

Introduction to Astrology Self-Study Course

Sample Course Materials

*Awakenings School
of
Intuitive Astrology*



Thank you for checking out these sample materials from my introductory astrology course. You can also listen to clips from teaching audios on my web site here:

<http://astro-awakenings.co.uk/asoia-samples>

The course materials are divided into 9 units which in total consist of 300 pages of course notes and 12 hours of audio teaching, together with the 70 plus page course text 'Signs and Houses' (so these sample materials form a very small part of the course content!). All materials are available for download via links which are sent to you once you purchase the course. You will also receive six different copies of your natal chart for use throughout the course together with instructions for using a free online tool to draw up additional charts of friends and family as you work your way through the units.

As this course is self-study you can work through it at your own pace and with no pressure, taking all the time you need to process and absorb the information, apply it to your own chart and those of friends and family, and generally integrate your growing astrological knowledge into your everyday life. In the course I suggest a variety of ways to do this and by the time you have completed all the units you will have a broad base of astrological understanding and techniques that enable you to experience the heavens as a living, breathing presence in your life. This is how astrology comes alive for us: not by reading countless books but by applying what we learn to our everyday experience and using it to grow in self-knowledge and wisdom.

Here follow excerpts from course unit notes and the course text 'Signs and Houses'. This is just a brief flavour of my style of teaching and the kind of materials you will receive when you purchase the course. Before each excerpt you will see noted where it is from. We begin with excerpts from the course unit notes and end with those from the course text 'Signs and Houses'. I hope you enjoy them and they inspire in you a desire to dive deeper into the world of astrology with me!

Sarah Varcas

p.s. Please feel free to share these sample materials with anyone you know who may be interested!

Excerpts from the Unit 1 Course Notes

From the initial introductory discussion about astrology:

Astrology is effectively the study of order within the universe. The heart of astrology reflects the unity of the cosmos, the connections between above and below, within and without. It recognises that we are all made of energy, as is every single thing: energy that vibrates and resonates at varied rates, thereby producing the different states of being from physical material to ethereal light. Astrology recognises that, as living creatures, we are animated by energy that both pours into us from outside and flows out of us from within. This continuous cycle of energetic exchange is the very essence of life. How these energies meet and merge defines how we express our life-force here on earth.

For example, if the energy that flows up and out of us is characterised by spontaneity, when it meets inflexible and rigid energy from outside there will be a mismatch or dissonance in the energy field. The two vibrations must then negotiate a relationship which enables each to exist in the same space as the other. We may experience this process as, for example, an occurrence which limits our freedom, perhaps in the form of an illness, accident or additional responsibilities for a dependant. There may be a time of resistance to these new limitations, during which we struggle to continue living in the old way which will no longer work: perhaps we don't have the time for creative pursuits anymore, or our energy's too low and unreliable to indulge in them. There then occurs a phase of readjustment in which we must incorporate some of the external limiting energy into our own energy field in order to find our optimum level of functioning under the new conditions. We can then learn how to be who we are under these new circumstances, thereby creating a synthesis between two very different vibrations. (For those who already know something of astrology, this process could well play out several times in the life of someone who has natal Saturn squaring Uranus, for example).

From an exploration of the elements:

Different elements have varying levels of endurance. Once we die, the air element leaves us immediately but may return in due course in the form of gases as our body putrefies. The fire element leaves us within a few hours as our body temperature drops, but the water and earth elements remain far longer as the process of decay gradually takes place. The elements are interdependent, complementing and supporting each other. Some, however, are more compatible than others. Air fans the flames of fire, but water puts them out. Earth provides a container for water while fire causes water to boil and overflow its boundaries. Each element has its role to play and its own relationship with the other elements. They are fundamental forces within the universe, existing in the heavens as they do on earth. Each component of an astrological chart is connected to a particular element. By understanding this elemental link we can more readily penetrate its true nature.

Many people are familiar with the elemental connection of zodiac signs knowing, for example, that Gemini is an air sign, Scorpio water etc. However, this elemental thread runs through everything in a chart, not just the signs. Every planet, house, aspect and point in the horoscope has an elemental signature within it, making an understanding of the elements vital to chart interpretation. A fire planet in an earth house with air aspects will express itself very differently to a fire planet in a water house with earth aspects. But don't worry! Whilst it may sound confusing, these are things you'll encounter repeatedly as you progress through the course and you'll gradually discern their relevance as you go.

And some information about the Unit 1 audio:

In the Unit 1 Audio I'll be looking at Barack Obama's chart to demonstrate how we can glean important information from a chart without knowing anything about planets or aspects. You will learn how to begin by looking at the chart as a whole, not dissected into its component parts. In doing so we can establish the overall focus of the individual, their general motivation in life and how they relate to themselves and their environment. In the audio I also provide some additional ways to bring alive your understanding of your chart and some other factors to take into account.

