

Preface to the 3rd edition

My initial task in preparing this revision was to include the new astronomical discoveries relevant to understanding Chiron. This was an enjoyable and relatively straightforward process. The next task proved to be a bigger undertaking, and more fascinating, than I had anticipated. While updating the final section, 'Spirit of the Age', it became apparent how much the world has changed since the first edition, written in 1987-88. Perhaps appropriately, Chiron was in Aquarius as the revision began; it was completed with Saturn opposite Uranus. The first edition was written when these planets were conjunct, in late Sagittarius, conjunct the Galactic Centre.

Over these last decades health, or the lack of it, has become a political issue, commodified and immersed in the vested interests of powerful industrial and pharmaceutical concerns, whether overt or hidden. Taking responsibility for our own physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being can be a radical political act in these times where legislation and standardised medical practice often support or even create ill-health. Also, rapid cultural change has been facilitated through access to personal computer technology. It is now easy to find 'alternative versions' of events, both historical and topical. Although the 'information age' provides powerful tools for indoctrination and state control of public opinion, it can also assist us to see through collective delusions and prejudices, including, most importantly, those which relate to medical issues. Today, the key themes of Chiron are being dramatically enacted on the world stage, for all to see. The 'healing journey' is no mere abstraction, but a need which has become sharply focused on many levels.

In this edition, a new section on the astronomy of Chiron features the discovery of the Kuiper Belt and its symbolism, and includes mention of two of the many new 'Centaur' bodies. The ephemeris of Chiron has been omitted, in favour of a compilation of other technical information, perhaps harder to find. Since the advent of the internet, most readers will have access to the ephemeris resources detailed in the Bibliography section. The discussion about rulership has been significantly altered, and some general material condensed or re-worked.

Much of your pain is self-chosen.
It is the bitter potion by which the physician within you
heals your sick self.
Therefore trust the physician, and drink his remedy
in silence and tranquillity:
For his hand, though heavy and hard,
is guided by the tender hand
of the Unseen.

Kahlil Gibran

Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

The 'morphic field' of Chiron has been nourished over the last two decades by many astrologers experiencing at first hand how its process works, and sharing their insights with each other. Readers familiar with earlier editions will find here an expanded context, many new ideas, new chart examples, and clarification of material previously offered. Apart from an increased emphasis on the significance of ancestral material in the understanding of Chiron, the basic meanings, associations and interpretive content have not been substantially changed.

Finally, interspersed throughout this revised text are some suggestions about working with the self-healing process, in addition to providing a separate bibliography of resources for this purpose. The astrological material and meaning of Chiron truly come alive when connected with the living process of our own healing journey.

Introduction

The message of Chiron seems more relevant now than ever, representing as it does the wise and loving awareness that reveals our interconnectedness with all Creation. This is the basis of healing, to *make whole*, and Chiron signifies the experiences whose urgency prompts our spiritual awakening. From this basis, consciousness flowers, healing is encouraged, and miracles are witnessed; we are also empowered to face the darkness and suffering within ourselves, in others, and indeed in the world at large. The motif of the Centaur, half animal and half human, represents the periods of deep transition that we experience personally and collectively; the process of Chiron reveals our suffering and indicates what needs release and healing. When we must relinquish the past we know for a future which beckons from the unknown, a threshold struggle ensues. We pause for however long it takes to purify the heart and gain sufficient clarity and courage to proceed. The destination of this journey is nothing less than the deepening connection with our own True Nature, always present, but sometimes obscured from us.

Since Chiron was discovered in 1977, there have been enormous changes to the Earth and its peoples, accompanied by a veritable explosion of celestial discoveries. Astronomers no longer sit out on frosty nights under a starry canopy, but are sequestered in rooms humming with computers and radio telescopes; using infrared spectrometry they peer vicariously into the invisible realms of the firmament. New discoveries are now commonplace: asteroids, Plutoids, Centaurs, Kuiper Belt Objects, Scattered Disk Objects, and many others cascade into view. New galaxies, indeed, even new universes, jostle into the picture. We no longer inhabit a humble 'solar system', or even a grand 'universe' but a 'multiverse' of astounding complexity. *Our contemporary period rivals the Copernican Revolution in the extent of its cosmological revisioning.* In tandem with this, the connection with our own individual experience has perhaps never been more important. The further 'outward' the human endeavour reaches, the further 'inward' we need to go on our journey of discovery, for balance to be sustained. In the 'Emerald Tablet' it is said: "As above, so below. This is the

Miracle of the One.”¹ In the world of diversity which we inhabit, this Oneness is revealed as changes ‘above’ accompany changes ‘below’ and vice versa. Chiron’s process leads to the appreciation of this Oneness. His very image depicts it.

