

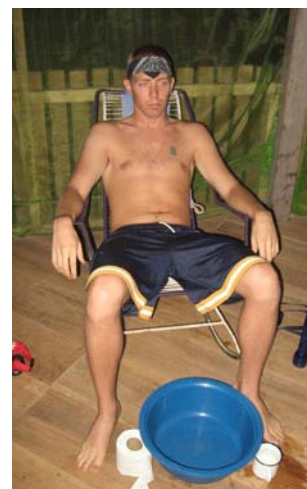
CHIRON IN PISCES: The Mystical Basis of Medicine

By Adam Elenbaas

As a young astrologer beginning my second full time year of professional counseling and teaching, having just completed my Saturn return, I don't pretend to have a full grip on Chiron, let alone many other planets and astrological riddles that have presented themselves in my first, say, 500 sessions or so. However I believe that my ideas about Chiron, the most substantive of which appeared to me just as Chiron entered Pisces fully last winter, are perhaps reflective of both a new generation of spiritual seekers and our understanding of spiritual medicine.

In 2005 my personal spiritual seeking took a turn for the explosive when I traveled to the Amazon Jungle to drink a mystical psychedelic plant medicine called Ayahuasca. I was looking for something spiritually substantive, an actual peek at another dimension or another reality. I was also looking for something that could help me purge a number of drug habits and a fundamentalist Christian upbringing. Ayahuasca certainly did the trick. Comprised of several plants from the rainforest, Ayahuasca is a highly purgative and visionary tea the natives of the Amazon have been making and working with ritualistically for many hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. I had of course dabbled with psychedelics at home first. Being an opiate and alcohol addict (Neptune is in my 8th house in Sagittarius!) I was immediately impressed by the psychedelic experience and felt it could somehow liberate me from addiction. Far from recreational, my first psychedelic experiences had illuminated the Jungian shadows of my psyche (which was something I had only read about in grad school classes). However I knew the context wasn't right. I knew that even my intellectual ability to cite people like Jung or Huxley as a justification for my psychedelic dabbling wasn't right. It felt tricky. So I sought the authentic (or as close to authentic as one can get in our rapidly globalizing world) shamanic experience with psychedelics in the Amazon. I found some real life, old lineage shamans administering Ayahuasca and I drank my cup.

In the first hours of my experience I vomited things that felt as substantive as actual opiates out of my mouth, and I also cried and screamed out things as abstract as Calvinism and Jesus idolatry and repressed anger. My visions were multi-dimensional and archetypal. They were far more than just "trippy" cartoons or goofy pictographs of my own jarbled mind stuff (my MFA professor would later say to me, "make sure you don't write your Ayahuasca visions like the animated caste of Hindu gods turning around in psychedelic mandalas; they are clearly more than that!"). The mysterious active ingredient in Ayahuasca, DMT, is endogenous to the human body and is excreted in big bursts at birth and death and in dreams. Otherwise DMT remains somewhat quiet in the human blood stream. When taking Ayahuasca in the middle of the jungle my first night, without having ever studied much yoga philosophy or any esoteric science, I remember thinking "This is my third eye opening. I'm walking into Narnia. This thing people talk about is actually real. There is an actual dimension of psychic reality; it's like some kind of fluid medium that exists all around us." Such novel insights were few and far between compared to the actual quest that evening, which would become a search for composure and acceptance in some of the darkest spaces I had ever visited within myself. Screams and moans and by morning the feeling that I had glimpsed something incredibly numinous and yet as gritty as bullfrogs and tree vines.



The Author in the Amazon

So what does this have to do with Chiron in Pisces? Well, my Astrology project, Nightlight Astrology, a donation based Astrology School and Counseling center I launched in Manhattan this past year was opened as Chiron transited the cusp of Pisces. Our doors opened to the public just as Chiron entered Pisces fully, followed closely by Neptune. Both planetary transits also occurred on the heels of a national book tour I had completed; the message of my tour had been very much about new ways of understanding "medicine," in particular plant medicine.

