

PLUTO AND THE GALACTIC CENTER

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On December 31, 2006 – and again on July 17 and October 28, 2007 – Pluto is in conjunction with the galactic center. What does this conjunction signify?

These dates are those of *geocentric* conjunctions, i.e. Pluto as seen from the Earth (*ge* or *gaia*). Of these three geocentric conjunctions, Pluto moves past the galactic center at 2° Sagittarius for the *first time* on New Year's Eve 2006/2007 and continues to 4° Sagittarius on March 31, 2007, when it starts to move retrograde.¹ Pluto then moves back from 4° to 1½° Sagittarius during the period from March 31 to September 7, 2007, coming into conjunction – while moving retrograde – with the galactic center for the *second time* on July 17, 2007. After this retrograde movement lasting until September 7, Pluto resumes its slow forward movement through Sagittarius, coming into conjunction with the galactic center for the *third time* on October 28, 2007.

Viewing Pluto heliocentrically, as seen from the Sun (*helios*), it should be noted that there is only one *heliocentric* conjunction of Pluto with the galactic center, which occurs on February 24, 2007. As Pluto moves so slowly, it is apparent that its movement is in the vicinity of the galactic center throughout the year 2007, and therefore 2007 is characterized by this event, which has thus been chosen as the theme of this article.

Pluto: The Great Debate

Since 1999 there have been attempts to demote Pluto from its status as a planet. The primary argument against classifying it as a planet is its small size, since Pluto is the smallest planet of our solar system, its diameter being about 2/3 that of the Earth's Moon, and 2/11 of the Earth's diameter. It takes about 248 years to complete its orbit around the Sun. Its average distance from the Sun is almost 40 astronomical units, that is, Pluto is (on average) about forty times more distant from the Sun than the Earth is from the Sun. However, its elliptical orbit around the Sun is very eccentric. It is so strongly eccentric that at its closest approach to the Sun (perihelion) it is just under 30 astronomical units away, and when it is farthest away from the Sun (aphelion) it is almost 50 astronomical units distant. Moreover, Pluto's orbit is strongly tilted: at an angle of 17 degrees to the Sun-Earth plane of the ecliptic, so that it goes well beyond the limits of the zodiacal belt, which is officially defined to extend 8 degrees above and 8 degrees below the ecliptic. Pluto's orbital tilt is the only one extending beyond the zodiacal belt, as it is much larger than that of the eight planets Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune – the next largest orbital tilt being that of Mercury (7 degrees), and the orbital tilts of all the remaining planets being less than 3½ degrees. The exaggerated tilt is an indication that Pluto belongs to a primal sphere of our solar system, one in which different laws prevailed – prior to the “settling down” of the movements of the heavenly bodies into orderly trajectories.

Pluto's moon, Charon, is about half as big as Pluto, and it revolves around Pluto in a synchronized way such that the same surface areas of Pluto and Charon are always facing one another.²

In 1999 there was an attempt by American astronomer Brian Marsden to re-classify Pluto from a planet to an asteroid. This evoked a response on the part of various astronomers who defended Pluto's right to be called a planet. They argued that ever since Pluto was discovered by American astronomer Clyde Tombaugh in 1930 it has been called a planet. They added that the existence of a large moon, Charon, orbiting around Pluto, qualified it as a planet and, further, that Pluto is round like a planet, whereas most asteroids are irregularly shaped.

¹ All longitudes are given in the Babylonian sidereal zodiac defined by Aldebaran (the Bull's eye) at 15° Taurus, signifying that the galactic center is located at 2° Sagittarius.

² In 2005 two small moons (Nix and Hydra) were discovered orbiting around Pluto in addition to Charon.

The reason for reconsidering Pluto's status as a planet is because of Pluto's location in the far-distant region of the Kuiper belt marking the outermost reaches of our solar system beyond the orbit of Neptune. Since 1992 it has been discovered that the Kuiper belt is full of small celestial bodies. A great many of those so far discovered are larger than 100 kilometers (62 miles) in diameter. Among these bodies, an estimated 200 have been found that have approximately the same orbital period as Pluto around the Sun, with some – like Pluto – having a highly tilted orbital plane with respect to the Earth-Sun plane of the ecliptic. These heavenly objects are called *Plutinos*, not because they are “little Plutos”, but because they share an orbital period in common with Pluto, which happens to be in the ratio 3:2 with Neptune's orbital period, i.e. in the time that it takes Neptune to orbit three times around the Sun, Pluto and the Plutinos make two orbits. Then, in the year 2003, a distant object was discovered – temporarily named 2003 UB313 (nicknamed “Xena” or “Lila”) – that is larger than Pluto itself. This discovery rekindled the debate started by Brian Marsden who, already with the discovery of the Plutinos, was inclined to demote Pluto from its planetary status. Logically speaking, if Pluto is called a planet, then “Xena”, which is larger than Pluto, should also be called a planet. At any rate, with “Xena's” discovery, Pluto's status as a planet was called into question again.

