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Beyond the Symbols to Life Itself

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Michael returned to the Valley with more wit, words and wisdom that start, as he pointed out, with the Sun sign. The lecture material covered transits, especially those of Chiron and Saturn. The workshop dealt with relationship and real life.

He commented that the popular view of astrology as a process of predicting the future is distorted in many ways, but in some people the distortion becomes pathological. Most people have a curiosity about what lies around the corner, particularly whether some ideal, romantic figure isn't lurking there even as we suffer through the mundane, everyday existence at the office. And, as astrologers, we pander to these needs. It is what the client believes they are paying us for. If we manage to slip in a bit of insight as to who they really are, what the wounds are, where those wounds come from and maybe even a bit about how to heal them, then many of us feel we have given actual value mixed in with the "look ahead at the coming year." And sometimes we get feedback that the something we said really did change an attitude and prepared them to respond better to a set of events that came along.

But for the pathological folks, it is never enough. Give them three months' worth and they can hardly wait to get the next installment. They see everything you said in the past as being so accurate and so bountiful that they want this session to be even more wonderful. They are desperate for more information, they are desperate that you should make their decisions for them, they are desperate for your approval. So what is it in these people that brings this imbalance about?

Michael suggests that there is blame in society, as well as in human nature, for setting up dominance-submission as such a major part of our culture. Our parents start it going: "You *will* do what I (we) say. You *won't* behave that way. You *will* be clean, neat, do your room. You *won't* wear that. Etc." Society, recognizing how well we are already trained, picks up from there and continues with the minister, the boss, the policeman who stops us, the doctor who tells us only what medicine to take, and, with his attitude, dares us to ask questions.

Against all these background inputs, we still see that some people respond with desperate neediness to authority situations, and others pass by with not much thought. And so, frequently, the people who respond with neediness are the same ones who want to know the future in all its detail. It is as though the words we offer will light the path on which they know they would otherwise stumble. What, then, is it that puts the fear of stumbling so clearly in the minds of some and bypasses others?

Michael suggested that this is insecurity. There is only one fear: death. Death is a major fear and focus in all cultures. Every religion has a way of offering a "solution" to death such that it would pay you to be in touch with them, because they have the only answer.

Those who never knew in infancy and childhood that the next moment was safe want to know what the next moment may bring now. They want to know that the next moment does not contain death. They would prefer that we, as astrologers, provide

the reassurance they crave and cannot find in themselves because they did not get it in the early family life. That's the way they reincarnated – to work on those very themes.

This kind of thing has to be discoverable in the chart, or our whole psychological model of the chart falls apart. And sure enough, if we have, say, Saturn or Pluto in hard aspect to our Moon, Venus or Sun, we are likely to have security issues to a greater or lesser degree. The more of the heavies there are in such formations, and the more pronounced they are in the chart, the stronger the insecurity is likely to be. By “pronounced” we mean the traditional things, like being conjunct an angle, ruling the Ascendant or the MC, being the focus of a T-square, etc.

So now what? Every time we see someone with heavy outer planet aspects involving personal planets, rulers of the Ascendant or MC, etc. etc., do we immediately assume this person needs to have their hand held and to be reassured? No. The next requirement is to assess the person as a whole. Let them talk to us. Listen to them with more than our ears. Observe carefully, go beneath the conscious words and consider what the hidden meaning is that our veneer of society forbids us to discuss. Anyone who has dealt with more than just a few clients or charts has found those with relatively light-appearing formations in their charts who are nervous nellys, and those with major stress formations who are captains of life, and maybe even well-balanced to boot! Possibly more frequent are those captains of life who use their dynamic forcefulness to hide the wounds they certainly don't want us to see, and probably don't want to see themselves.

Ah, but the beauty of the model that is life! Here we run into what Michael terms “recurring themes.” Because our natal charts contain certain configurations, we get ongoing reminders of things that we are here to deal with. These recurring themes crop up when a “heavy” moves past one of our sensitized points, typically in formation with several planets, and plays that particular tune to us. He cited the Saturn-Pluto conjunction in late degrees of Libra in

late 1982 and 1983. Consider the time frame for a moment and think of the events that occurred then, suggests Michael, because right now is a time to be aware of what we were learning then, and to take it to the next level.

