



A human-made container for 123 billion gallons of water: the 110-year-old Asohkan Reservoir seen from the Olive Dam, in late autumn. It is part of the New York City water supply. Photo by Eric Francis.

Inner Space for Pisces

The Return of Saturn — and the World Within

Dear Pisces Sun, Moon or Rising:

The world is a challenging place for sensitive people, and you are one of them. It has always been so, though we are now experiencing a constant infusion or assault by incoming influences from which there seems to be no escaping. All of the worldly matters covered by the ineffable sign Pisces — art, music, poetry, the love of nature, the love of critters and a kind of universal love for humanity — are in tough times, as the world becomes less human and more robotic.

You may feel like you're the person assigned to preserving these core elements of what it means to be an arrangement of divinely animated stardust and a human citizen of the universe.

Imagine if that is true: that you are in conscious possession of something you must take care of now, to preserve it for a future when it's an even rarer element. That would be feeling, receptivity, an ear for harmony, noticing the colors and scents of the world, and the ability to be moved by beauty, sadness, grief or the transience of the human condition. You contain and may preserve the ability to remember what makes a difference to you, because something does.

This is happening in the Age of Irrelevance, when we are told that nothing and nobody matters. Yet most people feel it's easier that way; if you don't cherish much, then you won't fear losing it or miss it when it's gone. If you're told you're irrelevant, you don't have to care about your words and thoughts having an influence over anything. One thing is like another, it's all a simulation, whatever I believe is true, and our beloved Gaia is flat as a cake dish: this is the present zeitgeist, and you possess the living spirit that renders all of it the absurd joke that it is.

Metes, Bounds and Delineations

This year, Saturn makes its return to your sign for the first time in a generation. There's plenty of other astrology to write about, though for you, the return of Saturn to your sign or 1st house is the lead story this year. In my analysis, Saturn will be a helpful and supportive influence, clearing out some of the fog, confusion and delays that may have come with slow-moving Neptune in your sign the past decade.

Pisces has a boundless quality that can dissipate your abundant creativity and goodwill. Neptune enhances this factor, though the problem is that it's barely noticeable, since the influence of Neptune seems to disappear. It drops below the level of liminality and has a way of evading perception. Neptune expands this liminal quality inherent in your sign, and as an unrecognized or unseen factor, it's difficult to address. It needs some kind of antithesis to bring awareness to its effect.

Saturn is your best friend in this regard. It will help stop the erosion associated with Neptune. And it always gives more than it takes away. Saturn will remain in your sign until Neptune moves into Aries, finally setting some limits. You do not need a lot of sensitivity to experience your humanity, only a healthy modicum, and the willingness to listen to what it's suggesting; and to notice how you feel. You don't need to dive off the

deep end of your feelings, only to relate to water in a respectful way. Saturn's work is to tell you where the edge of the pool is.

While some would say that Saturn's influence on Pisces is to make it less sensitive, I would say that it's here to put some metes and bounds around you, your imagination and your senses.

Neptune, which has been in your sign since 2011, creates a vulnerability, in the form of a too-wide psychic opening and potentially a physical weakness. It tends to blur definitions, a phenomenon that is taking over the world and all of consciousness. It is powering much of the commitment to delusion that the world is experiencing.

Saturn shores up boundaries, and guides matters back into timeframes and workable concepts where one thing can be distinguished from another. It sets some delineations that can be informed by the information coming from Aries, your 2nd house of values and priorities, which I will cover shortly.

Sometimes historical references can provide some orientation. The last two times Saturn entered Pisces were in 1993 and 1964. So this is not an everyday occurrence. And it is certainly not one for you. The difference between then and now is that you need Saturn more today. You need and will benefit from the nutrient of stability and focus that it provides. There are few things that can leave anyone, even a Pisces, feeling as powerless over your affairs as Neptune does. Saturn's presence is your invitation to take authority over the shape and direction of your existence.

We only get so much power over our environment as we make our way through the world. With Saturn you get an opportunity to concentrate. This can be uncomfortable for Pisces (and for that matter, many people) because structure and discipline are not exactly the fashion of the day, when anything can be had for a few taps on an imaginary button on your phone.

