UAC 2018 In Praise of Melancholy

Title
Bio
Copies
Itinerary

Solar and Lunar Values – Culture Bias
Which do you think are privileged?

Western culture – Manifest Destiny
And if we can no longer expand our borders westward, then let us expand our ideology far and wide, demonstrating that democracy and capitalism are the finest expressions of our free nation. Let us also expand upward and outward to the Moon and Mars.

Our topic

The Dilemma

Zeus/USA symbol –
As a side note, notice that the sacred bird of Zeus is also a symbol of America. The eagle with its noble bearing expresses its gift of great flight and acute far seeing vision expanding its boundaries.

Sibly chart

America
Expansionism

Divine Mandate

In Jupiter’s extending our reach to grasp for the things which we do not possess, in our greed for more, our attitude becomes one where the world is seen as a commodity for our private use. And the world considered a commodity cannot be an animated, ensouled world. It becomes a thing rather than a being. It is an I-It relationship rather than I-Thou. We structure Nature as adversary rather than source of our origin. This of course, has always had the complicity of the monotheistic traditions. We want to conquer nature, control and predict natural forces, battle them, master them, to bend nature to our will and desire.
And yet we call it Mother. Now, there’s a therapy issue.
Notice also, that this attitude infuses our practice of astrology.

Jupiter’s seduction

What we want

We want to achieve our dreams; have satisfying relationships, resolution of conflicts, financial security, physical and emotional health, well-adjusted children, great sex, rich spirituality, and a joyous inner child, in a word – Happiness. We want to get rid of all that hinders, binds, and frustrates our quest for the brass ring.
It seems that we all want the bright light of day without having to experience the dark night of the soul.

We want Jupiter’s growth and expansiveness without the delay and contractions of Saturn.

Manic Salvation – Astrologers await the newest technique, the most recently discovered Kuiper Belt object, or the latest uncovered Greek manuscript. Cosmological – Even our cosmological imaginings are marked by Jupiter, we popularly imagine “the expansion of the universe will continue forever.” And we suffer perhaps the most arrogant conceit of all, that somehow humanity is the crown of creation in this great vastness and that the universe cares for us, that the universe discriminates with an intrinsic scale of value. Paraphrasing our foundational Western text, “The sun shines upon the evil and the good, it rains upon the just and unjust.” Perhaps life doesn’t play favorites, it just plays, in a glorious go ‘round of movement and rest, creation and destruction, violence and peace, feast and famine, in an ongoing dance filled with terror and beauty.

America’s expansive thinking is compensatory for a Saturn that gets no respect. This existential refusal to embrace Saturn has allowed a group of professions to flourish.

Growth of a profession –

As astrologers, many of us have settled for the one time reading and if we are fortunate (blessed by Jupiter) our clients return in 6 months or a year for an update. We want to be seen as helpful, bearing messages of good
news to our clients, letting them know when the heavy transits and progressions will pass, and that life will turn out okay. We might feel the urge to help our clients get rid of their bad feelings or resolve their uncomfortable situations ASAP.

We rarely notice that this style of intervention helps to keep us and our clients shackled in Jupiter’s airy abode. When we pursue Jupiter (happiness, well-being, fulfillment) as the highest value, we have found trouble.

The historian Daniel Horowitz wonders whether “the pursuit of subjective well-being is or should be the primary or even a primary goal in life.”

In mythology, Zeus was known for his unwillingness to observe conventional boundaries. In fact he is notorious for his philandering and infidelity. He was never satisfied with his wife, Hera and constantly sought new fields to plow where the grass was greener. Is divorce a problem in this country?

We have retained the expansive and inflated aspects of Jupiter/Zeus while disregarding the positive sense of faith and trust in life and feeling graced by what we already possess, all Jupiter qualities.