Excerpts from the Unit 3 Course

Notes

From a discussion about astrological opposites:

Essentially, astrological opposites are all about balance. Each pair of opposites marks out a spectrum of experience along which exists a balance point that draws upon both extremes in equal measure, enabling them to fully manifest their potential. However, it can be quite a challenge for us to establish this balance, or even to recognise that the opposite qualities exist within each other! If, for example, we strongly identify with our Aquarian Sun and lack any planets in its opposite sign of Leo, we may resist acknowledging our own need for personal attention and recognition because it doesn't rest well with our egalitarian Aquarian ideals. However, most individuals with a strong Aquarian energy in their chart express it in an individualistic way that inevitably attracts some kind of attention, be it through their activities, appearance, politics or their general lifestyle. Whilst they may not specifically do these things to gain attention, they will receive it anyway, reflecting the Leonine need for individual recognition. They will also enjoy the attention, even if only in secret!

From a comparison of Mercury and Jupiter:

Styles of learning: Mercury learns by receiving information from another person's body of knowledge. This is then memorised, becoming part of our knowledge base. However, whilst we may know it intellectually we do not know it experientially. To know something experientially we must engage Jupiter, who teaches us subjectively through experience, experimentation, exploration and personal interest. For example, we may learn Mercurially (from a text book or a science teacher) about what happens when you combine two different chemicals, but we won't learn it 'Jupiterially' until we combine those chemicals ourselves in an experiment and experience their interaction first hand. Likewise we may be told that touching a hot coal is a bad idea (Mercury) but we won't learn it through Jupiter unless we touch a hot coal and suffer the consequences! Sometimes it's best to leave it at the Mercurial lesson and learn from someone else's mistakes!

On the challenges of reading one's own chart:

Of course, reading one's own chart is very different to reading someone else's. We already know what our chart 'feels' like because we've been living it all our life! However, we will be more conscious of some parts than others and we may be inclined to pay attention to those things we already know, using the chart as confirmation, whilst ignoring factors which lie outside our conscious awareness. Doing this means we only get a fraction of the benefit of using astrology, when there is so much more self-knowledge available. It can be tempting to dismiss an interpretation with which we don't immediately resonate. However, by working with just such interpretations we can uncover deeper truths about who we are. There seems little point in using the wealth of wisdom in our birth chart simply to affirm what we already know! Far better that we use it to uncover what has yet to enter our awareness. This is the best use of astrology for it reveals those hidden, denied and avoided aspects of the self, presenting all that we are without censorship or apology. No matter how uncomfortable we may be with certain aspects of our nature, they will be reflected in our chart without guile, ready and waiting to be recognised, embraced and integrated.

So if you find yourself resistant to the apparent meaning of a planetary placement or other chart factor, rather than simply dismissing it, accept it as a possibility. Consider what it may be saying about you and what your reaction towards this possibility may say about you too! Feel into its message. Allow your chart to speak to you. Deny nothing until you've explored it from every angle. Only in this way can we truly receive the deepest wisdom of the heavens. They're not out to bolster our own personal self-image, but to reveal our authentic and true self, warts and all, for our greater awareness and authenticity.

An extract from the teaching on sextiles (60 degree angles between two planets):

A sextile indicates the need for a harmonious, creative and innovative response to our environment. It enables us to see things through fresh eyes and create new ways of doing things. We must develop talents and skills which we then put to good use in order to reap their benefits. We must be prepared to put in the required effort to manifest these new possibilities, otherwise a sextile indicates unfulfilled potential and a lack of engagement with life and our environment.

Sextiles stimulate us at a mental level, but we must find the energy to apply ourselves at the material level to realise their potential.

Now take a moment to let yourself 'feel into' the energy of a sextile. It's harmonious but inspired, creative but cerebral. It has potential but requires commitment. It's fulfilling and challenging in the same moment. It reveals the strengths and talents we need to develop, but doesn't necessarily give us the application and commitment required to develop them! Allow yourself to get a sense of this energy in your own life. Can you relate to it in any way? Does it remind you of aspects of your own character? Do you ever find yourself full of plans but lacking the motivation or 'know how' to make them happen? Do you see yourself as a creative person? If yes, in what way? And if not, why not? What stops you from being creative? Or what stops you from **seeing** yourself as creative? Remember that being creative isn't just about being artistic! We can be creative in the kitchen, in bed, at our desk at work, in our use of language, in the clothes we wear... Sextiles encourage us to recognise our creative potential, because without recognising it we'll never realise its fullest potential.

Excerpts from the Unit 5 Course

Notes

From a discussion about karma and the moon's nodes:

An appreciation of the karmic nature of life forms an important part of the way I work with astrology. It removes it from the realms of 'fate and destiny' into a paradigm of responsibility, continuity and order. Traditionally speaking the nodes were seen as the place of fate in a chart, where powerful events befall us that we can neither control nor influence. Whilst such events do undeniably occur in our lives, astrology reveals the nature of order within the universe, no matter how disordered it may feel to us on a personal level. The study of astrology teaches that what feels like 'fate' is in fact a reflection of fundamental energies manifest in our chart and woven throughout our lives. Recognition of this inherent pattern in seemingly random events is a powerful bedrock when 'fate' appears to have intervened and we feel like we're swirling away

down a huge cosmic plug hole! An understanding of the moon's nodes can help us establish this bedrock and discern a way forward....