Saturn's arrival will come as a tremendous relief, and help you move the story of your life forward in ways that have eluded you for a long time. Indeed, I am proposing that you will notice the bog you've been in as soon as you have the opportunity to climb up out of it and get a grip on your time and energy.

Review of Saturn in Aquarius

Saturn has just spent three years in Aquarius (beginning in March 2020), which is your 12th house (the sign before your own). This is the hidden dimension that you contain, and it is a model of society: that's what Aquarius is, and you find it internally.

For many reasons, this has been a very strong transit, powering a deep internal inquiry, even if it's just a little depressive. The power of this transit comes from Saturn's rulership of Aquarius, and also from another ancient rule that "Saturn rejoices in the 12th house."

The combination of factors suggests that you have gone through a reckoning with the past and may have determined that our moment is rather different from what has happened before. The 12th is about ancestors, and Saturn in this place commands respect for them. (While I like a fluffy cup of Starbucks as much as anyone, I refuse to partake because my Aunt Josie, who was born in 1904 and lived to age 90, would have thought a five-dollar cup of coffee was one of the most outrageous things she'd ever heard of.)

Saturn's shift into your sign, coming in March, will feel a little like your ears popping to equalize the pressure between you and the world. Just two weeks later, Pluto moves into Aquarius to stay for more than 20 years.

Aquarius is one of those regions in your chart where you can do deep inner work, and where you find your inner life. But what is so unusual is that the sign involved represents many people, as well as the social patterns of society. In a way, given its deeply internal nature in your chart, Aquarius represents a microcosm of your concept of society and what is happening to it. This is unusual: Pisces (and Pisces rising) is the only sign that has this factor present.

Yet the challenge here is facing just how disappointing people can be, especially when they organize themselves into groups or collectives of some kind, and decide arbitrarily that something is or is not true, or that someone (or a whole category of people) are unworthy of acceptance by society.

Saturn in Aquarius the past few years has put you through a lot, but at least it has contributed to your self-awareness. It has firmed up your resolve to make the world, and your life, a better place. Remember that there is no separating you from the world, because you don't see yourself as separate, and you know that you are not. This is about the inherently Buddhist nature of Pisces.

Before I get into Pluto in Aquarius, let's unfold several other key transits, many of which involve Aries, and its ruling planet Mars.

Mars in Gemini, Square Neptune, Times Three

As of this writing, Mars is retrograde in Gemini. This is your 4th house or place, the one associated with whether you feel safe in the world. It also addresses the four walls you live in, the immediate surrounding grounds, and says something about your father and his legacy.

The first matter — feeling safe — has come up for review many times in the six months that Mars has been a factor in Gemini. The overarching message is to acknowledge what you feel, and to get a handle on your response to what you feel.

This is not easy, given the lack of examples in the world for being grounded and realistic. There are next to no reference points. It's difficult to spot an adult in the room. The world has turned into an endless episode of *Home Alone*, only not as funny. The Mars-in-retrograde condition is also going to be about resolving old anger, the kind that can split you against yourself.

The distinction of this Mars retrograde in Gemini — itself a rare condition — is that Mars is in the process of moving into its third and final square to Neptune, which is in your sign and closely associated with you.

This is something of an irritant. But it provides a service: it's giving you something to respond to, that you might ordinarily have missed. It's easy to miss something associated with Neptune, but the square from Mars makes whatever you're feeling stand out. And it represents a test of truth, which may manifest as a crisis related to the consequences of believing what was not true.

We live in a world where most people think that what they feel is true (by which most mean *what they emote*, especially if it's fear). There is very little observation involved, whether of self, or environment. The equation is BP = GHT — buttons pushed equals God's honest truth. If someone reacts to something, it is automatically true.

Mars is moving through your 4th house — your emotional life and sense of security. The repeated squares must be taken as a series of questions: is what I am feeling really an assurance of its reality? Do my emotions point to something real, or am I just reacting? You will need some courage to get to the bottom of this, and to question everything that seems to challenge you.