Pluto, “Xena”, and Ceres

Consequently, a recent gathering of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) – some 2500 astronomers from 75 countries, whose annual meeting took place in Prague – decided on August 24, 2006 that Pluto is no longer considered to be a planet, leaving only Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune as the eight “official” planets. It was decided that from now on Pluto is to be called a “dwarf planet”, which is defined to be a celestial body that (a) is in orbit around the Sun, (b) has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round shape), (c) has *not* cleared the neighborhood around its orbit, and (d) is not a satellite of a planet or other non-stellar body. Because Pluto did not meet the criterion of clearing the neighborhood around its orbit (witness the Plutinos), it was demoted from being a planet to a dwarf planet. Moreover, according to this definition Ceres, the largest asteroid, is also a dwarf planet, and so is “Xena”. The IAU is also considering whether other celestial bodies beyond the orbit of Neptune (“trans-Neptunian objects”) might be classified as dwarf planets. There are at least twelve trans-Neptunian objects, including Sedna and Quaoar (both larger than Ceres), that might be added to the list of dwarf planets. Apart from the eight “classical” planets and the new dwarf planets, the IAU specified that all other celestial objects in our solar system are to be classified as Small Solar-System Bodies.

Pluto's demotion can be understood against the background of the biography of the asteroid Ceres. This new “dwarf planet” belongs to the asteroid belt located between the orbits of Jupiter and Mars. The asteroid belt is thought by some to be the debris resulting from the destruction of a planet that once orbited between Jupiter and Mars. According to Rudolf Steiner, “*Scattered between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter there is a multitude of asteroids. These are the wreckage of the battlefield of the War in Heaven that was waged between two points of cosmic time when our solar system contracted first to Jupiter and then to Mars.*”³

Ceres was discovered on January 1, 1801, by the Italian astronomer Giuseppe Piazzi. With a diameter of about 950 km (590 miles), Ceres is by far the largest asteroid, and at the time of its discovery it was considered to be a planet. Likewise, the asteroids Pallas (1802), Juno (1804), and Vesta (1807) were – together with Ceres – all considered to be planets, despite their small size (Vesta, the second largest asteroid, has a mean diameter of only 530 km or 329 miles). Thirty-eight years after Vesta's discovery, in 1845 a fifth asteroid was found and named Astraea. In the wake of the discovery of Astraea, thousands more asteroids were found. For thirty-eight years the four asteroids Ceres, Pallas, Juno, and Vesta were considered to be planets, until Astraea's discovery and the subsequent finding of more and more asteroids showed that these four were only the largest of a whole new type of celestial body. (Actually, the asteroid Hygiea, discovered in 1849, is the fourth largest asteroid, after Ceres, Vesta, and Pallas.) It was William Herschel (1738-1822) who coined the name “asteroid” which was subsequently used to classify the new type of heavenly object.

If one thinks in terms of *cosmic spheres*, i.e. that Mercury traces out a sphere around the Sun, Venus traces out

³ Rudolf Steiner, *The Spiritual Hierarchies* (Anthroposophic Press: New York, 1970), pp. 65-66.

a sphere around the Sun, etc., the asteroid belt can be conceived of as a sphere around the Sun. That Rudolf Steiner attributed a spiritual reality to this sphere delineated by the asteroid belt is clear from the following:

In order that the human being, though not yet able to enter the Jupiter region, may receive, between death and a new birth, something of the forces of Jupiter and also of Saturn, many asteroids are interspersed between Mars and Jupiter. In their outer aspect they are constantly being discovered by astronomers. They make up the region which in its spiritual aspect is experienced by the human soul after death because it cannot yet reach Jupiter. They have the remarkable characteristic of being spiritual colonies of beings from Jupiter and Saturn who have withdrawn here. And before a human soul is ripe for existence on Earth, it can find in this region of the asteroids, which are there for that purpose, a kind of preparatory substitute, before it is able to enter the region of Jupiter and Saturn.⁴

The asteroid belt evidently signifies a spiritual reality, even if it is not delineated by a single planet but by a multitude of asteroids. Ceres, as the largest and brightest asteroid, can be considered as the “primary representative” of the cosmic sphere of the asteroids. The analogy with Ceres is helpful in gaining an understanding of Pluto’s demotion from a planet to a dwarf planet.

