

## DEATH HAPPENS IN THE MIDDLE OF LIFE

June 7, 2012

By Michael Erlewine ([Michael@Erlewine.net](mailto:Michael@Erlewine.net))

I have written here many times about my first spiritual teacher, Andrew Gunn McIver, who was a traveling initiator for a Rosicrucian order. I first knew him in the mid-1960s as a retired person living in Ann Arbor that I connected with. He appeared as an old man who looked a lot like Bernard Shaw. There he was sitting around on benches on the U-M Diag open to contact. I have written extensively about him elsewhere.

What I write here is a part of esoteric astrology, so it is not for everyone. It is not that any of this is a secret, but rather that it refers to something that is so obvious (like the air we breathe) than it is hard to catch and gather with the mind. So going in, I write this for the very few who will resonate to it. My apologies if it is too obscure or esoteric (abstract and boring) for some of you. Please feel free to just skip this blog. You have been warned.

One of the concepts Andrew McIver empowered or instilled in me is that of the 30-year Saturn Cycle (29.4 years), similar to that presented in the quintessential book by astrologer Grant Lewi "Astrology for the Millions," perhaps the only astrology book I would take to a deserted island, although by now I know it by heart and have even added my own two cents to the concept. Andrew's take was quite different and more spiritual than Lewi's, yet complimentary.

Andrew would repeatedly explain to me that during the first thirty years of life (our formative years), each of us is caught-up and busy in time (during Saturn's first orbit in the zodiac) building our physical body and mental vehicle, which he likened to a space capsule that is launched, ready or not, at the age of thirty years.

If we have built our vehicle strong, it will last well into the future, our future. If we did not, it will essentially not hold together and sustain us. In other words, we all come apart sooner or later, depending on how well we are made, and I am not speaking just physically, although that too is important. I am speaking of our mental and spiritual body or vehicle.

Andrew saw our life beyond thirty years as if we were at that time launched into space, free-floating, and endlessly separating from Earth as we know it, launched beyond 'time', beyond the grasp of Saturn and all that is physical. He saw time as Saturn (Chronos) and the moment that Saturn starts going around the zodiac a second time at around 30 years, it's grasp on us does not hold. We are freed from time at that point and can gradually become aware of this. We are said by some occultists to "enter the silence," for time's ever-busy noise ends at the age of thirty. Some folks call this being 'born again' and that is not a term that just belongs to Christians. We all can have that in our own words.

After that first Saturn return at 30 years, we each are like a space capsule, perhaps still tethered

to Earth, but forever beyond its reach or touch. Picture someone in a space suit tethered to the shuttle and you will have the idea. After thirty years of age we can no longer build our vehicle any more than when the body reaches its physical prime, we can further enhance it. We stop growing when time runs out at thirty years of age. Instead, we work to sustain what we have for a while and then all of us gradually fail in one way or another.

Andrew would also say things like, "When does ice melt?" and then point out that between 32 and 33 degrees is when ice melts. Or when did Christ die on the cross? Again, at 33 years of age, or he would mention the 33rd degree of Freemasonry, and so on. His point was that it is somewhere around the completion of the Saturn cycle at 30 years or in the years soon thereafter that we leave the body, and not at the live-long end of life. In other words, the real death we fear comes in the middle of life, not at the end. Think on that sometime for this is a key esoteric thought that explains much.

Rather than life having the sequenced of a birth, prime-of-life, and death as we have been taught, esoterically we have a Birth, death, and 'after-death', but this process is not linear, but cyclical. Of course this process is a cycle, like everything else in life: our heartbeat, breath, day, month, year, etc. Astrology is the study of cycles.

And here is the beautiful (but also the subtle) part of all this: the perfect image of this process is not linear, like a straight line from birth to death, but rather more like the image of the Sun shining in the sky – that blazing ball of fire in the firmament – an endless cycle of energy exchange.

