

# Opening the Doors of Perception

*Vision Quest for Aries by Eric Francis Coppolino. Published by Planet Waves, Inc.*

To find your true vision, you don't need to do much besides get your outmoded concepts out of the way of your perception. This is a time-honored spiritual method involving the clearing of perception. *A Course in Miracles* says we don't need to seek love; we merely need to find the obstacles to the awareness of love. That is how I would sum up your charts over the next 18 months.

Humans rarely perceive directly — were we to, it would feel like some crazy episode out of the *Bhagavad Gita* or the *Book of Ezekiel*. There is the fear that to do so is wrong; that it's not a good idea to actually perceive the essence of spirit. Quoting the King James Bible (Exodus 33:20), God says, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live."

Menacing, isn't it?

For whatever reason, what we tend to do is look at the world through concepts, or what you might call mental constructs. It is a form of seeing but it's like looking through a lens. All the light passing through that lens is shaped by the geometry of the glass — and by its distortions. It does not help that most of the time we have no idea we're looking at the world, at ourselves and at one another, perceiving through one or more filters or obstacles to perception.

They tend to be old, and they tend to operate below the level of full awareness. They were, perhaps, installed by someone telling you, "This is the way it is." They told you so long ago that you forgot they did, but the concept entered your mind and stayed there.

That telling was not necessarily in the form of a frank conversation. Usually it was demonstrated by someone's actions (setting an example being one of the most powerful teaching tools in existence), conveyed emotionally, or injected into you through osmosis in your environment. Often this happens well before the age of three, when the mind is at its most easily molded and shaped and many, many decisions are made about existence.

Some filters are also inserted and shaped later in life, in the form of more conscious educational and religious indoctrination, yet these often have the role of being conflicting scripts that lead to neurosis and on a good day, provoke some rebellion. There are many other ways these obstacles to real thought are placed into our minds and emotions.

We have many words for these constructs. They are the basis of the statement in *A Course in Miracles* that you don't need to look for love; you merely need to seek and find the obstacles to the awareness of love's presence, which is your natural inheritance. If you get those obstacles out of the way, you can experience the world closer to reality. It's possible to question whether something is true honestly, and to make up your own mind.

Blake meant something similar when he said that if the doors of perception were cleansed, we could see the universe as it is: infinite.

The problem with these filters, concepts, mental constructions and preconceived notions is not so much that we see the world through them; rather that we see the world *as* them. Given that all of these constructs and concepts come from the past, and that nearly all of them were made up by frightened, negative people, that is a problem. It's why we have so much difficulty seeing the world as it is now; why we have, as a race, so much trouble being in the moment we are actually in — rather than attached to some previous time.

This would be good information any day of any decade of your life. It's appropriate now, with Saturn making its way through your solar 9th house, Sagittarius. The 9th is the house of beliefs, religion and law. Saturn is the lord of that which has materialized or takes tangible form, and it's also the planet of authority — corporate, governmental, parental or allegedly Divine.

It's also the house of one's direct spiritual experiences, and one's vision for one's life. Those are two different levels — the concept level (religion) and the immediate reality level (direct experiences). There is the third level of what you envision, which has not manifested yet. What level you take things on is what you might call your level or phase of growth.

### **Saturn square Neptune: Go Deeper**

At a certain point, a few people realize that all these religious concepts they've been taught — heaven, hell, angels, devils, sin, salvation and all the rest — are just that, concepts, made up by someone — not necessarily true. The concepts are based on something else, and they tend to get in the way of that something else.

Saturn in Sagittarius is here to present you with a direct encounter with your concepts, so you can see them for what they are — and what they represent — and go beyond them.

When people let go of preconceived notions and fixed concepts, the next thing that happens can be a sensation of living without ground beneath your feet. There can be a sense of confusion and disorientation. That is not only normal and natural; it's essential. It's also evidence that you really, truly are progressing spiritually from the phase of believing what others told you to believe, into discovering what is really true for you. That is the theme of your astrology for at least the next two years.

Said another way, this is a process of self-realization; the truth is, most people don't have the stomach for it. It's distasteful and frightening to let go of past ideas, or to have them taken away from us — or worse, to have them proven wrong. The problem here is that without concepts, many people feel like their reality is groundless; that it has no foundation.

We humans tend to be way too attached to who we were in the past, who we were told we were, or who we were flogged into being. Many people are set in their ways by the time they're young adults, and can only be changed by wrenching or cataclysmic experiences.

For example, one might cling ardently to the belief in marriage and monogamy, only to find their marriage is boring and that they or their partner ‘cheated’ because their emotional and sexual needs were more powerful than their obsession with a concept of the right way to relate to someone. (Often, the notion of ‘commitment’ is really obsession with a concept rather than a real offering to another person.) It’s not like people to question their beliefs before they lead them directly into problems, but it would be wise for you to do so.