.....Pursuing our nodal path can often feel counter-intuitive, especially if we have no planets in the sign of our North Node. The qualities of our North Node may feel totally alien to us, so how can we possibly develop them?! The North Node challenges us to do the opposite of what comes naturally and embracing its message can, at times, feel almost impossible to do! However, it isn't impossible. If it's there in our chart we can do it, whether or not we think we can! So we need to suspend disbelief when working with our nodes and act on faith, knowing that if our North Node tells us we need to develop *these* qualities in *this* area of our life, it does so for a reason. Once we've heeded its wisdom a whole new aspect of life will open up to us and the sense of fulfilment and satisfaction that comes with liberating the energies of our nodal path is well worth the effort!!

From an exploration of the similarities & differences between quincunxes (150° angles) and oppositions (180° angles):

The key **similarities** between the quincunx and opposition are:

- Both relate to an internal process of change and development, necessitating inner adjustment which changes our relationship with – primarily - ourselves and – secondarily - the outside world.
- Both are key to the process of maturation and the development of wisdom and insight.
- Both require that we encounter dis-ease or stress caused by aspects of our nature, feelings, habits and/or behaviours. This unrest spurs us on to deeper self-understanding and the development of greater self-awareness.

The key **differences** between the quincunx and opposition are as follows:

- The dis-ease of the opposition arises from relationships between ourselves and other people, through which we encounter our own incongruencies and inner contradictions. The dis-ease of the quincunx arises from internal stress that we can experience apart from our connections with other people.
- The opposition requires that we make adjustments at an emotional and thinking level. The quincunx requires adjustments that are primarily mental, promoting understanding and insight in a more cerebral and less emotional manner.
- The ultimate goal of the quincunx is wisdom and understanding. The ultimate goal of the opposition is self-acceptance which promotes inner peace.

Excerpts from the Unit 7 Course

Notes

From an exploration of large aspect structures:

The term 'large aspect structure' refers to a significant geometric shape (such as a triangle or rectangle) formed by a combination of individual aspects. When a chart contains one (or more) of these structures it gives an over-arching theme to the chart and will be prominent in the individual's personality and life experience. When considering the issue of large aspect structures we do so from the perspective of two main attributes: colour and shape.

Colour:

We've already encountered the issue of colour in our study of aspects in general and by now you'll be developing familiarity with the significance of green, red and blue aspects in terms of the energy they bring to a chart. Because large aspect structures are formed of a combination of individual aspects, they have the potential to contain more than one colour. It's therefore important that we understand the significance of their colour combination and what this says about the influence of the structure itself. Large aspect structures can be formed of a single colour or a combination.

Shape:

Large aspect structures come in a variety of geometric shapes and sizes. Many are triangular, but we also find rectangles, squares and other shapes. Some are symmetrical and others less so, and the shape's relationship to the symmetrical plane indicates its basic motivation: the more symmetrical the shape, the more it's geared towards creating the experience of security. So, for example, a shape which is a perfect square or a perfect rectangle seeks to create certainty and control. However, a triangle with varying length sides will be more dynamic and interested in change and discovery than one with sides all the same length.

Generally speaking shapes with four sides are also motivated to create stable conditions, whereas triangular shapes are more interested in interaction, relationships and adjustment, although that interest decreases the more the sides are of equal length. In effect, the more 'dynamic' the shape the more its energy is focused upon interaction and change, the more symmetrical the shape the more its energy is geared towards maintaining the status quo.

.....You'll see the above mentioned principles of shape and colour demonstrated in the exploration of the following nine large aspect structures. For each aspect structure a chart follows which contains it. Take some time to look at each chart after reading the description and consider how the structure will express itself. Remember to take into account the planets and houses involved. Don't get bogged down in other factors in the chart at first, just focus on the large aspect structure in question. This helps you develop the capacity to hone in on a particular area of a chart before expanding your reading from there. Once you've considered the aspect structure itself, take a look at any aspects which connect to its component planets. These will take you out into other chart factors but still enable you to focus upon the prominent life theme depicted in the large structure. In the audio for this unit I take a look at Agatha Christie's chart which appeared above, demonstrating how her Grand Trine in Air works with the rest of her chart.