The reason for that is that the theme is currently recurring. Chiron is retrograding over that area and will continue to pass over it for much of this year. Chiron is no lightweight in transit. His orbit runs between Saturn and Uranus, and most of us know that both of these can make a pretty clear impression on our sensibilities. So here is a relative heavyweight coming the replay the themes that were established for us with the transiting Saturn-Pluto conjunction. This would have been particularly noticeable if we have points at high cardinal degrees in our natal charts.

So to the themes defined then, we now need to add a Chiron-flavored reminder. What is Chiron's flavor? Michael defines it as the incredible pain and anxiety that leads through death to birth (transition), followed by the state of grace that follows the birth process or transition. Consider the actual giving of birth, or the attendance of the process for husbands. There is incredible tension, anxiety, concern that (a) the pain is unbearable, and (b) that something may go wrong, with all this intensity and pain going on, and (c) that it may never end. So there is the long-drawn out anticipation, followed by the tremendously intense experience itself. Then comes the ecstasy and joy at what has happened. Michael indicates that it is just the same whether we attend to someone who is dying or to someone who is giving birth. Both have this terrifying, enveloping, growing anticipation of the inevitable, followed by the wonderful relief after it has happened. For those who recollect clear experiences (lessons) back in 1982 and 1982, prepare yourselves now. Almost certainly, we can already see and anticipate what will happen. It'll be intense, but we will give birth to the next phase and love the result!

The other transitory that Michael gave consideration to was Saturn. He joked about those who have

“made friends with their Saturn” as having a poor selection of friends indeed!

Saturn is often defined as our wound – where we feel deprived, where we lack confidence and where we spend our lives learning slowly but never being satisfied that we have actually made enough progress. But at the same time, Michael challenged us to think of a time when we were totally, completely happy, free and just having a great time. Then, he suggests, when we look at this time in the ephemeris, we will find Saturn was involved.

Considering Saturn in its recent incarnations, we have Michael’s description of the Saturn in Pisces behavior. Your neighbor’s dog pees on your roses. You pick some of the roses and arrange them prettily, going to your neighbor’s door and saying, “Here, have some of these roses. I really wasn’t fond of them anyway. You sure do have a cute dog for a Great Dane. He does have a large capacity. Hope you enjoy the roses. Sorry to disturb you. Do send the dog over again.” Your neighbor has no idea why you visited. But now Saturn has gone into Aries. The same thing happens, so you shoot the dog. Did anyone notice themselves behaving this way, or others behaving this way toward them, asked Michael.

Saturn in Aries is about new beginnings, about planting seeds that will mature over the next 30 years. So, suggests Michael, don’t spend too much time comparing yourself to what you would like to be, to what you think you should be achieving. Rather, how about casting your mind back to about 1967-69 (for us slightly older citizens. . .) and seeing what it was you were worried about achieving then, and how much you have grown since then in those directions. This will (a) give you some satisfaction; and (b) assure you that the progress will continue over the next 30 years, since Saturn is pretty well guaranteed to do another tour around the zodiac in that time frame. There will be things to learn from the last cycle, things that we will try to handle more smoothly this time. But this is not, as Saturn sometimes seems to suggest, reason for

major self-recrimination. Rather it is an opportunity to congratulate yourself on getting as much out of that inexperienced framework as you did, and being that much wiser about how to tackle current challenges.

Michael introduced the workshop with a definition of being in love: it is that feeling of being sick unless you are in the presence of the beloved (limerence). And being out of love: that same feeling of being sick as long as you are still in the presence of the (former) beloved. What is it that changes?

When we meet someone for the first time, our subconscious minds see each other totally clearly, perfectly healed and loving. So we may instantly feel that attraction that can fill the aching void, and on a subconscious level, the message goes out: “You’re exactly what I need. Come fill my void because I know you are perfect.” If the other person has the same response to us, their subconscious sends out the same message. So the words that are exchanged, about “nice to meet you,” and “isn’t it warm today,” mean nothing. They are only the socially acceptable way of spending time in each others’ presence. And we each receive the hidden message that society forbids us to speak overtly: “I’d like to bed you right now.” So, somehow we manage to draw out the meeting and to exchange phone numbers.

