

Lesson One

The Challenges

The challenge that all astrologers now face arises from the shift in the polar axis in 2012 that will make all our astrological tables inaccurate.

Of course, that shift will have many other effects, but they are not our concern here, other than to acknowledge that the circumstances that will accompany the shift are likely to make the resetting of astrological tables a very low priority.

We have a need now to start simplifying the system and reducing our reliance on software and hardware.

It is a blot on our professional integrity that so few astrologers now feel competent in calculating and drawing up charts. Wholly reliant upon computer software, more often than not they have no real understanding even of what the chart depicts.

My own students know only too well what I think of this kind of slovenliness, and very wisely try to conceal from me the extent of their own dependence upon software; but it shows in the lack of confidence they experience around calculation, and they take that lack of confidence on with them and fear to break new ground. So who wins by this cutting of corners? Not astrology, that is for sure.

Yet, as this is the situation that confronts us, let us try to turn it to an advantage. If the majority of those who consider themselves astrologers are no more informed than the general public in the matter of chart construction, let us throw this programme open to everyone who is interested and start everyone at the same place. This we are doing with the **Vingilot Programme**.

As readers of Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* will know, Vingilot is the name of the ship built by Círdon, that took Eärendil to seek out the Valar and beg for their help in desperate times on Middle Earth. The point is that Eärendil did not call out to a higher level; he went looking for it and found the Straight Road.

Intellectual Worms

Another challenge that we are all facing now is the slowing of the vibration of the material plane. We experience this as less quality time as basic maintenance takes longer and longer; as increasing anxiety about material sufficiency; as a loss of direction; in mental anguish, depression and a sense of hopelessness.

Negative thought form circulates. Mostly this is brought about unwittingly by a communications media invested in sensationalism and by ourselves through careless speech. But, like computer viruses, it can be circulated most deliberately with the aim of

creating widespread hopelessness and despair. It matters less where they might be coming from than the fact that these intellectual viruses are amongst us. We need to know how to protect and cleanse ourselves.

Getting out amongst nature is one of the best cleansers, and studying the Heavens is surely another. Reading and repeating the names of the stars opens a door in the mind and lets in fresh, clean air.

Man's relationship with the stars pre-dates astrology, and to this day it exists independent of it. Anyone can go outside on a clear night and look up. We do not need a system or categories to do this. Indeed Western astrology which has come to focus upon the lesser Zodiac and the planets, rarely ventures into the stellar world. The work that has been done on the fixed stars is mostly confined to delineating the influence that they are considered to send through the sieve that is the Zodiac. There is little or no concept of going out through the Zodiac and dealing directly with the stellar level.

Yet we do this every time we go outside and look up, which everyone is encouraged to do as often as the skies are clear.

The Vingilot Programme which is designed to open up the Heavens starts from this simple basis.

It aims to enable people to recognise and develop a relationship with the stars that are of particular importance to their energy field (stellar profile) and, more importantly, to locate them, not on a computer screen, but in the Heavens.

These stars are:

- **The star that occupies the Zenith when the Sun on the day of birth occupies the Midheaven (MC) – *the star that guides us.***
- **The star that is closest by longitude and declination to the Sun – *the star that befriends us.***
- **The constellation which provides the back drop to the Sun, and which itself has a ruling star. (In many cases this will be different from the Sun sign of conventional astrology.) - *the constellation that holds us.***

We will examine each of these categories in more detail as we move on, and later we will show how to do the calculations that assist this process.

Not everyone will want to do all the calculations, any more than everyone will want to read the philosophical basis for the construction of this approach to astrology, but it needs to be understood that computer software for astrologers is unlikely to be very helpful because we are moving outside the margins of Western astrology; and although certain programmes may do a job of sorts, it will not be a very good one if they use only a restricted star base.

More useful is the willingness to put some effort into finding out what we need to know. That effort, which will issue a challenge to inertia, is a spiritual exercise. We make a big mistake when we think that knowledge is spirituality and take short cuts to acquiring knowledge; it is the process of learning with a correct intention which contains the spiritual alchemy.

For now, get out in the fresh air, look up at the stars and awake your sense of wonder¹. Intellectual viruses cannot stand up to that.

The Vertical and the Horizontal

The cross of matter + symbolises two aspects of manifestation: Life and Consciousness. The vertical axis represents Life, and the horizontal axis represents Consciousness.

- The section of the vertical axis above the horizontal axis represents that which is higher than the present level of consciousness; whilst that below represents that which is lower. Expressed in a different way: above the horizontal is spirit or potential whilst below is the accumulated fruits of the manifesting process; above the horizontal is future, whilst below it is past.
- The horizontal itself is the present quality of awareness or state of being. The Zodiac belongs to the horizontal. Our understanding of the signs and how they reflect us changes shape as our awareness changes.
- The ecliptic which is the perceived path of the Sun, serves the consciousness aspect of manifestation and intercepts the horizontal in two places.
- When the cross is encircled, this describes the third aspect of manifestation: Appearance, in its cyclical, recurring aspect.

