

MEDICAL ASTROLOGY

by J. Lee Lehman

The Medical Horary Questions You May Want to Ask

The typical horary questions that you will see in books, articles, and blogs on medical horary have remained unchanged since at least the Middle Ages: They cluster around the nature of the disease, its treatment, its length, and whether the patient will survive. All these types of questions have somewhat different technical interpretations based on the fact that they make the most sense within the worldview of Hippocratic-Galenic medicine. For example, the nature of the disease may be couched in the language of the elements or the qualities of hot, cold, wet, and dry.

Knowing the techniques to use in answering these questions is an extremely important piece of the work of any horary astrologer, because medical questions are common. That said, the purpose of this article is not to discuss the common questions, but the rare ones. By doing so, I hope to give readers permission to ask similar questions, or to encourage others to think more

broadly about their health and how the artful question can be of service to these larger goals.

Example 1: *Is the back brace a contributor?*

This client has scoliosis: curvature of the spine. Sadly, this is a condition that only gets worse with age. In order to combat some of the effects, she was given a soft back brace. Shortly thereafter, she began experiencing sciatic pains — pains so bad that she required a cortisone shot. Fortunately, the shot gave her considerable relief, but it did not address the cause or the cure. Her question was: Did the use of the new brace contribute to the sciatic pain?

Before we examine the chart, it's important to fully consider the utility of the question. That the patient has scoliosis is in no doubt; this is a clearly defined medical condition diagnosed through normal medical testing. But having arrived at the diagnosis, now there are multiple pathways for how best to treat it. Many of these options fall within modern medicine; some of them don't. Regardless, when there are multiple pathways to success, horary can be used to help pick one. But this is worth expanding on, so that we can get the most from this idea.

Scoliosis can be treated by surgery, back braces, exercises, physical therapy, anti-inflammatory drugs, massage, chiropractic, and probably even more modalities. Not every sufferer will be helped by the same methods. The general philosophy is that it's almost always best to assume a minimalist stance: Don't

treat a nonlethal condition more aggressively than it needs. Thus, with scoliosis, one generally doesn't want to try surgery until less drastic measures are exhausted.

A horary question can be framed at any point during the process. Before a treatment method is selected, one can ask a horary question roughly along the lines of: Will treatment X relieve my symptoms? Or, will treatment Y give me a good outcome? After the fact, as in this case, a horary question can help to evaluate the circumstances as they occur. The modern medical model is based upon the use of a range of quantitative measurements to define a condition, where each treatment protocol is understood to have a *probability* of success,

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not a *certainty*. Existing alongside this statistical view of care is the recognition that no treatment works 100% of the time. Also, it is recognized that treatments have possible side effects, and the side effects can be worse than the condition in some cases.

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The general horary method for evaluating these questions is through an analysis of the 10th house: the “physic,” to use the old word for treatment. This example is one of the clearest wordings of this type; it asks whether a particular course of treatment has made matters worse. It is precisely this simplicity that produces an unambiguous answer, as the querent is not complicating the question with anything about alternate treatment protocols.

The simplicity of the question is mirrored by the clarity of the answer. But first: Saturn in the 1st house is one of the considerations before judgment, so does it apply? (See **Chart 1**, following page.) I decided it did not, because Saturn in the 1st completely describes the querent: an older person with a *back* (i.e., skeletal) problem. If a Saturn consideration actually describes the person ruled, then it’s one of the factors that tells you that you’re on the right track. With Mercury ruling the 10th in mutual reception with Venus, ruler of the 6th and in the 6th, there is a link between disease (6th house) and “treatment” protocol (10th). Though in mutual reception, neither Mercury nor Venus has any strength; they are peregrine. From the standpoint of the disease, this is good, because it means that the condition isn’t so bad that ultimate improvement isn’t possible. But the weakness of the treatment method shows that it is not working positively at all. The separation of Mercury from the trine to Jupiter perhaps suggests that, if the brace had been prescribed earlier, it may have worked, but at this time, it is no longer the case. And with the Moon applying to both conjoin Neptune and square Saturn, as well as the opposition to Jupiter, the Ascendant ruler, you’ve got your confirmation.

Example 2: Should my son take this ADHD drug?

The traditional Chinese system of medicine identified twelve major meridians. Ayurvedic medicine recognized three *doshas* (mind-body types), and ancient Western medicine used four elements. These historic approaches have emphasized that there are basic path-

ways to disease, and that these pathways result from either excesses or deficiencies in people’s diets, environment, and lifestyles that impact a key system for each of us. As we study medical astrology, we come to understand that the birth chart shows us the tendencies that will drive our health into certain channels. Knowing about these channels can help us to evaluate choices that may have future impacts.

