

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE VALIDITY OF TRADITIONAL ASTROLOGY

Using the sets of AstroDienst data posted to The Astrologer's Forum, the following investigation uses an experimental technique to investigate the traditional claims of Astrology, that is, the effectiveness and significance of Planets, Aspects, Signs, Rulerships, Domiciles, and Houses.

Introduction

We all know what a statistical analysis of Astrology looks like.

- A hopeful researcher assembles a large set of horoscopes, all with some well-defined factor in common;
- Aspects between the Planets and Angles are plotted;
- The plots are compared to a hypothetical standard dataset without the distinguishing factor;
- Differences between the two are found to support, marginally, the hypothesis that there is some Astrological effect associated with the horoscopes' common factor.

All of which is interesting, but unsatisfying. There is rarely an attempt to test the *real* assumptions of traditional Astrology, the existence and significance of, say, Signs and Houses. When there is such an attempt, the results always disappoint. At most, we get evidence that the Planets have significance.

When Addey plotted the Mercury-Mars Aspects of 1025 polio sufferers (*Harmonic Anthology*, 1976) the result was a fascinating demonstration that there are regularities in the unfortunates' birth charts. But there were no peaks at the traditional Aspects. When the Gauquelins plotted the births of 570 French sporting personalities (*The Influence of the Stars*, 1955), they demonstrated that the Angles did indeed divide the sky into significant sectors, but these sectors stood little comparison to the traditional Houses.

Still, this shouldn't have come as a surprise. A statistical investigation into traditional Astrology is problematic for two reasons.

The first concerns the nature of statistics. Every horoscope is unique and therefore not reproduceable as an experiment. Even identical twins typically have different Angular Degrees. Granted, there are striking similarities in the lives of many twins, even those separated at birth, but these form a very small sample for analysis. As Jung tells us:

"The distinctive thing about real facts... is their individuality. Not to put too fine a point on it, one could say that the real picture consists of nothing but exceptions to the rule,

and that, in consequence, absolute reality has predominantly the character of irregularity.” (C.G. Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*.) And indeed, however large a dataset one assembles, it is always tiny compared to the possible number of horoscopes. This means that even a truly powerful Astrological effect can be easily swamped out.

The second concerns the nature of Astrology. Two people might become, say, doctors, but for very different reasons (altruism, money, family tradition, sibling rivalry), under very different circumstances (a scholarship, a gift, early in life, later in life), with very different methods (holistic, analytic, traditional, experimental) and specialities (from obstetrics to geriatrics), with greater or lesser luck, in very different environments (a hospital, a city practice, a country practice, the triage centre of a war zone). In these cases, their Horoscopes have very little in common; and what they do have in common may not be easily expressible in terms of a common occupation.

In the words of Dennis Elwell, “To the newcomer to this subject nothing seems easier than to prove the existence of the astrological by collecting the birth data of several thousand clergymen, soldiers, doctors and so on, or a similar number of sufferers from polio or dyslexia, and analyse the charts to find out what each group has in common. Interesting results may certainly be obtained that way, but there will also be many failures, and the reason is that the cosmos seldom operates in the categories which seem important to us. It has categories of its own, which cut across ours...” (*Cosmic Loom*, 1987).

This is, of course, not good enough. I therefore intend to make some study of traditional Astrology, and believe I have found a way to do so. I suggest that the methodology I employ here— which is unconventional, and which would therefore be dismissed by a conventional or “scientistic” (not scientific!) researcher— allows small (degree-sized!) elements of significance, whether positive or negative, to accumulate over the categories examined. These categories are broad sets of occupations, those of art, business, entertainment, the military, music, politics, religion, science, sport, and writing, which may reasonably be assumed to have *something* in common, however small. The technique will pick out this commonality and amplify it.

The technique will not *identify* the commonality. For instance, it may be that Mars Conjunction Saturn is strongly positive in the charts of all professionals requiring disciplined and authoritative initiative. It may likewise be that the same Conjunction is strongly negative in the charts of professionals requiring a degree of spontaneous and creative diplomacy. These positive and negative factors will tend to cancel out over a randomised sample. But with the present technique, a *measure of the distance between the two* can be found, so the

results *add* instead of cancelling, and the fact that Mars Conjunction Saturn is indeed significant— in some way— can be demonstrated.

Conventions and Omissions

Astrological phenomena are indicated by capitalised names. The Planets are the Sun (SU), the Moon (MO), Mercury (ME), Venus (VE), Mars (MA), Jupiter (JU), and Saturn (SA), these being indeed Planets in the original sense of the term (“those lights that wander”). The Angles examined are the Ascendant Degree (ASC) and the Midheaven Degree (MC).

