

may place upon our own sensations.

For the psychotherapist, as well as for the philosopher, astrology offers a challenging framework in which to work. It can describe many of the complexities of human interaction for which other disciplines have no effective vocabulary. It is not tied to one perspective of the psyche, it does not seek to pathologise or reduce,

nor are its roots embedded in one specific age or culture. Astrology is flexible enough to encompass both the rational and the phenomenological approaches to understanding our existence, and it allows for both the analytic and the experiential. For these reasons alone it deserves much closer attention by all those concerned with exploring the processes of life.

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## ***Chiron — The Bridge between Personality and Soul***

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**O**n the 1st of November 1977, the astronomer Charles T. Koval discovered a new planet lying between the orbit of Saturn and Uranus. Because of this position he called it Chiron.

In mythology Chiron was a Centaur, son of Cronus (Saturn) and grandson of Uranus. The versions of Chiron's myth differ slightly but in essence he was the result of the illicit union between Saturn and a nymph called Philyria. Philyria had changed herself into a mare to escape Saturn's amorous advances, but taking the form of a stallion he managed to mate with her, and at the same time deceive his wife Rhea about the whole affair. Philyria was horrified at giving birth to this creature with human head, arms and torso, and the body and limbs of a horse, and totally rejected and abandoned Chiron. The god Apollo took pity on him and brought him up in a cave below Mount Pelion. Chiron grew up to become one of

the wisest beings, gifted in the art of divination, herbal medicine and music as well as archery and other martial skills. He was mentor and teacher to heroes like Achilles and Jason. Then one day Chiron was accidentally wounded in the leg by one of Hercules' arrows, poisoned with the blood of Hydra, the nine-headed monster. The wound was not fatal because Chiron was immortal, but from that moment on he was in great pain, and all his endeavours to cure himself with the herbal potions he knew so well, and had used so successfully on others, were to no avail. Ultimately he made a decision to end his suffering by sacrificing his immortality.

At that time the Titan, Prometheus, had been condemned by Zeus, the ruler of Olympus, to be chained to a rock because he had dared to steal fire from the gods to give it back to humanity. An eagle came to the rock every day to devour his

liver, which regenerated itself nightly. Chiron offered to undertake the mortals' journey into Hades in exchange for Prometheus' release, but after nine days Zeus decided to reinstate his immortality and Chiron's image became the constellation Centaurus.

According to the myth, Chiron received his first wound when he was rejected by his mother, who could not accept him because he was different. Inevitably that led to his own non-acceptance of the rejected, different, part. The myth does not in fact mention much interaction with other Centaurs. Centaurs were known to be savage and uncouth beings, of unruly and drunken behaviour, totally dedicated to the pleasures of the flesh, and Chiron was therefore very much an outsider. Furthermore, it seems that his upbringing, placing great emphasis on qualities of mind and spirit, had neglected his more earthy, animal side, and had probably caused a powerful split between his human sensibilities and his centaur nature, the physical evidence of which had so horrified his mother.

Did the wound then occur to remind him of his animal self, heightening the pain by reminding him of that other early rejection? There is something very poignant about this very wise being who cannot cure his pain. Even the immortality that came to him from being the son of gods has now become a curse. And when he realises that his immortal nature is impotent faced with endless physical pain he opts for mortality and surrenders himself to Pluto's realm. Here he is in the underworld, domain of the Great Earth Mother, that long before the

gods of Olympus embodied both aspects of life and death. Thus he is healed, raised to an immortality that reconnects him to the gods whence he came — and also freed is Prometheus, the creative spirit within.

The discovery of Chiron coincided with increased use of holistic medicine, advanced healing therapies and new approaches to psychotherapy. There was greater use of practices for treating body and mind in a physical, metaphysical and spiritual way, endeavouring to reconnect the disconnected self, beyond mere adaptation within society, towards a higher quality of life and death. In this context the use of both psychological and soul-centred astrology can be a powerful tool. It can help us to understand that the onset of change and crisis is part of a larger picture, and relates to an individual's growth and their psyche's purpose. This type of astrology, rather than predicting, urges the individual towards self-knowledge. It requires astrologers to be on their own path of growth, and to have enough knowledge and intuition to be able to direct the individual to other



therapies that might help in the search for wholeness.

Psychological astrology works with myths such as that of Chiron, and other symbols and archetypes represented by the constellations and planets. These are part of our consciousness, and can help us to integrate our light and dark side. The planet Chiron is very prominent in charts of healers and therapists that are consciously undertaking their own journey of self development — a journey which often mirrors the stages of the myth, as the person comes to an acceptance of the wounded self, leading to a shamanic initiation in the underworld. An illness or a moment of acute crisis can bring a painful acceptance of the limitations of the physical plane, and the mortal self, in that act of surrender, can begin to reconnect with the forgotten soul.

The age of Pisces has left us a legacy of victimhood, with a feeling of impotence in the face of world crisis. People starve or die of incurable diseases, and the ecological balance of planet Earth is being slowly destroyed. Who is to blame? We are all wounded to a greater or lesser degree — for that is the human condition — and we need to become responsible for ourselves and our environment if we wish to make a difference to the whole. As we step into the age of Aquarius, the latest discoveries in the fields of physics and metaphysics tell us that we create our own reality through our attitudes and beliefs, and becoming conscious of this allows us to be responsible for what we create.

Challenging planetary transits pinpoint crises of reorientation both on a physical and collective level, and astrology can help people understand and acknowledge that an alchemical process is taking place. Chiron's position in a chart shows where the wound or split is and how damaging it is. It also indicates how we can undertake the journey to release our Promethean energy and reconnect us to the immortal side of our selves: the soul. The soul has chosen the body as the vehicle for growth, and as the body breaks down with all sorts of diseases, the mind — god of this age of science and technology — can no longer cope. An important Chiron transit can be a shamanic crisis of initiation. The myth of Chiron can then offer the symbol that is needed to provide a bridge between the personal and transpersonal. To some, the personal healing journey may seem an option, but when the choice is between being a healer, a wounder or a victim — and victim and wounder are always very closely bound — can we really afford to ignore the reality we are creating?

