

**ASTRO\*SHAMANISM – PART 7**  
**The Saturn Return and the Outer Planets**  
**July 20, 2010**

By Michael Erlewine ([Michael@Erlewine.net](mailto:Michael@Erlewine.net))

I have attempted to point out how the very order of the planets themselves can be a key to how they may be used, a key to our own inner journey of discovery. But it is clear that many of you are nodding off and I accept this as my fault. It is true that esoteric astrology is very difficult to grasp and if not grasped lends itself well to sleeping. I apologize.

At this point, instead of going on to describe each life chakra in excruciating detail, I am going to detour around that and say something about Saturn and its relation to the outer planets, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. If this does not resonate, then I will take up other topics entirely. I don't want to wear out my welcome. It is a good question: What about the outer planets, the planets beyond Saturn: Uranus, Neptune, Pluto and any others still waiting to be found?

It may be helpful, before reading through this section, to understand a little about how I view astrology, which is above all as an oracle. Astrology, in my understanding, speaks to us in its own language. There are many approaches to astrology, and thus many languages or ways to make astrology speak. It is what astrology speaks to us of that I consider important, not the words themselves, and not the language of astrology, per se. We have also to be prepared to hear or listen.

#### The Transcendental or Outer Planets

What is presented here is most appropriately part of what we could call Shamanic Astrology: initiation and tales of the soul's journey through time. My approach is not meant to be dogmatic, but like all astrological techniques, this is but one of many to better understand our life and life's journey. Please accept it in that tone.

We will now look briefly at the planets that exist beyond the realm of Saturn or time. These external planets are beyond the physical or material (on the outer or the far side), just as the inner planets are beyond the physical on the inside or within Saturn's orbit.

These outer planets are Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto, and the three together have been called the following: Out-of-Body Planets, Transcendental Planets, Metaphysical Planets, After-Death Planets, Planets of the Unconscious, Spiritual Planets, Impersonal Planets, Psychic Planets, and other names. Why these names? What are these outer planets all about?

We could push the limits of language and say that the outer planets are not about anything, not about any "thing," for they are by definition beyond the physical, beyond Saturn. Yet they have a very important message for us and, although this blog is primarily about the traditional planets, I will briefly try to present here an overview of the outer planets and how they might be used in counseling.

One reason to include them here is that these outer planets represent in yet another way the same life initiations or rites of passage that we have looked at elsewhere in this blog, initiations as seen in the planets or chakras within the sphere of Saturn. These outer planets are the eternal witness and awareness of all that is — the revelation. In other words, these trans-

Saturnian planets serve to reveal and emphasize the nature of the inner planets. This will require some explanation.

### The Meta-Physical

From the point of view of Shamanic Astrology, the outer or transcendental planets (Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, and any trans-Plutonian planets yet to be discovered) are not stations or experience beyond our physical life in the sense of some next place to get to or land. These outer planets are not physical in the sense that Saturn is physical, for — as pointed out — Saturn is physicality or form itself. The outer planets are by definition beyond Saturn, and are therefore formless or meta-physical.

Because these outer planets are beyond form or Saturn, they are (and can only be) part of the 'revelation' of the physical or internal planets we have already looked at, the planets within (and including) Saturn's limits. The outer planets can but reveal the nature and importance of the inner planets. This is the extent of their power, but as we shall see, this is power indeed.

### Pointing Out: Saturn Is Form

It is important here to grasp that Saturn is the realm of form and time, the planet of all physicality, similar to the form of our body that contains all the organs, and in this case all the planets within Saturn, including the great Sun, which of course is not a planet. Saturn is this physicality and form.

Just as we know that Mars has to do with drive and energy, Jupiter with direction and path, so Saturn has always been the planet of form and the physical. It is not enough to simply nod your head that you understand this concept and move on. If it does not deeply register, then what follows is not going to make much sense to you, the fact that the outer planets are not physical, are not physical places or stages. In the context of Shamanic Astrology, these outer planets are beyond form and the physical, thus: meta-physical, the measure of the physical, the sensing of the physical – a mirror.

Astrology here is but a language. We are not talking about putting a space probe on Pluto and sampling soil, but instead we are using astrology here to point to the esoteric meanings of the planets, in this case the outer planets, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. Astrology is only a language we use to point to something happening in our lives, and not itself much of an end. Shamanic astrology does not have to correspond exactly to other forms of astrology or to science. There are many astrological languages, and the point is to make them articulate and speak to us.