Pluto was considered to be a planet for 76 years, from the time of its discovery in 1930 until the IAU meeting in 2006 when it was demoted. This is longer than the 44 years during which Ceres was classified as a planet. The demotion of Ceres from a planet to an asteroid came about as a result of the discovery that it was simply one of thousands of a kind, albeit the largest and brightest. Similarly Pluto, with a diameter of 2306 km (1433 miles), is the largest of the Plutinos and, apart from “Xena”, is the largest trans-Neptunian object found so far. Moreover, Pluto is the brightest trans-Neptunian object, which is why it was discovered already in 1930, sixty-two years before the next Kuiper belt object was discovered in 1992. Since 1992, however, some one thousand trans-Neptunian objects have been found.

Given it’s leading status in the Kuiper belt – the cosmic sphere beyond Neptune to which Pluto and the Plutinos belong – Pluto can be regarded as the “primary representative” of the Kuiper belt, which can be considered as a cosmic sphere in its own right. Moreover, “Xena”, although a little larger than Pluto (about 2400 km or 1490 miles in diameter), orbits the Sun in a region of space known as the *scattered disk* lying beyond the main Kuiper belt. It is currently the most distant known object from the Sun at a distance of about 97 astronomical units. Pluto is presently located about 31½ astronomical units away, about one-third of “Xena’s” present distance from the Sun. Whereas Pluto’s orbit (between 29½ and 49½ astronomical units) coincides more or less exactly with the limits of the main Kuiper belt, “Xena’s” orbit (between 38 and 97½ astronomical units) goes far beyond the main Kuiper belt.

Perhaps “Xena” is the primary representative of a different cosmic sphere, lying beyond the Kuiper belt? This question is raised in order to stimulate further questions and research. In lieu of definite research findings concerning the significance of “Xena”, in the following Pluto (for which there *are* definite research findings) will be regarded as the primary representative of the entire Kuiper belt together with the scattered disk beyond. This is in line with the IAU’s statement referring to Pluto as “*an important prototype of a new class of trans-Neptunian objects.*” In the following, against the background of the nebular hypothesis, the Kuiper belt (and beyond) will be considered as the relic of the primal sphere of our solar system – relic in the sense of being that which remains of the primal sphere that existed as a gigantic gaseous nebula extending to the outermost limit of the solar system, having since then crystallized into the solid form of the multitude of celestial objects (Pluto, Quaoar, Sedna, “Xena”, etc.) belonging to this most distant region.

The Nebula Hypothesis and the Kuiper Belt

According to the nebular hypothesis concerning the origin and formation of our solar system, the asteroids and the planets with their moons gradually crystallized out of the original gaseous nebula that was slowly rotating – or rather, they came into existence by way of agglomeration from the rotating gaseous cloud of the primal

⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *The Evolution of Consciousness* (Rudolf Steiner Press: London, 1968), p. 153.

nebula. At the same time our Sun also took on shape through a process of contraction. It is this principle of contraction that offers a key to understanding humanity's relationship with the solar system, recalling Rudolf Steiner's reference to this principle ("*when our solar system contracted first to Jupiter and then to Mars*"), indicating that our solar system contracted stage by stage (from planet to planet) from the outermost realm contracting inwards.

The whole process of formation of our galaxy, and subsequently of our solar system, can be looked at purely physically, or it can be looked at as an expression of the "incarnation" of Spiritual Intelligences into a "body" that forms into a star – our Sun in the case of our solar system. Viewed from this latter perspective, there is a meaning to the fact that nine planets orbit around the Sun: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto – regarding Pluto as the primary representative of the outermost sphere of our solar system (even if it is called a "dwarf planet", it is the brightest object beyond Neptune). If we accept C.G. Jung's idea of a collective unconscious, we would expect to find ideas in the realm of mythology which could serve as indicators pointing to truths not yet known consciously at that time, yet having arisen as promptings from the collective unconscious. The Greeks did not know consciously that our Sun has nine planets orbiting around it. Nevertheless, Greek mythology refers to the Sun god, Apollo, with his nine muses. Could this myth of Apollo and the nine muses be a prompting arising from the collective unconscious of that time, indicating that there are *nine* planets orbiting around our Sun? If yes, then – according to this conception – Pluto is a planet, like the other eight "classical" planets!

Following the contraction of our Sun that formed long ago from the primal gaseous nebula, it could be hypothesized that humanity is engaged in an evolutionary process proceeding from planet to planet, drawing ever closer to the Sun.⁵ According to this hypothesis, evidently cosmic evolution began with Pluto – or with the entire Kuiper belt of which Pluto is a part – and began contracting from here. In light of this hypothesis, Pluto and the Plutinos and all other objects belonging to the Kuiper belt and beyond are relics of this first stage of evolution, reminding us of the origins of our solar system from the primal giant nebula that filled the entire space extending out to the limits of the solar system. Against this background, Pluto represents the entire Kuiper belt, and therefore its small size does not really matter, as it is the representative of an entire cosmic sphere of existence associated with the primal stage of our solar system.