¹Irritation Triangle

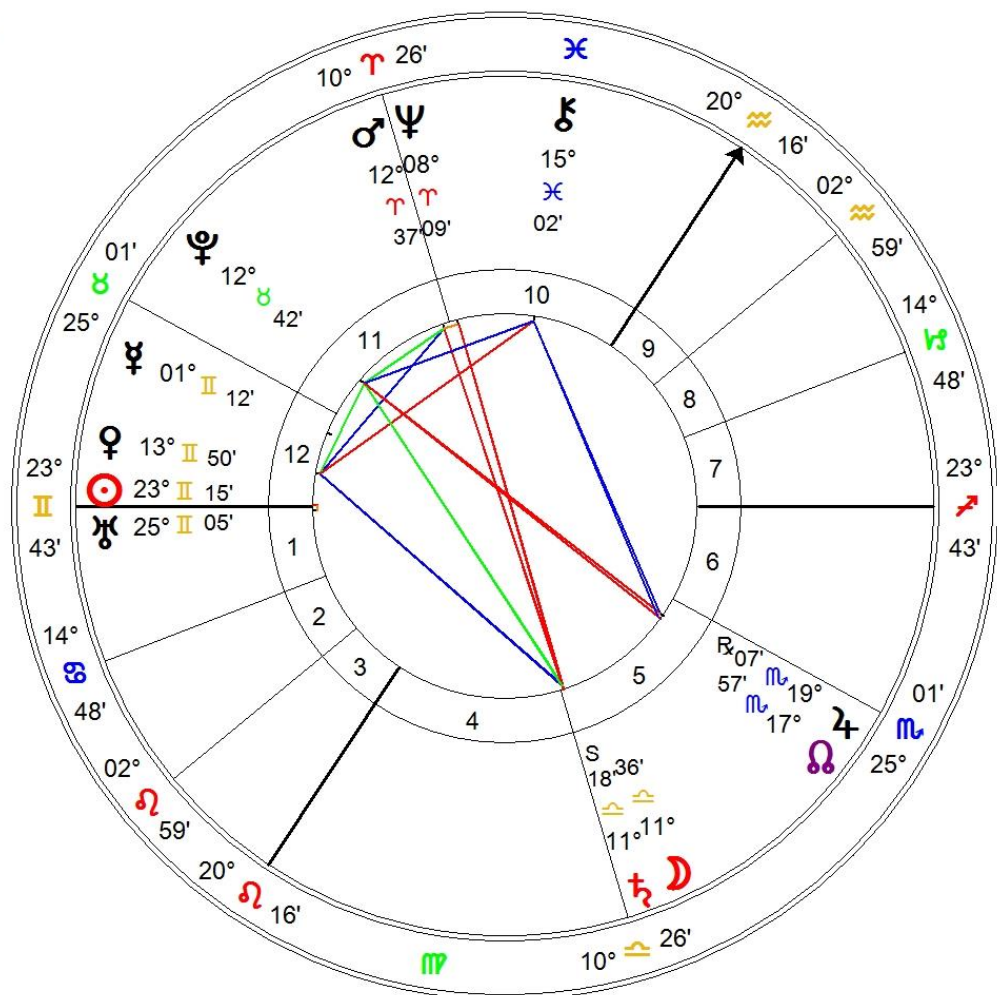
This structure is created by a semi-sextile and a quincunx attached to an opposition. Thus it is red and green, indicating tension which demands careful management. With

¹ This is one of several structures specifically identified as a result of painstaking research carried out by Bruno and Louise Huber, who developed the 'Astrological Psychology' model of chart interpretation

the application of awareness, the stress it produces can be used as a positive motivator rather than an obstacle to satisfaction and peace. Given the presence of an opposition on one of its sides, it will sit in one half of the chart. This half will be a source of stress which must be managed for the individual to find peace and a sense of positive productivity. One can look to any adjoining blue aspects to locate an easier and more satisfying energy. An irritation triangle is often viewed as delivering few gifts, however, the self-awareness that grows from managing this fairly challenging structure can be invaluable when it comes to tackling life's obstacles.

The following chart, belonging to the German psychiatrist Alois Alzheimer, contains an Irritation Triangle formed by Pluto, Mars and the Saturn/Moon conjunction.

Alois Alzheimer
Natal Chart
 14 Jun 1864, Tue
 04:00 LMT -0:40:32
 Marktbreit, Germany
 49°N40' 010°E08'
Geocentric
Tropical
Koch
True Node



Kite

A Kite is formed by a Grand Trine topped with a Great Sextile, forming a kite shape containing an opposition between its two end points. Thus it is blue on the outside with a red opposition on the inside. This inner red aspect is essential to the working and fulfilment of this fairly rare aspect structure.