To me there is something of the Chiron in Pisces energy that has imprinted itself upon the way in which I've been doing astrology and talking plant medicine. Within several ceremonies into my Ayahuasca study I began to connect with, literally feel down to my bones, the pull of the Moon upon the waters inside my body. I'm a Cancer, so this lunar Ayahuasca moment was key to understanding my sun sign as well. Up until that point I had only ever read about my sun sign in magazines. My astrological inquiry began almost immediately and the archetypal landscape of the planets was taught to me by the juxtaposition of studying great masters like Tarnas, Forrest, Wolf and Green in between chart observations and deep nights in the heart of Ayahuasca ceremonies.

I'll never forget what the first shaman I ever worked with in the rainforest had to say about the nature of medicine. What he said is also what I've come to understand as the true Chirotic "medicine" archetype.

"All medicine is based on an understanding of the purposefulness of suffering, not just the redemption of healing. Learning medicine isn't just about healing your wounds. It's about facing the fear you have that your wounds or that suffering in general is not purposeful. You can't learn medicine until you learn to face the fear that suffering is meaningless. You can't learn medicine until you learn HOW to suffer, how to be in the suffering fully, not just how to get high on the feeling that comes after it passes. All good medicine is based in a firm and unafraid relationship to suffering."

As a young astrologer knowing this medicine truth, or at least believing this very firmly myself, I have found it hard to take very seriously most of the literature out there on the planetoid Chiron. People say, "Chiron is a wound." Other people say, "Chiron is where you're going to be a healer," as if we need any more clients coming into the shop with the delusional belief that they have special healing abilities just because they have special wounds. Still more complex explanations say "Chiron is a nagging something or other that you'll just have to deal with over and over again." To the extent that learning medicine means having a relationship to fear and suffering, not a dominance over but a listening and an actual relationship to fear and suffering, I agree that Chiron can appear as a nagging wound. However, the observation I've made in chart after chart is that Chiron's sign, house and aspect placements teach us not only where we will suffer repeatedly but HOW to do so in a way that yields medicine, that yields a kind of immunity to the fear of fear or the suffering of suffering. Chiron (as far as I've observed) asks us to know, experientially, that suffering is an aspect of evolution. If we learn how to suffer then we learn how to evolve more gracefully. This concept, at least in the Amazon and among many indigenous cultures, seems to be directly in line with the actual word "medicine." More simply reiterated, "medicine is nothing more than right relationship to fear and suffering."

The most simple delusion around the subject of Chiron I've tried to clean up in the Nightlight classroom and among my clients is the idea that we all have special wounds which make us into special healers. This has always felt to me like woo-woo astrology. Especially in the new age communities of New York City, where I live and practice, I've noticed that Chiron is a favorite planet among people who have a certain egotistical delusion about both the importance of their woundedness and their potential as some kind of new age rock star. Mostly in sessions I try to help people like this understand Chiron's placement in their chart as a message about how to have a right relationship to fear and suffering. This right relationship is what yields medicine, which should not be confused by the old centaur and his status among Greek myth characters as the greatest physician of all time. What we should notice about the Greek Chiron myth more universally is that Chiron chose suffering and death in order to save Prometheus. Prometheus, in his fire theft dilemma, represents the idea that real progress is punished by damnation or torture or perpetual suffering. It takes someone like Chiron to take the place of Prometheus. Prometheus to me is like the 1960's, and Chiron is like the answer to the 1960's immaturity. In the 1960's we see people trying to "break on through to the other side." To some extent they did. But, as I've seen in my counseling practice, many of those breakthroughs led to breakdowns and disillusionment. Many NYC suits are old hippies chained to the side of their promethean cliff. Chiron, being somewhere

between Uranus and Saturn is the integration point between structure and the breakdown of structure. Chiron seems to say, "create a relationship to suffering and fear" and by doing so we take Prometheus off the cross. Change happens, real transformation, when we actually experience the breakdown, not when we force it or when we reflect back on it from a place of redemption, the high feeling we get after the suffering is over (I permanently healed that wound, I stole that fire = I skipped a step). Chiron fills in all those "skipped steps" evolutionary astrologers love to talk about by teaching us how to actually become the skipped step, how to become the suffering.

Up until this point I believe that people have understood the non-dualistic, Piscean state of consciousness, say since the 1960's, as something that liberates or washes away the "structures" and "prisons" of the dualistic, material realm. The problem is that Neptune comes in and out like waves. What we glimpse in the Piscean realm is only as good as what can be brought back and incorporated into the Saturnian world we occupied while we visited the Piscean. The shaman from the jungle once said during a ceremony, "All visions, no matter how astral or non-dualistic are happening from your body on planet earth." I agree. I believe that Chiron asks us to know intimately the way in which all worlds combine to create this thing we spiritual people love to call oneness. When we see Neptune and Pisces as oneness or fusion in contrast to other planets who do not represent oneness or fusion we lack imagination as astrologers.