But then, after a couple of months, it becomes obvious that there is both more or less to this person than we allowed ourselves to project. They do not have quite as much of that quality I need as I thought they did, and they have some others that get me going! The lack is the part I really regret, but how could this person keep up the pretense to be what he or she knew I so greatly desired, when it really is not their nature to any great extent?

To help our clients understand the way they handle relationships in particular and hence gain deeper insight into themselves. Michael sees the nodal axis as the most important feature. The south node is where we ruin relationship, our false path. This is the

frustration of having almost learned the lesson of that area. If we just had another five minutes, we feel, we would understand how to deal with that part of life. So now there is this urgent desire to complete that lesson, and we tend to turn many things that way. But the area where we are supposed to be doing relationship is in the north node, where initially we are less comfortable, and do not have that great desire to understand and “win” this particular game. And to operate successfully in the north node area, we have to give up our childish, primitive anger about having been cheated in the south node area.

The nodal axis describes one of six basic models. We need to take not only the houses and signs of the nodes into account but also the rulers of the signs in interpreting the effects of the nodal configuration.

(1) Dominance-submission. You be the strong person, and I’ll look up to you and let you tell me what to do. Or: You be the teacher and I’ll be the student; you be the astrologer and I’ll be the client. In all cases, it is about giving away our power, or dominating someone else who wants to give away theirs. This is, of course, the 1-7 axis, complemented by the Aries-Libra axis and Mars-Venus aspects.

(2) Sex and money (Taurus-Scorpio; 2-8). The process of dividing life into what I can gain and what I have to give to get it, whether in partnership or otherwise.

(3) The cultural axis (3-9; Gemini-Sagittarius), and how I can learn about expressing myself. Here we often run into people in our lives who are from a different background, culture, nationality, etc. It is our job to focus on the cultural issues and educational aspects of life if the north node is in the 9th, and get past our need to communicate everything to everyone.

(4) Family and business axis (4-10; Cancer-Capricorn): am I here to learn about my family or about my direction in life outside the family?

(5) Love given/love received: (5-11, Leo-Aquarius): How well do I do these things; where do I need to concentrate; also, what should the balance be between personal and familial pleasure and the needs of society.

(6) What are the requirements of service and health focus versus merging and becoming part of the whole; how much energy should I put into being discriminating and

analytical, versus how much effort should go into developing my subconscious. (6-12; Virgo-Pisces). In analyzing this, the nodal axis can shed significant light. As Michael elegantly puts it: “The north node will never fail you; the south node will never fail to fail you.”

Always we must remember that the nodal axis is represented by all the phenomena associated with it: houses, signs, rulers of the signs the nodes are in, which gets into their houses, signs, aspects, etc. Also important is any planet conjunct or squaring the nodal axis.

Next, Michael considered the Sun sign-relationship axis. Recognizing that we often tend to behave as our polarity when alone, and that we often seek in a partner what we cannot quite fathom ourselves, we tend to see our ideal mirage in the person we just met. But time and reality set in as the limerence wears off. And so, the mirage of the “perfect” embodiment of the opposite sign can become the monster that plays out the weaknesses of that sign.

All of this gives some insight into how we deal with relationship, especially if we bear in mind the many definitions that can be involved with our situation. These include Sun or rising sign; Sun in the 7th or in the “7th house equivalent,” meaning that Sun in the 3rd is one of the indications to view for a Sagittarian relationship tendencies. Sun in the 9th is an indication of Gemini relationship tendencies; Sun opposing the ruler of a natural wheel house puts that house in focus for relationship, e.g. Sun opposed Jupiter focuses on 9th house relationship issues. More: the sign of Venus speaks of relationship with that sign, as does the ruler of the 7th in a given sign. The house and sign that the ruler of the 7th is in contributes to that flavor. And so on. In little time, we have a considerable depth of information on the relationship axis to help understand the totality of what any individual is looking for in relationship. Always adding in the nodal axis will create more understanding, not only regarding relationship themes but how they fit into the overall life.