



Fifty years of melted candle wax at Sugar Loaf Candles. Photo by Eric Francis

## **Inner Space for Aries**

# **There is No Substitute for Integrity**

Dear Aries Sun, Moon or Rising:

There are two truly outstanding astrological distinctions for your sign in our current long era: first is that Chiron is in Aries between 2018 and 2027. Chiron, the great awakener, spends more time in Aries than any other sign (by a long mile — it spends the least time in Libra, just 18 months, while spending nine years in Aries).

While this transit is about everyone, it's especially relevant to you as a direct influence. You are being guided to a new level of maturity as a healer, teacher and participant in the human experiment. Chiron, as it transits through anyone's sign, often offers one of the ultimate self-actualization experiences, though this is especially true in Aries.

There will be many peaks of this event, such as when it makes direct contact with your Sun, your rising degree, your Moon, or any other planets. Chiron is sometimes astringent or can feel like psychic surgery; it demands rising to any occasion with commitment to healing and transforming your life in the most necessary directions.

Be grateful this transit is only half over. You still have time to make the most of it. And be aware that Chiron in your sign will focus attention on you and place you in the role of teacher by example, at the same time you will be reminded of your seeming human limitations. This combination is not easy for everyone to handle at once, though both facets of Chiron are part of the same journey.

By both, I mean the profound inner journey that Chiron represents, as well as how this manifests in the lives of others, who in some way rely on you or look to you as an exemplar.

The second profound transit through your sign is Eris in Aries, which began a century ago, in March 1925, and begins its transition into Taurus in 2044. Nearly everyone alive today has Eris in Aries, and it will be with us beyond the foreseeable future — for example, through the entire duration of Pluto in Aquarius, which begins in March 2023 and finally ends in 2044.

Because nearly everyone alive has Eris in Aries, it would seem to be difficult to sort out its influence on a personal level — though it can be done. However, it will take some true reflective observation of both yourself as you have changed over the past 25 years, and also of the movement of society during that time. The current keyword to Eris in Aries is *digital*. Prior to that it was *electrical*, of which digital is a subset. Prolonged exposure to, and immersion in, these environments transforms us, and does so radically.

And at this time, the thing you may want the very most is to recover yourself as you were prior to the era when these influences became so powerful.

The question I have for you is: what has become of your experience of yourself and of life during this quarter-century of the “digital revolution”? Who are you today that you were not in, say, the mid-1990s? I mean this mostly in your state of mind, your self-concept, your associations with friends and most of all, your fear level.

Another way to say “fear” is your sense of the future. We are all 25 years older than we were 25 years ago (an approximate measure of the full-on digital era), and that by itself shifts one’s views of the future. But I would ask what has changed in terms of what you think is possible for you? And what has changed the past few years that Chiron has been in Aries?

I have a theory that Eris has a fragmenting effect, which we have all experienced for all or most of our lives; and that Chiron has a corresponding integration effect, which is giving you a chance to put yourself back together.

The problem with any influence that might lead you to reassemble yourself is that you would have to confront any sense of being split apart, and often this is not so pleasant. However, it is true to some real degree for all of us — and we need to address it. It will be worth the work and the effort, and rising to an occasion that demands scrupulous honesty with yourself. That, above all else, is the true calling of this time in your personal history.

So, too, does maintaining a private space, where your thoughts are yours alone and not broadcast anywhere. Do everything you can to cultivate your inner sanctuary and to relate to yourself in ways that are not electrical, or at least not directly connected to the internet. In service of this, I suggest using real books, actual paper journals, acoustic musical instruments, candlelight and anything that might prompt your memory of who you were and how you felt in a simpler era of history.

### **Jupiter in Aries Through May 2023**

Jupiter re-entered Aries on Dec. 20 and will sweep across your sign in just 21 weeks, through May 16, 2023. This transit can have you feeling at your very best, as Jupiter bestows confidence, knowledge and that odd thing called luck. However, be aware that it can magnify any weaknesses or problems, while also providing you with the capacity to repair, correct and strengthen yourself.

Earlier, I described the fragmenting effect of Eris in Aries. In our own times, think of this as the way people tend to water down their sense of self by having numerous “identities” and handles that they use online. This includes any attempt to do something anonymously. This splits people apart. And it’s just the surface metaphor for what digital technology actually does.

Jupiter’s presence in your sign — and its conjunctions to Chiron on March 12 and Eris on April 23 — will provide the opportunity to turn any of your perceived weaknesses into strengths. Chiron in particular is a powerful force for self-actualization. That means self-awareness, self-becoming, personal evolution and whatever else “making yourself” actual means to you.