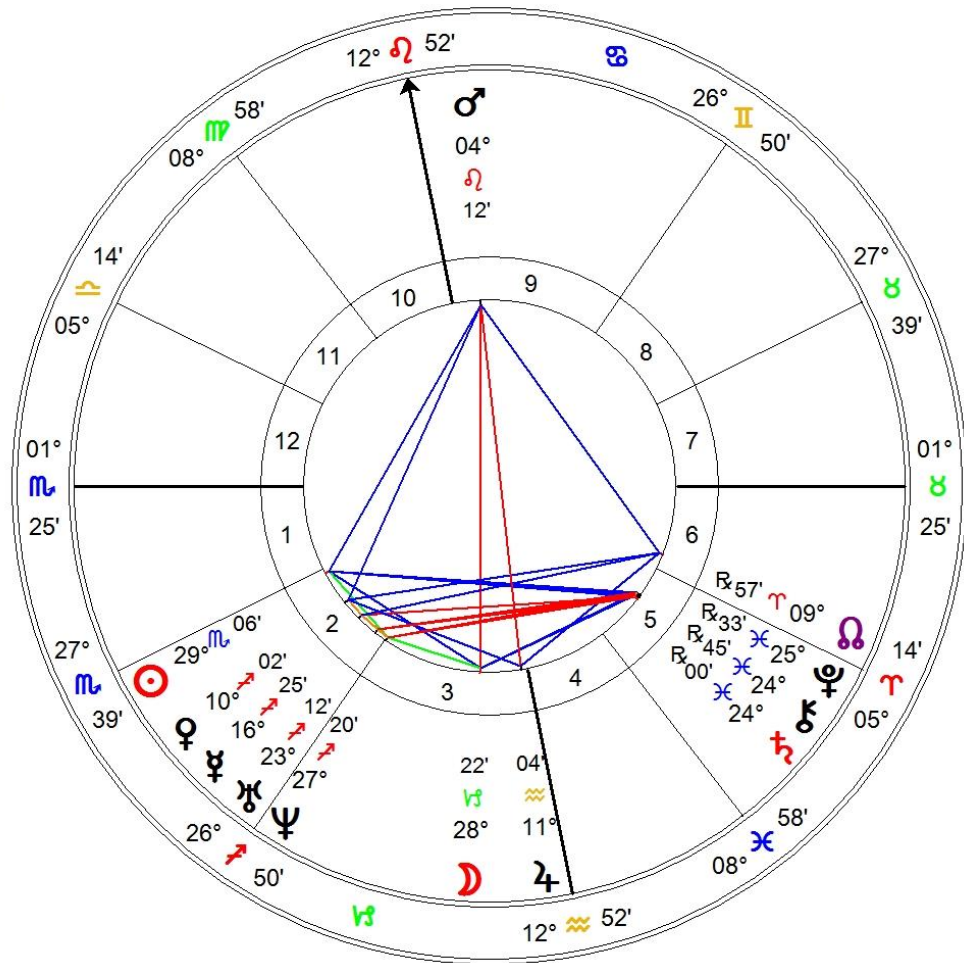
As we have seen with both the Grand Trine and the Great Sextile, there's much natural talent and potential here, but the tension of the red aspect creates an internal stress which pushes the individual to resolve an inner-conflict. In doing so the creative abilities of the other two aspect structures can be fulfilled. When a Grand Trine forms part of a Kite rather than standing alone, there is a greater possibility that its benefits will eventually be realised. It is less likely that the Grand Trine will become totally self-absorbed and self-perpetuating without effective engagement with the environment. In effect, the Grand Trine in a Kite indicates the central talent, the Great Sextile indicates the abilities still to be developed which will enable that talent to be expressed in a positive way, and the opposition forms the 'energy source' for the process of development and transformation needed to move the individual from self-absorption to creative expression.

In terms of the direction of growth, the planet at the 'base' of the Kite (i.e. where the Kite string would be attached) grounds the individual, anchoring them in the present moment. The planet opposite this (at the other end of the opposition) is the 'apex' planet and indicates where the individual needs to aim for to fulfil the potential of the Kite. The opposition between these two planets indicates the internal adjustment needed to enable them to express the unique gifts of the Kite through the apex planet.

Individuals with a Kite in their chart often present as peaceful and self-contained. This is reflected in the blue aspects being on the outside. The inner conflict of the internal red aspect is hidden from view and experienced personally as a contradiction to the way they are perceived by others. This can result in feelings of loneliness and alienation. A Kite can make it tough to ask for help because the owner is perceived not as someone in need of support, but who provides support and strength to others.

The following chart is that of George Eliot the English Victorian novelist. It contains a Kite formed by Mars at the base, Jupiter at the apex and the North Node and Venus forming the sextiles to Jupiter. This Kite points downwards in the chart.

George Eliot
Natal Chart
 22 Nov 1819, Mon
 05:00 LMT +0:05:52
 Nuneaton, England
 52°N32' 001°W28'
Geocentric
Tropical
Koch
True Node



The Audio for Unit 7 explores further the interpretation of large aspect structures in a chart.

Excerpts from the Unit 9 Course

Notes

From an exploration of Black Moon Lilith (BML):

Where BML lives in our chart is where we encounter our deepest and most tenacious power: the place in ourselves and our lives where we can finally apply complete resistance to external influence. Where the Moon is easily influenced and deeply impressionable, the Black Moon is the opposite: impenetrable and rigid. BML is our hidden strength and gifts us with her power when all else fails. She is us in our darkest moments at the point where we discover we can survive anyway, and then thrive. Never let anyone tell you that BML is a negative presence! She is not. Yes, she has a 'negative' expression as well as a 'positive' one (so does every other astrological component of a chart), but when we're expressing the negative aspects of BML it's because we're not owning our power consciously. We fear it so we hide it and resort to manipulation or aggression to get our way. BML, in her purest state, is neither of these. She is raw life energy. She is survival. She is the Divine Feminine, ferocious and scary, warm and wise.

In exploring BML you may sense her as very similar to Pluto. Both reflect the issue of raw, primal power. Both entail our facing aspects of life, ourselves and other people which we may prefer to avoid, and both have a bad name and are often met with fear! There are, indeed, some similarities between the two, especially in terms of the way we respond to them. However, an important differentiation to make is this: Pluto is a planet and as such offers us something we can use to interact with the world around us. We can 'do' our Pluto precisely because it's a force which lives inside of us, available for our use. Pluto is a tool in our toolbox of energy and expression. BML, on the other hand, is not a tool as such. Instead she signifies an opportunity, an encounter with the raw creative energy at the heart of the universe. In our chart she shows where we come face to face with this power and where we need to take full ownership of our own sovereignty. How we respond to this opportunity will be reflected in the placement of and aspects to BML. She indicates where we have the opportunity to channel unfettered energy and how we go about doing so.