At the time of this revision, Pluto has begun its transit through Tropical Capricorn, and the announcement in 2006 of its ‘demotion’ still resonates with controversy. As we shall see in the next chapter, the community of scientific astronomers has provided a breath-taking ‘metalogue’² of Pluto and other celestial objects, especially Chiron and his new-found companions, the Centaurs, progeny of the Kuiper Belt. Meanwhile, the Saturn Return of Chiron’s discovery has occurred, suggesting a certain ‘coming of age’, and making this review seem timely.

Chiron’s discovery between Saturn and Uranus marks it as a portal or gateway, a threshold between the visible and invisible worlds, a true place of initiation and the expansion of consciousness that invites us to make a quantum leap of awareness. The astrological perspective it represents embraces both Saturnian and Uranian principles and also goes beyond, inviting a higher order of synthesis. While life is a ceaseless process of change (Uranus), we also live in the world of separate forms, structure and limitation (Saturn) whose density and intransigence we must deal with. And so there is suffering. The grating between our inability to accept things just as they are (Saturn) and our desire for things to be different (Uranus) is indeed our own ‘cutting edge’, just as Saturn defines the edge of the classical solar system comprising the visible planets.

The psyche is located in time and place by ‘Fate’ in the guise of parental and ancestral influences, social and educational conditioning, and by the spiritual inheritance, karma and choices we bring with us into this life. Yet its spiritual substance is also limitless, fluid and in process, amenable to the influence of wise choice. In physics we find a useful analogy: matter appears as consisting of either particles or waves, depending on how it is viewed. The individual horoscope represents what we are here to work with; although its pattern is ‘fixed’ at the moment of birth, it too is in a process of unfolding, symbolized by the cycles of transits and progressions. There is a mysterious reciprocity here, for we also respond to the journey in a manner congruent with the core patterns of our own horoscope.

Chiron’s discovery has synchronized, in astrology and the wider culture, with the integration of the perspectives of depth psychology. Dane Rudhyar pioneered this approach, later expanded by the work of astrologers such as Liz Greene, Steven Arroyo, Howard Sasportas and many others. However, the roots of this lie in historical precedents going back almost a thousand years, for example in the *Centiloquy*, ascribed to Ptolemy, and later in the work of Marsilio Ficino. Chiron’s process is not about the diagnosis and description of pathology, but concerns how we relate to our experience, and what we ‘make of it’. True healing is beyond method, technique and even outcome. The ‘fix it’ model of Western technological thinking is transcended by the realities of Soul and Spirit, and the deeper mysteries we encounter on the journey of healing. Rather than trying to pre-empt, ward off or deny what pains us, we may be called to work with it consciously. In so doing, we participate in the alchemical *opus*, the hero’s journey, the search for the philosopher’s stone or the finding of the long-lost kingdom. Working skilfully with our own experience renders us more accepting and transparent to life, and Chiron addresses this process.

... Necessity governs the soul’s movements as well as the motions of the stars. As souls pass beneath her seat, so on her lap turns the spindle ruling the planetary motions. What happens to soul and to stars is on the same web. ...³

Now that the novelty of Chiron’s discovery has worn off, the initial research can be seen to have withstood the test of time. A still-growing number of astrologers are integrating Chiron into their work, finding that it often addresses with extraordinary precision the healing dimension of what we do. When confronting extremities of loss, dereliction and suffering, or experiences that tilt into the bizarre, transits of Chiron and the Centaurs often provide the astrological pointers that help find the way to the centre of our own labyrinth. They offer a kind of Ariadne’s thread we can follow, which helps us emerge renewed from a period of travail.

A time of healing is often initiated by transits of Chiron, when we are called to bear witness in compassion to our own suffering, or that of others. We cannot do this if we struggle to improve ourselves and live up to high ideals, without also addressing our pain. The

'goal' of healing is not about being pain-free and ever comfortable. It is nothing less than re-orientating ourselves to the journey of awakening. This will change our lives, and this may also be exactly what we resist.