Our manic orientation leans us toward spending our lives enthusiastically committed to seeking personal growth, self-actualization, peak experiences, liberation (i.e., expanded perspective), and with the recent emphasis on positive psychology; happiness. This manic search leaves us with a lopsided vision of the world as if Saturn’s domain is somehow wrong.
Chart
As a nation I suspect we easily identify with our country’s
Sun/Jupiter/Venus conjunction and struggle with the nature of Saturn’s
claims upon the soul of America in its square to the nation’s Sun. I think this
can perhaps be read as a shadow issue, as an easy denial of and a cultural
unconsciousness toward Saturn.
In ignoring the claims of Saturn, we throw ourselves out of sync with the
vast rhythmic harmony of existence. We want to ride the cresting waves of
life without experiencing the troughs. We want dawn without dusk, sun
without storm, expecting to find full self-actualization with only a partially
lived life.

Many of us seem to be estranged from our lives much like Joyce’s character
Mr. Duffy in The Dubliners. “Mr. Duffy abhorred anything which betokened
physical or mental disorder…. He lived at a little distance from his body,
regarding his own acts with doubtful side-glances.” Is this the postmodern
condition, distrusting of and distant from our own being, split and
conflicted? It seems, like Mr. Duffy, we suffer a dislocation in time and
space; living somewhere in the future or the past, anywhere but here and
now.
Estrangement
Review Jup/Sat

Traditionally, Saturn has been associated with the grave, not just in the sense
of death, but also as in grave, meaning serious and weighty, somber, heavy
and leaden.
Additionally, grave as in to stamp or impress deeply, to engrave, to fix permanently as in the certainty of death.

Our word ‘grieve’ comes from the same Latin root as grave, *gravis* which has to do with bearing and being weighed down and gives us our word ‘gravity.’

We do not hold gravity in high esteem; we prefer levity, buoyancy, frivolity, lightness, and the good times, the good old days.

Now think of the negative value our culture places on Saturn’s realm; gravity, grave, mortality, low, depressed, melancholic, fixed, stagnant, rigid. Often these are viewed as undesirable and even pathological rather than a legitimate domain of human experience. We tend to desire only the gods aloft, yet these dark states are the sacraments of the gods entombed.

Jung’s quote

It has become almost sinful (if that concept still had any cultural currency) to get old when there are cultural strategies in place to ward off aging and death. Let nothing show its age; tear down the old architecture, replace the two year old phones or cars with the newest models, dress in the latest fashions, purchase age defying cosmetics, surgically tighten the wrinkles, remove the bags, flatten the belly, lift the breasts, store the elderly out of sight, and for God sakes, hide the dead from public view. When we ignore or deny the Saturn’s realm of experience and overcompensate with the more
Jupiterian aspects we are in trouble, Jupiter is free to run wild. And to borrow a phrase, unchecked growth is the philosophy of a cancer cell.

It is part of the tradition that Saturn is associated with Time. To habitually ruminate about our past or worry about our future are two of the ways that we try to leap away from being consumed by the fire of this present moment.

According to Tarnas, Saturn is the matrix of things, that which provides limit, structure, and definition thereby permitting the possibility of manifestation itself. Saturn has also been associated with Fate and Necessity. Fate can be defined as “that which is given.”

Saturn is the concrete and actual, the given in which we are situated, this present moment in this immediate place. In Zen Buddhism there is a statement, “If you cannot find fulfillment in the midst of where you now stand, where would you go in search of it?” This moment, right now, right here is where we bloom and blossom.

To the extent that we dishonor the claims which Saturn has upon us, he will exact his vengeance both individually and collectively. Take note of the increasingly frequent violations of social status and position – crooked cops, corrupt judges, unscrupulous politicians, professional athletes being arrested for murder and drug use, clergy, teachers, and therapists having sexual relations with their charges. These individuals have little respect for their social position. Our institutions are fracturing. This reflects an onerous
disrespect for Saturn, a breaching of social identities and role boundaries. Look at the numerous cultural icons and the high and mighty who have fallen in the last year alone.

Additionally, episodes of road rage, supermarket rage, etc. suggest increasing incivility toward one another and a lack of formality in social relations. Manners and courtesies seem to gone out of practice. The grand embracing of casualness in fashion, in the workplace, in sexuality, in music and the arts all image a neglect of Saturn’s more formal style.

