

Of Relationships, Projection and Perception

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

Your charts for this year are about relationships. That is the focus — on your engagement with the world, and with healing the patterns of your intimate contacts, even the very darkest ones. The intent of your charts, if you could call it that, seems to be about creating an ideal situation for yourself, something that feels good and that you can abide and thrive on.

Relationships have showed up as a dominant theme of your astrology since Uranus entered Pisces in 2003. You might say that was a watershed moment, marking a time before and a time after. You would benefit from a careful study of what developed and changed in your life in the phase between 2003 and 2010.

Yet in the past five years, there have been several major developments that shifted the focus away from what you might call unpredictability and confusion, onto healing. With each passing year, your healing mission has called you with greater poignancy, until now it is impossible to ignore.

As the aspects have developed, you have been invited to go deeper, and to ask more relevant questions not just about yourself, but about what happens to people and how and why we relate to one another the way we do.

This is good news. It is some of the most relevant subject area we humans can take up, since as in the words of Thaddeus Golas, “We are equal beings and the universe is our relationships with each other.”

One of the most vexing issues in relationships is projection. Projection is about seeing the traits of yourself in others — and not seeing them in yourself. Usually projection is about shadow material. But often people project the best of what they are onto others — their loyalty and compassion, for example — and then are in for a rude awakening when they figure out their projection screen just ain’t got the stuff, or that they’re not accessing it in themselves, anyway. In this way, good and trusting people can be burned, often. It helps to understand projection.

When this is looked at honestly, we are presented with a real question about how much of what we see in others involves the phenomenon of seeing people as we are, rather than as they are. This is lauded as (for example) getting to know yourself by getting to know others. But who really looks closely at these dynamics?

How do you see and experience a person for real, rather than as a figment of your imagination? When we fall in love, how much is falling in love with our made-up version of the person, how much is loving ourselves, and how much is about actually recognizing who someone is?

Sorting this out, and seeing with clear perception, is a primary theme of your charts. While this question is eminently personal for you, it’s something reflected in our entire culture. We are all

put under pressure to have relationships a certain way. Movies, television, magazines, our parents, our peers and innumerable other sources of influence send the same message. But unlike drug advertisements, we are not warned how often what starts as marital bliss ends up in the courtroom. We just laugh it off saying all is fair in love and war, without ever really questioning why this happens so often, or so dependably.

It's clear that projection is one of the most dominant effects of the relationship environment we share. Even if the equation is as simple as how men often project their femininity onto women, and women often project their masculinity onto men, it's worth looking at. That does indeed happen. Men and women are biologically different, but have more common ground than marketing culture would make us think. Difference is pushed with divide-and-conquer ambitions, with the result being to divide and weaken people, and cash in on their enhanced sense of incompleteness or inferiority.

Then people are left seeking in others what they do not find or believe exists in themselves. The search is always external. Which leads to...the marriage within.

In the Nature of Tantra: We Are Not Healed Alone

There is considerable misunderstanding of this thing known as tantra. I am not an expert, only an aspirant, though I want to emphasize three properties of tantric practice and how they relate to your chart.

The first is accessing male and female primarily as inner experiences rather than as outer ones. Most of what we currently do is project this. Projection is the basis of heteronormative culture. "I am a womanly woman, and that's a manly man. Together we make a whole person." We have all seen where that leads. It's the basis of sexism, homophobia, other-phobia, and a great many misunderstandings. Difference is made to be a way of life. It is emphasized and exploited until people feel they have nothing in common with anyone.

However, long before the current age of trans, metrosexual and gender bending, people figured out that sexual characteristics and sex roles were not absolute, and that most of them are ridiculous. We could argue that for the most part women have been denied full participation in society by these distinctions. But men have been denied full participation in their humanity.

Both men and women have, through the ages, figured out that they possess the qualities of both maleness and femaleness. The projection of characteristics specific to sex (most people say gender, but it really is sex) are at the root of our extreme projection of other.

So one objective of tantra is the calling in of sexual projection, and claiming one's dualistic sexual nature as a fully resolved inner experience.

