

## 8. MYTHOLOGY - PLUTO

To paraphrase Joseph Campbell; due to the variety of social systems and also the modes of nature-nurture that in the course of the millenniums have shaped and reshaped man's image of his world, so too the analysis of the myths and legends, besides certain themes and principles, have also been redefined or redeveloped.

How can we 'live by' myths today? Can mythic illusions really help to relieve our modern anxiety, or do they help only foster it? These are questions we may ask ourselves as we reflect on how if at all, myths continue to illustrate human needs.

Because of dwarf planet Pluto's highly elliptical orbit, it can spend anything from 11½ to 30½ years in a sign.

**Last in Aquarius in 1778-1798 and now transiting Aquarius from 2024-2044 what common myths, themes, or principles, if any, around death, rebirth, and transformation may be reflected and/or evolved in the two decades dwarf planet Pluto will spend in Aquarius?**

The myth of Hades, Persephone and Demeter is common in illustrating death, rebirth and transformation. As Lord of the underworld Pluto was a fearsome character who ruled over the dead. In early stories Pluto, or Hades to the Greeks, was cast as Persephone's brutal abductor and rapist, stealing an innocent young girl from her mother Demeter(Gaia) and holding her captive. Yet Persephone chose to stay with Pluto, and in many accounts was transformed and empowered, ruling with him as queen and equal and enjoying a loving marriage. Her mother, Demeter, goddess of the harvest, inconsolable at the loss of her daughter allowed no plants or crops to grow, rendering the earth desolate. Zeus was entreated to intervene, allowing Persephone to leave the underworld, with the agreement that Persephone would spend six months of the year with Pluto underground and the other six months with her mother. The six months she was away from her mother Demeter would grieve, causing all the plants and flowers to die or lose their leaves (Autumn and Winter). When Persephone reemerged at the end of winter, Demeter came alive again and seeds blossomed and verdure grew (Spring and Summer).

When stripped of its 'surface appearance'<sup>1</sup> myth, Pluto symbolises part of the constant inevitable process of death, transformation and rebirth that is a natural part of our physical

---

<sup>1</sup> J Campbell, *pathways to Bliss – Mythology and Personal Transformation* p.21

world. All that is born must 'die', be transformed and reborn. In nature the dead leaves of the tree drop and decay, providing food for the tree grow. The fruit dies but within it is the seed for the new tree. And Pluto, when conjoined with Persephone, was said to hold the seeds of the new harvest, essentially holding the keys to the new season's 'birth'. Pluto is also associated with wealth as all the precious metals and gems are found underground.

“Pluto is the archetype of death and resurrection: it breaks down the old and outworn entities into their component parts, and then reassembles them into new being.”<sup>2</sup>

By force, Plutonian experiences are life-changing - we are never the same afterwards but our core essence is renewed. If we accept the process, we are empowered and richer for the experience, as illustrated by Persephone, provided we don't attempt to hold on to what is dying, illustrated by Demeter's life-stunting grief.

As Pluto transits Aquarius over the next 20 years, certain aspects of our world will face this continual process of death, rebirth and transformation. I will now examine where this will be reflected and how the myth might show us how best to navigate these experiences.

The last time Pluto was in Aquarius a new democracy was born, the product of the American and French Revolutions. This saw both countries reject their ruling monarchies and embrace a radically new world view based on egalitarianism, best encapsulated by the French Republic's motto 'liberte, egalite, fraternite' – i.e. freedom, equality and fraternity, which was seeded during the French Revolution in 1790. The notion that royalty and the ruling elite were special because of their God-ordained powers was rejected. Instead, the everyday people claimed their power and freedom, uniting to create a new system of governance “by the people, of the people and for the people”. In France, this came after much hardship where the ruling elite amassed extreme wealth at the expense of the starving masses.

---

<sup>2</sup> R Hand, *Horoscope Symbols*, p.79

In the last 5 years the top 1% have greatly increased their wealth significantly. There is a growing divide world-wide, between those with financial wealth and the masses existing on the verge of poverty due to social inequalities such as lack of proper public health care and a US minimum wage that when adjusted for inflation has been declining from its peak in 1968<sup>3</sup>. Will the next 20 years, as the US faces its Pluto return, see another uprising from the masses, a civil war in an attempt for the disenfranchised everyday person to take back their power and equalise the distribution of wealth? Or will we see more attempts at population control with personal liberties stripped and surveillance technology used to divide and control the masses? Will capitalism and the leader of the free world survive, or will we see a rebirth of socialist ideals create a new social order? Already the fight between the younger generations with liberal values and conservatives lamenting the loss of 'old-fashioned values' is increasing. Whatever happens, we are likely to see a transformation of society's fabric and values pushed by the desire for greater freedom and equality in all its forms.