Regardless of the level of consciousness under review, these conditions apply.

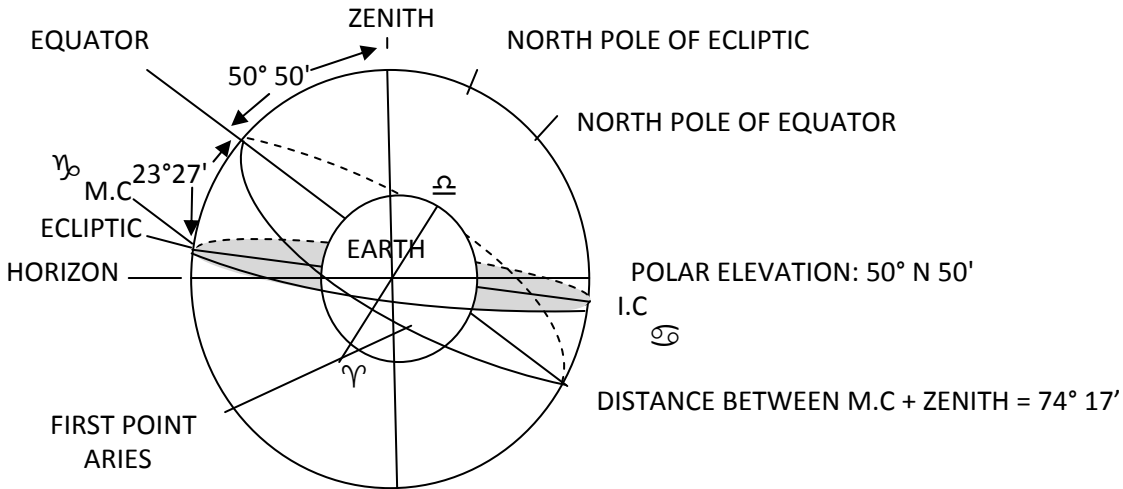
The Western natal chart as it is now drawn is the encircled cross of matter. It was not always this way: right up to the Second World War, natal charts were an arrangement of squares, which emphasised the power of form life. The square is associated with materiality and the number four, a word which needs only the addition of an “m” to create the sound of the word “form”. Hindu astrology charts are still drawn this way.

When the encircled cross replaced the squares, it expressed the awareness of the formative power of aspiration. Some thinking astrologers took this further in the Post War era and dispensed with the circle because they felt this lessened the hold of fate on the mind and enhanced potential, like so many windows being opened in a hitherto shut-up building.

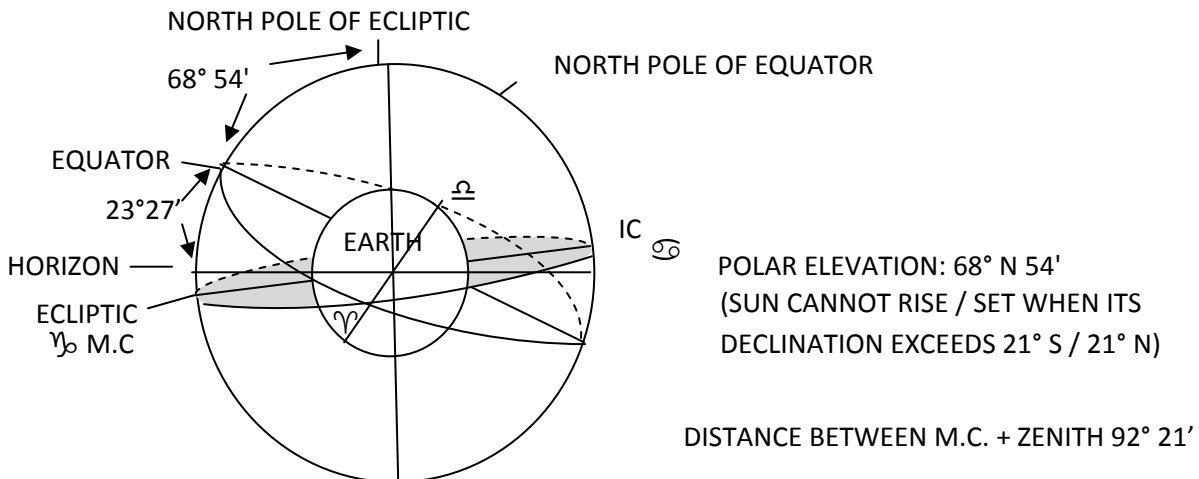
¹ A rewarding companion would be Milton Heifetz & Wil Tirion's *A Walk Through the Heavens* published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) 1996. The same authors have written a book for the southern hemisphere entitled - *A Walk Through the Southern Sky* published by CUP 2007.