The metabolic route that our chart describes comes with a whole series of related what-ifs. For example, take

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coughs. You can look up a definition of coughs that will describe the physical process in the throat that produces the sound. Generically, we would declare that the throat is ruled by Venus. However, are all coughs ruled by Venus? Actually, Venus doesn’t show up as a ruler at all! The most common ruler of coughs is Mercury. Richard Saunders makes the point clear about specifically what the Mercury type is: dry coughs. The Moon ruled the type of cough called “rotten,” and we would understand this as the more phlegmy cough. Likewise, the sign of Cancer was applied to these coughs as well, being one of the illustrations where there was a carryover in meaning between planet and sign. The Sun, Saturn, Jupiter, and Pisces get rare citations for coughs, and all this leads us to the conclusion that our forebears distinguished the type of cough. By recognizing multiple planetary rulerships, they also recognized the need for multiple treatments, because administering a Mercury herb for a Moon cough presumably wouldn’t do much good.

This insight should also inform us about modern medicine: There are generally multiple medications for a condition, and modern medical practitioners also recognize that no prescription drug works in all cases. It is both expensive and time-consuming to have to try all the possible drugs. Thus, horary questions focusing on whether a particular preparation will work can be understood as a potentially valuable tool.

This horary was asked by a mother who was trying to find her way through the thicket of medications for ADHD. Once again, this is a treatment protocol, so it will be ruled by the 10th house — but which 10th house? We have to decide whether to turn the chart, because the querent is not asking about herself.

Unfortunately, the classical sources do not agree: As a mother asking about her child, she could be signified by the 1st and her child the 5th, or her child could be the 1st and she could be the 4th (the parent of the 1st-house party). In this case, knowing that the son is a Gemini, it’s pretty easy to see that using the 5th for the child makes sense. (See **Chart 2**, following page.) So, he is signified by Mercury in Sagittarius in detriment, again describing the son’s condition. Mercury’s placement in *his* (derived) 7th house (the radical 11th house) indicates that his condition is dependent upon a 7th-house person, which I would interpret as being his doctor or counselor.

The son has Saturn in his 1st house, but Saturn signifies his mother by its rulership of the radical 1st house. The fact that *she* (Saturn) is in her son’s house (the 5th) shows that she is attempting to involve him in the decision-making, even though he is only ten years old. Saturn has in-sect triplicity but is retrograde: The mother has some strength, meaning that she has some confidence in her own abilities. She also has Neptune rising. I have seen two specific interpretations for this placement: Either there is some confusion about the nature of the question, or the querent has a psychic hit relating to it. In this case, she had a “good feeling” about this particular drug.

Turning the chart to the child’s treatment, the 10th house from the 5th is the 2nd house of the radical chart, with Pisces on the cusp, so the drug is

ruled by Jupiter. Jupiter has out-of-sect triplicity, so this is not a “bad” drug in the sense of quality; however, with Jupiter being in the radical 7th house, one gets the impression that this drug may be being pushed by *her* doctor. Mercury (the son) is past the trine to Jupiter, suggesting that the drug might have been more effective in the past — a fairly plausible idea with ADHD, where effectiveness may only last for short periods of time.

Adding more detail, the Moon is early by degree but very late by phase, and the coming New Moon is an eclipse. Seeing that the Moon has to get through an eclipse and a conjunction with Pluto in its travel through the sign, it looks better to wait until after the Moon leaves this Sagittarian lineup in order to get a treatment plan that would be a little more stable.

Example 3: Will I have a serious health problem before my insurance kicks in?

In the United States, where the medical and insurance industries account for close to one-quarter of the GDP and where citizens are required to buy health insurance, health care is by no means free. Since health insurance is mandatory, being insured means different levels of deductibles and caps on services. This has resulted in three major levels of health insurance, rated

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by cost and coverage, and many more variables about coverage. When this question was asked, one could choose not to have insurance at all. Currently, with insurance being mandatory, the equivalent choice is whether to have “bronze, silver, or gold” coverage.