Again, these transits call for learning how to be real. The word “authentic” is overused to the point of being irrelevant (or worse, a joke: the highly popular *acting like you’re authentic*). Being real takes guts. It can be scary. There will almost inevitably be the prospect and some reality of alienation from those who do not

present themselves as they truly are. It's not so much that this is a lost art; humanity has never much cared for it, because it seems so much easier to be fake.

You're free to experiment, though these opportunities to act under the combined influence of Chiron and Jupiter, and then Chiron and Eris, will be short lived, which is to say, you don't want to waste them.

It will be up to you to take the initiative to live on your own terms. This is not something that people invite you to do, even close partners (who can be 'threatened' when people aspire, grow, change and succeed). Others can be repelled by your willingness to dare (when they do not). The opportunity here is to not let this slow you down.

On May 16, Jupiter enters Taurus, where it will spend one year, through May 25, 2024. However, let's keep considering the astrology of Aries per se, focusing on your ruling planet Mars. I will come back to Jupiter in Taurus later in this reading, which addresses the theme of finances and your priorities. This will be exciting, though we are not yet done with the very unusual Mars retrograde pattern.

### **The Mars-Neptune Pattern**

On the theme of self-actualization, you are currently passing through an initiation, which is Mars retrograde in Gemini, and its series of square contacts with Neptune. This whole process spans from August 2022 to March 2023. Apart from all of its associations (self-assertion, matters of self-confidence, initiative, aggression and others), it's the astrological stand-in for *you*.

And it has been in rare form this year, as it has gradually crept forward then backward through Gemini and so far, made two right-angles to Neptune. The third and final one will arrive in March.

I would note that though this is mostly an inner planet transit — the kind that astrologers generally don't think have much depth or lasting value — my take is that this transit represents a once-in-a-lifetime experience of self-inquiry and growth, as meaningful as any transit of a slow-mover. And it happens that one is involved — Neptune — but first let's consider the Mars retrograde facet.

Mars retrograde is taking place entirely in Gemini, which is your 3rd house or place, associated with your state of mind, your contact with people in your local community, siblings and (in my view, not that of classical astrology) any relatives you consider your peers (such as close cousins in your generation).

The prefix “com” is all about the 3rd house: communications, community, commerce, committees, comprehension, and their various derivatives. This prefix means “with” or “together,” the perfect description of the 3rd house and also of Gemini, which covers your 3rd. So you might consider this a study in all of the ties that bind you to others who are in your immediate environment. Yet the 3rd is also about your relationship to yourself, how you express ideas to yourself, your thought patterns and other intimate details of how your mind works and seeks to understand your environment.

The retrograde of Mars is calling you to go deep within yourself and understand your thought patterns; and then to take the next step of understanding how they influence your relationships. I reckon this may not be an especially easy transit, as it necessitates so much self-questioning. However, it gets more interesting when we consider the role of Neptune.

The sign before one’s own (or the house before one’s rising sign) is called the 12th, which is the most mysterious and complex of the lot. It is the ultimate interior of the psyche, so deep that it’s a portal into the “unconscious,” the “collective unconscious,” and the ancestral realm. It’s the house that exists within its own internal dream-logic.

Slow-mover Neptune has been transiting here since around 2011, which has been providing a constant, often abundant psychic infusion that may be coloring our whole reality. It may be so powerful that it is creating a distortion you have not recognized until now; the squares from Mars are crucial points of correction.

Retrograde (and soon to be direct) Mars, in the house we could call “fully conscious” (the 3rd) is stirring the pot of the house associated with the “deep unconscious” (the 12th). It’s usually so deep that nobody has a clue it’s there, until it spills over into waking life — which is exactly what it may be doing. So this may feel like an alarm clock going off, regarding any one of a diversity of issues, which may range from your potential use of psychoactive substances of any kind (including alcohol or prescription meds), to your definition and practice of what constitutes ‘spiritual’.

There is something of a perfect storm in this set of associations. There will be times you will feel like something is bursting your bubble or opening up a kind of psychic cocoon you have been living in. I suggest you welcome this, and while you’re at it, put everything to the test of rational thought. Where there is a lot of Pisces, there must be a balance of cognitive reasoning, the use of fact patterns, and making a wholly mental assessment.

This helps create not so much a balance between the mental and the intuitive but rather a fusion of the two, which is necessary for any form of useful thinking and perception.

The essence of Mars-Neptune — as it is with so many of your transits — is the opportunity to practice being honest with yourself.

## **From Saturn in Aquarius to Pluto in Aquarius**

One of the most active spots in your chart, in recent years and for the long foreseeable future, is Aquarius, your 11th solar house or place. For in-depth information about what is happening in the sign Aquarius, [please read this reading from 2021](#).

Both Aquarius and the 11th address social patterns, and these two have had (to put it mildly) their style cramped the whole time Saturn has been in Aquarius. To put it less mildly, we have been under the influence of forces we may not think of as tyrannical, but which have done things like order the world population into their homes for no reason that they can demonstrate.