It was in 1951 that the Dutch astronomer Gerard Kuiper (1905-1973) formulated his hypothesis concerning the existence of the Kuiper belt. Kuiper himself did not live long enough to see his hypothesis verified. It was not until August 1992, with the help of the Mauna Kea observatory's giant telescope on the Hawaiian island of Maui, that the first object (other than Pluto) beyond the orbit of Neptune was discovered. Since then, with the discovery of the Plutinos and other celestial bodies, the existence of the Kuiper belt has been definitely confirmed. The main Kuiper belt extends between about 30 and 50 astronomical units from the Sun, recalling that Pluto's orbit also lies approximately in this range, and Neptune's orbit is about 30 astronomical units from the Sun.

According to modern astronomy, the Kuiper belt and its extension (the scattered disk) is the outermost region of our solar system, except possibly for the Oort cloud (named after another Dutch astronomer, Jan Oort, who conceived of this region in 1950). However, the existence of the Oort cloud is purely hypothetical.⁶ Modern astronomers – following Kuiper's hypothesis – regard the Kuiper belt as a reservoir of millions of comet nuclei, orbiting together with Pluto, the Plutinos, and other celestial objects there. Because the nuclei of comets are generally so small, they are undetectable at such vast distances. It is supposed that occasionally gravitational influences dislodge comet nuclei from this reservoir in this outer realm, resulting in a comet making its appearance when it penetrates into the inner region of our solar system. Comets, after orbiting

⁵ Robert Powell, *Hermetic Astrology, vol. II: Astrological Biography* (Hermetika/Sophia Foundation: Kinsau/Germany, 1989), chapter 8, describes this hypothesis in detail.

⁶ The Oort cloud is postulated to be a large spherical cloud extending from 50,000 to 100,000 astronomical units from the Sun and filled with billions of comet nuclei. Although it has not been observed, its existence is inferred from observations of very long period comets (in contrast to comets thought to originate from the Kuiper belt).

around the Sun, usually disappear back into the outer reaches of the solar system. However, some comets are captured by the gravitational pull of the larger planets: Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune, and this causes them to return periodically – the most famous example of a periodically returning comet being Halley’s comet.

Moreover, it is believed that Triton, Neptune’s retrograde moon, and the small outer moons of Jupiter, Saturn, and Uranus, since these also orbit in a retrograde direction, have been captured from the Kuiper belt.⁷ Likewise it is thought that the Centaur asteroids (Chiron and Pholus are two of the most famous Centaur asteroids) also originated from the Kuiper belt.⁸ A weak halo around Chiron displays comet qualities, so that Chiron is now officially classified as both a comet and an asteroid – twofold, true to the nature of the centaurs of Greek mythology. However, being 400 kilometers (250 miles) in diameter, Chiron is much bigger than a normal comet nucleus, which is usually between ten to twenty kilometers (six to twelve miles) in breadth. For example, the most famous periodically reappearing (and thus “captured”) comet, Halley’s comet, that returns to orbit the Sun once every 76 years (the last time in 1985/1986), measures 16 kilometers (ten miles) across.⁹ Most of the objects that have been found so far in the Kuiper belt are between 100 to 400 kilometers (60 to 250 miles) in diameter. Since comet nuclei are generally much smaller, even with the most powerful telescopes they cannot be detected at such a distance, and so Kuiper's theory that comet nuclei are stored in this far-distant region has not been definitely confirmed as yet, although there is overwhelming evidence to indicate that his theory is correct.

In the case of the Kuiper belt it is evidently a matter of the remains of the original, primal cloud nebula from which our solar system formed – approximately five billion years ago, according to recent estimates. The comets, whose nuclei according to Kuiper's hypothesis stem from this outer region of the solar system, are therefore messengers indicating something of the original nature of our solar system. Thus viewed, when we see a comet we are reminded of the beginnings of our solar system. Comets are generally unpredictable (except for Halley’s comet and other comets that have become captured by gravitational pull). They can appear at any place in the heavens, following a wildly erratic course,¹⁰ and then disappear at any place in the heavens. Trajectories of the various heavenly bodies during the initial stages of formation of our solar system were probably comet-like, prior to the “settling down” of our solar system and the corresponding emergence of ordered planetary motions obeying laws.

