

ASTRO*SHAMANISM – PART 4
Process of Initiation
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The first parts can be found deeper in My Wall or at:

HTTP://MichaelErlewine.com
under “Astro*Talk Blog”

Background: Digressions

Before we get into the specific chakras and how to recognize each of them and which one you are in, let's take one step back, and make sure you have all the background you need to understand what I am pointing out here. This will be a digression, but hopefully a very useful one. In fact, this post may be the most important post, since if you understand it, what is coming will be clear, and if you don't all that follows will be just some words. So please read this section with care.

In fact, let's even digress one step farther and talk for a moment about the process of initiation into the esoteric mysteries, what has been called holding or obtaining the “view.” And this might be important to understand.

Beginning students of esoteric astrology, although they acknowledge they know little about the subject, can't help but already have formed in their minds some idea of what this subject is all about. Otherwise, why would you read this blog? Although preconceptions are common, they are seldom helpful and, by and large, having a pre-formed opinion about a subject is most often the first obstacle any teacher or mentor must overcome, the fact that the student “thinks” he or she knows what the teacher is going to point out to them. Of course, if they did know, they would not be a student, and the teacher, who would see that the student already gets it, would not be trying to point out the topic.

Expectations Can't Define

Now let's introduce a more important factor yet, and that is: the truth of any topic is seldom what you expect, almost by definition. Expectations can't define, and you can't expect to find what you expect. Expectations usually don't help a situation.

Students tend to assume that there is something to get at, some ‘thing’ or object of knowledge that the teacher will point out, that they can then get their hands on or their mind around. In these esoteric studies, there IS nothing (no thing) to get to, anymore than there is a particular end to get to in life, other than the physical end of life, and few of us are in a rush to go there.

What I am trying to say here is that learning about esoteric concepts is more about preparing the student to have the right attitude or view, than it is about getting “at” something or to some end, like a treasure hunt. If all it took was telling the truth, then the sages and philosophers throughout history have already told us everything. If we didn't “get it,” so to speak, it is because we were not prepared to receive it, and did not have the right mind set. Our mind was not set, like a receiver, to gather it, to take it all in. We couldn't tune in. That is what I am working on

here.

Backpedaling

So, what frequently can appear to the reader as endless backpedaling on the part of the author, endless digressions (like this one here), and putting off getting to the point, is simply that there is no point, no such hard and fast thing like a “point” or fact when it comes to these esoteric studies, in particular. And that is not a bad thing. The teacher has to break this news, to discourage the student from looking for the “point” or preconception that the student has pre-formed in his or her mind, and, instead, gently help to orient the student to receive and experience the actual idea, an idea that, by definition, the student does not know, and has not yet experienced. It is more like setting the sails on a boat, often nothing more than an adjustment of attitude or approach. The student does not yet have the correct or right attitude. They are not properly oriented.

In fact, in most cases, students come with a linear attitude, looking for something they can imagine down the line, the next step, so to speak. Often, what is given is not a next step, linearly speaking, but a change or shift in attitude that enables a fresh view of the same old world. In fact, if you think about it, that is what most of us need, a new way of handling what we already have, not just more ‘stuff’.

This is not unlike the task of the midwife, who on occasion has to turn the baby around in the womb until it is oriented properly and can be born; same idea here.

In other words, the teacher has the unenviable task of turning and tweaking the student’s mind to receive knowledge, and here “to receive knowledge” means to be able to actually experience and thus “get” for themselves what the teacher is pointing out. Real knowledge is not a “thing” to get or understand, but a knowing, an living experience we each need to have for ourselves, and after which we don’t need a teacher on the subject.

The teacher points it out, the student tries to get it, and the teacher questions the student for signs that the student got what was being pointed out. If not, the teacher continues to try to adjust and position the student’s mind further, and then repeats the pointing out instruction, and this process goes on and on, until the student gets it or gives up.

Intellectual Understanding

In the realm of esoteric knowledge, simple intellectual understanding is not enough. We each must experience for ourselves what is being pointed out, if we ever hope to be able to point out to another what we have learned. Pointing out or understanding, intellectually, what we read in a book is just rote memorization. Learning must be a life experience we have, not just some words on a page.

So, to recap: teaching or pointing out esoteric knowledge is more like setting the sails on a boat, and waiting to see if the student catches the wind, and heads off in the direction desired. The teacher adjusts the attitude of the student, and gradually gets him or her in a position to see or receive the knowledge. It is all about receiving the knowledge and this kind of knowledge is an experience, not a fact. There is no “knowledge” per se, nothing to “get” all at once, but there is the act of knowing, the experiencing for yourself what the teacher is pointing out. The teacher tweaks the view of the student, until he or she gets it, and has the experience themselves, AND could then point it out to someone else. This process is part of what is called mentoring. It is

also an integral part of what make lineages so important. And that is the end of this digression.