As one of the most social signs of the lot, and while we're here, one of the most determined to live your own way, you have felt the impact of this keenly. The changes that Saturn makes have a way of being durable, and durable is what you've been made into as this transit has developed. I could say a lot about this from a sociological standpoint, though let's consider the personal influence it has on you.

Saturn in Aquarius has been about figuring out who your friends are, and are not. The word 'friend' is overused. Though people collect thousands of them on the internet, we are lucky to have one or two truly trusted friends in the world — people who are worthy of your trust, who only help, and who do no harm. Saturn has put a filter here, and you have had a good look at where you are welcome and where you are not welcome; who you want near you and who you do not.

This is important information, and it reveals many levels of truth about yourself and the world that will become more significant with the passage of the next few years.

Now, the 11th is also about groups, which is a concept distinct from friends. Where groups are concerned, there is a crucial issue at the center: how much are you willing to give up in order to be accepted by others? The answer should be nothing whatsoever, though we all have different tolerance points. I would suggest that any group that requires you to deceive anyone, or to claim anything that is not entirely true, is a place to avoid.

Contrary to Groucho Marks' quip about not wanting to belong to any group that would have you as a member, I propose that you don't want to be part of anything that requires you to be different from who you are, which you cannot be anyway.

This comes into a new kind of focus when Pluto, the planet of power, of unstoppable change, enters your 11th place in March. This is a 21-year transit that will come with the continued, and intensified, rearrangement of the social order. The possibilities are not all so pretty and will require you to be a pioneer back into the world of human-to-human relationships not controlled by a robotic device.

There may come a time when this is a bigger adventure than *Star Trek*. Cue the space-age music — *Humanity: the final frontier. These are the voyages of an Aries who still wants actual friends and social experiences in the real world...*

In my view, Pluto is going to push digital technology so far that enough people finally give up on it for social purposes and you may meet other people who you can relate to. However, the deeper issue is that humanity has been transformed, rearranged and destabilized by digital technology, and we are going to need to center ourselves. There has been a vast collapse of social integrity, and it affects every single person on the planet, whether or not they have touched a device.

One possibility you may be facing is having to fully come into your strength in resisting the pressure of groups and of society itself. Aries is one of the more self-assertive signs, though can still be especially prone to insecurity when in a group dynamic. This is of course not limited to you. We have had a taste of this on a grand scale, and most people do not have the strength to stand up for themselves — but you must. This is the focus of your spiritual projects for many years of your life to come.

## **Pluto At the End of Capricorn and Your 10th Place**

Before you get wholly into the experience of Pluto in Aquarius, you have the very end of Pluto in Capricorn to reckon with; it is not over, and endings are important times. Plus, after any Pluto transit, it is necessary to size up the transformation that has occurred.

Capricorn for Aries and Aries rising is the 10th house place, which addresses matters of reputation, responsibility, and on a good day, your true and fully committed vocational calling. While this is also a 6th place issue (daily work and wellbeing), many people are drawn to being known for something. And everyone on some level must address the matter of hierarchical authority.

This starts in the family, where parents usually reign supreme and often dominate the lives of their children. What is learned in the 10th comes as a child finds its way into later life. The 10th is one of the most critical angles where we see the intersection of an individual and the greater forces of society. And it is sometimes where people learn how to take authority — or at least become known for what they do.

A basic matter of the 10th is respect.

In the time that Pluto has been in Capricorn, you have seen how deeply impacted you can be by vast, impersonal events. The whole transit of Pluto through Capricorn represented a restructuring of your relationship to the official world of governments, corporations and anything with a structure that you depend on for your own stability.

My reading of this transit is that Pluto in Capricorn has taught you three main things. One is that to survive or thrive in this world, you cannot leave your soul behind. You must be able to take it to work, and it must be safe there.

Second, you have learned that you must be independent of the system at the same time you are dependent upon it. None of us can really get out of the structure of society, though there are ways to manage the dependencies.

Third, you have been taken on (or dragged through) a tour of the way that your family upbringing has set your mental concepts about how the world works. Pluto burning through this region of your life for the past 15 years has been about making deep repairs to your expectations, understanding and relationship with authority.

Pluto clearing the last degrees of Capricorn will come with a few surprises. You may discover who was pulling the strings in certain situations that impacted you. The final degree of Capricorn has a conspiratorial feeling to it (described by the image of a group of powerful men controlling the world). Be aware that there is likely to be a frenzy of conspiracy theorizing (even more than usual, which is saying something) as Pluto dances back and forth over this degree between now and late 2024.