Phanes and Hades

These notions help us to form a conception as to the nature of Pluto, considered as the “representative” of the primal sphere of our solar system now known as the Kuiper belt. Pluto evidently has to do with the primal “life will” of our solar system, and there is a “wild and unpredictable” quality to its nature. Pluto (and the entire sphere of the Kuiper belt that it represents) can be considered to form a polarity to the Sun. The Sun is the heart, the center of activity of the Spiritual Intelligences directing our solar system, whereas Pluto and the Kuiper belt that it represents belong to the periphery, at the limit of the sphere of activity of these Spiritual

⁷ Moons belonging to planets in our solar system generally orbit in a counterclockwise direction around their planets, as is the case with the orbit of our Moon around the Earth. The expression “retrograde” applied to the orbit of moons such as Neptune’s Triton thus signifies that they are orbiting in a clockwise direction. Moons in retrograde orbits cannot have formed out of the same region of the solar nebula as the planets they orbit, but must have been captured from elsewhere – for example, from the Kuiper belt. (There is also the possibility, albeit small, that a moon could have been turned retrograde through collision with some other celestial object.)

⁸ The Centaurs are celestial objects orbiting the Sun between the orbits of Jupiter and Neptune. They are named after the race of centaurs in Greek mythology. Chiron, the only “good” centaur according to the myths of the Greeks, was the first to be discovered – in 1977. Twenty years later, in 1997, the Centaur Chariklo was found, which is the largest currently known Centaur.

⁹ Halley’s comet is assumed to have been captured by the gravitational pull of Neptune, its orbit being roughly specified by the sphere traced out by Neptune, since the comet’s trajectory extends a little beyond the orbit of Neptune.

¹⁰ The expression “wildly erratic” here refers to the fact that the trajectories of comets can pass anywhere across the heavens, whereas the orbits of the planets (with the exception of Pluto’s orbit) are limited to the zodiacal belt extending 8 degrees above and below the ecliptic. Nevertheless, comets obey the laws of motion that pertain to our solar system, and their trajectories can be calculated very precisely.

Intelligences. On a spiritual level there is a unity between the center and periphery of our solar system. However, in the case of human consciousness, especially when it is disconnected – through materialism and atheism – from its natural sense of integration with the whole solar system and the Spiritual Intelligences at work therein, is open to influences playing into the life will of the human being which are inimicable to the directing Spiritual Intelligences. The essence of this inimicable influence can be characterized as the *will to power*. A historical manifestation of this influence arose at the time of Pluto's discovery in 1930 in the shape of National Socialism in Germany. The Fuehrer was possessed by the will to power, driving him relentlessly toward the fulfilment of his ambition to become world dictator.¹¹

As described in *Hermetic Astrology, volume II*, Pluto has a higher and a lower aspect.¹² In its higher aspect it is an expression of *Phanes* in the cosmology of the Greek initiate Orpheus. In the mystery school of Orpheus, Phanes was the source of the primal will, the fire of love that underlies the whole of existence.

*Phanes is the creator of all, from whom the world has its first origin. He is imagined as marvellously beautiful, a figure of shining light. (Orphic Fragment 85)*¹³

In its lower aspect Pluto is an expression of *Hades*, the god of the underworld, associated with the will to power and also with atomic power, which was discovered in the wake of the discovery of Pluto. The phenomenon of an atomic explosion, bursting forth like a volcanic eruption, gives an external picture of the way in which Pluto-Hades works within the human being. In the case of Pluto-Phanes the primal life will is at work, which draws the human being into union (oneness) with the Divine: the state of mystical union, also known as *Intuition*. With Pluto-Hades the force of will can manifest as the will to power, as erotic sexuality, or as violence (uncontrolled will forces). In Greek mythology, Hades uses force of will to abduct Persephone, forcing her down into his domain of the underworld, and against this background the obsession with sex and violence in modern civilization can be understood. It is a negative aspect on the cultural level that has come increasingly to the fore since Pluto's discovery in 1930, just as the atomic age has been born – since Pluto's discovery – as a manifestation of the influence of Pluto-Hades on the technological level.