### Saturn is the Physical End

Saturn marks the form and physical end of things. It always has, throughout the long history of astrology, East and West. That physical form contains within itself the great Sun, and all of the planets out to Jupiter. Beyond Saturn, beyond form itself, we have the outer planets, which are by the above definition, formless and non-physical. What can they mean or point to? What is their use?

I have mentioned elsewhere in this blog that each of us is born and grows our personal body over time, and in time. Everybody is mature and complete, physically, when Saturn returns at 29.4 years of age. There is no more physical growth from that time forward, unless you want to include middle-age spread, but that is not what we mean here by growth. The physical body is

finished growing by the Saturn return. It has reached its physical peak and is mature. This is what we are speaking of here. At that time, the physical body is not going to get any better. There will be no “more.”

### The Prime of Life

Beyond maturity or the prime of life, it is downhill for everybody. There is not a higher peak of physical prowess to be obtained. Like the trajectory of a missile, our body (if exercised and cared for) will reach a peak, maintain its form for a while, and then eventually begin to fall and fail. We all know this is true. It is true for everybody, human or otherwise.

Therefore, the planets beyond Saturn, beyond the physical, will not bring us any more physicality or form. They cannot. If we are looking for more of that, then the outer planets can only testify or prove to us that there is no more increase of form to be expected. By this same definition, we can say that these outer planets will reveal this fact as a natural by-product of getting to know them, by using them as an oracle. And in this regard, the outer planets are indeed very oracular. Astrology, at heart, is an oracle, albeit a complex one. It speaks to us.

If we are used (during the first 30-year cycle of Saturn) to something always being added on in the form realm, to there always being something “new,” then we will not find (physically speaking) any more “new” as we move beyond that 30-year Saturn cycle and begin to pick up on the cycles of the outer planets.

### Straight Lines Curve

If we have been caught up in the exposition of Saturn, as it makes its first cycle after our birth, which ends at 29.4 years, we may have become used to thinking of time as linear, as a straight line or linear journey that we have been on. This is a common and quite natural mistake that most of us make.

When Saturn completes its return, and turns to repeating itself (going over the same degrees of the zodiac for the second time), that linear sense starts to fade in our minds, and the idea of a circle begins to dawn for us. The straighter the line, the finer the curve.

Before and through the Saturn return, most of us are used to conceiving our life along a time line, in a linear format. Time in this view stretches on into the future, with birth at one end and death at the other. This is the common view, a time line from birth to death.

But with the Saturn return, this linear sense of time begins to be challenged by the essential circularity (cycles) of life, the tendency for all things to repeat or cycle. This is for most a major initiation, and a source of great confusion for many.

### The Straighter the Line, the Finer the Curve

I am not suggesting here that this is a sudden realization. For most, it is not. In fact, this altered sense of time, as a cycle or circle is very, very gradual for most, and apparently non-existent for some, at least awareness of it. The ingrained time as a “straight line” theory is slow to give way to the reality of time as returns, and returning — cyclic.

Yet, beyond the 30-year Saturn return, time stops as we have come to know it, and begins to repeat itself, to go over the same ground (zodiac-wise) for the second time around. This is what

we might term a climacteric event, one with far-reaching implications, and one that should be studied in a section by itself. Here, we will just touch on the main articulation points, but I have gone into this in much greater depth elsewhere in this blog.

### The Physical End of Life

At our Saturn return, we as a thing or body are complete, and we (our body) are launched beyond time itself for the first time. Time as we have come to know it up to that point just stops. Let's take a quick review of what this kind of time suggests.

Up to this point throughout our life, Saturn or form has been positing or declaring itself zodiac degree by zodiac degree. Over the course of our formative years, the activities of the inner planets, which complete their initial circle or cycle around the Sun, one by one, have caught our attention, each in their turn. This too will be explained elsewhere in much greater detail.

But after our Jupiter return falls to repetition at around 12 years of age, we can perhaps begin to pick up on Saturn's story. And the second Jupiter return, around 24-years of age, marks a real turning point for tuning in to what Saturn is (and has been) laying down all this time. We could mark these first 30 years as the track or line of time (as we mentioned earlier), this almost unavoidable sense of linearity, of time seemingly stretching endlessly toward the future – going on forever.

