by attending to their small beginnings.”<sup>16</sup>

### The Hero in the Mirror

So, as we await the collective call to adventure of Saturn opposite Uranus, I hope we can remember that there is more than one valid path the hero can travel. A hero is not only someone who achieves great feats, or rescues people from burning buildings, or invents some new technology. A hero is also someone who embraces diversity, affirms and supports others for their valuable contributions, and engages in the healthy debate of peer relationships. A hero incorporates the best practices of all cultures/religions/political systems into his life and finds win/win options that support his agenda and help the collective. One example of a modern-day hero is someone who does all the little things she can to reduce energy consumption and become more carbon neutral.

In short, we all can be heroes. Furthermore, we all have a variety of stratagems available to help us evolve on our heroic journey of becoming ourselves. I suggest taking a look at the elemental distribution in your chart and seeing what it has to say about your dominant heroic strategy. Does it fit? If not, perhaps you have a huge new potential to tap into. If it does fit, perhaps you can learn a lot and have some fun by taking a break and exploring some of the other strategies for a change — especially if your dominant element is either fire or air. If your dominant element is either water or earth, you may have felt like a stranger in a strange land for some time now. But this is about to change in a big way.

Since both the Saturn–Pluto and Saturn–Neptune oppositions occurred in fire/air, Saturn–Uranus in water/earth does represent a new theme. Add to this the ingress of Pluto into Capricorn in late 2008, and we have a clear majority of outer planets residing within

the feminine polarity of earth/water. It seems to me that this presages a change in direction of mass consciousness. The nationalistic and militaristic responses to extremist events under Saturn–Pluto already appear to face a growing and active opposition. Saturn–Neptune caused many people to question these responses that have resulted in torture, the suspension of habeas corpus, and the limiting of civil liberties — all in the name of freedom and democracy. As in the '60s, Saturn–Uranus represents a revolutionary counterculture response to the dominant Western paradigm of fire/air. It is highly likely that we will see more and more resistance to Warrior/Wanderer agendas by a growing group of Martyrs and Magicians.

Just as Bob Dylan prophesied back in 1963:

The line it is drawn, the curse it is cast,  
The slow one now will later be fast,  
As the present now will later be past,  
The order is rapidly fadin’.  
And the first one now will later be last.  
For the times they are a-changin’.

### References and Notes

1. Thomas Paine, *The Crisis*, December 23, 1776; see [www.ushistory.org/paine/crisis/index.htm](http://www.ushistory.org/paine/crisis/index.htm)
2. From Glenn Perry, *An Introduction to AstroPsychology*, the Association for Astrological Psychology, 1998. Perry suggests that this can be seen in a similar light as Maslow’s hierarchy, where more complex needs are met at each level until the individual reaches “peak experiences” and self-actualization.
3. This is admittedly an approximate figure and assumes the reader is lucky enough to live in a developed country. If you lived in sub-Saharan Africa, the Uranus demi-return (opposition) might more likely signal the end of life. Most people in the world currently have an average life expectancy of 60–75 years; the statistical world average is 67 years.
4. It is interesting that the same basic energies of the midlife crisis are being played out on the world stage right now. Saturn is interacting with these energies in the same order as the midlife transits of outer planets to natal placements for the current generations: the Pluto square, the Neptune square, and the Uranus opposition. Through successive oppositions to these same planets, Saturn is polarizing these issues in the world at large, so we are forced to become more personally

aware. Saturn opposite Pluto and Neptune brought up many important social questions. This questioning represents a sort of collective midlife crisis.

5. Caroline Myss, *Sacred Contracts: Awakening Your Divine Potential*, Harmony Books, 2001, pp. 88–105.

6. This is a basic tenet of many psychological theories. For a more thorough explanation of this process, see, for instance, Carol Pearson's *Awakening the Heroes Within*, HarperCollins, 1991, pp. 41–43; or my article in the Sagittarius 2007 issue of ISAR's *The International Astrologer*, where I discuss at length the astrological ramifications of Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration.

7. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, MJF Books, 1949, p. 58.

8. Dane Rudhyar, *The Lunation Cycle: A Key to the Understanding of Personality*, Llewellyn Publications, 1967, pp. 59 and 57.

9. Habeas corpus — the right to question detention in court — appears poised to become one of the bigger issues of the time (for more about this, see [www.commondreams.org/views05/0110-33.htm](http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0110-33.htm)). I find it fascinating and prescient that Saturn–Uranus is embedded in many of the people and events surrounding the principle of habeas corpus.

The Magna Carta (containing the first formal laws regarding habeas corpus) was signed under a Saturn–Uranus conjunction on June 15, 1215. The U.S. declared independence on July 4, 1776, under Saturn trine Uranus. The U.S. Constitution (with a habeas corpus suspension clause) came into effect on March 4, 1789, under Saturn sesquiquadrate Uranus. South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20, 1860, under Saturn square Uranus. This led to the first suspension of habeas corpus by President Abraham Lincoln, born on February 12, 1809, under a Saturn–Uranus semi-sextile; he has been accused of civil rights abuses by modern authors such as Thomas

J. DiLorenzo (see his book, *The Real Lincoln: A New Look at Abraham Lincoln, His Agenda, and an Unnecessary War*).

The November 13, 2001 Presidential Military Order gave the president of the U.S. the power to detain a noncitizen *suspected* of connection to terrorists or terrorism as an unlawful combatant — under Saturn trine Uranus (synodic return for the Sibly chart). Former Attorney General John Ashcroft was born May 9, 1942, under Saturn (just into Gemini) conjunct Uranus in late Taurus. Now holding that office is Michael Mukasey, born July 28, 1941, under Saturn conjunct Uranus in Taurus. During the confirmation process, Mukasey said he believes that the president has the power to negate laws, and he would not commit himself to enforcing congressional subpoenas.

10. See Liz Greene, *The Astrology of Fate*, Weiser, 1984, for an in-depth look at the innate archetypal struggle of Aries.

11. Carol Pearson, *The Hero Within*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1986 (original) and 1989 (expanded edition).

12. The basic idea is: Fire = Intuition, Earth = Sensation, Air = Thinking, and Water = Feeling.

13. Dr. Robert A. Hatch, *The Scientific Revolution*, 1998; see <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/rhatch/pages/03-Sci-Rev/SCI-REV-Home/>

14. Lao Tzu, *Tao Teh Ching*, translated by C. H. Wu, St. Johns University Press, 1961.

15. Technically, we are under the dominion of the final earth conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Taurus in 2000 — hence, the regressive governmental policies since that time. In 1980, the elemental mutation began, with Jupiter–Saturn in Libra, and starting in 2020, Jupiter and Saturn will conjoin in air signs for the next two centuries.

16. Lao Tzu, *Tao Teh Ching*.



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