

SECTION TWO: QUESTION 7: MYTHOLOGY

Knowledge of the myth associated with a planetary principle can greatly enhance our understanding of that principle, as astrology understands that there is synchronicity in the naming of a planetary body and its astrological meaning.

When Chiron was discovered in 1977 it was named after the centaur known as The Wounded Healer.

*How do the myths and archetypes associated with mythological Chiron amplify our understanding of the astrological principle that we know as Chiron?*

Since Chiron's existence was revealed on 1 November 1977, the world of astrology has discovered a latent, unforeseen need for the Chironic principle – the wounded healer archetype. Symbolised by the key glyph, Chiron has since unlocked a door into insights and connections previously unimaginable, now clearly pertinent to our modern astrological world where a birth chart reading has become an insight into our psychological make-up and an offering of counselling and healing for the client.

From the beginning, astrological thinking about this new planetary body viewed it as embodying the meeting of polarities. Chiron was discovered at the time of the pagan festival of Samhain, when the veil is lifted to the spirit world; and on the Christian Festival of All Saints Day. In astrological circles, this conjures insights into the themes of the physical world vs the unseen world; and the earthly vs the divine. And with the name 'Chiron' given, mythical archetypes playing out in the story of Chiron offer us hints to interpreting it in the birth chart.

And it begins with an animal act of violence: *Cronus, the Titan god, chases Philyra, a sea nymph. To escape his lust, she takes the form of a mare. He responds by taking the form of a stallion, catches her, consummates the encounter, and from this union, Chiron is born – immortal like his parents, but a centaur, the lower half of his body a horse, the upper half, human.* Within Chiron, several polarities clearly operate – the animal, instinctual, suffering, mortal and the god-human as divine, spiritual, immortal.

The unusual orbit of Chiron functions differently from other planets. It bridges worlds. Crossing the orbits of two other planets – those of the ‘social’ planet Saturn and the ‘transpersonal’ planet Uranus – it links the visible and invisible worlds. In the birth chart, Saturn, the furthest planet visible to the naked eye (named for the Roman version for Cronus, Chiron’s biological father, Greek god of Time) is all about the limitation of earthly form, authority, mortality, illness, and pain. Uranus, invisible without a telescope, (named for Uranus, Chiron’s grandfather, Greek god of the Universe) is about liberation, transcending authority to find a connection with a higher principle beyond the limitations of form and rational thought. And Chiron’s path runs between the two.

In its very nature, Chiron is different – not a planet, not an asteroid, not a comet ... more recently classified into a whole new category named after his genus – ‘Centaur’. And the Chiron archetype is all about the experience of being ‘different’: uniting an earthly incarnation with a higher origin and kinship; trapped by his animal form, yet immortal like the gods; his divided nature – not uncultured like other centaurs, yet not a god; singled out by his DNA ... a difference inherent in his being and unchangeable.

*Born as the result of a violent rape, ignored by his father, such a shock to his mother at his birth, she couldn't face raising a child with a 'handicap' and begged the gods to release her, so they turned her into a linden tree.* Chiron understands not belonging, rejection, abandonment, being the outsider, cut off from his family and his kind, the outcast, the refugee, the maverick, alone. His wounding moves beyond physical infirmity or handicap, it's primal, psychological, emotional, spiritual. Chiron in the chart, is where we are challenged to find courage, strength and resilience within to deal, not just with the physical pain, but with the knowledge we are estranged or different. Here we must build our self-reliance.

*And then the young Chiron is adopted by Apollo, taught music, the arts, archery, astrology, prophecy, medicine and herbalism; becomes known as a great healer, mentor and teacher, wise, gentle, gifted. Euripides calls him 'a sage'. Many students come to learn from him ... Hercules, Jason, Asclepius, Achilles, Ajax, Peleus etc ... and they go on to become great heroes.* This Chironic theme is around becoming wise, learning from suffering, mentoring, nurturing others in need, passing on the lessons of experience. His work here is the conventional archetype of the healer whose approach is knowledge- and care-based, whose role is to facilitate the healing. Here Chiron grows from student to teacher, becoming master of the words, the understandings, the herbs and medicines, the love and care ... the accoutrements of healing, but the actual healing experience? The essential nature of Chiron in the birth chart is about more than conventional healing.