Approach Is Everything

This last point is so important, let's go over it one more time. In shamanic or esoteric astrology, approach is everything. Your attitude or approach, how you take it, how you are oriented "toward" is most crucial. If you come at it wrong, you will see and experience nothing or very little of what I am writing about here. And here, I am not just talking about understanding this material, per se. I mean being aware of the content of this blog in your life. With the wrong approach, you just won't get it, and you will pass right through life and never know these experiences were there. You won't be aware of them and this is the case for most folks.

It happens to countless people all the time. Life passes them by.

It is my job here to tease these ideas out in the open for you, to turn your mind around until you can receive them, until you get it. That is why I have been telling you that this knowledge is not something for you to "get," not an action you must perform, but rather an attitude or approach you must assume or take -- reception. The key to esoteric astrology is to be passive and receptive, to prepare your mind to receive and take this knowledge in, like a satellite receiver --a big dish. You can be active in your passivity or reception, but you must be passive in your action. Don't push on, but give, as in "give way."

We Sail Our Ship Alone

I am trying, here, to tune you like we might tune a radio receiver to pick up a faint music station. The music is playing all around us, but you can't hear it unless you tune in. And tuning in is all about receptivity, and preparing your mind to get it. The analogy of setting the sails on a ship, so as to pick up the wind, is a good one. We have to work with the rigging, and set the sails. There is no doubt that the winds of change will come, and if our sails are set right, we will begin to move through the chakras, to feel the changes I will be describing.

The point here is that shamanic knowledge is not only conceptual, not merely something for you to understand, but rather an experience you must have. As an intellectual idea, shamanic knowledge is more or less just obvious, but as a living experience, it is profound. I am doing my best to prepare you for that experience, and to help set your sails. And I have only words to do it with. I cannot be with you in person and get your attention in other ways.

Figure and Ground

Now we need to spend some little time painting the background for all of this, giving you a picture of how all of these thoughts fit together. I don't expect you to get it all at once. This is subtle stuff, and anyone who studies esoteric astrology learns to see the chakras in and against the landscape of life. It is a little like one of those pictures you first look at and see nothing. But suddenly a new image pops out. It is a question of figure and ground. If it were not, this would not be esoteric knowledge, but public knowledge. Everyone could see it.

Pointing Out

In a subject so subtle or esoteric as shamanic astrology, the reader can't be expected to get all of these concepts right away, much less have experience with them, and certainly not at first to expect much realization of them. So, what I will be doing here is pointing out important

concepts, some of which may not seem to make very much sense at first.

Here is how I suggest you approach this: I will point out an idea or concept that is important to grasp, and in most places, I will tell you I am doing just that. Here are the traditional steps:

Understanding

Your initial task is to understand what I am saying, to make any kind of sense you can of my words. But intellectual understanding is only the beginning, the first step in the process and, by itself, is not going to take you that far. Understanding is just that, developing an intellectual or conceptual idea of what has been pointed out. We do that all the time.

Experiencing

Once you feel you understand what has been said, the next step is to develop some actual experience with the idea, to look in your day-to-day life for living examples of the ideas that have been pointed out, to observe. It is your responsibility to test these thoughts against reality, and to determine if what is being pointed out actually makes sense to you. Making some kind of sense (sensing) is what this stage is all about, developing actual experience from the understanding, something you can feel and use. Experience has its ups and downs, and is the story of your embodying the concept with meaning through your own investigations.

Recognition

At some point, if we are fortunate here, you will recognize what I am pointing at, and it will be different than you imagined and what had built up in your mind as an expectation. Look for that!

Realization

And the last step is to accumulate enough experience with the concept until it becomes a permanent and living part of your life, until you realize it. Realization does not have ups and downs, but marks the point where your experience stabilizes and there is no more change taking place with what has been pointed out. You get it and you get it 24-hours a day, 365 days a year. This is also the point when you will realize the emptiness of the experience for yourself, but never forget what you have realized.

Four-Step Process

Understanding, experience, recognition, and realization mark the four-step process that you will ideally undergo for each concept and for every idea I will be pointing out. This is not to say that this will happen with every concept that is pointed out, or that the process will be an easy one. It may be enough, at first, to just get a rough idea of what is being said, and perhaps a glimmer of a feel for what it might mean in the world around you. No problem, but don't confuse understanding with realization.

With understanding, you have intellectually taken the concept in and can paraphrase it. With experience, you have actually grounded the idea that was pointed out in reality, and developed a real feeling for it that is sometimes present and sometimes absent. With recognition and realization, you become the living proof of the concept, and can empower yourself and others with this knowledge. With realization, there is no change in the experience. For your own sake, it is best not to confuse these four steps. The most common problem is to mistake

understanding for realization. As my teacher used to say to me, “Michael, some day you must become the book.”

Let me know if you are still here.