Your beliefs and concepts are being questioned by something deeper within you, your source of direct contact with reality. It’s as if your beliefs are encountering your faith, faith being the much deeper quality. So, you’re not standing on nothing; but you are being compelled to test your concepts against what you know more deeply is true for you.

That something deeper is represented by Neptune in Pisces. No planet acts alone, and the concepts represented by Saturn are meeting the dissolving force of Neptune, though the result can be some genuine confusion that would be easy enough to get lost in — though this is not necessary.

You can use your sensation of disorientation as a teacher rather than as something that swallows you. Remember, if you encounter confusion, count it as something positive and necessary, because it means concepts that no longer work are indeed dissolving and losing their grip on your mind. As my friend Scott Kalechstein likes to say, “Confusion is the state before enlightenment.”

The thing to remember is that for about five different reasons, Saturn square Neptune is an event that will tend to disappear into the environment, or fade to the back of awareness, particularly for you. It will have effects long before you’ve noticed them, including right now. It will have other effects that take you years to figure out. That’s why astrology can be helpful — it’s a way to see into the invisible environment.

You could not rightly call Saturn square Neptune an aspect with impact. It’s more a slow soaking, melting, dissolving and gradual transformation through reassessment. Your very best cue that you’re engaging with this energy is a sense of disorientation. Notice it when you feel it! Trust it, because rather than being an inconvenience, it’s an important source of information.

This same quality will give this aspect a tendency to disappear even from memory. You may need to remind yourself over and over again that it’s happening, and to consciously look for the results.

Astrologically there is a good reason — a very good one, indeed — that you want to do everything you can not only to be aware of these conceptual objects in your mind, but also the process of them going away. You are in the midst of what is likely to be the most full-on personal revolution of your life: the rare, unusual and — for those of us now walking the planet — unprecedented conjunction of Uranus and Eris in your sign.

### **Uranus conjunct Eris: Inner Revolution**

Remember that what happens in Aries affects everyone. The Aries Point — the first degree of your sign — is like a concentrated source of the idea that the personal and the collective intersect.

This deserves some thought; even some very advanced astrologers seem to draw a differentiation between the ‘inner world’ and the ‘outer world’ as if they don’t have any relationship. That relationship exists within each person. In essence, that’s what a person (as we think of it) is — a kind of pattern created where ‘existence’ and ‘perception’ meet.

So, while the rather astonishing activity in Aries for the next two years influences you profoundly, remember: it’s something we will all be experiencing. The aspect is Uranus conjunct Eris. Uranus transitioned into Aries between 2010 and 2011. Eris has been in your sign since the 1930s and will be around for a while. Now they are about to form a conjunction, which has been developing for a couple of years but comes to its first head in 2016.

For you the net effect is like being dealt a wildcard. There is an unusual amount, and quality, of energy being conveyed through Aries; and it will have the net effect of making you question who you are, to the degree where you might decide you don’t really know, and at the same time make you crave a real answer; a real response.

This astrology could, however, go one of two ways. Under one scenario it will take you deep into a process of investigating your identity, which means asking a question that ultimately liberates you. That will allow you the ability to reinvent yourself in ways you never dreamed possible. When you look back in two years you may say just that: What I am now doing is something I never, ever, would have envisioned or imagined.

The other way, you could go over the top, emphasizing appearance above all else, reducing life to a game where you make — and can therefore break — all the rules, and thriving on chaos, drama and/or glamour. You might call the first the spiritual approach, and the second the personality-level approach. The difference is in the intent, the quality of energy and most of all the results. One result could lead you to a profound level of self-understanding and peace. The other could lead you to disregard all that is dear to you and destroy your world.

There will be very little room for compromise possible between these two outlooks. Taking what I would also call the spiritual or authentic route, you do get to benefit from the sense of adventure imparted by this astrology. If you take the superficial or glamorous route, you leave yourself exceedingly little room for true growth, change or inner exploration. There are no guarantees here. There is a lot of temptation to benefit from the power of appearances, drama and chaos; most significantly, the option to avoid your inner life. But the planets are stacked against that option.

Uranus and Eris are barely understood at all, much less in combination. Astrology has some notion of Uranus, but next to none on Eris. Without going much into the history of astronomy, both discoveries were true breakthroughs in their time — but to scientists, more than to astrologers. Both are distant, slow-moving worlds. Astrologically, both have the ability to

subvert the known order. They are revolutionary in nature, but this is more below the boards and behind the scenes rather than in the overt way.

It might help you to have a little background.

One is Uranus (discovered in 1781), which takes 84 years to go around the Sun. The other is Eris (discovered in 2005), which takes 571 years to make it once around the Sun. They form a conjunction about once per century (it takes Uranus an extra couple of decades to catch up with Eris, despite how slowly Eris moves). And we are about to have that conjunction happen. The exact dates are June 9 and Sept. 25 of this year, and March 17, 2017. The events will occur between 22+ Aries and 23+ Aries, aligning exactly with birthdays between April 11 and 13.

