

The Quest for What You Know

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

As I begin this writing on Nov. 30, a climate change conference is happening in Paris. This is being billed as our ‘do or die’ moment — as our last chance to hold warming down to under two degrees centigrade. Heads of state from 100 countries are convening. Protests have been banned, due to the events of 11/13 — but people are defying government orders, facing arrest, teargas and sound bombs.

Whether this conference turns out to be historic, a breakthrough or a dud; an opportunity taken or another one squandered, the feeling of the moment, the sense of imminence and urgency, is the true spirit of our times.

When we think of issues like this that reflect the prevailing conditions of society and its structures, one astrological image that immediately comes to mind is Pluto in Capricorn. It has influenced everything around us, and in the most personal way it’s influencing you.

Global warming is the moral issue of our time. It is the essence of a Plutonian force to be reckoned with. There could be no bigger — it’s the closest we’ve ever come to a consciously-thought-through existential crisis. Others exist; rarely do they come to the surface. There never really was a discussion of nuclear weapons.

The discussion of global warming is late — and it’s been delayed by people doing the damage concealing the truth, then spreading the lie that this is merely all some natural phenomenon. Blatantly false knowledge has been offered and accepted as irrevocable truth, and now there’s a struggle to accept that truth or to deal with it in some way. Each on our own journey seems to face some similar existential question, which involves discerning what is true from what is not.

I mean this less in some absolute sense and more in the sense of what you have actually verified — of what you know and have observed personally. Some may say that ‘personally true’ means what you accept, and on one level they would be correct. I would say that personally true means what you have investigated, questioned, considered and determined to stand up to your own scrutiny — including a review of your reasoning process.

As participants were gathering on Sunday, Nov. 29, the Sun was exactly conjunct Saturn and square Neptune; by exact I mean to a fraction of a degree. Exact as in exact. When this happens, we know we have a direct correspondence between a global event, and an astrological event — which translates into something potentially personal and collective. Here we have another indicator of the times in which we live — and again it comes back to you and to Capricorn.

Know When You Don’t Know, and Check Your Data

Saturn is the planet most often associated with your sign (sometimes Mars is as well), and the current square of Saturn and Neptune is the most significant thing you will find yourself

navigating over the next 18 months. Yet it's also your most helpful navigational tool, if you learn to read its subtle cues (such as doubt), and if you're honest about what you strive to know and understand. Most of this reading will be based on this one aspect, however I will factor other events as well, events which will describe your options, opportunities and assets.

Under this astrology, the most important objective you can set for yourself is to think clearly. For you, thinking is vision. It's a form of seeing the invisible, observing the flow of time, and organizing your mind to create the best possible use of your energy (which includes time, money, effort, space and other vital resources).

Here is the catch: Clear thinking for you means getting your emotions out of the way of your thought process. Or, said another way, it means knowing what you actually feel, and what you actually think, as opposed to feeling something and therefore thinking you know it. Despite its hard-edged reputation, Capricorn is more emotionally-oriented than we've all been told, on the level of any of the water signs.

And this is especially true now, with Neptune in Pisces, for the very long haul — though in the spotlight now due to Saturn square Neptune. I will come back to all of this soon, so that the astrological metaphors and images give you some added ability to grasp these energies.

Here is the operative fact, something you can take with you and figure out how to sum up so that it fits on the screen image of your cell phone: Feeling is one thing. *Confusing feeling with data, with analysis, with clear strategy, is another thing.* Feeling counts; feelings count; emotions count — but only for what they count for. This can open the way to contact with your intuition, your instincts and your imagination. But these are not cognitive processes and must not be confused with them. One is not better than the other, or superior to another; they are different, they serve different purposes, and ultimately must support one another.

The way feelings intrude on thought is through wishful thinking, assumptions and denial. Feelings can lead you to bias your view of — or to toss out — the known data, or lead you to stop looking for information that may disprove your viewpoint. If you can keep a pulse on those things, you're already halfway to where you need to be.

The way feelings enhance thought is by adding a level of sensitivity when the logic seems to check out, but something is wrong. The feeling realm of intuition, imagination and instinct is much closer to the realm of creative visualization. It allows a level of abstraction that takes you off the usual grid, leading to more elegant solutions than you imagined possible.

This all said, it's also essential that you know your intelligence level. This does not require the brutal honesty that some may imagine. Saying 'I don't know' is a sign of both strength and intelligence. Saying 'I don't know but I'm going to find out' verges on evidence of genius and fortitude. Were I a professor, I would give extra credit points every time a student raised his or her hand and said 'I don't know' in response to a question.