The Equator, The Ecliptic and M.C.

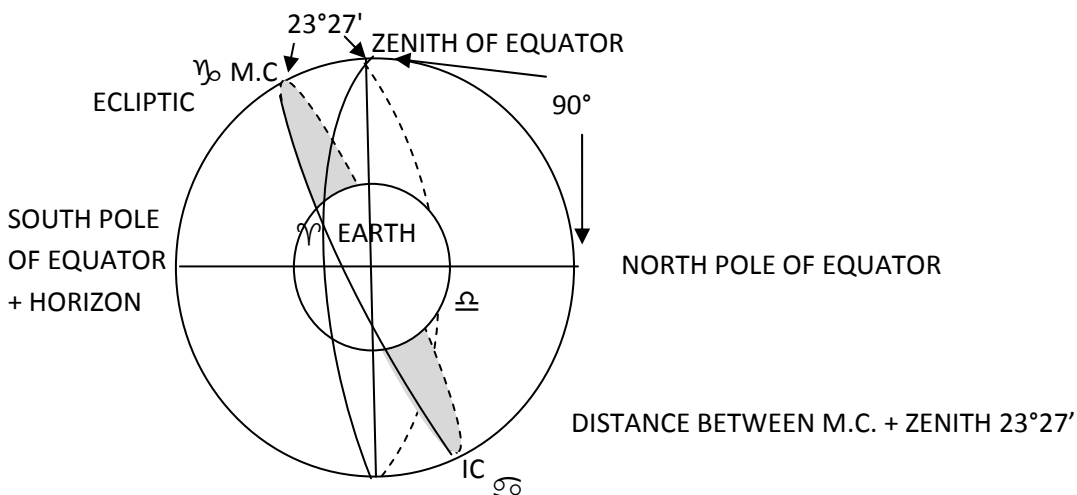
Overhead and the MC: at 50 degrees North 50. (This diagram applies to 50 degrees South 50 - just change the name to South Pole of the Equator.)



Overhead and the MC: at 68 degrees North 54 (This diagram applies to 68 degrees South 54 - just change the name to South Pole of the Equator.)



Overhead and the MC: at 0 degrees North 0



The MC

If we examine the cross around which the Western natal chart is constructed then the MC becomes the most elevated point of the chart and the MC / IC axis serves as the vertical. Some, but not all house systems make this identical with the Cusp of H10. But what is this MC?

MC is an abbreviation of Medium Coeli: the midpoint of the Heavens with the IC (Imum Coeli) being its opposite end. The MC is a long way from being the point over our heads, unless one is born much nearer the Equator.

The MC is the point of interception between the ecliptic, the path of the Sun and the meridian. It is the culmination point of the Sun before it begins its descent to the Western horizon. The MC represents a stepping down of the vertical to the province of the horizontal, i.e., the potential contained within the Life force being made to fit into present perspective. It is a substitution of a projection of the present state of awareness for the raw energy and limitless potential of Life.

This is really the starting place for this course. If the MC, the highest point of the natal chart, is really a point which at its highest at the Summer Solstice will be just 23.5 degrees above the celestial equator, what is happening over head, which is the true vertical as far as each of us are concerned and what might its significance be?

Please examine and reflect upon the three charts on Page 9 which show the relationship between the MC and the Zenith. There is enormous significance in this relationship for escaping from the grip of fate: the way on – it is obvious is to get off the wheel, and we will do this by going upwards.

Overhead

How shall we define overhead?

Overhead is what we point at if we extend our arm directly upwards aligning the arm with our ear. (And this will not be the pole star unless we are standing at the North Pole.) Our extended arm is our own personal pole. It may not be pointing at any visible star at all, just an area of sky, in which case we must be prepared to identify the nearest star to it. That space has a declination north of the ecliptic (regardless of whether we are in the Northern or Southern hemisphere), and which is not a part of any of the Zodiacal constellations that Esoteric tradition makes part of a lower world than that of the stars above and below the ecliptic belt.

We will examine the esoteric philosophy under pinning this system in the next lesson.

Definition of Terms Used in This Course

Terrestrial latitude and longitude: universally accepted measurement used to locate places on the Earth's surfaces. The base of this system is the Equator (0 degrees N).

Northern hemisphere (N): all latitudes north of the terrestrial and celestial equators, the latter being the extension of the former into space.

Southern hemisphere (S): all latitudes south of the Equator.

Ecliptic: perceived path for the Sun round the Earth.

Declination: for all working purposes declination is the counterpart of terrestrial latitude, being the degrees which distances a planet or star from the celestial equator which is the celestial counterpart of the terrestrial equator (co-ordinate is right ascension).