### **The Revolution Will Be Strategized**

This is an era-defining aspect. Nobody alive has ever experienced it personally. The most recent iterations of this conjunction were 1607-08 (in Gemini), 1727 (in Scorpio), 1834 (in Aquarius) and 1927 (in Aries, on the Aries Point exactly). Perhaps people better versed in history than I am will see the pattern. There was a similar event in the early 1970s — Chiron conjunct Eris. This was a revolutionary moment, in that it was a time when what we now call second-wave feminism had some of its greatest moments. In that event we witnessed Chiron activating the potential of Eris.

You might think of Eris as bringing with it the turmoil and chaos of the postmodern age — characterized, for example, by the widespread belief that there is no such thing as truth, and that truth does not matter. This is not pretty and it can involve the takedown of many established concepts, *particularly of self-concept*. If you feel like you and the rest of the world are walking around clueless about who you are, that is an effect of Eris in Aries.

Now, Uranus is about to focus a conjunction to Eris, which will push this effect off the scale. This has been warming up for a few years, though we've been distracted by the Uranus-Pluto square that dominated the mental environment going back to 2008 or 2011, depending on what events you use to measure history.

Uranus conjunct Eris, building quietly for years, now comes into the foreground of consciousness. Here is the message: to live authentically, you need to invent a method. This is not simply about "be yourself and you will succeed at everything." That may or may not be true. However, being yourself and working with a conscious plan or strategy will go a long way — even if that strategy is to experiment until you succeed.

Below that level, there are ways you will change, emerge, blossom and, in a sense, change from within. This is one reason why your life is so incompatible with fixed concepts. You are an idea in motion; you are changing in ways that cannot be contained in your old notion of viewing the world. This can, and indeed is very likely to, influence every facet of your present being and your whole future.

Uranus conjunct Eris, an approximately three-year phase that has already begun, is one of those before-and-after aspects — where you look at your life in the years prior to, and the years after, and recognize that change has happened. However, since this aspect has not yet happened at full intensity, it's yours to use as creatively as you wish. And, since it's been brewing a while, you get to pick up the threads that have been developing since 2011 — that is approximately when you began to feel these waves of change.

Pretty much everyone reading already has Eris in Aries, unless you were born before 1926. So we all live with this energy daily; it's part of consciousness and part of our environment; it's what we think of as "the chaos of modern life." Uranus arriving in your sign in 2011 took that to a new level, making it nearly impossible to settle on any one idea, person, place or thing. As Uranus has approached its conjunction to Eris during that time, it's also made conjunctions to the natal position of Eris in everyone's birth chart — so we've been experiencing this for a while.

But now it's time for a test of truth: how willing are you to actually be the person you are, rather than something or someone else? Are you willing to take the risks involved, such as not being as popular as you might ordinarily be? Are you willing to be more controversial, more visible and someone obviously unwilling to go along with the game?

The astrology of the next two years makes this the much more viable option for you, though it will require you to take the risk of being unorthodox; of being different. This might seem like a social risk of some kind, where the game is about whether you're accepted by others. On one level that is true. But the real question involves the encounter between your beliefs and experiences that directly contradict those beliefs. You will either cling to this frail, lifeless but strangely powerful thing called belief — or you will allow yourself to grow and change as experience guides you to new realities. Something has to give. Either you dismiss the amazing potential you will be experiencing, or you will let go of beliefs that no longer serve you.

The beauty of letting go of those beliefs is that this process will put you in contact with a deeper layer of yourself; in fact ultimately that's all it will do — get you past belief into a kind of inner sanctum of your own spiritual reality.

### **Pluto in Capricorn: The Chaotic Opening**

Pluto in Capricorn, which began in 2008 and is about half over, is acting like a force driving your soul to emerge, to succeed, indeed to conquer. It's also driving the culture in strange directions and bashing up old concepts and institutions like Babe Ruth gone wild in Pottery Barn. When Pluto ingressed Capricorn, the first thing that happened was the financial crisis — the collapse of the world banking system.

If we need yet another reminder from your astrology that you live in a rapidly changing paradigm, there you go. Capricorn is one of the signs most personal to you, as it's your 10th house — second in influence only to your Sun or rising sign.

Pluto in Capricorn is not merely saying don't cling. It's saying there's not much to cling to. Not, especially, as the future unfolds, which it's doing at an unusual pace. Things long expected to

exist, structures we have lived with for years, are disappearing — things like classrooms, jobs, modes of communication, and the infrastructure of our country (at least here in the U.S., where it's crumbling) are being turned into mosaics that look and feel like something else.