Take it easy on the spooky bullshit. Society has organizational structures and, in effect, anything that happens due to the effort of two or more people is a conspiracy (which means breathing together). What you get to explore here is how things work. But I am strongly suggesting that you keep your inquiry practical and as close to you as you can. For example, if you are working for or with a corporation, learn how it works. If you are responsible for a corporation, get a handle on your governance.

The 18-month transition into Aquarius represents a shift in the emphasis between two houses, one related to professional matters and the other related to social ones. The essence of this transition is between formal structured power and informal social



power. In a sense, you go from the living room and its rules over to the playground and its rules.

## **Fire Sign Theater: Venus Retrograde in Leo**

Let's come back to the fire signs. One of the highlights of your year, and one of its true distinctions, is Venus in Leo. This spans from June 5 through Oct. 8, a long time for Venus to remain in one sign. This is due to Venus being retrograde from July 22 through Sept. 3.

Planets in the fire signs benefit you, and there is help on the way after Jupiter has entered Taurus (which is also likely to work in your favor — see next section).

Leo is your 5th house, which is about pleasure, play, playful sex, creativity, games of any kind, and therefore taking risks (such as speculation and investments). Translated into the language of the daily horoscope, this is about having fun, and exploring expression for its own sake. While the world has become extremely conservative in matters of sexuality (except for those over-the-top zones that may be your cup of tea, who knows), there is a space where sex can exist for its own sake. That's the place to hang out. This relates to creativity for its own sake, and any form of play for its own sake.

This is not easy in the current setup of the world and our present map of consciousness. We are constantly being sucked back into the internet, what Venus in Leo is decidedly not about. It's about what you do in reality — in physical form.

Venus in Leo and other factors may have you feeling like you are financially unstoppable. However, I strongly recommend making diverse investments and limiting the amount you gamble. You may set a high limit or a low one, though I suggest you set a limit. Also note that financial moves made under Venus retrograde may not hold their value (Facebook's IPO as a publicly traded company is an example).

So keep a grip here, and perhaps consider hedging your bets until Venus turns direct in September. There are other ways to make money besides speculation — though it will be a temptation for some time, which is why I am suggesting that you do so on a prescribed budget.

## **Jupiter in Taurus May 2023-May 2024**

On May 16, Jupiter enters Taurus, where it will be through May 25, 2024. This is the official "get busy saving money" transit. All the factors involved point to it. The transit is leading to a glorious event on April 20, 2024 (Jupiter conjunct Uranus, a once-

per-14-year event) and so it's likely to have a sense of anticipation for something big happening. Please be conscious of that.

Of its own, Jupiter in Taurus is as beneficial as any event in astrology, as the expansive and growth-fostering power of Jupiter is invested in what is generally a solid, stable sign, Taurus. For you, this occurs in your 2nd place, where you concentrate your personal resources.

Please note that there will be a reduction in activities in the earth signs, and there has not been much lately anyway. Jupiter in Taurus will provide some solid grounding. Earth signs are essential to well-being as they provide stability, and also tangibility, texture, a sense of quality, and the experience of natural materials and objects.

The 2nd place is about your resources, which in older times were presumed to be money, farm animals and your tools of the trade — movable assets.

However, more significantly, the 2nd place is about your priorities. It's about what you hold as valuable and why. Values and ethics are closely intertwined: what is important, and also what is right and true, and the emphasis you place on these things.

The current resident of Taurus, Uranus, is suggesting that you've been through a series of revolutionary experiences the past few years. It may be that your values and sense of your own value are changing radically — though what exactly is the influence?

Uranus by its nature can represent electrical and digital influences. I strongly suggest you measure those carefully, and observe yourself as you (and we all) move through this treacherous, unpredictable era of history — a technological adolescence where some of the bigger kids are playing with matches in the fireworks shed.

## **A Future Event You May Be Feeling Now**

Let's wrap up with a brief comment about a forthcoming event in your sign that spans 2025 and 2026 but is likely to be sending out vibes that you're feeling today. That is the Chiron-Eris conjunction in your sign. It is the only outer-planet conjunction of our era; the most recent was in 1993 — the conjunction of Uranus and Neptune.

Prior to that event was Uranus and Pluto in 1965-66. These things do not happen often, and one is about to happen in your sign. If history is any teacher, we are already in the era of this conjunction. It is, however, building toward a watershed moment. This will be the topic of major Planet Waves coverage, which I intend to

begin as soon as I am done with these sign readings. When you see the words Chiron, Eris, or their meeting, think: *this is about me*.

Note that this will be the first Chiron-Eris conjunction to happen since these planets were discovered. The most recent was in the explosive early 1970s, and we can see the effects in hindsight.

A lot of people jumped on the self-actualization train right about then, and jumped off after it was no longer convenient. It's not about convenience, though. Growth can be a pain in the ass, but there is no substitute for integrity.

With love,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eric Francis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.