

Chiron: Your “Higher Moon”

By Joyce Mason

© 2005-2009, All Rights Reserved

Before Chiron was discovered, humanistic astrologer Dane Rudhyar predicted that there would be a new planetary body found between Saturn and Uranus that would act like a “higher Moon.”

It was exactly in that location where the “centaur” Chiron was found on November 1, 1977. [1] For 15 years, no one knew just what Chiron was—a small planet (planetoid?) A comet? For a while, astrologers called it a cometoid for its composite nature, since it exhibited characteristics of both. Only recently did astronomers uncover that Chiron’s discovery heralded a whole new class of similar objects, found beyond Neptune, born from the far-off Kuiper Disk. The planetary system is now known to be surrounded by a vast disk of planetesimals. The disk is believed to begin a bit beyond the orbit of Neptune and to extend outward toward the much more distant, spherical Oort Cloud, from which all comets were once believed to come. Over time, astronomers realized that the short-period comets, like Chiron, could not evolve to their present orbits from the Oort Cloud, but rather, must come from a more flattened and much closer reservoir. More than 20 Chiron-like objects have now been found, at least one far beyond Pluto. Astronomers believe there are at least 10,000 such bodies, and that the Kuiper Disk contains billions of comet nuclei and perhaps a few larger objects up to the sizes of Pluto’s Moon or Pluto itself. [2] (For a more recent theory, read [Chiron and Pluto: The Comet Brothers](#).)

Chiron was named two years after its discovery in honor of the wise centaur in Greek mythology, half-man and half-horse. The International Astronomical Union has adopted the name “centaur” for these compound small objects, in Chiron’s honor. [3] Many other centaurs have been discovered since Chiron’s entry into our awareness in 1977.

What does this astronomy lesson have to do with a higher Moon? More than you can imagine. First, Chiron was discovered at 3 Taurus, the traditional degree of the Moon’s exaltation. It was the only planet under the horizon, in the 4th (the Moon’s) house, and the Moon was in its own sign, Cancer. These were the first hints of Chiron’s lunar nature.

Chiron’s discovery in our time allows us to experience what it must have been like to be an ancient astrologer, trying to ascribe meanings to the planets. Planets don’t come with built-in astrological descriptions like the laundering directions on our t-shirts. Astrologers derive meanings primarily from three sources: the astronomy of the planet, the mythological character for which it is named, and cultural events approximately 15 years before and after discovery. The mythical link is the most fascinating, for it is the most lunar way we explore outer space from an astrological perspective. The names chosen for planets are somehow magically correct, despite the fact that it is the privilege of the discoverers to name them, often hard-core scientists who don’t believe astrology is

the least bit valid. Myths "live" in the collective unconscious, so it makes sense that the astronomer would "channel" them unconsciously.

Mythical Chiron was a teacher and mentor of many famous heroes such as Jason, Hercules, and Asclepius. Because of the wound Chiron accidentally incurred at the hands of his most beloved student, Hercules, Chiron the planet has become best known as "the wounded healer." Despite his skills as both an herbalist and surgeon, because Chiron was immortal, he was unable to heal himself and suffered lingering pain. He was shot in the leg with an arrow as Hercules fought off the wild centaurs (a different breed from Chiron altogether) at a marriage ceremony. As the story goes, the wild beasts smelled the festive wine, which brought out the worst in them. These other centaurs were untamed beasts who gave no second thought to rape and mayhem. Arrows flew as Hercules protected the bride from being ravaged. It was a stray arrow, dipped with the poison of the many-headed Hydra that produced Chiron's incurable wound.

It is fascinating that astrologers have stayed as stuck on Chiron's woundedness dimension as Chiron himself was stuck in his chronic wound. (Note the resemblance of that word to "Chironic.") This is a vital aspect of Chiron's story, but there is much more to it. Chiron was the son of Kronos (Saturn) and the sea nymph, Philyra. Kronos was married to Rhea, but became enamored with the nymph, so he turned them both into horses so that their affair could go undetected. (He turned Philyra into a Philly, so to speak.) Thus, Chiron was born in his half-horse, half-human condition.