Andrew went on to say that during the second Saturn cycle (from 30 to 60 years) we spend repairing the damage we made being launched or born (getting out) during the first cycle, and here is the interesting point for this particular blog:

Andrew also said that in the 3rd Saturn cycle, from 60 to 90 years (should we live so long and be aware) that we can actively partake consciously in the creative process of life. It is this third Saturn cycle that I want to draw your attention to, which of course, is the cycle of Saturn I am in now. This is an important phase.

I pretty much understood early-on Andrew's description of the first two Saturn cycles, but of course that 3rd cycle I had very little clue or idea of. Well, that is changing now that I am actually in that cycle and I want to comment on it as best I can. An encounter with a very famous astrologer years ago now begins to make sense.

I will tell that story and continue tomorrow, for those who are following this. Let me know if this interests you.

DEATH HAPPENS IN THE MIDDLE OF LIFE: PART 2

June 7, 2012

I can remember when the astrologer Dane Rudhyar visited the Heart Center in the early 1970s to give a talk. Of course we were honored to have this great astrologer in our home, but a strange thing happened. Since I seem to have many astrological ideas, I wanted to run some of them past Rudhyar, and one of them had to do with heliocentric astrology, my personal favorite technique.

I don't remember his exact words, but when I asked Rudhyar about helio astrology, he seemed to dismiss it as of no importance or something like that. Of course, I was disappointed, but the story continues.

Later in that same visit Rudhyar quite spontaneously began to speak on heliocentrics, this time praising and extolling it in a very deep and forward-looking manner. I was surprised but soaked it in. He seemed to be speaking somehow automatically, in an odd voice, almost as if he was reading from some inner script or source. It did not sound like his normal voice. Needless to say I was surprised at this reversal of opinion and also at the kind of robot-like tone in which he spoke. It gave me real pause and I have never forgotten that event. I took note of this strange phenomenon and have been trying to place it ever since. I now can.

I will be 71 years old next month, am well into my 3rd Saturn cycle, and experiencing something quite similar (hopefully without the robotic tone!), the ability to pull from the ether ideas and insights almost at will, especially when asked a sincere question.

It is almost if as I grow older, the top of my head has opened and become space itself and all that is in it, the treasures of the mind. It would seem that the mind is a rich star field of ideas, a wealth of information that just exists in there, ready to be read by anyone sensitive or open enough to do so. Perhaps increasing age enables this to happen, made even easier when coupled with the development of some basic awareness practice, which I have worked at.

If there is a need, a question from a younger person, some real reason to access these mind treasures, the information appears with even greater authority and strength. The request or need seems to come from the younger person, but the ability to readily access the information in the mind comes from the elder or more experienced. And even though the elder person transmits, the message or ideas are often meant for the younger person to listen and take in. The information may or may not really interest or be important for the older person (although it usually is), but together we help this information to flow from above to below, from older to younger -- the precious circulation of information. We elders seem to have our heads more open, while younger ones have their feet on the ground, and thus, like lightning, information flows. Identification of this type 'is' cosmic circulation and circulation keeps the body and mind together -- coherent.

As I grow older, my head seems more and more open to the sky of the mind. Indeed, in a real sense, beyond thirty years of age there is nothing but the mind out beyond there and the more obscurations that age removes, the more obvious are the rich mental treasures hidden there. And these treasures can be shared, although this seems to at times be enhanced when sharing

with others. This kind of exchange seems to be what is meant by the conscious participation in the creation my teacher Andrew spoke of.

Of course I still have many of my own interests and questions, as you can tell from my endless blogs here, but I also find myself automatically responding more easily to sincere questions from those around me. It is fascinating how we can exchange energy and information between generations – ‘identifying-with’ is circulation.

So my wonderful teacher Andrew McIver’s teaching, which he managed to embed in me way back when, has proved to be true. What a treasure that teacher was for me! He taught me all of what I am sharing here when I was around 25 years of age, which enabled me to go through my first Saturn return with my eyes open.