I believe that Chiron's sojourn with Neptune into the sign of Pisces will ask yogis, new agers, shamanistas, and secular materialists alike to get over the idea that oneness exists in contrast to duality. I believe Chiron in Pisces will act homeopathic. People who sniff self-righteous, cloaked dualistic comparisons and judgments from new agers will be validated. And many secular-materialists will begin to see the mystical or non-dualistic cracking through the rusty armor of their defense mechanisms. The increasing ability of Mercury retrogrades to teach the mechanics of mysticism during its worldwide internet wackiness over the next years should play nicely into this same motif. Uranus is in Aries but Pluto is in Capricorn sextile Neptune and Chiron. I think we should expect to see temples and corporate structures both coming down in equally ironic and meaningful ways. What is holy and elevated as more "divine" or Piscean in one moment will backlash in the next (electing a black president and lording our progress on sell out t-shirts only to incite anger and the creation of a Tea Party). This coming and going is not just taking down structures but it is continually integrating and complexifying what progress and evolution actually looks and feels like. Evolution and progress is linear but non-linear at the same time. People need to feel this, not understand it, in order to know medicine.

So far the most concrete, practitioner tools I could offer based on these developing thoughts (and although I am writing passionately here I do admit that my observations are very young and obviously still forming) are as follows. I hope they are useful or at the very least could provoke good conversation among my peers and elders.



1. The Chiron in Taurus Generation

Those of us who were born in the home sign and first years Chiron was discovered in will probably have the most to say about what this planet means on the symbolic level, both theoretically and in how we live our lives. Therefore I feel that most of the best research on this planet is yet to come. I expect that when Chiron returns to Taurus much good literature and human examples will be blossoming.

2. Chiron by Sign

Chiron by sign is an indication of not just how one is likely to meet the spirit of suffering but "how" one should learn to be firm and centered in that suffering. I find that it is very useful to recommend that my clients learn to be with rather than dress, treat, or avoid any persistent wound, fear or suffering they experience around Chiron's sign placement. The best remedy is relationship.

3. Chiron by House

Chiron by house is an indication of what sphere of life one is likely to get to know suffering. Same thing applies. I tell my clients not to avoid suffering in this area of life, don't avoid this house but examine it, be with it.

4. Chiron by Aspect

Chiron by aspect is an indication of where suffering is likely to web outward archetypally from Chiron's home placement, what other planets will be most intimately involved in the quest for right relationship to suffering and fear.

5. Common Questions

How do you come to a right relationship with fear? How to you move into fear and suffering? Does healing actually ever come?

My answers are straight forward: you come to know fear and suffering over time. The reason Chiron nags is because you can't use a technique to get into right relationship with suffering. The best gauge of a right relationship with fear is not the absence of fear but the absence of the fear of fear. We're learning to take Prometheus off the side of the cliff!

As Chiron transits Pisces I expect our understanding of fear and suffering, of dualism and non-dualism, and of Chiron itself to deepen and integrate. However, I also expect that if all of my astrological insights on the subject turn out to be fluff that I will laugh at myself and then blame it on the fact that Chiron was traveling alongside of Neptune! ☹



Adam Elenbaas is an author and astrologer living in New York City. After earning several graduate degrees, Elenbaas published his first book, **Fishers of Men: The Gospel of an Ayahuasca Vision Quest** in 2010 with Tarcher/Penguin books. On the heels of his book tour in 2010, Elenbaas left his career as an art therapist and came out of the Astrological closet. He opened his own private astrological counseling practice and a donation based training school in NYC. In its first year the **Nightlight Astrology** studio has attracted 30 full time students to its one-year study course, seen over 500 donation based clients, and hosted a number of reputable astrologers, including: Erin Sullivan, Eric Frances, Ari Moshe Wolf, Eric Meyers, John Oliver and others. Nightlight's goal this year is to start peeking its head into other astrology groups and hopefully making many new friends and colleagues around the USA. <http://www.nightlightastrology.com/>