I suggest further that part of Saturn’s revenge toward being ignored or done away with results in an obsessive cultural attachment to Saturnian logic and rationality. This formal mode of inquiry into the world has gone beyond being a methodology to the point of becoming an ideology, we have a form of belief that has become the final arbiter of value in society. Imagine for a moment you are shopping, you notice two similar products, one scientifically tested and proven clinically effective, the other not so much, which do we buy?

If we fully believe that a scientific understanding of the world is far superior to prior understandings across the history of humanity, then we should recognize how deeply we are imprisoned within a monocentric, black and white, flatland, no longer effulgent with color, sound, and form, abuzz with Beauty.

Let us not forget that truth has many facets, venusian, martial, uranian, neptunian, etc. As astrologers we should recognize that each imaginal god
has its own style of consciousness and being in the world. It gives us a polycentric perspective rather than a monocentric one. So how do we reframe Saturn?

Saturn’s Reflection

Slows us down
Gives us pause to examine our situations
Adds substance and weight to our thought
Sobering our considerations
Brings us down to earth
Focuses us in the present
Provides us with the necessary delays, obstacles, frustrations, and failures that add patience, shape character and dignify bearing.

Saturn as the reality principle continually bends us back into the moment, fostering the possibility of being here now rather than there and then or locating ourselves on the trail of some future satisfaction. Our reluctance to embrace Saturn is both an individual and collective problem.

Having been seduced by a manic sensibility within our culture, there is no room at the Inn for the dark, despised, dispossessed aspects in our lives. I contend that Jupiter’s notion of growth, whether personal or cultural, robs us of the very things that we need to deepen soul and enrich being.
Generally I think we too often handle matters with a mechanical how-to approach to living; define a problem, find a solution, and \textit{fine}, it is resolved or we move to change things as quickly as possible rather than experience discomfort. We’ll switch jobs, end a relationship, move to a new location, or ingest medication. Think of the popular phrase, “Love it or leave it,” this mindset seduces us in the direction of disposable marriage, jobs, products, etc. Rather than stay to work on some situation we end it preferring to move on.

Like Zeus, who was the master of his domain, Americans are encouraged to take heroic steps, move into action, become top dog, exert control and gain mastery over the environment, give the world a makeover. Rarely are we encouraged to invoke Saturn’s discipline and patience for adapting ourselves to changing circumstances, to align ourselves with the flow and rhythm of the world, to accept matters as they stand and work with the cards we have been dealt. To try to rid ourselves of our problems denies us the opportunity to be deepened by them.

Jung’s quote

Saturn’s methods; restraint, limitation, frustration, fate, necessity, fixation, and stuckness. We need to allow these movements in our lives rather than trying to control or master them. The dark, depressing, restricting moments in our lives need to be acknowledged not avoided, embraced not repulsed. When you wrestle with a god, you will not come out on top.

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As astrologers, when we ourselves become more comfortable with our own limits, shortcomings, and failures, we can allow our clients to explore their difficulties in consultation without us feeling like we need to rescue them from discomfort or put polish and shine on their problems.

These moments of failure and frustration are the manure which nourishes soul and allowing us to flower. We experience a deepening into life. It is in our dark places that healing occurs and new life is brought forth.

For example:
I’m reminded that when I am bleeding I bandage my wound cloaking it in darkness in order that the healing process may begin.
That injured creatures retire to dark, out of the way places to begin recovery.
That nightly I retire to the dark world for rejuvenation.
That the seed begins it germinative activity in the darkness of the fecund earth.
In all likelihood, I was conceived in the darkness of a cold November eve.
And that I have sprung forth from the darkness of a loving womb.