From an exploration of different house systems:

Of course, a frequently asked question about the issue of house systems is 'if different systems provide different charts, how can we rely on any of them to be accurate?!'. This is an important question and one which cuts to the heart of what astrological houses actually represent. The first thing to note is that the change in the house position of some planets, from one system to another, will only ever be to neighbouring houses. You won't suddenly find that your 1st house Sun in Placidus is in your 9th house in Equal or your 6th in Koch! These kind of discrepancies do not occur. All that we see when planets shift house in a different system is a change of nuance rather than an entirely new life theme.

It can help to think of it this way: each house contains the fruits of the previous house and the seeds of the following one. It provides the place in which we reap the consequences of our choices and behaviour in the preceding house and where we accumulate the information, skills and wisdom we need for the next one. Thus each house is part of a cohesive system of development, not an isolated entity in and of itself with no relationship to its surrounding environment. For example, planets in the 7th house are used in relationships. How we use them provides the foundation for how we experience 8th house issues of shared resources and interests, loss, deep change and rebirth. If, for example, we use our 7th house Mars to bully others, then our 8th house experience will be one of conflict, power struggles and isolation simply because we will not have created the alliances we need in the 7th house to make the 8th house work in a productive way.

Alternatively, if we use our 10th house Venus to manifest beauty through our work we can reap the benefits of being part of a group of people who share our love of beauty in the 11th house of shared goals and aspirations. But if we use our 10th house Venus to indulge ourselves and fail to establish the self-discipline needed to create a beautiful experience for others, we may find that our 11th house world is empty of meaningful connections. We have focused too heavily on our own immediate gratification and failed to demonstrate the inter-personal awareness that groups require to function well.

When we understand this inter-connected nature of the houses we can appreciate how different house systems can change the nuance of certain aspects of life without changing the over-arching themes within a chart. As such, every system will give you a meaningful reading, albeit with some shift in emphasis.

Excerpts from the course text

'Signs and Houses'

'As you read about zodiac sign characteristics please bear in mind that the description is effectively that of the prototype, but what we encounter when we actually meet people is always a modification. You'll never find someone who is pure Aries, for example, or unadulterated Virgo. We all channel and express a combination of archetypal energies in our own unique way. Whilst in everyday parlance we may refer to 'a typical Taurean', there is, in fact, no such thing....only degrees of expression of certain archetypal Taurean energies. Each of us will contain the opposite of the predominant energies present in our chart, ready to be expressed when the conditions are right! Unit 3 considers in more detail the issue of opposites in astrology.

As you read the following pages, remember we're not talking about absolutes here. Not everyone born with their Sun in Aquarius will express all of the Aquarian characteristics described. Indeed, we could display a very strong Aquarian streak without having our Sun in Aquarius if we have a number of other planets there, or it occupies an influential position such as on our Ascendant. So when I refer to a zodiac sign please remember we are not talking about specific people but distinct archetypal energy signatures which will be modified in practice.'

Aries:

'There's a marked directness to Aries expression. The Arian mind simplifies things down to their basic tenets. It doesn't deal in complexity or analysis, which are viewed as a distraction when a decision needs to be made! It encourages straight-talking and honest expression. This is a 'take me as you find me' person, with few airs and graces, despite the fact that Aries can bestow great ambition to excel in many different fields,

from work to sport to creativity. There's a truly pioneering quality about the Aries spirit, willing to go where no one has before and come back with tales of risk and threat alongside passion and desire!

Taurus

'Despite seemingly infinite patience, Taurus does have its limits. When pushed beyond them an angry outburst can be expected. It may seem to occur out of the blue, but in truth has been simmering beneath the surface for quite some time. A Taurean individual whose reliability has been too long taken for granted can suddenly explode and withdraw from those they previously supported, having given all they can. Although this anger will eventually subside, the relationship will never be the same. Having withdrawn they will not return to the relationship in the same way. A lesson has been learned and change has occurred! Like all things Taurean, when change finally happens it is enduring and reliable. There is no vacillation or regret. What's done is done and there will be no going back!'

Gemini

'Gemini needs to communicate, so talking and/or writing often feature significantly. Here we find avid letter-writers, internet surfers, broadcasters, journalists, book-worms or just someone who's on the phone and texting all the time! The Gemini mind wants to articulate life, putting everything into words: thoughts, feelings, hopes, dreams, pet-peeves etc. Everything is talked about and communication is paramount. The focus is on 'out there'. Contact with the environment is vital for this individual to thrive. This is not someone who wants to be left alone. They need mental stimulation in order to keep their energy flowing. Here we have the conversationalist who can talk the hind legs off a donkey if necessary!'

'In maturing, Gemini turns its attention inward rather than outward. It begins to apply its capacity for understanding to the inner self and the wider issues of humanity, not just to whatever is most stimulating to the mind in the moment. In this way it can begin

to understand the nature of cause and effect at a mental level and grasp the significance of thought in the unfolding of life experience. Thus the true power of the mind is unlocked and the creative capacity of thought can be harnessed in a positive and constructive way.'

Cancer

'The Cancerian path entails moving towards a dynamic and energised state of peace, from which one can act with clarity and integrity. Cancerian energy, whilst sensitive and inclined to withdrawal, is a cardinal energy nonetheless. As such it is motivated to initiate things and this drive needs to be expressed. Cancer can contribute to effective leadership within the family and community, but this outward focus of a generally introverted energy pattern may cause it to feel torn between taking care of others and keeping them away! Likewise it may want to both share and hide its feelings. Everything can feel paradoxical when the energy is experienced at this level, but it is important for Cancer to share its feelings and thoughts effectively in order to sustain meaningful contact with the environment.'