It's a difficult lesson for many that merely believing something does not make it objectively true. Yet that seems much easier than doing the work of self-observation. With Gemini there must be several sides to any viewpoint admitted. With Mars (or any planet) retrograde, there is a need to revisit what comes from the past, whether from your own experiences or those of your ancestors. With Neptune, everything must be subjected to tests that are factual and intuitive; nothing says "be objective" like Neptune under transit.

One of the rewards of this process will be rooting out certain self-destructive or addictive tendencies. Mars is providing you with conditions and circumstances to question, and they are internally contained or close to home. Part of the question is whether you can focus yourself and address the situation that you're actually observing rather than the one you think is happening. If you ever hear yourself say the words, "I believe," stop and ask yourself why.

Mars Enters Cancer in March

When Mars finally exits Gemini in March, it enters your fellow water sign Cancer. The sign-changes of Mars are not usually life-changing, though this one will help set the tone of the year, if you let it. Mars will release the concentrated power of the retrograde in Gemini into the next sign and house, which is Cancer.

This is your 5th place, and this is where you take creative and sexual risks. It's an excellent sign to have in this role, though it will tend toward sentimental and familiar and not necessarily favor the artistic and sexual qualities that make the 5th one of the best houses. But when you create something, you mean what you make down to your flesh and blood.

Mars marks the entry of two ultra-slow-movers into Cancer: centaur Asbolus, and a point a bit beyond Neptune, Chaos. Asbolus (discovered in 1995) is about the core chemistry of consciousness. It is to your mind what carbon is to your body, an essential constituent. It is one of two things that all life has in common (the other being water).

Chaos (discovered in 1998) is the first of the primordial Greek goddesses (the *protogenoi*) and so represents conditions at the dawn of creation (followed immediately after by Gaia, the Earth, Tartaros, the pit; and Eros, procreation (which means all that you create). This will be an extraordinarily fertilizing influence for you, and it lasts a long time, well into mid-century (by the end of the decade, it will have only gone 11 degrees).

While Chaos alone might not be enough to move you, it certainly speaks to your potential. What will encourage action for you is Asbolus, ensuring that you honor what is necessary for your survival. Art is not merely what shows up in museums when rich people kick the bucket and donate their living room decorations to the cause of tourism.

Art is how the most sensitive humans survive. The creative process is a healing capacity through which people remain sensitive, move through their grief and crisis, and work through their relationship to their environment — thereby changing it. Asbolus describes not just the ability but the urgent necessity for you to work with this innate human capacity.

Together, these points in Cancer — activated early in the year by slow-moving Mars — will revive your creative passion in a way that you have not experienced in a long time. Remember to include your sexuality in this mix, as it is central to your humanity. The opening to express sexuality is narrowing rapidly under digital conditions, as if the field that provides its energy is weakening.

In Japan, the most technologically advanced society (where we are all heading), half the population has no interest in sex and there is an obsession with the technological manifestations of eroticism, which are not the same thing. Like everything else, sex and art are being consumed by digital. This will not work for you. You have the eminently human sign Cancer — the sign of mother and the Moon, and of the tides and the oceans — as your creative power center.

Be aware that anything involved with the sign Cancer goes in cycles, so when the tide is low, ride it out. However, Mars in Cancer definitely describes the tide being high. And one other thing, apropos of the slightly misfit mismatch between Mars and Cancer (in detriment, according to some guy wearing a toga in the 1st century). To me this says it functions like Chiron — an inconvenient benefic; a mild irritant; a provocative and focusing influence. Work through it and let yourself out of your shell.

Chiron in Aries: The Quest for Personal Relevance

Your 2nd house or place is Aries. This is about your priorities, values, ethics and personal resources. Yet the overarching theme is the value that you place upon your own existence. Aries is an excellent sign to have as the 2nd because it means that focusing your priorities is a natural thing you can do.

It is this and little else that moves an alert and aware journey through this world. Various terms self-esteem, self-respect and self-value, the 2nd in the I AM style of

Aries is what mediates your sense of belonging not only on the planet in the sense of where you have something to offer, but also within your own awareness.