Since first working with Chiron, it has become apparent to me that movement on the healing journey is often powerfully initiated through patience, as we bear with 'how things are', pay attention to 'what is' and let things be. Pushing aside what we are actually experiencing in favour of an idea of how things 'ought to be' simply does not work. It often backfires. I believe this is a major teaching that Chiron represents: notions and theoretical considerations do not work, but getting real with ourselves does. As in the mythic theme, the ego 'dies' to its struggle to control things, and we discover the immortal being within us as it comes to our aid our Celestial Nature.

A journey into these depths transcends ready-made philosophies, notions and formulations, although others' experiences and ideas can of course inspire us, touch our hearts and become part of our own evolutionary process. However, Chiron signals us to undertake our own unique journey of awakening which underlies the meaning of our lives. During this process, we will encounter many imponderables, paradoxes and unanswerable questions. Certainty stifles the soul, while the heart opens where the wisdom of uncertainty is allowed. Whenever we think we have figured out 'The Answer', we risk painting ourselves into the corner of our own unconscious hopes and fears. The deeper certainties, which bring rest to the soul, are inexpressible, but unmistakable. Chiron's journey is about learning to trust this without having to prove or demonstrate it.

In Part I the new astronomical material relevant to Chiron is described. You are invited to read this section with a poet's eye and ear, allowing the celestial symbolism to speak to your intuition. We need not ask what something means; we rather assume that we live in a meaningful universe and *wait for it to speak to us*. By contemplating the facts, we engage our capacity to see the obvious, and personal meaning arises.

Part II explores the mythology, archetypal images and stories connected to Chiron and the Centaurs, elaborating this material in

various directions. This section is intended as a resource bank of images, associations and themes pertaining to the somatic, psychological and spiritual aspects of the journey represented by Chiron. Immersion in these images and stories stimulates our capacity to learn from our own observation and experience. Richard Tarnas expresses eloquently this process:

The sustained study of astrology grants human consciousness the experience of vivid intimations of a divine intelligence of scarcely conceivable complexity, power and beauty. By having one's limited rational framework repeatedly challenged by powerful synchronicities, one's vision of the universe becomes opened to an intimate encounter with the numinous.⁴

Part III offers a selection of Chiron manifestations observed in the lives of individuals, some of which you may recognize from your own experience. However, this material is not intended as a 'cookbook' of 'recipes' for interpreting Chiron. The notion of 'interpretation' is less useful than allowing basic astrological factors (like sign, house and aspects) to be a lens through which to focus the energy of compassionate enquiry and healing intent. I believe this to be true of the classical planets also, in the psycho-spiritual process of an individual as reflected in the horoscope. Working with Chiron takes us beyond 'characterology' and the narrowness of having to 'get it right' into a realm where everything nourishes our awakening. We no longer need a filter of spiritual or psychological dogma. Instead we honour our experience just as it presents. Admitting our suffering into consciousness initiates a cycle of healing, which in turn brings release; it is in this spirit that the observations on Chiron by house, sign and aspect are offered. The reader is also referred to the bibliography of material which offers specific exercises designed to facilitate contact with our own process.

To understand Chiron in enough depth to make it truly part of our astrological vocabulary ultimately requires each of us to make our own personal journey with it. Chiron represents an emerging spirit of philosophical independence, compassion in the face of suffering, and an on-going process of learning to trust the Inner

Teacher or Guide. We pay attention within, for the healing and spiritual knowledge we need is sourced there. The phenomena of suffering are transient, but contact with our True Nature is cumulative.

Part IV is entitled 'Spirit of the Age' and explores Chiron's themes as revealed within the collective historical process of these times. If we are truly to embrace a reality that is beyond dualism, this means there is no difference between my suffering and that of the world around me. Our inner world is not separate from the context in which it is embedded. Making contact with my own grief enables me to feel empathy with those who grieve anywhere. Equally, when I allow myself to be impacted by others' joy, it helps connect me with mine. By this token, 'my' inner peace and healing is also 'everyone's' peace and healing. The Buddhist monk Achan Chah is famously reported to have said: 'In making a cup of tea, I stop the war'. The work of healing is not only about 'doing' or 'fixing'. It operates most powerfully within stillness, when we are receptive to the intimations from the Universe, beyond our personal pain. From this place, appropriate action is more likely.

My hope is that this book will nourish the process of personal discovery which Chiron represents, and be of practical use for anyone who uses astrology as a guide to accompany the inner journey. May all who read it derive as much benefit from their work with Chiron as I have been fortunate enough to experience, and may that benefit in turn be shared.

PART ONE

THE ASTRONOMY