It remains for me to communicate to you something about how close the connection and exchange between teacher and student was for me and can be for anyone. It defies words, but you know I will try.

### DEATH HAPPENS IN THE MIDDLE OF LIFE: PART 3

June 9, 2012

We are winding this short series up, but there are still many questions that I personally have, questions like “What is beauty?” and “What is charisma?” or even more basic yet, “What is identification?” When we identify and share with someone, what is it that happens? We communicate and something is exchanged; what is exchanged and how does that work? When we are kids, we look forward to growing up; when we are old, we look back to our youth. Coming and going, is it all about the prime of life? Just what is it that we look forward and back to? Do we ever achieve it? My teacher Andrew pointed out that time stops at that first Saturn return at thirty years. Effectively, from that point onward we begin leaving the body. How does that work?

Andrew McIver had another analogy that stays in my mind, that of the two basic kinds of peaches, the Cling and the Freestone. With the Cling peach, the flesh of the peach clings to the pit when you try to remove it, while with the Freestone peach, the pit easily just pops out. These are our choices when we begin to leave the body, when the spirit and flesh began to separate from one another after thirty years of age.

The ideal way is that of the Freestone, where the separation is painless and natural, while with the Cling it is painful and messy. You get the idea. Our attachments cause us to cling to the body and the past, making the whole experience painful, while if we can learn to let go, the separation of spirit and flesh is natural. I wrote a poem to the effect that our attachments are the glue that holds the Self together, and the concept of the self is something we should discuss in another blog.

Here we have looked at the three 30-year cycles of Saturn in our lives as they were taught to

me by my first life teacher. If you want to know more, I have two suggestions, but one of them costs money. First, I wrote an entire book about these concepts and it is free for the downloading. Called "Astrology of the Heart: Astro-Shamanism," you can find it here:

<http://astrologysoftware.com/books/index.asp?orig>

And second, I just published a new software program, Blue\*Star, that runs on a PC or on a Mac with a Windows partition. It includes sixteen complete interpretive reports written by me through which you can look at yourself astrologically. They require no astrological knowledge to read and one of them provides you with the exact timing of all three Saturn cycles for your birth data, along with interpretations and a chronological list of events in the life. There are 15 other reports that cover the basic astrology I present when I do readings, the same techniques I post here from time to time. You can do all 16 reports for your family, friends (and not-so-friends), co-workers – anyone you want, as often as you want. This program also includes all of my StarTypes work, that interprets your Dharma chart, as well. I offer it for a limited time for half price to my Facebook readers:

<http://astrologysoftware.com/software/bluestar/index.asp?orig>

I give illustrated samples of all reports here:

<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10151015537072658.484326.587252657&type=1>

What I have been presenting here is called "esoteric astrology." It is esoteric, not because it is any secret, but because it is so obvious (like breathing) that it is hidden in plain sight in society, and hard to grasp consciously. I have always found it fascinating and have done my best to share here what I was taught so many years ago.

There remains one more concept to present, but it is very difficult to grasp. I will try. It has to do with how we convert the linear concept of birth leading to death that society has taught us into the cyclical concept of rebirth. Here goes:

I find it helpful to consider some simple physics, like that of the single source of warmth and light, our Sun. The Sun is powered by nuclear fusion which is emitted from its core in the form of gamma rays that travel upward until they reach the sun's surface, at which time the energy radiates primarily in the form of visible light outward as sunlight, thus shining.

An image I will share with you is that of a shaft of energy shooting out from the Sun, fueled at the base by magnetically charged molten plasma that forms a stalk of light that then shines far out from the Sun's surface into the darkness of the heavens. Now imagine innumerable shafts of light all over the surface of the sun, shining in all directions (all ways and always) and you have the image of the Sun, that ball of fire radiating light in the firmament. It is awesome every day.