Then ... *Chiron is wounded in an accident by one of Hercules' arrows dipped in the blood of the Hydra, an unhealable wound causing him horrendous pain, but he is immortal; there can be no relief.* The snake is a symbol for our earthbound bodily nature, the primal human bottom line ... physical pain, suffering, death, and yet the dilemma is that Chiron cannot die. This is the acute flare up of Chiron's chronic eternal predicament – he is animal and yet divine – and in his assimilation as healer and mentor, we had somehow forgotten it. The Chironic wound in action in the birth chart is our Achilles heel, the wound that never heals, that is part of our being, in our DNA. The wound which we can learn to manage, utilise its lessons to mentor others, even at times forget about, but which never leaves us and resurfaces afresh when we least expect it. Chiron, master of the healing arts, is unable to heal himself.

*And then, in his pain, Chiron offers to change places with Prometheus, a Titan who as punishment for his crime of stealing fire from the gods as a gift to mortals, has been sentenced to be chained to a rock for all eternity with an eagle daily eating his liver UNLESS an immortal will willingly go down to Tartarus in his place. Zeus accepts Chiron's offer, releases Prometheus and honours Chiron with a place in the sky as the constellation of Centaurus.* This is a particularly interesting twist on the story, because of its insight into the nature of the true Chironic healer. This is taking healing to a whole new level – here the wound is not actually his weakness, but his strength; his greatest teacher. It's the source of his compassion and what lifts him to true divinity ... but paradoxically, it's also what keeps him human. I see a clear parallel here between the story of the crucifixion and the resurrection – the image of Chiron chained to Prometheus's rock (like the Cross), the

descent into hell followed by the raising him up to the heavens. And who is Prometheus? Wikipedia says he is the creator of mankind and its greatest benefactor, stealing fire (knowledge? free will?) for humanity. Effectively, the wounded Chiron is releasing the Promethean spirit, that Uranian desire for freedom for mankind. Like Christ, Chiron had a conscious choice. Endless pain and misery (and possibly blaming Hercules, Cronus, Philyra or whoever might possibly have had a hand in his suffering), OR acceptance of his lot, sitting with and feeling the physical pain, but transforming it spiritually, opening his heart to compassion, service and liberation. This is the ultimate archetype of the wounded healer and it embraces the idea that true healing can only come from within, and from embracing one's destiny in the broader scheme of things.

Chiron represents the 'rainbow bridge' between the human rational world ruled by Saturn's pain and limitations, and the transpersonal Uranian world of freedom, individuation and service to humankind. Prior to Chiron's discovery, healing involved external sources. Now the potential for the wound to co-exist with and BE part of the healing is bringing that transpersonal dimension into the modern picture. Within the Chironic cycle, we see the waxing square, the opposition, the waning square, and the Chiron return (all irregular in their advent depending on when the individual was born in Chiron's march through the signs) as the periodical re-awakening of the Chironic wound as a primal initiation or spiritual passage and part of a graduated personal healing and evolution. The role of Chiron in Prometheus's story suggests that the Promethean spirit isn't enough to bring Heaven's fire down to Earth for mankind's use. The Chironic wound needs to be experienced physically and made conscious before spirit can be released from its instinctual imprisonment.

Chiron's introduction in the late seventies to the readings of western astrologers parallels the emerging acceptance into our culture of holistic approaches to healing. Shamanic healing, eastern techniques of spiritual evolution and healing such as yoga and meditation, homoeopathic healing, psychic healing, reiki, transpersonal psychology, and of course, humanistic and psychological astrology are techniques which take the responsibility for cure firmly away from the 'healer' who becomes more of a facilitator. Healing comes fundamentally from within – from the insights clients have and the choices they make; from shifts in their energetic field and the spiritual transformation of their inner world. The Chironic process then is about firstly, honouring the wound as symbolic of the fracture between the physical human nature (where pain, illness and death are inevitable) and the spiritual divine nature; and secondly, understanding healing to be the heroic lifelong journey to unite and transcend this duality in the face of the pain of impending mortality and the compassionate desire to serve humanity.

“The unleashing of the Wounded Healer Archetype is first experienced as a crisis that leads to radical personality change, spiritual awakening, and ultimately to the wisdom that comes from being of service to others and our planet as a whole.”<sup>1</sup> Chironic healers are aware that breakdown is potentially the precursor to breakthrough. This understanding is relevant to every level of astrology whether we're working with individual physical or psycho-spiritual wounds, generational distress, environmental degradation, humanitarian or socio-economic

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<sup>1</sup> “The Wounded Healer Archetype: A Breakdown is a Breakthrough” by Don Oscar Miro-Quesada Solevo, 2015. Published in *Path of the Universal Shaman: Transforming our World through Sacred Living*.

suffering. Before healing on any level can begin, we must first experience, sit with and know the pain from within, and ultimately the transcendence, wisdom and healing will come.

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Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiron>, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prometheus>