When she first laid eyes on him, at the moment a mother normally first bonds with her baby, it's reasonable to imagine that Philyra was horrified. She considered her son a freak and begged the gods to turn her into anything rather than force her to raise this "thing." (You'd have thought she had learned her lesson about shape shifting.) The gods obliged and turned her into a linden tree, which has heart-shaped leaves. [4]

Kronos was already long gone before Chiron was born, so Chiron's father never really knew him—his absent father's rejection was once removed—more indirect. But the reaction of Chiron's mother is one of the most heartless, all-out rejections imaginable. What does this part of the myth mean to us?

All the key words and concepts about Chiron refer to wholeness—or how to achieve it. Obviously, from the beginning, considering the myth, we come into this world feeling rejected and alienated at some level. One of Chiron's major astrological meanings has to do with bonding issues and their opposite—a sense of separation, feeling different—like a misfit. For Chiron, it all started with mother—symbolized by the Moon. That brings me back to Chiron's astronomy.

Astronomer Mark Bailey from the University of Manchester believes that Chiron is "the mother of all short-period comets." [5] In other words, Chiron was once whole and all other relatively short-lived comets broke off from Chiron. (Chiron's mass appears to be a comet nucleus, but it orbits just like a planet—an outer planet, at that, given its position,

and with all the astrological influence that implies concerning personal and planetary evolution.)

Like the planet Chiron, we were once whole, cruising the cosmos as free, unfettered spirits. [6] Then, like the centaur planet, we were sucked into a dense body, into the Earth's orbit, where our mission is to rediscover our original oneness with the other comet fragments. Thus, our heritage from Uranus (Heaven) is brought to Earth (Saturn) while we struggle to remember who we really are (and recover a little bit of Heaven here). Like Chiron, we often feel stuck—between Heaven and Earth and in mythical parallel, by the “slings and (especially the) arrows of cruel misfortune.”

This issue of “rough landings” was brought down to earth for me in a brilliant presentation by astrologer Brian Clark. [7] Our first relationship and bonding experience is with our mothers in utero. Then, we are cast out—she “rejects” us—and we are thrust into an alien world. We feel rejected for being ejected. As babies we operate almost entirely from our subconscious, and at some level, the original wounding of birth can linger, life-long, if we don't rebond outside the womb with our mother and others. From that point forward, life is a quest to feel at one again, both inside and outside of ourselves. Chiron tells us, both in his myth and astronomical properties, that he is dual, and it is the pain of duality—of being divine in human form—that gets to us from the beginning. In practical terms, it continues to plague us until we can [integrate our many opposites](#)—good/evil, masculine/feminine, human/divine—and so on.

When it comes to the Mother Comet Chiron, there are Moon metaphors everywhere. In the last paragraph, we were sucked (suckled) into the orbit (orb/breast) of Mother Earth. The most profound cultural event related to Chiron's sighting in 1977 is “the New Age.” This, of course, is a total misnomer for there's nothing new about it, only the rediscovery of many lost esoteric arts we can associate with our more feminine, lunar side. Even though Chiron was a male and conducted an all-male heroes' school on Mount Pelion, he clearly was at one with his feminine side and wanted his charges to learn about theirs, as well. His education was holistic and included not just the martial arts, but the creative arts, as well. He taught in a balanced way, the full spectrum of skills, as he was instructed himself by Apollo and Artemis in the guise of the Sun and Moon. The discovery of Chiron coincides with men getting in contact with their animas, helping rear children, like the many Chiron foster parented. There was the matriarchy, then there was the patriarchy; now we have a chance for true integration. That takes developing our recessive polarity as well as our dominant one—the anima and animus in everyone.