How this looks in your astrology is fascinating. The primary chart I am using for your reading is that for the ingress of the Sun into Virgo (all of these readings are primarily based on the Sun's ingress chart). In that chart we see a few things: One is the substantial presence of slow-moving planets in Pisces, which include two healing-themed centaur planets (Chiron and Nessus), as

well as Neptune (the modern ruler of Pisces) and Borasisi (a contemporary point that reflects Pisces themes related to belief).

The reason Pisces is so significant in your chart is that it's the sign opposite Virgo. An axis of two signs functions as one entity. They are expressions of one another. Traditionally the sign opposite the Sun or ascendant is considered the relationship area. So instead of being perceived as one functioning entity, they are regarded as inner and outer; the 7th is the house of partners and enemies. Yet when we take astrology to a deeper level (for example, as taught by Alice Bailey in *Esoteric Astrology*), it's easy to see that the pairs of opposites work together. Part of the evolutionary journey is the integration of seeming opposites.

So whatever shows up in Pisces will be something you're working on integrating. And there is plenty going on. But there is more than the obvious. For example, Chiron is a planet closely associated with Pisces. It's currently in Pisces, so that's describing an extension of yourself into the realm of the other. Whatever Chiron in Pisces represents, it is relational but it is not something separate from you.

One way to experience Chiron in Pisces is what Carolyn Myss describes as woundology — that is, wounding as the basis of relationship; a kind of injury fest. It is in essence the use of one's wounds as a weapon. **By one definition**, it is “using the wounds — the hurts, the traumas, the unfortunate events, the slings and arrows of life in general — in order for the wounded person to manipulate others, elicit sympathy or compassion, to gain a measure of power and/or authority, and/or to claim allowance for their disagreeable actions.”

This happens a lot, and it's not necessary. It's not even useful. With a little awareness, Chiron describes common ground and can be used to establish the intention to heal. What Chiron suggests is that you have unusual insight into others, because you have that same insight into yourself.

We have an echo here of the **A Course in Miracles** lesson, “When I am healed I am not healed alone.”

That teaches, in part: “Healing is freedom. For it demonstrates that dreams will not prevail against the truth. Healing is shared. And by this attribute it proves that laws unlike the ones which hold that sickness is inevitable are more potent than their sickly opposites. Healing is strength. For by its gentle hand is weakness overcome, and minds that were walled off within a body free to join with other minds, to be forever strong.”

To do this, it's essential we call back our projections. For that to happen, we need to recognize them when we see them. I would propose that you will have never had an easier time doing that. Relationships can only take place on common ground. And while it may seem like the common ground of the relationship is what you and the other share, actually the common ground is you.

The Inner Marriage: Mercury and Jupiter

One of the most important functions the energy field known as Virgo provides is that of integration. All of astrology speaks to this, but Virgo is where the matter really comes home. The real work of bringing opposites together as one entity or experience, particularly on the mental level, happens in Virgo. This extends into Pisces, where you might say integration of opposites is fully resolved — Pisces seems to be the most comfortable with its own dualism.

In your solar chart for the year, there's something beautifully apropos of this theme: Mercury, the traditional ruling planet of Virgo, and Jupiter, the traditional ruling planet of Pisces, are in a conjunction. So this is the perfect image of what it means to be a whole person. You could say that any experience of otherness, or any challenge in a relationship, can be resolved by embracing your own wholeness.

Previously, I mentioned calling back projections, and I mentioned there seems to be a question of whether we get anything but projection in our relationships. As soon as you become aware of the phenomenon of projection, and see how pervasive it is, it becomes clear this is the trick of the mind that seems to define all of existence.

A Course in Miracles puts it bluntly: *projection makes perception*. In other words, what we tend to see (that is, to perceive) is our own projections. We hear what we hear through our filters. This is why it's so difficult to convince anyone of anything they're not already convinced of. It can be maddening at first to discern what is real underneath those projected visions; who the real being is beneath what we think we see.

The conjunction of Mercury and Jupiter looks not only like taking full responsibility, it looks like the sacred marriage within. It looks like the healing of so much that you have, in the past, ascribed to outer causes and sources. As you embrace this, it will be easy to see what is really an environmental factor and what is something you personally possess.

It will also be easier to take responsibility for what is in your outer environment, and who and what you invite into your environment. As someone who has counseled women in their relationships for about 22 years, I can tell you that bad choices abound; at the same time, there is great reluctance to undo them.