### The Bewildering Display of Time

Keep in mind, here, that all during our first 30 years, Saturn is developing or positing the form or physical experience that we have up to this point. It is all that we have known, and it is captivating. It would seem that each of us is fascinated, if not entranced, by the seeming-endless (often bewildering) display of form and new experience. As I pointed out, there is a quite natural assumption that this stream of new experience will go on forever, and that this is just the nature of life. Like the proverbial deer in the headlights, we are caught up in this bewildering display of time.

### When Time Stops

It is my contention here (in the esoteric sense) that time literally stops as Saturn reaches its return and turns to repeating itself, as it begins going over a section of the zodiac for a second time – around thirty years of age.

This is not an "Aha!" experience for us. Most don't get it all at once, and some never seem to get it at all. Instead, as Saturn falls to repetition in our experience, that sense of something new as always appearing at the "present" point of our timeline fades. It falls away. There is nothing further physically forthcoming. There is no more "more." You have it. This is it! There is a great silence that sets in.

For most people, this is not easily recognized, but mostly at first somehow intuited. They "feel" different. Something has changed, but they don't know what it is just yet. Some part of their deeper consciousness is monitoring all this, and they sense a gap or change in their experience, but can't quite put their finger on it, Dylan's "You don't know what it is, do you Mr. Jones."

### Entering the Silence

In the Western esoteric tradition, this has been referred to as “Entering the Silence,” for the great motor of time has been turned off for the first time. The rush and roar of time that has been there all our life fades to silence.

My esoteric teacher, who was a traveling initiator in a Rosicrucian order, had his own way of explaining this concept to me, and I will pass this on to you, since I found it totally helpful myself.

He spoke of this whole Saturn-return transition as being like the launching of a rocket into outer space. Our time within the Saturn cycle, until we reach its return at roughly age 30, is the time during which we can work on and build our own personal space capsule. We are still grounded, so to speak, and have all the tools and resources we might need to construct as perfect a vehicle as we can manage.

### The Vehicle is Launched

At the Saturn return (29.4 years heliocentrically), that vehicle is launched, ready or not, well-built or not-so-well-built. Literally, there is no more time after that to work on the vehicle. The physical growth or development has reached an end. For better or for worse, our vehicle is finished and launched as we enter the space beyond Saturn or time, what we could call here: outer space, the space outside what we had been up to that point enclosed within — a major initiation.

Our journey beyond the realm of time (Saturn) to a very great degree depends on our vehicle, how it was constructed, how well it was made, and so on. We are literally floating out there, beyond time, floating in that space beyond time, if that phrase makes any sense.

### One Generation

If you are older than thirty years of age, you are already out there beyond time. For many people, this transition is not consciously registered and seemingly not a great problem. They are oblivious to it, or so it seems. However, for others, this transition can be very problematical. In particular, those who begin to awaken to this experience (and try to put all the pieces together) may not understand what they are going through, and even become fearful, frightened.

And it is this group that can benefit from some form of shamanic astrology, some spiritual handholding and guidance. And there can be so many questions that occur to those making this transition. A spiritual friend or guide to these regions can be a friend indeed, and serve us in good stead.

### The Outer Planets

And thus the whole concept of the outer planets, the planets outside Saturn’s grip, comes up. How are they to be understood?

Of course, we have quite a long history now of using these outer planets in astrology, so I am assuming you already have that. What is being presented here is not in any way contrary to that material, but rather our focus here is on what shamanic astrology can bring to the picture. Let me try to describe this.

Using the linear sense of time we discussed above, as we hit our Saturn return at 29.4 years of age, it is like driving out of town and hitting the outskirts. Suddenly, there are no more houses,

no more stores, no more “town,” and we are looking down a line of highway that is empty, and perhaps, we hope, going somewhere. To our eyes, it appears to stretch out toward what we have always viewed as the future. It is what we are used to. It has always been something like this for us, time as a line going somewhere.

### A One-Way Street

Now imagine that as we drive out from town along this straight highway, we encounter three signs, much like those of us who are older used to see as a series of signs for products, like the old Burma Shave slogans of the 1950s, that had one phrase on each sign, things like:

A guy who drives,  
A car wide open,  
Is not thinkin',  
He's just hopin'  
Burma Shave.

Sorry, but I had to do that. Well, in our case there are just three of these signs at this point, in the order Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. We can add more, as more trans-plutonian planets are added, but they will ALL tell the same story. And what is that story?