Deep within the core of the Sun is this very dense mass of molten plasma which is converted to visible light at the surface and from that surface out into space stalks of light shine. Somewhere near the surface there is the conversion or transformation of the energy from inside to outside, from within to without, a crucial exchange -- the fringe of fire up front. This exchange is what we are discussing here, the conversion of energy and how it is exchanged. And here it gets perhaps more difficult to express in words, but consider this:

Just as we humans have an outer physical appearance and personality, we also have an inner soul or psyche. So does the Sun. This image of the outer active Sun is something we might study in a physics class, but the inner and esoteric meaning of the Sun is breathtaking in its profundity, but seldom realized and practically never spoken of. We are almost universally unaware of this great being, the Sun, although it is the same being we refer within ourselves as "I." There are many living beings but no two ways of 'Being'. As the Greek philosopher Parmenides put it "Being alone is."

We like to think of ourselves as looking out through our eyes at life. Instead, take a wider perspective. Think of yourself as the intelligent life in the universe looking through your eyes at your life, someone larger than just your personality, what has been called our soul or 'Individuality'. That too is you, the intelligent or spiritual Sun (and beyond) looking through the prism of our personality at itself. Think big! Not two, but one vast being.

Consider the light in our eyes as itself the intelligent life humankind has been looking (searching with telescopes) all these years to find somewhere in a faraway galaxy. We are already it! In other words, we ourselves are the very spaceman we wait and search for, and we are out here in the middle of space. We are already in a distant galaxy and have always been there! We are, of course, just endlessly searching for ourselves, trying to find our self. What's new?

In other words, there is only one being in the entire universe and it is circulating information by identifying and knowing itself through the process of "us." Not some vast intelligence 'using' us by looking through our eyes, but we already are (and have always been) that vast intelligence looking through our own eyes, only our vision may be somewhat cloudy due to personal obscurations. We don't know our own inner self. Behind all those obscurations is that cosmic being, what we call the 'Self', and behind that is nothing but the true nature of mind itself.

After all, we ARE intelligent life, although the daily newspapers could not prove it by me. This process of identification I refer to here 'is' the circulation of information that holds the cosmos together.

This circulating energy is exemplified in the exchange between younger and older, student and teacher, any two of us, and so on. Something is endlessly exchanged and everything also remains the same. Everything happens and nothing happens. This is, of course, the mystery. The Sun itself is a mystery, which I will get to in the next and final part of this series. However, please note this:

Many years ago, when I asked my dharma teacher about astrology, he said this: “Astrology is one of the limbs of the yoga, but not the root.” In other words, astrology is a relative truth, which means it is helpful to get from here to there in our journey, but it is not an absolute truth. Dharma, the path to awakening, is the absolute truth, knowing the true nature of the mind.

I have found astrology and discussions like these Saturn cycles very helpful in understanding my life, but it too is part of a larger dream we are all having. This dream we call life we will have also to wake from one day. Meanwhile we have these discussions.

## DEATH HAPPENS IN THE MIDDLE OF LIFE: PART 4 – FINAL

June 11, 2012

This short series of blogs has been about rites of passage and esoteric astrology, in particular the separation of the spirit from the physical body, not something that happens at the very end of life, but something that happens early on, in the very prime of life, sometime after the return of the planet Saturn to its original place in the zodiac at the age of thirty years.

This key event is known by many names including being “born again” by evangelical Christians, “entering the silence” by esotericists, and so on. Of course our body and spirit separate finally at our physical death, but that separation begins many years earlier and mostly goes unheralded and unnoticed in modern society. In this view, life ends at around thirty years of age, as the old saying “Never trust anyone over thirty” points out. After life there is the afterlife.

The orbit of Saturn, which represents ‘time’ in astrology, turns to repeating itself at thirty years of age. Time just stops as we know it and we just up and gradually leave the body, floating out in the great silence beyond time. Have you noticed that we seem to act like there is no tomorrow and that we will live forever? Why do you think that is?