That may involve either wanting to fix the other, and self-blame. If I seem to be saying all this dealing with projection business is about blaming yourself, I assure you that is not what I am saying. I am actually saying you are now free to take full responsibility for your choices, and to exercise the power of decision more boldly.

As you get to know yourself, it will become easier to see what you want and what you don't want. It will be easier to see you have options. There is a profound state of balance described by Mercury conjunct Jupiter; a sense of self-completion. This may not manifest immediately but it's something you can work with, something real and palpable. At least you can work up to it, or use it as a model for what is possible. It's describing an authentic potential.

Since this is a conjunction — two planets occupying one degree — that is an invitation to check the Sabian symbol for that degree. The Sabians are a set of 360 symbols, one for each degree of

the zodiac, each of which offers an image and tells a little story. I use the ones interpreted by Dane Rudhyar. These symbols are best used as food for the intuition.

I have to go to another office and look up what it says for 27 Virgo, where the Mercury-Jupiter conjunction takes place. OK, this is a masterpiece of esoteric writing; let's see if I can decipher it. The initial image is, "A group of aristocratic ladies meet ceremonially at a court function."

Dane interprets this as, "The ability to carry on a revered tradition in order to perpetuate cultural standards of excellence."

Then he explains that in a monarchy, the king or queen is considered an extension of cosmic law, and their role is to keep society working in line with the cosmic order. On the feminine side, there are certain rituals of courtly life that serve to uphold the resulting social order. He writes, "Dignity, elegance and respect for formal rules are essential. We may consider the formalism obsolete and meaningless, yet when it ceases to be observed, the culture breaks down. Even now in this age of crisis and world transformation, there may be times when honoring formal procedures can be of great value for the disordered and rebellious mind."

By the way — this resonates with my theory that any useful revolutionary has strong Capricorn in their chart. It's necessary to have that grounding in tradition in order to make authentic change. I'll come back to this — in these years, your Capricorn is exceptionally strong.

Let's finish with what Dane has to say — in conclusion, that this symbol presents contrast between the "sacred" ritual and the "profane" one. "Our overindividualistic and confused new generations find it useful to study Japanese tea ceremonies, flower arrangement, judo, etc. The undisciplined need to learn refinement."

Now, remember we are talking about the conjunction of Mercury, your planet, and Jupiter, your seemingly opposite or relationship planet. You might call this a kind of ritualized self-completion. We might say selflove is the prerequisite of love; we might say those who come from a space of either inner completion or the agenda of seeking inner completion are more prepared for relating and more compatible with others than those who do not. There is also the reminder to honor both the sacred and the profane, which leads nicely into my next topic...

The Other Two Essential Elements of Tantra

Pisces, and by extension Jupiter, represent your environment. One could also say the 7th house is relational and the essence of that is your relationship to your environment, including the people you share energy with. All houses are environments, though the 7th is your most immediate environment — that which surrounds you, and the people you come in contact with in direct, intimate situations; it's the house of face-to-face contact.

Jupiter is the embodiment of those relationships and that environment. And, placed in your sign, it's about internalizing these things — experiencing them, and understanding they are part of you and you are part of them.

For a tantric practitioner, existence is erotic. You don't live so much as you fuck and imbibe the world. This is not about handling existence with barbecue tongs. It's about soaking in the reality that you experience, and soaking it in you. In this process, you exchange essences with the world, creating a new and unique substance.

This is what your charts are describing.

The third element of tantra I will cover is embracing the taboo. In classical tantric practice (which is different than the how-to of Kama Sutra), that which is forbidden is embraced. In tantric practice, participants might have sexual encounters outside their caste — with someone of lower or of higher status. Vegetarians might eat the forbidden fruit of meat. Spiritual purists might experiment with drugs and alcohol.

This is all designed to guide people out of their thought boxes and their experiential limits, and to lead them to a new place of shifted consciousness. Most enlightenment is designed around some concept of purity. If that has ever felt like bullshit to you, maybe you're noticing something. There is a place for discipline and restraint. But despite the teachings of nearly all religions and countless gurus of various stripes, that place may not be nirvana. If I can't eat pussy in nirvana, what's the point? If you cannot rock out and do the things you're drawn to and the things you love, how exactly is it paradise?