Conjunction of Pluto and the Sun

Our intention is to arrive at an understanding of the conjunction of Pluto with the galactic center, this being the signature of the year 2007. Before we go on to consider the conjunction with the galactic center, as a preliminary step let us look at the possibilities associated with the conjunction of Pluto with the Sun. This is helpful in so far as our Sun, as indicated below, can be regarded as a miniature copy of the galactic center. As an example of the negative potential inherent in the conjunction of Pluto with the Sun, it suffices to consider that the Roman emperor Nero was born at the time of a conjunction between the Sun and Pluto in Sagittarius – on the Ascendant, moreover, since he was born at sunrise, just as the Sun (in conjunction with Pluto) was rising across the eastern horizon.¹⁴

As the Sun's zodiacal position is chosen by the incarnating human being as a source of cosmic forces supporting and strengthening the self (represented by the Sun), a conjunction of the Sun with Pluto can signify that the human being seeks to connect with the primal cosmic will impulse (represented by Phanes in the cosmology of Orpheus). However, it also holds the potential danger that the human being might fall prey to the will to power (represented by Hades). A conjunction between the Sun and Pluto may therefore signify very powerful will impulses which, if channeled in the right way, can lead to the development of the faculty of *Intuition*

¹¹ Robert Powell, *Hermetic Astrology, vol. II: Astrological Biography* (Hermetika/Sophia Foundation: Kinsau/Germany, 1989), chapter 8, describes Pluto in connection with the will to power of the Nazi movement and also in relation to the discovery of atomic power around the same time (the first artificial splitting of a lithium nucleus through neutron bombardment was in 1932).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ W.K.C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion* (Princeton University Press: Princeton/NJ, 1993), p. 80.

¹⁴ Robert Powell, *Hermetic Astrology, vol. II: Astrological Biography* (Hermetika/Sophia Foundation: Kinsau/Germany, 1989), p. 317, gives the horoscope of the Emperor Nero, showing the conjunction of the Sun and Pluto on the Ascendant at 24½° Sagittarius.

(mystical union), where the human being's will is aligned with Divine Will, which is love. For this to take place, the temptation of the will to power has to be overcome. Falling prey to this temptation can lead to an unfolding of destructive impulses of the will, which may erupt suddenly and explosively.

In Nero's case, instead of overcoming the will to power, he fell prey to it and became a tyrant. Destructive impulses soon gained the upper hand, coming to expression in two events for which Nero is famous (or rather infamous): the murder of his mother, and the burning of the city of Rome. Murder and destruction are signs of out-of-control will impulses aligned with Hades rather than directed toward mystical union. Then the human being is swept along by forces beyond his control, on the tide of the will to power, ruthlessly disposing of any opposition. Murder and destruction, sometimes quite arbitrary and sometimes as a demonstration of power, are then the rule of the day. The example of Nero presents a stern warning concerning the terrible forces residing in the depths of the will, which can surge up and overwhelm the human being. On the other hand, the very highest spiritual faculty – *Intuition* (mystical union) – is also connected with Pluto and is attained by elevating the will to the primal sphere of our solar system, represented by Pluto-Phanes, thereby to become a vehicle of divine love.

To grasp the meaning of a conjunction of the Sun and Pluto on an archetypal level, let us look at two events in the life of Christ. First, the forty days in the wilderness culminated with the three temptations, which took place on the 37th, 38th, and 39th days. The third temptation (day 39) took place on November 29 in the AD 29.¹⁵ On that day there was a conjunction of the Sun and Pluto at 9° Sagittarius, not far from the galactic center at 2° Sagittarius. On this day Christ (symbolized by the Sun) had an encounter with the Prince of Darkness (symbolized by Pluto), who tried to tempt him to “turn stones into bread”.¹⁶ The way this temptation manifests now, for humanity as a whole, is through materialism and, in particular, through the temptation presented by the technological production of a “virtual reality” in place of the reality of Divine Creation. The creation of the appearance of something real and living, but which in fact is only something mechanical and lifeless (“stones”), in place of the reality of the Creation (“bread”), is the third temptation. It is this third temptation which has swept the world since 1988 (although it was in preparation long before). It was in 1989 that Al Gore introduced the National High-Performance Computer Technology Act, a five-year \$1.7 billion program to expand the capacity of the information highway to connect government, industry, and academic institutions. Signed by President George Bush (Senior) in 1991, the bill supported research and development for an improved national computer system, and assisted colleges and libraries in connecting to the new network. It is interesting to consider Christ's response to the third temptation: “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*” (*Matthew* 4:4). With these words he implicitly acknowledges the necessity of that which the material world provides, but at the same time draws attention to Divine Creation as the source of everything. As indicated below, the Ultimate Source manifests itself in our galaxy through the galactic center as the *creative heart* of our existence.