Admittedly, Jupiter sure feels better and yet, as every mother knows, without Saturn’s contractions, nothing new could be born into our lives. Saturn has much to tell us. Saturn speaking through depression is as normal as Jupiter speaking through elation. To insist upon happiness is to honor Jupiter and disrespect Saturn. It is in our failures, faults, and shortcomings that Saturn speaks and provides our lives with rich layering, fine textures, and profuse colorings.
It is in the present moment that we make the painful discovery that the presence of death and suffering are deeply and inextricably entwined with life and joy. To embrace one and deny the other fractures our wholeness. Birthing and dying, the two polarities of life cannot be separated. We have been dying since the day we were born and being birthed anew in each rising moment. Like the yin/yang symbol, there is a secret sorrow in our most profound joys and a joyful blessing residing at the heart of every sorrow.

The writer and academic, Eric Wilson writes in Against Happiness,

In feeling fractured and fragmented, isolated and bereft, one actually comes to experience wholeness and unity. To suffer melancholy is also to understand its polar opposite, joy. Lacking joy, one broods on it more deeply than when one possesses this state…. In vacillating between sorrow and joy, one grasps the secret harmony between these two antinomies. Doing so, one apprehends the rhythms of the whole cosmos, itself a dynamic interplay between opposites.

As Life stirs us into its depths, Saturn is at its best when we encounter tragedy, loss, failure, or illness and we slip through the crack between the ruminative past and the anticipated future. We find ourselves in Saturn’s presence in this very moment and a curious paradox occurs, we discover that the more deeply we are moved, the more we are uplifted. Saturn’s movement in our lives gifts us with substance and character. Character in Greek means an engraving instrument, something which cuts, which wounds. Ask anyone about the scars on their bodies, they are
biography. They carry stories. Well-seasoned maturity, one of Saturn’s gifts, requires the tempering of heated experience with the deep chill of failure.

Growth is a tricky word. Just as there is the expansive growth upward and outward that Jupiter affords us, there is also Saturn’s “growth,” a deepening inward and downward, a ripening to fullness that comes with time, a slow Saturnian process that a culture living a hurried existence, attempting to ward off aging and death, often ignores.

It’s important to remember that there is no view from nowhere. There is always a context within which we are embedded and through which we view things. Culturally locked in to Jupiter’s perspective, we naturally see Saturn’s gravitational growth downward as delaying, restrictive, an obstacle holding us back in fulfilling our desires.

Saturn’s fullness in focusing us in the present reflects the recognition that with growth comes loss, and with loss, growth.

The awareness of what we leave behind.

The loss of childhood innocence to maturing experience.

The loss of the familiar, of the old way of being.

The sobering assessment that there is no going back, no return.

As Thomas Wolfe wrote, “You can’t go home again.” There is only this present moment and that is all we have.

This is Saturn’s deepest gift, the realization of the transience, wqragility and preciousness of life and that in the end, there is grace in gravity.
This is what we discover when we reframe Jupiter and Saturn along the lines of experiencing Jupiter not so much in his literal expansiveness but rather in trust and faith in Life going just how it goes, even when Saturn walks on stage.

When we recognize Saturn’s deeper dynamic - that without a villain there is no hero, no story. The Jupiter/Saturn dyad moves life along, and in embracing Saturn’s necessity, life moves onward.

We can affirm the serpent in the garden, Judas in the crucifixion tale, the wicked witch in OZ.

How else could the tin man have found his heart, the Lion his courage, the Scarecrow his brain?

So how can we honor Saturn, how can we give praise to melancholy? Perhaps by affirming its presence in our lives, by accepting that melancholy is a natural human expression,

perhaps by observing our blue periods before we run to medication or shopping, or alcohol for relief,

perhaps by getting up when we are knocked down,

perhaps by working with a troubled relationship rather than leaving it,

perhaps by being more attentive to what we already possess, rather than what we want,

perhaps by realizing that there is a perfection in each blossoming moment,

perhaps by not interfering so much in our own lives as a form of trust freely given Saturn and perhaps begin for us a life of reverence and gratitude.
Let me end by asking you to allow yourself to open to the sad nostalgia and sobering realization of Saturn’s presence in this poem… (On Turning Ten)