Another area of our world where the themes and principles of death, birth and transformation will be reflected is technology. Aquarius in myth is ruled by Uranus –God of the Sky. Known for his prolific progeny, the result of his coupling with Gaia, he symbolises the original creative principle. The mid-nineties saw Aquarius' ruler Uranus transit its own sign, signalling a time of unbridled advancement in telecommunications and computing, giving rise to the internet. Nowadays almost all humanity is connected through telecommunication networks, physical barriers have been removed and instantaneous communication has created a global community. With Pluto entering Aquarius the dark side of this technology, and potential power

---

<sup>3</sup> By Congressional Research Service - Page 3 of State Minimum Wages: An Overview. Freeware IrfanView used to edit text, add border, etc., Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=129276859>

of the technologies it has seeded (smart phones, IoT – Internet of Things, AI, cryptocurrency) is birthing.

Telecommunications have facilitated the mass spread of damaging misinformation, throwing election results and polarising and dividing society. Younger generations are experiencing significant increases in mental health issues- anxiety, depression and low self-esteem that stem from their use of social media and smartphones, also linked with ADHD. Whilst we may be more ‘connected’, loneliness and social isolation is skyrocketing. Will the freedom of the internet finally be curtailed? Will we find a better balance, and a release from these technologies that are holding us captive? Turning back to our myth, my hope is that governments will step in to further regulate and find solutions to these issues as Zeus, or Jupiter – the societal planet, intervened and agreed to allow Persephone to leave Hades.

Simultaneously, the next season’s seeds are already sprouting. As Pluto took its first steps into Aquarius the world was stunned with the birth of ChatGPT, an AI language model that can easily generate text. Already transforming many creative industries – copy writing, education, music, art, etc. there appears to be no end to AI’s potential. Available to anyone with internet access, it threatens to radically transform concepts of individual creativity and genius, providing creative expression to everyone by drawing from humanity’s collective works. AI’s immense possibilities are still nascent but it’s power to drastically transform our lives is evident. Other possibilities point to human and computers merging, such as the development of Neuralink by Elon Musk, a brain-implanted computer chip that hopes to connect and control our brains with computers. It was cleared for human trials in February 2024 as Pluto crossed into Aquarius a second time.

Potentially terrifying, we must look to Persephone’s experience to allay our fears of a *Black Mirror* or *Matrix*-style dystopian future. It is most probable that humanity will find a way to work with and be empowered by these technologies, using them to help solve our problems. For example, AI is already being used to advance scientific research at a pace previously thought

impossible, empowering humanity to find new energy solutions<sup>4</sup>. This will be essential to meet the future energy demands of these new technologies and prevent the destruction of our world from CO2 induced global warming.

It was during Pluto's last passage through Aquarius that science gave us a whole new understanding of the cyclical nature of birth, death and transformation. The Law of Conservation of Mass, a law of physics discovered in 1789, states that while things 'appear' to die, matter can never be destroyed or created it can only be transformed. Around the time Pluto was discovered, Einstein developed his theory of relativity, proving that matter can indeed be 'destroyed' or, more accurately, transformed into energy, further evolving our understanding of this 'alchemical' process of death, transformation and rebirth.

It is no surprise that the next 20 years would herald significant scientific advancement in the energy sector, particularly advances in nuclear fusion - two atoms dying to transform and give birth to a larger particle. In the process, creating huge amounts of energy that could free us from our reliance on earth-polluting fossil fuels.

The process of death, rebirth and transformation is an eternal and unchanging principle of our world. To fight it or deny it is to be a victim and can cause untold grief – as Demeter experienced. Yet, if technological progress is left unchecked, monstrosities are created (see Uranus' offspring). The solution? Finding a balance and following our values. In the end Persephone divided her time equally between Pluto and Demeter. When Uranus was castrated by Cronos (Saturn), his genitals were thrown into the sea. From the foam emerged Aphrodite (Venus). This counsels us that in time the reality of our world will place limits on these technologies and they can be used to create something beautiful. From this it is evident that myths are still relevant to

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://news.microsoft.com/source/features/ai/how-ai-and-hpc-are-speeding-up-scientific-discovery/>

us today. They can help us understand the nature of our world and continue to provide insights on how best to deal with our evolving human experiences.

**Word count:** 1589

**Bibliography:**

Bolgar, C. (2024) How AI and high-performance computing are speeding up Scientific Discovery, Microsoft. Available at: <https://news.microsoft.com/source/features/ai/how-ai-and-hpc-are-speeding-up-scientific-discovery/> (Accessed: 24 May 2024).

Campbell, J. and Kudler, D. (2018) Pathways to bliss: Mythology and personal transformation. Joseph Campbell Foundation.

Gregersen, Erik. "ChatGPT". Encyclopedia Britannica, 21 May. 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/technology/ChatGPT>. Accessed 23 May 2024.

Hand, R. (2016) Horoscope symbols. Atglen: Schiffer Publishing, Ltd.

Pluto (mythology) (2024) Wikipedia. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pluto\\_\(mythology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pluto_(mythology)) (Accessed: 23 May 2024).

Revolution: Energy: AMNH (no date) American Museum of Natural History. Available at: <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/einstein/energy/revolution-energy> (Accessed: 23 May 2024).

State Minimum Wages: An Overview (no date) Wikipedia. Available at: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=129276859>.

The conservation of matter during physical and chemical changes (no date) Education National Geographic. Available at: <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/conservation-matter-during-physical-and-chemical-changes/6th-grade/> (Accessed: 23 May 2024).