Therefore, I suggest you make that your mantra, refrain from judging yourself for not knowing, and invest your energy in the determination to find out what you don't know. One of the most

serious flaws of thought is thinking you know when you really don't know, and that's the thing to be mindful of. You might start with the presumption that most of what you know is wrong, then investigate, seeking to substantiate or disprove. [In 2015 I published an article you can read called [Know When You Don't Know](#).]

One of the ways to learn is to listen, to read, to observe. It's more important, however, to express your ideas in some way and listen to the feedback you hear. Some will be based on opinion and some will be based on fact. The factually-oriented feedback is more meaningful to you. Opinions are interpretations of facts and fact patterns.

It's also essential to check your work at every step to make sure you're following the thread you need to be following; that you're on the right track, which means the right train. Thought does not need to be as rigid as a train on tracks, but it can seem that way. Hence you will need to pay attention. You must monitor your own mind for perceptual or cognitive errors, for denial, for blind spots and for missing information.

This takes greater honesty than most people are aware of. The smarter you fancy yourself, the more honesty is required. Think of yourself as a pilot. Imagine that errors count. Imagine that you have to get it right, and part of getting it right means making constant corrections, as you go, in real time.

In this reading, we're going to check in with Pluto in Capricorn and get an update on that very long process. More significant right now is that Saturn — the planet associated with Capricorn — is doing two things worth knowing about, which describes your current reality and that for the foreseeable future. I've been writing about this one for many years — let's start with something new.

Saturn in Sagittarius

As you may know, Saturn has ingressed Sagittarius. It's been in the process of doing so since late 2014, so you've had some time to get used to the change — though it's now going at full strength. For several reasons this transit is as tricky as it is potentially creative for you. You can waste a huge amount of energy trying to adapt in the context of limited information, or you can focus some well-spent energy on making a series of necessary changes.

Sagittarius is the sign before your sign. That is called your solar 12th house. The 12th house is like the background of everything. Think of it as the dream world that exists constantly when you're awake — but you can't get there as easily. But it's still there, with all the potential of the dream space, only it doesn't seem real. Yet it has a way of driving your consciousness in a silent, invisible way.

The 12th can be the house of things gone missing. It's the house that represents where all those socks went, when they didn't come out of the dryer. In more somber terms, a planet or luminary (Moon or Sun) there can represent the parent who was not present for you, due to mental illness or alcoholism. Seen another way, one or more planets there can represent secrets you keep from yourself (otherwise known as denial), or things you hide from the world. The 12th represents

more than this — for example, ‘parallel world’ experiences such as a mushroom trip, spiritual journey, intense sexual experience or certain creative experiences.

The 12th is a strange house. It’s nearly impossible for most astrologers to understand, and it’s associated with effects in life that are difficult for people to understand. It’s also the most interesting house. And it’s the house where you currently live, because Saturn, the Capricorn planet, is in that house to stay for the next two years. Let’s talk about that for a while, then expand the discussion into the rest of your chart.

Remember this: the central transit of your life, the master transit, the planet that’s the central processor of your astrological computer, is Saturn in Sagittarius in the 12th. For the next two years, everything is playing a supporting role, or in some way modifies, describes or elaborates it. In case you’re aware that Sagittarius and therefore Saturn fall in a different place in your natal chart (rather than the solar chart we are using for this reading), please consider what I am saying, and use it as a basis for understanding how this plays into your natal chart. The two viewpoints enhance one another rather than competing with one another.

It would be fair to say that as someone with Capricorn Sun or rising, Saturn represents you. If you have a Cap Moon and really identify with it, the same is very likely to be true. And now Saturn is in this house of strange. What this can suggest is that you have a sense of yourself ‘gone missing,’ and must therefore embark on a new phase of your search for self or soul; for mission and for meaning.

Yet at first you may not be aware this is what you’re doing. It’s not easy to notice the sensation of something missing. It’s a little like when a male friend shaves his beard, and you notice something is different but you’re not sure if it’s a new hat or cologne. Then you realize you can see his face.

With a 12th house planet active in your chart, you may feel yourself missing something but unsure what it is. One way to tell is that you’re experiencing a shift in priorities. You may, for example, start inquiring about certain elements of your past, your ancestry, or your psychological nature. You may find yourself having a spiritual awakening that is deeper than any prior ones. The difference is what you might think of as existential rather than a curiosity or luxury. If you’re feeling like you might drown without your spiritual connection, then you’re feeling Saturn in Sagittarius.