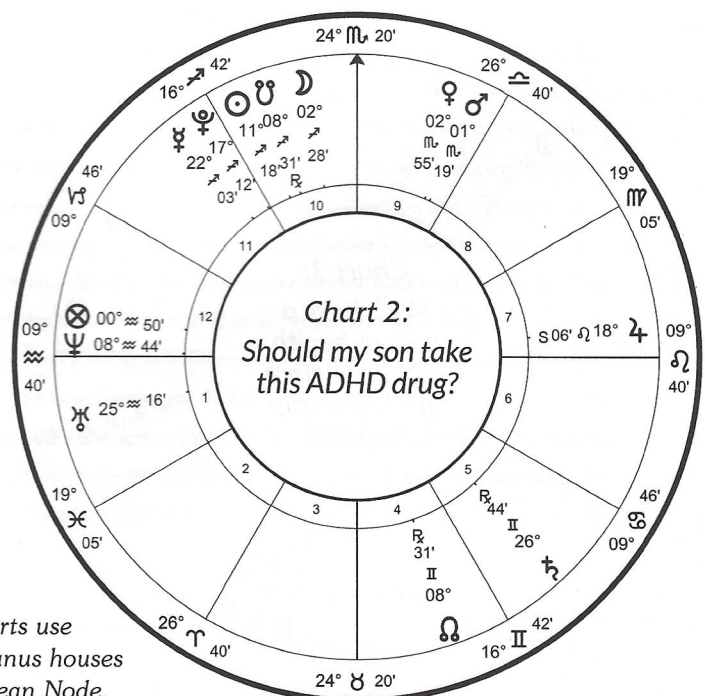
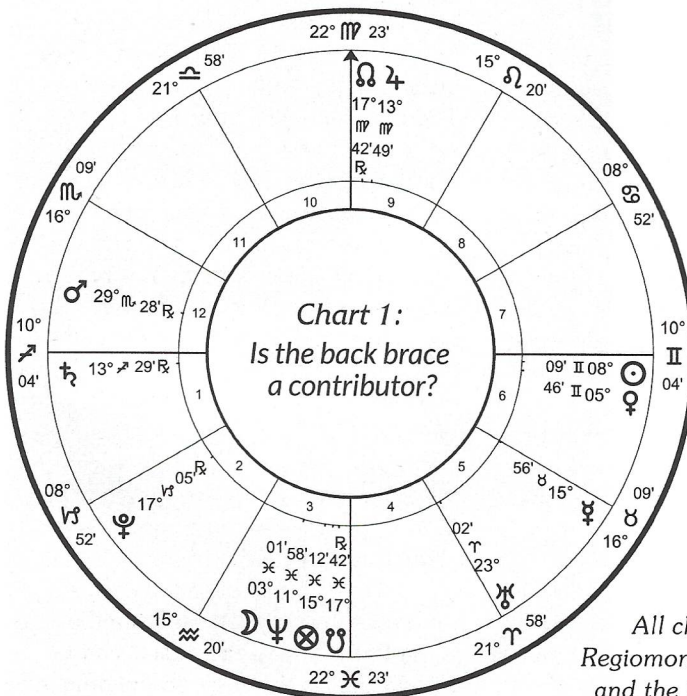
I have gotten this question in two different wordings: this one, which asks if the querent will be sick enough to need insurance, and the other, in the form of whether the querent should buy insurance. The interpretation is essentially the same, because the logic is the same: *If* the querent gets sick, *then* the querent will need insurance to pay for it. If the querent does not get sick, then either no insurance is necessary or, in the era of the Affordable Care Act, the querent can get a cheaper policy. How-

ever, it’s also worth adding that having insurance does not guarantee coverage for any particular treatment.

In the horary chart, the 1st house is ruled by Mercury, which is in detriment in Sagittarius. (See **Chart 3**, following page.) I judged that the querent already has health problems, and this was admitted. So, the question really is: Will the health situation get worse, requiring more treatment? For health and vitality, we use the 1st house; for disease, we examine the 6th, and here, we see Venus, ruling the 6th, in the 6th in Scorpio. Venus in Scorpio is in detriment, although it does have triplicity by day. The type of disease indicated is Venus-ruled, which could be kidneys, diabetes, a throat condition, or a genital issue — all of these are ruled by Venus. With Venus in Scorpio, a bladder problem is even possible.

It is at this point that I should remind you that everyone has the potential to have a disease at any moment. We all have a 6th house at all times! For our querent, the disease could be diabetes, or it could be a sore throat. It could be a serious venereal disease, or it could be a urinary tract infection that responds to a simple antibiotic. This is where we need to be able to assess: How bad is the condition, and is it getting worse or better?

Mercury is fast — this Mercury is moving away from a superior conjunction



All charts use Regiomontanus houses and the Mean Node.