That story is as simple as that there is nothing more out there, no place to get to or go to, AND you had best turn around or at least take a look back over your shoulder at what you are leaving: all of the planets and bodies within Saturn's orbit. If you do look, this is what is called “discovering your inner life.” If it happens all at once, it has been called “discovering your Self.” It is the physical point of no return, and, therefore, a major (perhaps THE major) turning point in a life.

The esoteric principle here is that the only thing to be seen when you get out of the body is the body itself, just as we gaze at Earth from the space shuttle. Out-of-body experiences are a vantage point only and not a place to get to.

### Sidebar: Out of the Body Experiences

So much has been made (and is still being made) about out-of-the-body experiences, astral travel, and related experiences. And this is just what we are describing here, ecstatic experiences, how we exit the body, and pass from that body to a more subtle experience of all things.

There are scores of books about out-of-the-body experiences. And although these books appear quite exotic, for the most part, if you read them with the concepts being presented here, they will make more than a little sense. Out-of-the-body experiences are not uncommon. In fact, they are ubiquitous and universally experienced by all of us, all of the time. Our consciousness is always moving in and out of our body, but starting with our Saturn return, many of us begin to consciously experience this and remember those experiences. What may have been rare up to this point (the Saturn return) is an awareness of what we all experience, this passing beyond time and the physical, to the metaphysical — beyond the physical.

### Somewhat of a Big Deal

This trans-Saturnian view is not a minor piece of information for most of us, those of us who

have been assuming that there IS something out there all those years, that there is much more of something waiting for us along this linear road of time, and especially perhaps something for us at the end of that road, like heaven or hell. The usual scenario: we are trying to proceed along our straight timeline, as we always have up to that point, and here are signs that are telling us to “Go Back!” What are we to think?

I hope by now you are beginning to get the general idea. These outer, transcendental, planets are not physical, in that they are (by definition) beyond Saturn or the physical. They have been called the meta-physical planets, and rightly so. They are not going to manifest in a physical way. They are meta-physical, that is: beyond the physical.

However, these outer planets can (and do) reveal the physical, perhaps in a new light. They are planets of revelation, and the only thing tangible (physical) they can reveal or render is the physical world and all that is within it, the same old physical world we are used to, but now viewed differently. And this is what they, in fact, do.

### Revelation and Rendering

What do we mean by “revelation?” Revelation is just that, a true revelation, and in the Biblical sense: a revealing of the true nature and sheer importance of the Sun, Moon, and planets out to and including Saturn.

And what do we mean by the statement that the outer planets “render” the inner planets? We are using the word “render” here in its sense of “to give back” or “hand over.” The outer planet initiation can give back to us that which we have come to take for granted and perhaps lost an appreciation for, including our entire sense of the Self.

By saying that the outer planets are the revelation of the inner planets, it is meant that the outer planets are the realization (growing awareness of) of the absolute value of the inner planets. The outer planets, like a rear-view mirror, are really all about the inner planets, the value of which is being pointed out by exposure to the outer planets. We learn to value what we formerly took for granted. With one foot firmly on Earth, we might think to step out with the other off the Earth, but we only sink back into Earth, because there is no other place to step to. We are stuck with the Earth and thus begin to see it differently.

### The View from Earth

When astronauts leave Earth, what is it that they see and most commonly photograph from the trip? It is not the dark and starry sky beyond the earth — the relative emptiness of space. No, it is Earth itself, that great blue and white planet that looks so awesome and peaceful from a distance. That is what we all look at and see. This is key.

In the same way, when we emerge beyond our Saturn return, the most important thing for us to see is not outer space, but inner space, the space within, including the Sun, planets, and Saturn. We discover not what is out there, but what we just left or are leaving. There is nothing out there, but we now know it. This is just common sense.

Saturn represents the physical form of things, and planets beyond Saturn are beyond the physical form and are non-physical. As my teacher would say to me, they are “transcendental,” and he would snap his teeth together, literally beyond the dental or physical. It may take time to understand this, but it is time worth taking. These outer planets will not add one iota to

the physical world, because, as pointed out, that is the domain of Saturn.

The outer planets are the realization of the rest of the solar system, the Sun and all the planets, their production and the presentation. We indicate this in that, for the most part, these outer planets are by age (return) longer or beyond the personal experience. We each of us don't live that long, so they are what we have yet to fully know, even through death. They mark the aura of the solar system, and point back to the Sun center, and not beyond to deep space. They reflect.

Let me know your thoughts on this please.

Michael