Leo

'Leo can recognise and nurture the spark of the Divine in everyone when it is lit and nurtured within the self. This is the Leo choice: to glorify the self or the Divine. Of course, to choose well it is vital to know which is which! Leo encounters challenge and obstacles when its ego, inflated at the expense of the Divine, is perceived as divine nonetheless and a 'right' to personal power and authority is assumed without question. Only by monitoring and consciously engaging with environmental feedback (such as the positive or negative responses of other people) can Leo begin to discern whether it's operating from a divine or egoic energy source.'

Virgo

'Virgo energy engages the mind with a healthy pursuit of perfection on the one hand and obsessive perfectionism on the other! It provides attention to detail and finds the right place for all things, recognising the needs at each stage of development whether it be of a living being, an idea, project or community.'

'Keeping things in proportion can be difficult. Minutiae take on great importance and the truly significant things in life can be lost as a result. Virgo's need to feel in control creates an imperative to analyse and know everything in great detail. This state of mind arises from the misperception that we can only ever know something through the mind and mental faculties. In fact this belief prevents us from directly knowing life in its true essence, which exists beyond mind. Fulfilment of the Virgo path occurs in directly knowing the heart of the Divine in all its beauty and perfection, without obsessing about the nature of that perfection.'

Libra:

'Libra has an instinctive understanding of the hidden and often obscure connections between seemingly disparate things. This can be experienced both as a blessing and a curse! Consequences can be so clearly perceived that action becomes impossible because no choice assures only positive outcomes. Alternatively, appreciation of the interwoven nature of experience enables a deep understanding of human nature. Ultimately it is this aspect of consciousness that must be refined for the Libran path to be fulfilled. The final and ultimate test is one of absolute fairness in all things, which can only be achieved through the recognition that all things are, in fact, born of the same essence: all is One. The path to this realisation demands the development of inner balance to tolerate outer strife when necessary.'

Scorpio

'In its balanced expression Scorpio respects and honours privacy as something that enables safety and integrity. It understands the importance of the private and personal sphere around which everyone has an inalienable right to draw their own boundary. At the same time it possesses the courage to challenge those boundaries if greater issues of moral integrity are at stake. Scorpio recognises that obsessive secrecy can lead to repression and denial, especially of oneself which, in turn, fosters pathological emotional and mental states. Here we see the Scorpio resonance with psychotherapeutic work: delving into the depths of the psyche to uncover and bring into consciousness those things which serve, unconsciously, to sabotage, corrupt and destabilise it.'

Sagittarius

'Despite its love of freedom and spontaneity, Sagittarius also appreciates order and patterns, reflected in its rulership of law, philosophy, religion and sports. The Sagittarian mind wants to understand and make sense of the universe, life and experience, bringing disparate parts together into a cohesive whole. The self-discipline and commitment required on the Sagittarian path is often encountered through commitment to a certain philosophy or way of life. This commitment forms the doorway to a new perception. Gradually life begins to make sense beyond the immediate gratification of the desire for stimulation. At this point life begins to reveal its deeper and more enduring face and Sagittarius is forever transformed.'

Capricorn:

'Life may eventually present Capricorn with a stripping away of material resources to shake it up and awaken it to the non-material aspects of existence. When this happens there can be a sense of profound loss and hopelessness prior to an awakening and enlivening of the heart. Initially Capricorn may feel disconnected from the lives and emotions of self and other, as it focuses on keeping the external world under control

and on meeting its own needs. Once the spirit has been awakened a profound transformation begins as a result of which Capricorn can manage and shape the material world for the benefit of all, not just for personal gain. This shift necessitates recognition that it is the Divine who provides through us. We do not have to provide in and of ourselves.'

Aquarius

'We find many apparent contradictions on the Aquarian path. Here we see the open-minded, forward-looking free thinker who clings to his unusual views like a drowning person to a rock! We see the humanitarian who fights for the underdog but lacks emotional empathy with those around her. Or the misunderstood loner who nevertheless needs to be part of a like-minded group to progress and develop. It is in navigating a path through such internal paradox that Aquarius attains balance and an ability to engage both the mind and heart when interacting with others.'

'Despite the focus on community, Aquarius must go through a formative experience of isolation or loneliness at some point, which forces it to face its own pain and internal dissonance at a heart, rather than intellectual, level. In essence, this is the initiatory process which takes it onto the next level of awareness. Through it, the heart is opened and compassion born out of a sense of shared suffering, which then underpins future relationships.'

Pisces

'Pisces can tend towards laziness and/or a lack of engagement. It may believe that life just unfolds regardless of personal wishes, perceiving itself as a victim of circumstance with no hope of exercising its own authority. This perspective, best avoided, can result in a lonely and unfulfilling life. However, the other side of this coin is its powerful resonance with divine timing and its ability to allow things to unfold as they must. When coming from a place of inner wisdom, Pisces can wait patiently for life to shift as

necessary. It tunes in to inner guidance and knows clearly whether or not it's time to act. Developing confidence in this ability is a central part of the Piscean path.'