Against the background of the archetype of the life of Christ, the conjunction of the Sun and Pluto on the 39th day of the forty days in the wilderness was the cosmic sign of the third temptation, the temptation now manifesting by way of materialism, supported by technology, which is assaulting humanity at the present time in an unprecedented way. There is another archetypal significance of the conjunction of the Sun and Pluto that revealed itself one year later in Christ's life, on December 1, AD 30, when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (*Mark* 5:35-43) – again the Sun and Pluto were in exact conjunction.¹⁷ Here Christ reveals the higher side of the conjunction of the Sun and Pluto – the pouring out of divine love (Christ's nature, represented by the Sun) uniting with the primal life of existence that still lives in the outermost realm of the solar system (represented by Pluto) to the extent of overcoming death. Thus, in these two archetypes from the life of Christ, the meeting of the Sun with Pluto-Hades (the encounter with the Prince of Darkness) and

¹⁵ Robert Powell, *Chronicle of the Living Christ* (Steiner Books: Gt. Barrington/MA, 1996), p. 163 gives the horoscope of the 40th day in the wilderness (November 30, AD 29), one day after the conjunction of the Sun and Pluto on November 29.

¹⁶ Robert Powell, *The Sign of the Son of Man in the Heavens* (Sun Cross Press: Vancouver, 1999), pp. 116-119, discusses the present time (1988-2018) as the historical period when humanity as a whole is undergoing the third temptation.

¹⁷ Robert Powell, *Chronicle of the Living Christ* (Steiner Books: Gt. Barrington/MA, 1996), p. 167, gives the horoscope of this event, showing the conjunction of the Sun and Pluto at 11° Sagittarius.

with Pluto-Phanes (the calling forth, through love, of the primal life) are revealed.

Given the striking nature of these two conjunctions of the Sun and Pluto in the life of Christ, as well as examples such as that of the Emperor Nero, it is evident that from an astrological standpoint Pluto is a planet in terms of its significance, even if it is now called a dwarf planet. Apollo (the Sun) has nine (not eight) muses!

Galactic Center

In order now to arrive at an understanding of the potential inherent in the conjunction of Pluto with the galactic center, we need to consider the nature of the center of our galaxy. What is the galactic center?

When we look up to the constellation of Sagittarius, the Archer is seen to be aiming his arrow directly at the galactic center (at 2° Sagittarius), where an extraordinarily intensive point of infra-red light has been discovered.¹⁸ This energy source, approximately 50 light years in diameter, has been identified as the actual center of our Milky Way galaxy. Located some 25,000 light years from our solar system, it is estimated that this energy source is about 500 million times more powerful than our Sun. From here emanates the power that holds our galaxy of more than 100 billion stars together. This is the Central Sun, referred to in Plato's *Timaeus* as the Supra-Celestial Sun, of which all the stars (including our Sun) are miniature copies, having originated (in an archetypal sense) by way of emission from the Central Sun.

All the stars that we see in the heavens are Suns, like our Sun. All of them rotate slowly in a clockwise direction around the Central Sun, “*Like a wheel that is evenly moved by the love that moves the Sun and the other stars*” (Dante, *The Divine Comedy: Paradise* 33: 144-145). In light of Dante's words: Could it be Divine Love emanating from the Central Sun that supports and sustains all the Suns/stars in the heavens such that it is literally “*Love that makes the world go round*”?

To gain an idea of the immensity of the Central Sun at the galactic center (which is NOT a “*black hole*” as modern astronomy teaches), imagine a second Sun alongside our Sun. And then add a third Sun, and a fourth Sun, and a fifth Sun ... and so on, until there are 500 million Suns there. This imaginative exercise can offer us a glimpse of the majesty and grandeur of the Central Sun at the galactic center, which holds 100 billion Suns/stars in their orbits around it.

The Russian poet and mystic Daniel Andreev once had a vision of the galactic center, which he describes in his book *The Rose of the World*:

*I remember seeing a glowing mist of stunning majesty, as though the creative heart of our universe had revealed itself to me in visible form for the first time. It was Astrofire, the great center of our galaxy.*¹⁹

The conjunctions of Pluto with the galactic center (“*the creative heart of our universe*”) in the year 2007 could signify for humanity a remarkable opening to Divine Love, an igniting of the fire of mystical union leading to oneness. This would be Pluto-Phanes. Or will Pluto-Hades prevail? If so, an unprecedented upsurge of the will to power can be expected. Already now an increasing tendency toward the dominative stance characteristic of self-will has been observed and characterized by priest/psychologist Edwin M. McMahon as the “*myth of dominance*”:

What young men, and increasingly today young women, do not feel the pressure to carve out their own niche of dominance through athletics, through the use of their wits, the beauty of their bodies, their brains, their ability to clown, etc., etc.? They are told by their environment a hundred times a

¹⁸ The two-dimensional image of the Archer aiming his arrow at the galactic center has to be thought of in three dimensions in order to grasp that it is an optical illusion, since the stars making up the constellation of Sagittarius are relatively close to our solar system (the most distant stars being not more than a few thousand light years away), whereas the galactic center is located at a distance of about 25,000 light years.