Another sensation is that of isolation. Saturn may be in the house of things gone missing, thought that can feel like the world has gone missing from you. The isolation aspect of this transit is one to work with carefully. As long as it’s happening, it’s essential that you focus your mind internally and get comfortable doing so (most people are decidedly not). This may, depending on who you are, be a real stretch. It may push your need for external validation, only to have that prove to be fruitless.

Seeking your own internal validation and learning how to find it will take time and practice. It’s also the best investment you can ever make in your own maturity, because it will change the purpose of relationships in your life. If you’re looking for relationships for companionship rather

than for validation, that simplifies things greatly; it changes the purpose of your encounters and puts them on something closer to level ground.

Yet you need companionship specifically on the kinds of existential questions you're asking. By existential, I mean questions about the nature of your existence. By companionship, I mean it will help to relate to those who you are certain know you exist. This may seem like an odd thing to say, but my take is that there are two kinds of people we may relate to — those who know we're here, and those who do not.

If you think this through, you may start to see the distinction.

In any event, Saturn in Sagittarius in your 12th house is the best image I can think of for *inner vision quest*. It's about gaining *insight*. It's about seeing into the dark. It's about learning that you contain a vast inner space, and that space is not empty. But what is there, you can only discover by actually going there and not avoiding yourself.

In this world there are plenty of ways you can avoid who you are, and I suggest you be observant about noticing them when they are happening to you. Set an alarm so that something rings a bell when you know you're avoiding yourself. If you're doing this transit right, you should be wanting a good amount of time alone, particularly in secluded or quiet places.

This is an excellent time for therapy as well. Most people are averse to therapy, preferring to 'go it alone'. While your charts call for solitude, they also call for a safe place to open up regularly and dependably. Friends do not count as therapists — ever. Anyone with a personal vested interest in you does not. They can be helpful but it's not the same. Teachers might count, but it depends on many factors, including their accessibility and their ability to take many factors into account, not just the subject seemingly at hand.

The Neptune Factor

One chart element that reveals the deeper nature of Capricorn is having Pisces on the 3rd solar house. The 3rd is the house of the mind, covering many cognitive and communications functions. Pisces, the most watery of the water signs, is on this house.

The result is some potential confusion between what it means to think and what it means to feel. Something that feels clear to you may be entirely foggy to others. Something that makes sense to you may be opaque to others. With this placement it's essential that you know how to explain yourself and that you be certain when you're understood.

Yet as an internal dynamic it's essential that you seek the maturity to know whether you're coming from a place of reason, or a place of belief. You may not care. You may feel that because something feels right, it's true enough. Yet as you've discovered many times, you cannot make this assumption.

Speaking as an editor and reporter with Mercury in Pisces (a similar placement), it's essential that you devote substantial mental and other resources to fact-checking and verification. If there

is such a thing as true enough, that would mean pretty gosh darned true, as attested by at least three sources (not including Snopes), spellcheck and the oldest person you know. Then go back and double-check again.

Said another way, there is a difference between belief and knowledge, and you must know that difference — not merely believe it on a case-by-case basis. This would be true for you any time.

Now Neptune, the most Pisces planet of them all, is in Pisces, and it's adding a massive ocean's worth of water to your 3rd. This can have many effects; for most people it will be to further cloud the difference between knowledge and belief; between fact and opinion. It would ramp up the effect.

Saturn is leaning into Neptune. What this is doing is pressing you to go past the whole concept of belief and get to someplace more solid, stronger and more grounded. Saturn in Sagittarius in itself represents a kind of transcendence of belief. With so much in Pisces, you could easily be pushed to 'solving' the riddles of existence with religious or spiritual dogma of some kind. By dogma I mean things that are supposed to be right, or true, by their very existence and which are not subject to scrutiny.

Once they are, they fall apart — and they will be. As the year progresses it will be increasingly difficult for you to believe what is either untrue, untested or merely accepted on faith. If you start to get 'lessons' that you're doing this, I suggest you mend your ways fast, because you are not only responsible for what you know — you're responsible for what you're supposed to know.

The Saturn-Neptune square will progress for a while, increasing the pressure on this very topic. Then Saturn will reach a square to Chiron at the end of the year, which will be like passing through a kind of initiation or verification. What did you believe and why did you believe it? This is the question.

In terms of religious and spiritual principles, how often do we really question them? A friend recently quoted me a Zen philosophy: "The world is a perfect place, It's our understanding that is imperfect."