One of the most overbearing struggles going on in the world involves a rapidly diminishing sense of relevance. This is about the digital environment above all else: it reduces everything and everyone to nothing, and people are feeling this. You see it in the nonstop “look at me” that is social media, and the endless quest for likes, shares and follows. This is a desperate struggle that is defining both personal and social existence in an unwholesome way — and there is no actual result of feeling better.

It is also responsible for most of the violence we see in the world, whether physical, emotional or verbal, all of which is based on people’s need to find out who they are. This is affecting everyone, though most people are mystified about the nature of the problem.

Fortunately, you have help in this area; first, in the form of Aries on the 2nd house, which places a high priority on self-respect. Even if you don’t always succeed, you know the issue is important. Next, you have help from Chiron, which is associated with focusing awareness and instigating the kind of healing crisis that turns a debility into power.

Chiron, making a long trip through Aries (which peaks in 2025 and 2026 and trails off in 2027), is ensuring that you stick to the issue. It focuses the self-esteem struggle in a productive way, and is instigating your quest for true relevance rather than the illusion or the game. Chances are you are doing better than you think. Where Chiron is a factor, you usually are. This is because Chiron focuses attention on the process of getting the results rather than assuring you that you have already done so. It puts the work before the rewards, and the chance to do a little more work is one of the benefits. Chiron in Aries focuses the question, “Who am I?” which is best not answered definitively but rather lived as a conscious experiment.

I know that many people struggle with self-esteem, which is generally thought of as a feeling. I would say it’s something else: how you make decisions. Whether “you matter” is something enacted at the time that you make a choice; when it’s in force, it’s the basis of *any decision that pertains to you*. When you look back and decide whether you had self-esteem at any time in your life, you are most likely to see it in the choices that you made. Therefore, remember this at the time you make any decision about the direction or status of your own life.

Here, it helps to know when you're making a decision, which includes the times when you do not do so (and accept things as they are when you know that you want to make a change). You would make the change because of the value you place on your own existence.

The 2nd house is also about your priorities, which is to say, what comes first. It's hard to know what comes first: that's the *prior* part of *priorities*. Priorities are about what comes first. Remaining aligned with your own priorities is crucial for you; currently it is the essence of your healing process.

Therefore, it helps to know what they are. By know, I mean be aware of, and understand, what you actually want and need, based on the underlying matter of what is the most important to you: your principles and your values. The overarching theme of your astrology this year and beyond is aligning yourself with yourself on several different levels: this is known as integrity.

Essentially, the goal is to align what you say and what you do with what you understand to be true on some deeper level. This is often spoken of but seldom attempted in earnest and rarely accomplished.

The reason for that is easy enough to understand: it's hard work. It requires making constant evaluations and adjustments of your thoughts, actions and relationships. But we are in unusual times, here in the decadent and corrupt Kali Yuga. In such times it is essential to recognize that the Dharma has not changed, and that you can align yourself with it.

Jupiter in Aries into May 2024

The classical ruler of Pisces is Jupiter, which after a year on-and-off in Pisces is now in Aries through mid-May 2023. This brief transit will help with everything I've described above. Jupiter provides substance and resources. It will help you in any financial recovery that you are going through as well.

The 2nd is the sign of your available cash, your talents, your tools, your resources other than money, and your acquired knowledge. You might want to take an inventory. This could be in the form of opening up your CV or résumé and giving it a thorough going-over. Most people do not maintain a real awareness of what they are capable of, because they don't usually think it matters. I propose your talents and abilities all matter.

Jupiter tends to magnify, so you will get a look at what has potentially concealed issues or problems you're dealing with. If something emerges, address it immediately, before it takes on a life of its own. Consider that it's being magnified specifically so you can address it.

Here are three dates to consider, associated with Jupiter in Aries and the matter of the personal resource known as self-respect:

Jupiter Conjunct Salacia, March 8, September 27 — Salacia represents what you consider to be sexually appropriate for you. It's not what your mother thinks, or what you think your grandmother thinks, or what Sister Mary Elephant thought about the length of your skirt or patent leather shoes. It's not what your spouse or significant other thinks. It's about what is true for you; what you determine is right for you. There is true wisdom available here, which is far better than the usual moralism that prevails in matters of sexuality.