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with the Sun and is within 17 minutes of the conjunction, hence *cazimi* (in the heart of the Sun). Guido Bonatti required that the conjunction be in both longitude and latitude, but William Lilly represented the tight conjunction with the Sun to be a strong accidental fortitude. Already, an inferior planet¹ at superior conjunction represents a new trajectory: The native's condition has entered a new cycle, and he may not respond to his condition the same way that he has in the past. Mercury is in detriment, thus suggesting that this new path may not be so wonderful for the native. But even as Mercury pulls away from the Sun, it moves toward Pluto. This represents a definite danger that things will get worse before they get better.

Can we get confirmation of this danger? We can examine the Moon, which is applying by square to an angry Mars in its fall and retrograde. This aspect suggests something flaring up — an acute condition (Mars) — and with the Moon and Mars in mutual reception, this is not to be ignored. Our querent definitely needs insurance for this year!

Example 4: Why did I have the miscarriage?

A miscarriage is often far more than a disappointment; it brings up all

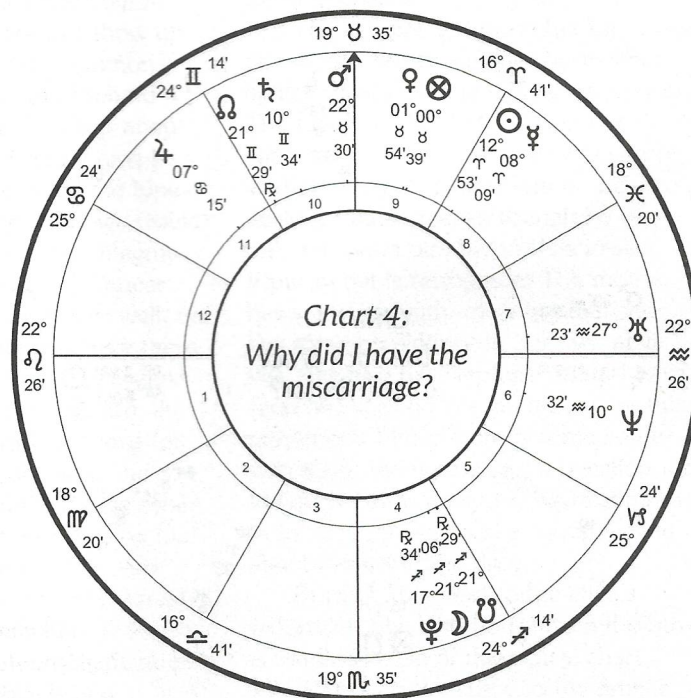
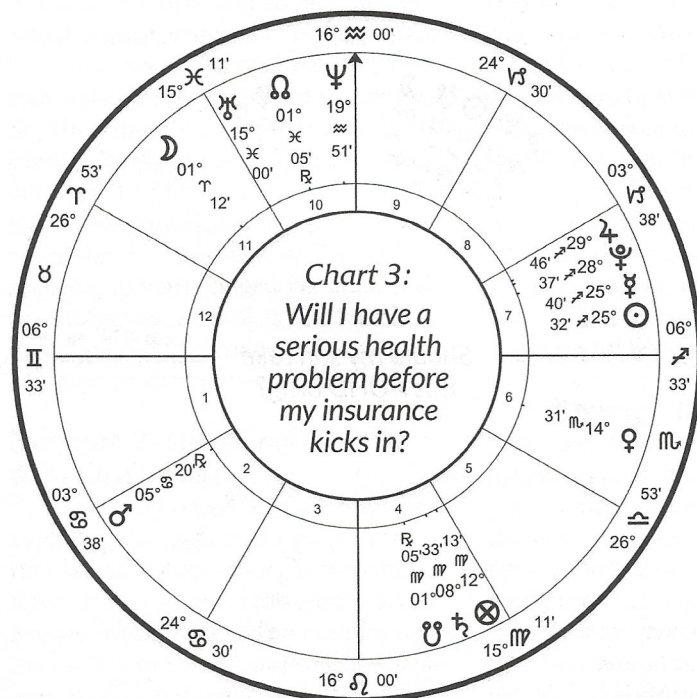
Pluto is one of the representatives of the chthonic energies — those ancient ones that have to do with impersonal fate.

kinds of issues, including self-doubt and even blame. The querent felt that she needed an explanation before she could go on with her life — and, hopefully, have a child.