I bristled. I've heard this one, or something like it. I asked him, "Can you see this may be Chinese empire anesthesia for the masses? Everything is fine — all these wars and slavery. You're the problem."

Look, it may be true that the world is perfect and that all we need to change is ourselves. But really, it sounds like rationalization, injected into people who already feel bad for no good reason. I am saying be careful. I am saying be the kid who asks the priest why he's saying what he's saying. There may be substantial temptation to accept some other narrative, some other story, than the one that is actually true for you — and lots of people will go along with it. That is a form of validation, but it doesn't make it true.

Chiron in Pisces and your 3rd house is saying: be clear. Focus and get documentation. Ask yourself why you believe what you do. Trace the history of your beliefs. Heck, you may trace

that history back to something that checks out. You may trace it back to the Rev. Jim Jones or Henry Kissinger, which would not make it inherently false — but you will benefit from the investigation, the more so if it's inconvenient.

Chiron is a path to knowledge. The knowledge you're aligning with is an inevitable meeting. You will get to the truth of what you think, what you feel and what you know. It's only a matter of when. I suggest you get ahead of Saturn square Neptune and think about Saturn square Chiron — and really make sure you know what you're thinking, and why, and how you got there.

Clearly there are times in life when you'll need to accept something on faith. There are times when you will need to trust your intuition. I am **not** suggesting that reason, rationality, logic and fact-checking are more important than intuition and faith. Rather, I am suggesting it's essential to know what is what; to know when you're using which of these approaches, and be real about it.

Say it out loud. When you're accepting something someone says based on trust, or when you're lacking all actual data and need to take a guess, at least openly admit that's what you're doing, so that you know for sure.

Uranus Conjunct Eris: The Emotional Dimension

Further illustration of Capricorn being more emotionally oriented than mentally oriented is this unusual feature: Aries, the sign of identity, is located in your 4th house. The 4th is about your sense of security — the place where you're supposed to feel secure.

We could read this a few ways — perhaps you've got a warrior's spirit about your home (handy if you ever need to do battle with the appliance store that delivered a defective refrigerator). You asserted yourself against your family social system enough to develop a real identity. You seek your identity based on how you feel. You prefer to identify with an inherent trust in who you are.

Yet all of this is what I would call instinctual body knowledge. It's 'the way things always were'. Now Aries has come under some profound transits, which are shaking up your confidence. The most significant of these began in 2010 and took hold fully in 2011 — Uranus in Aries. This seems to have arrived with a disruption of your previous way of life. It seemed sudden in some ways, but also necessary, as you can use complacency with who you are, and the need for stability, as a way of thinking you're 'safe'. If you go out of your way to be the same person one day after the next, that's supposedly better.

But that hasn't been working so well. Besides the fact that people (especially women, with rapidly cycling hormones) have a slightly different viewpoint and emotional experience every day, Uranus in Aries has served as a wave generator at the bottom of your psyche. You might think of this as a little earthquake machine that creates many occasions where your concept of who you are is shaken — and where the reality of who you are is both reactive and constantly vibrating.

The only way to actually feel safe is to feel those vibrations and feel what they are telling you, what they are guiding you to do and — most significantly — what and how they make you feel.

Part of the central message is to consider yourself someone who evolves rapidly, rather than who delays nearly forever before you decide to allow yourself to possibly make a change. Once you figure out this is about resistance, and that resistance is ultimately a source of unnecessary pain, this will make a lot more sense.

If you haven't figured this out yet, I suggest you do so soon, because intensity of the waves is only going to increase over the coming seasons — and there are likely to be a few 'big ones' in terms of discovering who you are. It would seem on some level that you still have to be shaken out of the habit of resisting not only change, but embracing the reality of the moment. And the more you do that, the more you are inviting higher-intensity shocks to wake you up. But this is not necessary — you can just as easily raise your awareness, focus on your immediate inner feedback and adapt to both your internal and external environments; in a sense, you can harmonize them, but this must be a conscious act. You can do it proactively, or as has so often happened, in the aftermath of changes you were not planning for.

There is nothing about your charts that is static or stable, but that's not another way of saying you must be a flake. In fact, you will seem less flaky to yourself and others as you learn to adapt more promptly and with the reduced resistance to change that's all about vibrating on a more expanded level. Said another way, the more open you are, the less the prospect of change, of creativity, or of creative people, will make you feel nauseous or panicky.

Part of this process involves identifying your many, many preconceived notions of how things are supposed to be, how you are supposed to be, and how others are supposed to be, and coexisting with *what is so*.