This way of viewing the passage of time and the awakening to a more spiritual view of life pays many dividends. Reading the wide history of spiritual literature from the view that we separate from the body after it stops growing, right in the prime of life, explains a lot.

We have looked at the three Saturn cycles that cover the first 90 years of life in terms of how they were presented to me by my teacher Andrew McIver, building our vehicle, being launched, becoming part of the creative force itself. We are used to seeing all of these cycles (this ‘timelessness’) laid out on a straight line of linear thought running from birth to death, but then what? Is life a short line that just ends? That is where the linear approach breaks down, at least psychologically.

All lines are in reality curves and all curves circles. The straighter the line, the finer the curve is what I always say. All things come back and return. Anything that does not return is a singularity, an anomaly which almost by definition we can have no memory of. All things continue to exist by re-positing themselves, by endlessly returning, and therefore enduring.

I wrote a book that covers this topic rather thoroughly called “Astrology of the Heart: Astro-Shamanism” back in the 1960s, that was published in a series of articles in the early 1970s. You can find it here:

<http://astrologysoftware.com/books/index.asp?orig>

And for those of you who actually want to measure your personal life against the cycles of Saturn, I just published an interpretive report called the “Life Landscape Report” as one of sixteen complete reports that represent the main kind of astrology I do. Using this program you can look at many views of your life as interpreted by astrology and written by yours truly. Examine yourself, your family, friends, and so on to your heart’s content. It is here:

<http://astrologysoftware.com/software/bluestar/index.asp?orig>

In closing, I want to reiterate a point I made in an earlier post in this series. Astrology is a marvelous way to look ourselves and the course of our lives. I have studied it intensely for almost fifty years, and use it all the time. And astrology is known by almost all cultures and has been for centuries. Yet as my dharma teacher for almost thirty years pointed out to me a long time ago, astrology is one of the limbs of the yoga, but not the root. It is a relative truth, meaning it can help us get from here to there in this dream of life we are living. It is not, however, enlightenment.

It would seem that we are wrapped in the sleep of several dreams, all of which we eventually have to wake from. Astrology helps us to get around in and make sense of this dream we call life. Inside of that dream is a still deeper dream from which we also must wake. Dharma is the key to that awakening.

Here we have been concerned with life, death, and the discovery of our “Self,” the image of the Sun. I will end with a poem I wrote about this topic some years ago. One of my closest friends told me it is not a very good poem, so for that I apologize. I can’t tell. For me it puts into words all that I have been writing about in these last few blogs. They may not be the best words, but they do capture the concept, which for me is what poems are for. A poem is also worth a thousand words, and can capture what volumes of prose cannot. This is a poem about a point in life we each reach, whether we are aware of it or not. If we can become aware of this point of transition, it helps a lot.

#### THE POINT OF NO RETURN

The point of the “point of no return” is that:  
When you have reached the point of no return,  
From which there is no return,  
The point is to turn and return.



That is the turning point.

Every life has a turning point,  
Whether it's in the echo of age,  
Or in the very midst of life's prime.

As we reach our point of no return,  
We pause,  
Then we turn.

And, in turning, we begin to reflect.

In our reflection,  
And rising into view,  
Perhaps for the very first time,  
The Sun.

Where before it was we who were seen,  
And others seeing,  
Now we are the mirror in which they see themselves,  
And we can see our self in them.

What we once saw shining before us, as youths,  
That which we gladly embraced in our prime,  
And what we now see etched in the mirror of reflection,  
Is our eternal Self,  
The Sun,  
Ever burning in the darkness of our life.

That's it.

I understand this.

What I find harder to understand,  
Yet still believe is:

We didn't know it then;  
We don't know it now.  
We never knew it.

In truth,  
It never was.

IT NEVER WAS;

It never will be.

It is not now,  
And still, it is.

It still is:

This most brilliant illusion,  
Shining in the mirror of the mind.

Michael Erlewine

Feb 14, 2006 2-4 PM, Grand Sextile Helio

A Poem for My Daughter Michael Anne