I suggest therefore that you consider the real, actual world — and its people, and your experiences — to be your spiritual path. This is not growth in the abstract sense of the word. This is not the goal to be a better person. It's the part of yoga that's the bit about actually breathing. I mean actual engagement with existence that leads you toward experiences from which you learn, grow, and open up to the beauty of your own life, and of the world, which are intimately related.

Yes, to do this you may have to burn a few books, and send a few sacred cows out to pasture, where they will like being actual real cows who eat grass and bugs and worms (cows are not vegan).

I recognize that the options you may have among your suitors, partners and other intimates is a little, well, weird. You may not really feel like you can relate to the people around you. Two of them are represented by centaurs (Nessus and Chiron); one is represented by the sea god Neptune; and one is a crazy, little planet named for a deity in a Kurt Vonnegut novel (Borasisi). Yet if you see these things as expressions of yourself, or of some factor in yourself you're not quite wanting to accept, these people will make a lot more sense to you.

They all look like mentors of some kind. Nessus is by far the most, uh, intense of the lot. Nessus represents some influence compelling you that responsibility for your own existence comes back to you, or else it has nowhere to go. This is different from blame — this is not about condemnation; it's about resolution and completion.

Neptune will have a way of emphasizing isolation at different times. Yet if you feel closely and intimately, this is a kind of cosmic isolation that puts you into contact with something much vaster and wider than what you think of as yourself, or of the limits of known reality. (Mercury-

Jupiter in aspect to the Galactic Core do the same thing, perhaps even more palpably.) Stay in contact with that vaster thing! Explore any isolation willingly and curiously; swim deep into yourself to find what you seek.

I am talking about tapping your innate wisdom and power of healing. You already contain your environment and all that it has to teach, and your experience of life is a kind of exploratory mapping out, testing of reality, and the mixing and melting of new substances as you unfurl your reality into time and space.

The Pluto Factor: Relaxing Into Your Creativity

Virgo is known for its seriousness and attentiveness to the things that matter. One element of that is having Capricorn on your 5th solar house. In other words, Capricorn is five signs away from your sign, and the 5th place (another word for 'house') is about fun, freedom and frolicking. Yet Capricorn there is not exactly supportive of that, being a bit serious itself, and located in a zone of the chart where you're supposed to have the freedom to be a child.

On this topic Capricorn is interesting, as this is the sign noted for serious, mature young people and for silly, fun-loving older people. Except now Pluto is moving through Capricorn, which is one of the factors most poignantly changing your life. What Pluto is doing is unearthing your prime creativity, and drawing out of Capricorn your ability to be young — now.

With this, we are in the territory of breaking taboos, mentioned above. We are also in the territory of how you go about using tradition, as described by Capricorn. Pluto is at once an invitation to honor tradition and to turn it on its ear. These are best done at the same time. Up-ending what has always been done is also a way of honoring it. This is not about anarchy but about making sure you balance change and stability in the same gesture.

In practical terms, this might feel like breaking your work routines so you have time and space to do something more creative, such as art, adventure or sex. This is not merely an option. I would go so far as to say with Pluto in this region of your chart, we're talking about something on the level of a growth necessity; an evolutionary necessity.

Speaking of practical, the combination of Virgo and Capricorn in your chart drives you to be just that. Now, however, you're being drawn, guided or driven in the direction of art for art's sake, sex for the sake of sex, and fun for the sake of fun. This will be good for you, and it'll also shift your orientation on work, encouraging you to make it more like play.

You have the perfect setup for tapping into creative sources that allow you to feed your work with some imagination. However, from an erotic standpoint, Pluto is saying it will be both fun and healing to crack the shell of your inhibitions and allow yourself to experiment.

This is going to feel like breaking taboos, and you may notice you feel some guilt as a result. That's the main clue you're headed in the right direction. There is a rumor that guilt is proof you're doing something wrong. This is actually a self-serving device on the part of people who

would strive to control you with your own guilt and resistance. I realize this is counterintuitive. I realize guilt itself seems like proof, but rarely is this logic questioned.

One point of tension you may have is the feeling that you absolutely must hold onto your integrity. In a sense that is true, but this is not about having fun or not; it's about your agreements.