What causes miscarriage? There can be a problem with the embryo/fetus, there can be an immune reaction in the mother, there can be a physical trauma, there can be a disease, or it can be a first-time pregnancy — there are many possibilities! Here, considering this as a biological question, I thought that horary could aid her in understanding the process, and perhaps help her to assess what pitfalls she might encounter in the future.

We know that the issue can be mother, fetus, or the interaction between the two. Let's sort out the components. (See **Chart 4**, below.) First, going to the 5th house for the developing fetus, we see Jupiter in Cancer ruling that house. The water signs are also called fruitful, and Jupiter is in Cancer, the sign of its exaltation! From this, it's difficult to conclude that the fetus was damaged. The mother's health is given by the Ascendant, which is ruled by the Sun; the Sun in Aries is also exalted, though moving into the 8th house by diurnal motion. (Notice that the Sun is within 5° of the 9th-house cusp, which brings it back to the 9th by the five-degree rule.) Mom is also just fine. So, what happened?

Again, we see key information from the Moon. The Moon has just separated from Pluto and is now conjunct the South Node. The Moon conjunct Pluto sounds like the miscarriage, and the partile conjunction with the South Node shows that the unfortunate circumstances are still present, even after the miscarriage itself. Pluto is one of the representatives of the chthonic energies — those ancient ones that have to do with impersonal fate, here showing the destruction of the new life. With the Moon-Pluto-South Node combination being in the 4th house, we have two possible interpretations: Either we can use the 4th as a symbol of genetic lineage (the 4th house as parent), or,



literally, as an indicator of some form of toxicity in the home/environment.

We can separate the affairs of a house from people represented by the house by distinguishing planets in the house (affairs) from the ruler(s) of a house (people). Here, Pluto in the 4th house says there really was something that we can call generically toxic, while the 4th-house ruler, Mars in detriment, suggests that there could be a genetic problem with a parent. If it's the latter, it's most likely the father, both because Mars would typically represent a male and also because the mother shows as being very strong in the chart. If Dad is the "problem," then the particular sperm that fertilized the egg could have had a mutation that showed up only after fertilization. This does not suggest that all of her husband's sperm are compromised, but that particular one may have been.

Can we get more information before we implicate Dad? We can. Mars is the participating triplicity ruler.² Thus, while peregrine by Lilly's rules, Mars is not necessarily so by Medieval rules,

which examined all three triplicity rulers. But Mars is in detriment, suggesting that there may be problems here. Because Taurus is not a barren sign, this does not suggest infertility as much as weakened sperm.

Furthermore, consider the placement of Mars. It's in a partile square to

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the Ascendant. This means that at *this* time, there is a conflict involving Dad, but then Mars moves off. These two arguments suggest that this genetic issue is not always present, but that this pregnancy represented a perfect storm, so to speak. The Moon is applying by trine to the Ascendant within 1½ degrees. The Ascendant, being fixed, points to a slower time period, suggesting that, if the querent waits about a year before she tries to get pregnant again, that particular problem will have passed.

However, Pluto is still in the horary's 4th house, so we can look for a chemical toxicity as well. This was a case where I chose to emphasize the literal toxicity rather than create a blame game between wife and husband. I told her that there was something toxic in her environment, which needed to be cleaned up before she tried to get pregnant again — and that it might take a year to do so. She responded that she felt it was toxic people around her. Was she acknowledging my anonymous warning? Perhaps.

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Saturn and the Theoretical Foundations of an Emerging Discipline



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PRESENTING ISSUE 5

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Saturn structures the rites of passage and initiations of life: at the precise time of birth Saturn fixes the natal chart, and it stands at the threshold of death. James Hillman's essay "On Senex Consciousness" provides the foundation for this issue: it is an homage to the Saturn archetype, forming the backbone for the entire volume. The contributors—including Richard Tarnas, Keiron Le Grice, Jessica Garfield-Kabbara, and Drew Dellinger—offer articles on such subjects as the potential for a feminine re-visioning of Saturn, a philosophical investigation into the three modalities of time, the relation between psychological and archetypal complexes, the connection between participatory theory and archetypal cosmology, a review of Sean Kelly's book *Coming Home: The Birth and Transformation of the Planetary Era*, and archetypal analyses of Dante's Saturn return, the Saturn-Neptune complex in the life and works of Virginia Woolf, and the relation between karma, collective field dynamics, and the Saturn-Pluto complex.

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Example 5: Should I see a doctor about the lump?

If time and money were infinite, then we could bother our health care practitioners with every little thing we observe. But this is not true. And especially in a world where individuals may not entirely accept the premises of any one flavor of medical practice, there may be a reluctance to visit a doctor except when something serious is happening.