¹⁹ Daniel Andreev, *The Rose of the World* (Lindisfarne Press: Gt. Barrington/MA, 1997), p. 198.

day: "To be somebody is to dominate something or someone else in your little corner of the universe. Get busy with learning how to do it, and do it well, because you don't want to end up a nobody."²⁰

Humanity is now faced with a choice of opening to Divine Love streaming from the creative heart of our galaxy or becoming engulfed in the temptation of the will to power ("My will be done" as opposed to "Not my will, but Thy will be done"). The challenge of the conjunction of Pluto with the galactic center is – on a grand scale, for all humanity – the same as that represented archetypically by Christ's encounter with the Prince of Darkness at the third temptation in the wilderness. Recalling the words spoken by Christ in overcoming the third temptation ("Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"), the following by the Russian esotericist Valentin Tomberg in his recently published book *Christ and Sophia* applies well to the challenge of the year 2007:

The human organism is filled with all sorts of substances, biological forces, and egoistic tendencies; in the areas of commerce, politics, and abstract intellectuality, human civilization is absorbed in profit, power, and pleasure. In fact, during this age...human life tends increasingly to eliminate all elements of real Christianity from its presence. Natural science, for instance, has already gotten rid of all Christianity from its area of influence, and business and politics are heavily involved in expelling Christianity from their realms as well.²¹ The banishment of Christianity from all areas of life goes on and on, and the "realities" of the physical world arrange themselves in stronger and stronger opposition to Christianity and in opposition to the love-filled wisdom that is just as essential to the human soul as are sunlight and warmth to a plant.

*From this view of Christianity, the human world is empty and cold; in itself, however, it is overstuffed and stifling. Indeed, the "realities" of the physical world of humanity are gradually developing in a way that Christianity has been reduced to the same value and position that words have in that world. What Christian truth can manifest in present day life – that is, without having to protect itself everywhere through compromise? Only in the **word** can the Christ impulse become a reality among the people of today. True Christianity today has the same opportunity as does the word to live in the world without becoming adulterated and falsified by compromise; it is a time of great testing. The vast and powerful realities of today's Chastel Merveille are opposed only by the word and nothing else at all.²² The millions of Christians cannot and must not be arrayed to do battle with the organized antichristian millions. Antichristian forces cannot and must not be fought through the use of their own weapons. Power, number, and organization – all are opposed only by the word borne by the human voice. The test is this: Despite everything, we must never say, "These are mere words; they are not the realities." Rather, because they can be only words, the **whole** reality of the Christ impulse must be experienced **in** them. Because the great mass of antichristian and unchristian forces fills our entire life sphere, we must allow the power of thought, the life of the heart, and the feeling for truth to live in the word and to oppose the hostile world with the other world that can be experienced in the word. This **can** be done if we are truly aware of the fact that in the beginning the Word was with God; that **all** things were made by the Word, and that the Word that was once divine with God is now human with humanity. Then, when human beings are wholeheartedly united with him who became man and spoke words as man – to him who instills divine forces into the human word – then humankind will know that the spirit-filled word of experienced and recognized spiritual truth can stand against the whole*

²⁰ Edwin M. McMahon, *Beyond the Myth of Dominance: An Alternative to a Violent Society* (Sheed & Ward: Lanham/MD, 1993), p. 67.

²¹ Valentin Tomberg is referring here to "real Christianity" based on the practice of Christ's teachings, not to the false Christianity that masquerades as Christianity but actually espouses ideals and practices that have nothing to do with the love, caring, and compassion taught and practiced by Christ and his disciples (footnote added by RP).

²² Rudolf Steiner had this to say on this subject: "We have on the one hand the kingdom of the Grail, and on the other the evil kingdom, Chastel Merveille, with all that came from the pact between Klingsor and Iblis playing into it. And here we can see, expressed in a wonderfully dramatic form, all that the most independent and innermost of the soul organs, the intellectual, or mind soul, has had to endure in face of attacks from without...It stands so dramatically before us as the antithesis between 'Montsalvat' and 'Chastel Merveille'." Lecture of February 7, 1913 in *The Mysteries of the East and of Christianity* (Rudolf Steiner Press: London, 1972), pp. 67-68.

massive stronghold of “realities” of physical human existence...This signifies that the “keeping of the word”...not only means that ideals are to be held aright in the face of external realities; it also has the special meaning that the ideals arising from knowledge are to be filled and permeated by the moral life of the Christ impulse.²³

This article is from the *Christian Star Calendar 2007* (Sophia Foundation: Palo Alto/CA, 2006).

²³ Valentin Tomberg, *Christ and Sophia* (Steiner Books: Gt. Barrington/MA, 2006), pp. 343-345.

The Galactic Center with Spiral Arms