With this, your concept of success must change, if you are to succeed. The first change is to be bold. Yes, you're an Aries and allegedly that's what you are. Yet there is a strange lack of confidence that can afflict your sign, such as if you hesitate right before you would otherwise succeed.

It's true that without the expected world as your clothing — which might also be influencing your family life — you may be feeling naked and unsure where to get some cover, much less a foothold. Keep at it. We are indeed in a time of vertigo and you may be far better situated and oriented than many people you know. Confidence does not mean being on top of the world every day. It's merely the willingness to dare, to try again, to make another move in the approximate direction of forward. It's the guts to have a goal.

On the most personal level, Pluto is inspiring you to do something unusual and original with yourself, your talents and indeed your life. That's good, because by all rights you are at your most impulsively creative, and it will be good to harness that energy.

One thing to remember is that there is plenty of room for you in the world. I realize that often the planet and all its activities feel like they're not taking any new applicants or too cool for an Inuit warrior (that is, an eskimo). However, Pluto in Capricorn has been doing a number on known reality, and the truth is many, many things are in the process of being newly formed. You will have ongoing opportunities either to initiate your own projects, or to get in on the ground level of something new.

The thing to remember is this may not seem like a smashing success; in taking part in something that is new or formative, there is a risk involved. I suggest you make sure you have money located in the right place in your list of priorities (toward the top, but not at the top), and that you leave space and time to dedicate yourself to projects or activities that are not necessarily established or successful yet.

We live in times of tremendous change, instability and indeed, on the psychic level, chaos. In such moments as this, many people crawl into their caves (mostly mental and emotional) and refuse to participate. There's supposedly too little certainty and it would seem, worst of all, a lack of a stable structure to cling to.

Right now you have the ability to thrive on change and uncertainty. During such intense moments of transitions, there is a decrease in predictability and an increase in potential. There should be a name for that, but nonetheless, you know what I mean.

What this takes is the ability to see what is not already there. Typically we humans will look at the world to find out whether there is something already established that we can involve ourselves with, or advance through in an orderly fashion. You need to look into the chaos and

see a pattern you can relate to; a pattern that already exists for you, but which you may have long denied.

### **Mars Retrograde: Is It Religion, or Is It Sex?**

In recent years, the whole ‘sacred sexuality’ thing has become a popular item in many places. It’s not new; it’s a pretty old concept (to wrap sex in some spiritual garb, to make it OK).

In contemporary times we might think of it as a new form of romanticism to have sacred sex exist as a popular concept. The root of the idea is ‘sex that god/goddess is OK with’. We might ask why such a thing is necessary, but all you have to do is read the *Book of Genesis* and you’ll see.

I will say this, and you might think of it as the theme of your whole reading: religious concepts are some of the most persistent in all of consciousness. And most of them involve sex. They tend to deal with the mysteries of death, and for as long as people don’t have their own, original relationship with that topic of existence, religion will jump in, take over and clog up the works. Saturn through Sagittarius will represent a significant reassessment of this, for those who are bold enough to allow the question to stand in their minds.

As for Mars retrograde — you know Mars is the planet associated with Aries by classical astrology, and will be retrograde this year. Inner planet retrogrades have the quality of shaping or defining our experiences of whole seasons or longer. Because Mars is involved, this is more personal for you, and calls for a close look.

The retrograde will begin in Sagittarius, describing one of two things: a spiritual question, or a question about your long-range plans. Sometimes, despite the movements of slow and influential planets, it’s the more personal bodies that can set the tone or the theme; and in a way Mars retrograde sums up a central question of your life. You might think of this as the question “Is this a spiritual matter or is it biological?”

Consider the metaphor: Mars, your planet — and also the planet of desire — stations retrograde in the sign associated with all things spiritual. You might conclude that this is about some form of sin. Sin is any concept that makes consensual sex wrong. This is not about sin: it’s about biology.

This is an explicit message to pull your search inward. You might be prompted to do that in the form of a quest for meaning. If you do this in a holistic way, it will be a quest for your source — for example to make contact with your true beliefs, or what you might think of as your original instructions. Those are contained in your biology. Everything vaguely spiritually meaningful is contained in your biology.

There, you know, you’re likely to make contact with your vision for your life. This may come on like a sudden storm of inner inquiry, taking you further and further back to your core beliefs.



But then something strange happens: your quest leaves the realm of belief and enters Scorpio, the realm of biological existence. This body you're in, the one that came to Earth now, for a purpose you're still discovering — the one that's susceptible to astrology and that can read words on a computer screen — is a biological phenomenon. You are a unique entity in all the universe, incarnate, with all your desire and mortality — capable of going anywhere from here, if you are honest with yourself.

As [Walt Whitman wrote](#) way back in 1881:

*Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the  
origin of all poems,  
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are  
millions of suns left,)   
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor  
look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the  
spectres in books,  
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,  
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.*