Over the years, I have received many questions that are essentially variations of the simple question: How serious? This is actually one of the most important types of questions, because it allows the querent to prioritize the situation.

The first thing we are confronted with is a consideration before judgment: Saturn in the horary's 1st house. (See **Chart 5**, below right.) The generic meaning of this is that the querent is either lying, or perhaps there is some fact that, when considered, makes the whole question moot. There is also one other possibility: when Saturn actually describes the situation. In this case, it does. The lump in question was on the querent's ear. Saturn rules "surdity," to use the old expression: deafness. So, when Saturn is descriptive, it is no longer a consideration. This concept is like Saturn in the 7th in a real estate horary, where the other party to the transaction is a senior citizen — it has become descriptive.

The querent has Aries rising naturally, so this chart describes her. She is strong, given the horary Mars in Scorpio. Her significator is in the 7th house, which can represent either a health care practitioner or the partner — usually the health care practitioner in a medical horary. The querent's significator is strong and angular; she is showing as being in good condition. The lump is given by Mercury, ruler of the 6th house. Mercury is the out-of-sect ruler of the air signs, so has dignity using the Medieval system, if not quite as strong as in-sect. Most importantly, from my standpoint, Mer-

A horary can show not only what will happen if things continue on their present course, but often what adjustments might produce a different outcome.

cury is separating from Neptune, which means that clarity is improving — Neptune can represent both confusion and immune system issues. This Mercury is approaching the superior conjunction: a fast Mercury nearing the end of its cycle. Mercury is combust — the cause is hidden, but then that is why she contacted me for a horary!

The Moon is void of course and about to enter the sign of its domicile. This generally means that things are improving. Since the querent's condition (Mars) is sound, and the sickness is becoming clarified and improved, and the Moon is vastly improving in condition, I told her that it would improve on its own.

However, without my recommending it, she asked her partner to examine her ear — and, lo, it was a nasty pimple, easily lanced! So, the 7th-house location of Mars came into play after all.

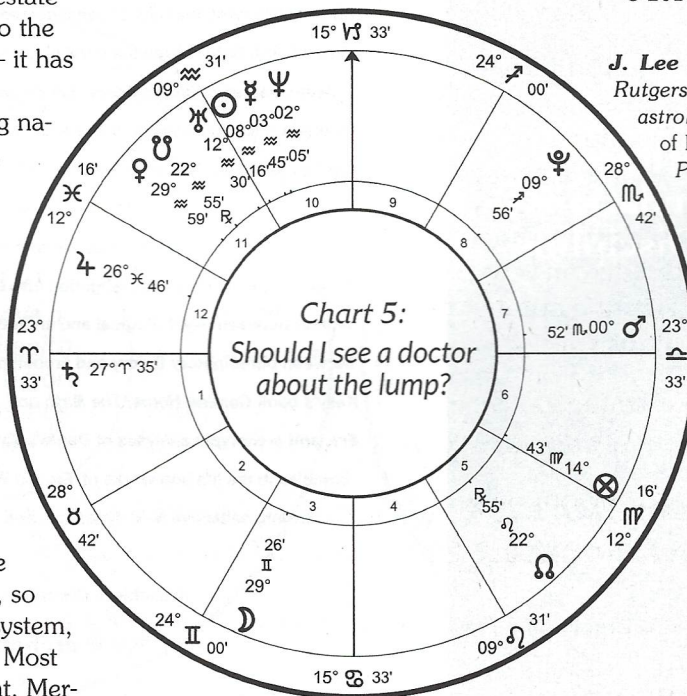
Parting Thoughts

Horary is a snapshot in time. Whether this is applied to a medical situation or to any other subject, there is considerable utility in knowing where we stand and where the trend is pointing. One of the most heartening things, when studying Lilly's example horaries, is to see that a horary can show not only what will happen if things continue on their present course, but often what kinds of adjustments might produce a different outcome. Divining the future without the possibility of changing it can add to worry and concern, since most of us do not manage to achieve the level of acceptance that the Stoics advocated as the proper response to blind fate. Horary allows us a clearer path on the middle road: to help map the obstacles that perhaps we can change or, at least, navigate around.

Notes

1. Mercury and Venus are "inferior" planets, as their orbits are within the Earth's orbit.
2. The participating triplicity ruler is the third planet that rules each element, or triplicity. Mars is the participating triplicity ruler of the earth signs.

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