Jupiter Conjunct Chiron, March 12 — Here, look for the situation that if addressed will help you get to the next level, and if not addressed, could result in some kind of breakdown. This momentary transit will help you get to the essence of the issue — not any issue but something close to the core of how you feel about yourself. There is both wisdom and power in this conjunction, and it may coincide with an important financial decision. Remember that self-esteem is most relevant at the time you make decisions.

Jupiter Conjunct Eris, April 23 — Here is an opportunity to notice who you were prior to becoming immersed in and transformed by the digital environment. Part of surviving the digital age with your humanity intact calls for remembering who you were before this all began.

Eris is the cosmic force working behind the de-centralizing, de-individuating, illiteracy-breeding and tribalizing quality of the digital age. It is likely that you felt more like a fully intact human, with your memories stored inside your body rather than in a hunk of metal and plastic.

I would use the 20th century as “the time before digital” in the symbolic sense, with practical relevance. The Y2K scam was supposed to be about computers thinking that we would be going back to 1900 at a nanosecond past midnight on Jan. 1, 2000. Really, it was the official commencement of the digital age. Who were you? What did you want from life? What did you do then that you don't do now?

Taurus through May 2024: Keep it Local

Jupiter Enters Taurus on May 16. While there is a diversity of interesting possibilities here, the most important one is to keep your affairs as local as you can. The 3rd is your local environment, your communication style and your mental state. Taurus is a strong placement to have here, and Jupiter in Taurus, which will last more than a year, is as good as it gets.

Local is where to invest, to buy and to sell, and whatever else you may be doing. I will say more about this in the audio section. The peak of this transit comes in April 2024 with the once-per-14-year conjunction of Jupiter and Uranus in Taurus.

All in all this is an excellent set of circumstances for those who take seriously the need to communicate in writing, or who are involved in any form of public speaking. Nothing says 'beautiful voice' like Taurus in the 3rd house, and nothing says use your voice like Jupiter.

Pluto in Aquarius: The Dharma Within

We will have 20 years to figure out what Pluto in Aquarius is about, though we should already know. We are already experiencing most of the effects. One of those effects is to flatten society and another is to denude individuality and render everything and everyone alike.

And as we have seen under the influence of Saturn in Aquarius, the result is to divide people against one another; individuals against groups and groups against individuals.

Because it's happening in your all-encompassing 12th house, Pluto in Aquarius may have a difficult-to-pin-down quality because the 12th represents all that can go missing and often does. Think of Aquarius in the 12th as you containing the world within — a kind of Buddhist principle. And, that is one of the most significant things gone missing for a great many people: the world that we contain within ourselves; the little society that lives inside of our minds, with its many fictional characters.

But this arrangement suggests that you are inwardly aware of the movements in society; and that in a sense you contain them. This in turn makes you extremely sensitive to the social effects of everything that is happening in the world around you.

This transit is likely to precipitate a kind of crisis of humanity associated with the digital environment — including various breakdowns of the digital network that the world is

caught in like a fly in a spider web. It's essential that you not take this too personally. Remember, you are one of the people best suited to see this from a philosophical standpoint, and to understand its wider implications.

However, there is a more significant problem, which is the fragmentation of our social bonds. This is a violation of the Dharma, which is the integrity field that we tap into if we are acting as if to hold the world together. Whether consciously or not, there is something deep within you that understands the role that you and each of us can play to allow this to be. The Dharma is fine; whether people honor it is another matter. We could say very simply that the bonds of humanity are not digital, they are human. They are not technical; they are empathic, emotional, and intellectual. They must not be governed by power, but rather by ethics. Because you will have such an inner pulse on Pluto in Aquarius and all that it represents in the world, you are a natural reference point for how to handle the many complex situations. It's just that you must not take on too much.

And while the world is busying itself with going digital, you are summoned to occupy yourself with remaining wholly human, and connected to others who are also committed to being so. This is no small task, but it's an important one, and you are certainly up for it.

Signing off from the Inner Space written readings at 7:50 pm EST on Dec. 27, 2022, Kingston, New York — the 25th annual edition of Planet Waves.

With love, your Pisces astrologer,