Celestial latitude and longitude: used by astrologers to identify the position of a planet or star with reference to the ecliptic.

Sidereal Zodiac: The twelve constellations on the ecliptic belt through which the Sun is perceived to pass in the course of a year.

The Lesser Zodiac: manmade construction which divides the Heavens into 12 sections of 30 degrees (signs) each and uses the same name as those of the Zodiacal constellations. The Master DK tells us that this thought form was introduced to the Mental plane in the Atlantean era to assist human consciousness make a meaningful connection with the stellar world. The structure most commonly used in Western astrology to chart this construct is the Tropical Zodiac (Zod. Trop.).

The 360 Degrees of the Zodiac

Please note that the last degree of a sign is 29 (which is the 30th degree when the count begins at 0 degrees).

If you ever see, for example, Aries 30 written, then you know this is the same as Taurus 0 degrees.

Degrees	Signs
1st-30th	Aries 0-29 ♈
31 st -60th	Taurus 0-29 ♉
61 st -90th	Gemini 0-29 ♊
91st-120th	Cancer 0-29 ♋
121st-150th	Leo 0-29 ♌
151st-180th	Virgo 0-29 ♍
181st-210th	Libra 0-29 ♎

211st -240th	Scorpio 0-29 ♏
241st-270th	Sagittarius 0-29 ♐
271st -301th	Capricorn 0-29 ♑
301st -330th	Aquarius 0-29 ♒
331st-360th	Pisces 0-29 ♓

Great Year: name given by esotericists to the 26,000 year cycle involving the pole of the Earth and the circumpolar stars which gives us the Twelve Ages. Presently we are considered to be in the Age of Aquarius.

Circumpolar: the stars which at any given latitude never set because their declination exceeds the co-latitude of the location (Co-latitude is what the latitude lacks of 90 degrees).

Magnitude: basic measurement used to classify stars by their apparent brightness; a measurement which does not take into account the star's size or distance from Earth. The greater the brightness, the lower the magnitude. The brightest stars therefore are of the first magnitude and are classified as "0".

If all this seems complex get outside and look up into the Heavens and observe what is happening. Observation is the greatest instructor in the matter of learning about the Heavens.



Exercises

Rules:

- An observer from the surface of the Earth can see only half the celestial sphere at any one time.
- A star cannot rise or set if its declination exceeds the co-latitude of the place of observation.
- An observer at the North Pole sees the celestial North Pole immediately overhead, whereas an observer at a more southerly latitude sees the celestial North Pole at a lower angle in the sky.
- An observer in the northern hemisphere can never see objects that have a declination which is more than 90 degrees south of his latitude.
- An observer at the South Pole sees the celestial South Pole immediately overhead, whereas an observer at a more northerly latitude sees the celestial South Pole at a lower angle in the sky.
- An observer in the southern hemisphere can never see objects that have a declination which is more than 90 degrees north of his latitude.

Calculation in astrology is very largely a matter confidence (and necessity), but, first, the mind has to be limbered up. Remember that most of the calculations used in this course will have the circle as its base and talk in terms of minutes and seconds of arc.

There are 360 degrees in a circle; 60 minutes in a degree and 60 seconds in a minute. Most calculators count in units of 100, not 60. Do not get caught out this way.

If the latitude of New York, USA, is 40 degrees N 45, its co-latitude is:

$$\begin{array}{r} 90.00 \\ 40.45 - \\ \hline 49.15 \end{array}$$

Co-latitude: 49 degrees N 15

If the latitude of Sydney, NSW, Australia is 33 degrees S 32, its co-latitude is:

$$\begin{array}{r} 90.00 \\ 33.32 - \\ \hline 56.28 \end{array}$$

Co-latitude: 56 degrees S 28

Questions:

You will need access to an atlas to answer these questions because, intentionally, the latitude of each place is not given. Answers will be given with the next lesson. Please do not write in to say you have always been bad at maths. Just get over it! If you can count coins you can count degrees! Do not be afraid of getting completely confused. It is the first step to getting it straight if you persevere, after taking a short break to let the mind unscramble itself. If you use a computer to get at these answers then the person that you are cheating is yourself. It is your choice.

1. What is the co-latitude of Zurich, Switzerland?
2. What is the co-latitude of Nelson, New Zealand?
3. If someone is observing the sky in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil what is the declination of the most northerly star that he can see?
4. If someone is observing the sky in Inari, 68°54' Finland what is the declination of the most southerly star she can see?
5. What is the most southerly latitude that Polaris the pole star (declination 88 degrees N 53) is visible?
6. Can the star Al Phecce (declination 26 degrees N 59) be seen in Birmingham, Alabama, USA?

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