A little known fact is that Chiron married—a sea nymph (it ran in the family) named Chariclo. The nymphs or Nereids were very psychic, among the most lunar beings described in Greek mythology. They had one daughter, Thea, whose name means, “shining one of the Moon.” [8] She was known for her gift of prophecy, and Chiron himself was an astrologer, who presumably turned out heroes because he could encourage them to develop their greatest gifts by casting their horoscopes.

This is one of the greatest paradoxes about Chiron from an astrological perspective. In our wounding lies the key to our healing, and it all has to do with feelings (Moon). We are taught to suppress how we feel, from little on, and those stuck knots of unresolved pain often rule us from the subconscious where we are unaware of what causes our knee jerk reactions to certain incidents that repeat past patterns. So we stay stuck in ritualistic responses, to the detriment of our growth. To be in a body is to feel, and Chiron is associated with the pain of embodiment. We use the expression, “a free spirit.” It takes a lot of living to learn to be free within the confines of flesh and blood—to feel merged with the other beings, despite this fleshy armor with all its foibles. Just trying to move through the thickness of matter can be a chore. Some part of us remembers when there were no walls (bodies) between us. That is what we crave and take so long to learn. It is a state of mind. Separation is really an illusion.

Ironically, our Chironic sore spots are also our power points. When we do the brave work to release past pain, we often discover our greatest gifts to contribute—where we can be a hero, which after all, was mythical Chiron’s job to produce. Some examples are the stutterer who over overcomes his disability to become a great statesman; the bereaved mother who forms an organization to help find missing children; the person from poor roots who makes it to the top and now sends kids from the ghetto to college.

I recommend studying Chiron in your chart with these triple metaphors in mind—its astronomy, myth, and the cultural events around its discovery. Any of the material in this or other sources that lights up “in yellow highlighter” as you read it, is a big hint about the meaning of your Chiron. If Chiron is angular, or highly aspected, ponder what you were doing in November 1977 for even further insights. When you uncover a “sore power point,” massage it gently, but most of all, keep your sense of humor.

If you’ve wondered about my puns and playful asides, they’re more than just for fun. Besides being “the best medicine,” laughter is physically releasing and enables us to “chuckle up” locked-in pain. (Examine the content of a comedy routine sometime and notice just how many parts pain go into the making.) The greatest thing I learned from my own mother was to laugh at myself. And when we laugh together, we are joined. We see each other as beautiful, no matter how unique we are or different from the next person.

You’ve got to be there for yourself, even if your mother or father wasn’t. If we can become our own positive parents and nurture ourselves in the best way possible through our Chironic wounds, we will discover our hidden gifts and positive personal power to give back to society—nurturing the bigger family of humanity. I believe this is the “higher Moon” Dane Rudhyar meant.

NOTES:

[1] Discovered at 10 a.m. in Pasadena, California.

[2] Stern, S. Alan, “The Chiron Perihelion Campaign,” *Sky and Telescope*, March 1995,

pp. 32-34.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] O'Brien, Dale, "The Myth of Chiron," audio tape, recorded at The Mountain Astrologer's 1991 Planet Camp in Philo, Calif.

[5] "The mother of all short period comets, " *Discover*, February 1991, p. 9.

[6] O'Brien (See note #2).

[7] Clark, Brian, "The 8th House: The Sacred Site of Eros," UAC '92, Bulldog Audio, Inc.

[8] Clow, Barbara Hand, *Chiron: Rainbow Bridge Between the Inner and Outer Planets*, (St. Paul: 1987), p.3.

This article first appeared in Chironicles in April 1995.

~~~~~

**Joyce Mason**, is an astrologer and versatile writer who has specialized in Chiron and the sign of Virgo for over 20 years. Read her many articles on these and general astrological topics on [The Radical Virgo](#) blog. Her other blog, [Hot Flashbacks, Cool Insights](#), focuses on "spirited living" and the cosmic signs that direct us comprise our personal GPS or God Positioning System. She loves interaction with readers and welcomes your e-mails: [joyce@joycemason.com](mailto:joyce@joycemason.com).