Some of the most important information coming from your chart is to be vigilant about what you promise and what is promised to you. You can pretty much do anything you want, in the context of your agreements. There is equal emphasis on holding others to their contractual obligations, and holding yourself to your agreements, particularly financial.

To do this, it's essential you understand what people feel their interests are. In other words, you must understand everyone's agenda — and you must understand your own agenda. There's no wiggle room here, because on this one theme, there's next to no difference between misunderstanding and serious problems, particularly involving matters of taxation, finance and shared resources.

I would recommend that no matter how much money you think you have or do not have, you work with a financial professional, whom you have vetted carefully. The purpose of such a person is to help you see your options and to tell you something you do not already know. *In my opinion such professionals must always be paid by the hour and not by percentage.* Further, their engagement must be performance-based; if someone advises you well, keep them and if not, jettison them.

Maintain security in all facets of your financial life. Pay attention to where your money comes from, where it goes, and what the daily status is. But more than anything, do not make promises you cannot keep. Hoping to keep a promise where money or a contract are concerned is not enough.

The Security Question: What You Were Taught

There is one last angle of your chart calling for some interpretation, which is in your 4th solar house — that of home, security base, family and family of origin. The 4th tends to represent the past more than the present. That is to say that material in the 4th describes experiences from the distant past as they have translated into your present emotional experience.

Said another way, the 4th house is a filter, through which you try to experience life as it is now; though what you get is the coloring — and, in a sense, bias — of the past. The way to work with the 4th is to seek deeper understanding of your family of origin on your life. Before I get going with an interpretation, to that end, I would recommend a book called [**A General Theory of Love**](#).

This book presents one of the most useful approaches to understanding how our early influences (that is, before age two) can shape our neurology for the rest of our lives — until we get a handle on the process. It also presents the most relevant ideas I've ever heard about why therapy works.

Where I am not with the viewpoint of the authors is on their approach to using mood-altering drugs, though this is a minor point in the book, more of an afterthought.

The point they make — that I would emphasize — is that what we call therapy is really about the cultivation of trust. In other words, no matter what the specific technique or approach, the thing learned in therapy is trust, which turns out to be one of the things people need to learn the most. The therapy relationship becomes a model for how to trust others.

It would seem you are having some questions or perhaps occasional crises of trust. With Saturn moving through your 4th house, in an ongoing square to Neptune, you may be experiencing a kind of ongoing drone reminding you this is something to pay attention to. In your chart for the year, Mars is conjunct Saturn. It's also square Neptune at the same time — which in your 7th house of intimate relationships.

You could have few better illustrations of a scenario pushing all of your questions about trust to the surface, and I suggest you take the opportunity to address them. This is not done with a jackhammer or with a caustic substance. Indeed, it is done slowly, carefully and most of all, reflectively. One of the first things to address is anger about past betrayal. It may seem like you have a blind spot that feels like the place where you trust — but then people take advantage of you.

This is very likely to be about an emotional relic from the past that is still aggravating you, and still acting up from time to time. If you recognize its inherent nature as something that happened — or some condition you encountered — as a child, it will be much easier to address. If you try to address it purely as a function of the present, it will be difficult because you're not likely to address the root of the matter. I would add that a good bit hinges on your ability to address this issue, this year — so if you know of a way you can make progress, or if you know of a practitioner you can work with, I suggest you focus on this.

It will also help to make every new relationship one where trust is the central theme, beginning with your choice to trust rather than to test someone's trustworthiness. Your trusting them IS the test. Then you get to see what happens. If someone violates your trust, it's important to make that clear, in a direct and nonjudgmental way — then see what happens.

Right now the entire world is struggling with this issue, and the over-the-counter remedy is to either be violently skeptical, or to allow yourself to be injected with whatever substance some authority figure says you need. Neither of these approaches will lead you to where you want to go, which is a state of balance and awareness of your surroundings.

The real question is always how you actually feel. Most of the time people are well aware when they should have a concern, but often second-guess themselves, make up a story or deny their feelings. Remind yourself that you know what you feel, and to use what you know. This is more revolutionary than it may seem on the surface. It may take more courage; but courage, like the heart, is a muscle. And that, with trust, are the only ways to find the love you want and need.