The Astrological Houses

'The twelve astrological houses form the link between our internal world of thoughts, feelings, ideas, beliefs and sense impressions, and the environment within which we experience and express them. Each house relates to a particular area of life experience. Some correspond in part to specific locations such as the 4th house relating to our home and the 10th to public life. Others are more figurative, such as the 7th house being the place of relationship and the 2nd of resources. In their entirety the houses reflect the various component parts of life that form the landscape within which we live out the energies in our natal chart.'

1st House

'The 1st house is where we meet our survival instinct. Here we act without thinking and learn later whether or not our actions have been successful. Very little is planned in this house. Instead we respond to life in the moment, as it occurs. The primary concern is with the self and how to protect its interests, how to attain what it wants and needs.'

2nd House

'Here we discover what we possess, our attitude towards it and how we can best use it to navigate through life. This could be anything from physical possessions to talents and personal qualities. This is also where we reap some of the results of our 1st house instinctive responses: have they secured our position or jeopardised it?'

3rd House

'In the 3rd house we meet the 'common' man and woman: not the expert or celebrity, but the people in our local community and our immediate environment who contribute to our lives in apparently small but nonetheless significant ways'

'The rise of the internet has changed the associations of the 3rd house, as people on the other side of the world can now be a part of our immediate community as we engage with them in real time. Traditionally, foreign connections would be reflected in the 9th house, but these days the age of technology has brought some of them into our immediate experience of the 3rd. This is a good example of how astrological interpretation must shift and change to reflect modern developments.'

4th House

'In the 4th house we encounter the impact of our birth family, the conditions and experiences of our childhood years and the roots of our fundamental nature. Here we encounter energies that run deep within us. Our identification with them may be largely unconscious but they nevertheless shape us and our experience of life.'

5th House

'Our creative juices flow from this house, expressing our life force out into the world. Here we find individualistic self-expression and the creative fruits we want to share to make our mark upon it. We look to the success of our creations for a reflection of our own worth. When we speak of creativity here we're not talking only of artistic endeavour or creative talent. This house also corresponds to whatever we create with the skills we have. For example, cookery, mechanics, plumbing etc. can all come under the auspices of the 5th house, especially if we build our own business out of a skill or talent.'

6th House

'In the 6th house we encounter everyday life, routines, work and health. Here we discover those things that form the bulk of our existence including the work environment and type of job we do, the people towards whom we shoulder responsibility such as elderly relatives, and the ways in which our own health helps or hinders us when meeting everyday demands.'

'In this house we discover how we interact with everyday life and the people within it. Do we take care of other people or see them as competition? Do we fulfil our duties willingly or with resentment? Do we embrace the new and unexpected or prefer to maintain familiar routines no matter what?'

7th House

'The 7th house reveals what we need from a relationship and how we go about getting those needs met. Do we value closeness or independence? Do we want to do everything with our partner or keep a part of our life very much separate? Are we a faithful partner or a wayward one? Do we attract faithful or wayward partners to us? What we find in this house reflects both ourself and those with whom we enter into relationship, demonstrating that we often seek in others what we either lack or value in ourselves.'

8th House

'In the 8th house we encounter powerful and transformative experiences and energies, including those of sex and death. We are challenged to let go in all manner of ways, be it into the abandon of sexual activity, through the loss or death of a loved one or by facing our own mortality. In this house we also encounter shared resources and other peoples' possessions.....Here we meet issues of power in our relationships: who has it over whom, how, why and what do we intend to do about it?'

9th House

'The 9th house is the house of knowledge. It contains our beliefs about life - be they political, religious or philosophical - alongside higher education, the study and practice of academic disciplines such as law and medicine, and the wisdom attained through life-experience.'

'Here we also come to conclusions about the meaning of life and refine those conclusions into wisdom as we mature. This house reveals what we require to make life meaningful and how we relate to that meaning on an everyday basis.'

10th House

'In this house we discover what the world requires from us and how we interact with it. This is the place of our public life, career and social status. Here we discover our strengths and weaknesses when we're in the spotlight, and our ability, or otherwise, to raise ourselves above the crowd and be noticed'.

11th House

'This house reveals our goals and aspirations and contains our social conscience. Here we identify with those who share the same values. They become more important to us than people with a differing worldview. Hence this can also be the place where we break off into factions amid separatist and divisive activity.'

12th House

'We may find it hard to access the wisdom of this house at first, but if we apply ourselves to exploring its secrets we can eventually know ourselves intimately and at all levels. Here we can discover our true nature and the root of any psychological and spiritual problems we encounter. With commitment we can uncover the truth of

ourselves and work to heal and transform our psyche, so our unconscious no longer works against us.'

A closing word from Sarah Varcas:

I hope you've enjoyed reading these excerpts from my Introduction to Astrology Self-Study Course. Maybe you've already learnt something that will help you understand your chart better! You can find out more information about the course here:

<http://tinyurl.com/j3l7oya>

And don't forget you can listen to some samples from the teaching audios here:

<http://astro-awakenings.co.uk/asoia-samples>

If you have any questions about the course, please don't hesitate to get in touch through my web site here:

<http://astro-awakenings.co.uk/contact-me>

Thanks, once again for your interest in my work!

Very best wishes,

Sarah Varcas