One thought that comes to mind is how much of this energy you are dealing with is sexual. Sex is more than a concept, something to talk about and something to think about. It is, rather, a natural feature of the landscape, like a river, a waterfall or in your case, a volcano. Pretending it's not there does not help. Living in harmony with it — which means in awareness of and sensitivity to its power — is the only thing you can do.

That might mean tapping into the energy you possess, and of course that's essential. It would help if you remember the extent to which what you feel as emotional movement is pushing you to express yourself creatively. Emoting is not really expressing. You begin to express when you are articulate, and above all honest, about what you are experiencing and what you want. Remember: Articulate AND honest. This is not about some inner, silent knowing, but rather actually connecting with yourself, and with others.

There are really two risks with so much Aries happening, particularly these planets. One is trying to convince yourself you're feeling something; the other is using appearances to mask feelings. Said another way, how you tell the world you feel is not necessarily how you feel, no matter how convincing you are.

Mars Retrograde in Sagittarius and Scorpio

There is one additional factor that this reading would not be sufficient without — Mars retrograde. This happens every two years. The most recent time was the “Mars effect” retrograde that I covered in the 2014 annual edition. You may [refer back to your reading here](#) to see my interpretation of the most recent Mars retrograde for your sign.

One reason Mars is an important planet for you to watch is that it’s like the second ruler of your sign. Saturn is officially your planet, but Mars is what’s called exalted in Capricorn. So Mars becomes a kind of extension of your sign — what I think of as a particular aspect of your sign: that is as a cardinal sign (as are Aries, Cancer and Libra).

Cardinal signs are the ones that tend to express initiative; or let’s say that where a cardinal sign is placed in one’s chart is a good place to begin the query for the kinds of initiative you might take. Seen one way, this is a factor of Mars — the planet of initiative.

Mars retrograde turns that inward for you. I would consider it a review of what you want. The retrograde begins in Sagittarius, your solar 12th house, and ends in Scorpio, your solar 11th house. I have to say, this is a fascinating mix of influences.

Let’s start with the 12th — which is like a parallel universe we inhabit all the time. Here’s the feeling of the 12th: you have a dream right before you wake up, and its ‘world apart’ seems vivid and clear and its strange logic somehow makes sense. But as your frontal lobe awakens, it filters out not just your memory of the dream, but also the feeling of that place. Yet as you go through the day you get little glimpses of memory of that feeling and space.

Everything processed through the 12th feels this way — so close, within you, but somehow inaccessible. One property of the 12th is that it represents ‘the pleasures of the bed’ — we know this from Vedic astrology, and it makes sense. Deep or intense erotic experiences seem to exist in that world apart, which can almost seem unreal after the experience is over.

Sagittarius brings in the theme of all things spiritual and religious. Mars brings in the theme of desire. How do these facets of life align for you? I believe most people underestimate the profoundly negative influence of religion on their sexual experiences, and on their relationships. Mars retrograde is taking you on an inquiry into this aspect of your life. You may be probing into some of your most vivid desires, and deciding if the prohibitions placed on you are worth honoring. You may also decide to consciously include sexuality on your spiritual path.

As Mars retrogrades out of Sagittarius and into Scorpio — a sign openly connected to sex and sexuality — it enters the most public area of your chart, the 11th house. You might think of the 11th house as including everyone you know, and a few people whom each of those people know. It’s the place in your chart where you are a ‘public figure’ in your own life.

Mars retrograding into this house, and then stationing direct there, describes the question of what people know about you as a sexual being: what they see, what you reveal, what you do and don’t want to reveal; what is plainly obvious; what you try to hide. I say this recognizing that you are likely to consider yourself a modest and private person. It may not be comforting to know your

sexuality is far more transparent than you think. By this I am not talking about the physical aspects of your sexuality (how you look, for example), but the inner content of your desires.

This is just one more example of how your inner truth and outer truth are coming into a long overdue, yet entirely necessary, alignment. If you feel shame about this, or embarrassment, or even the least reticence, I suggest you consider this in light of the unfair and toxic demand by nearly all religious teachings, passed even into secular society (that is, even if your parents were atheist scientists) that all sex be suppressed, hidden and/or denied. That is not its purpose, and that is not your purpose as a living, breathing spiritual, biological entity.

Your sexuality connects you to your full presence, your full self-knowledge, and your rightful place in your community. Cast the light of awareness into the shadows of ignorance. Live as if you are alive. So be it.