Regrettably, the datasets of the slow-moving Planets (from Uranus outwards) have very non-uniform distributions, and this tends to artificially exaggerate any findings. Similarly, the dataset is very small for the Moon’s Nodes, making it less likely that a significant effect could be found. I have therefore reluctantly excluded these bodies and points from this analysis.

PLANETS AND ASPECTS

To repeat the above in the context of Aspects: when sufficiently large sets of horoscopes are split into the Natives’ occupations, the frequencies of Aspects between Planets and Points are plotted, and the results corrected by subtracting the expected frequencies, the sums of negative and positive degree frequencies can be found, and the sums’ absolute values plotted. This technique adds together the influences the Aspect has, for and against, the given occupation, and amplifies these for analysis. A fuller explanation is given in the Appendix.

These values reveal patterns of Aspect influences nearly unique to each Planet, but related across the Planets. That both the Planets and Aspects are therefore significant in the Astrological sense is therefore demonstrated immediately.

Here follow individual plots of Aspect strengths for ASC, SU, MO, ME, VE, MA, JU and SA (Figures 1, 2). Please note that the Excel software used gives circular plots that read clockwise, a little jarring for those of us used to the traditional Horoscope.

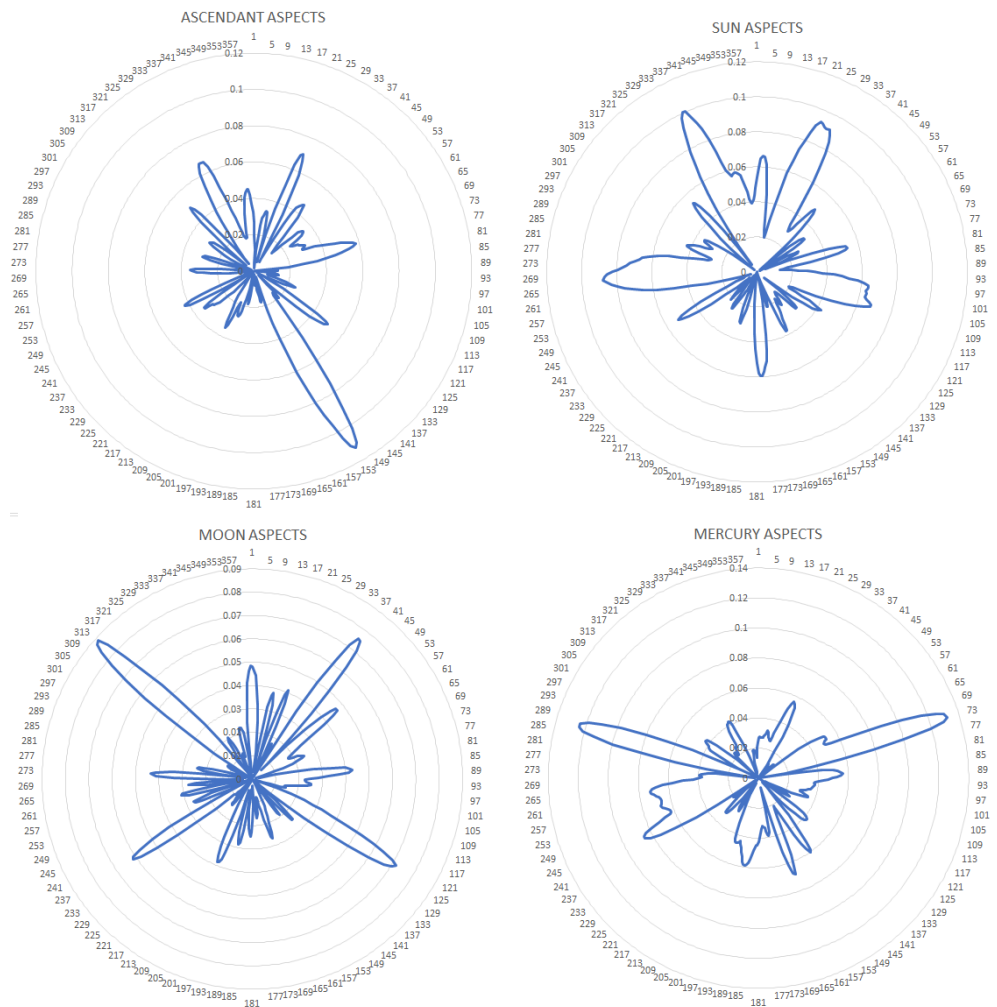
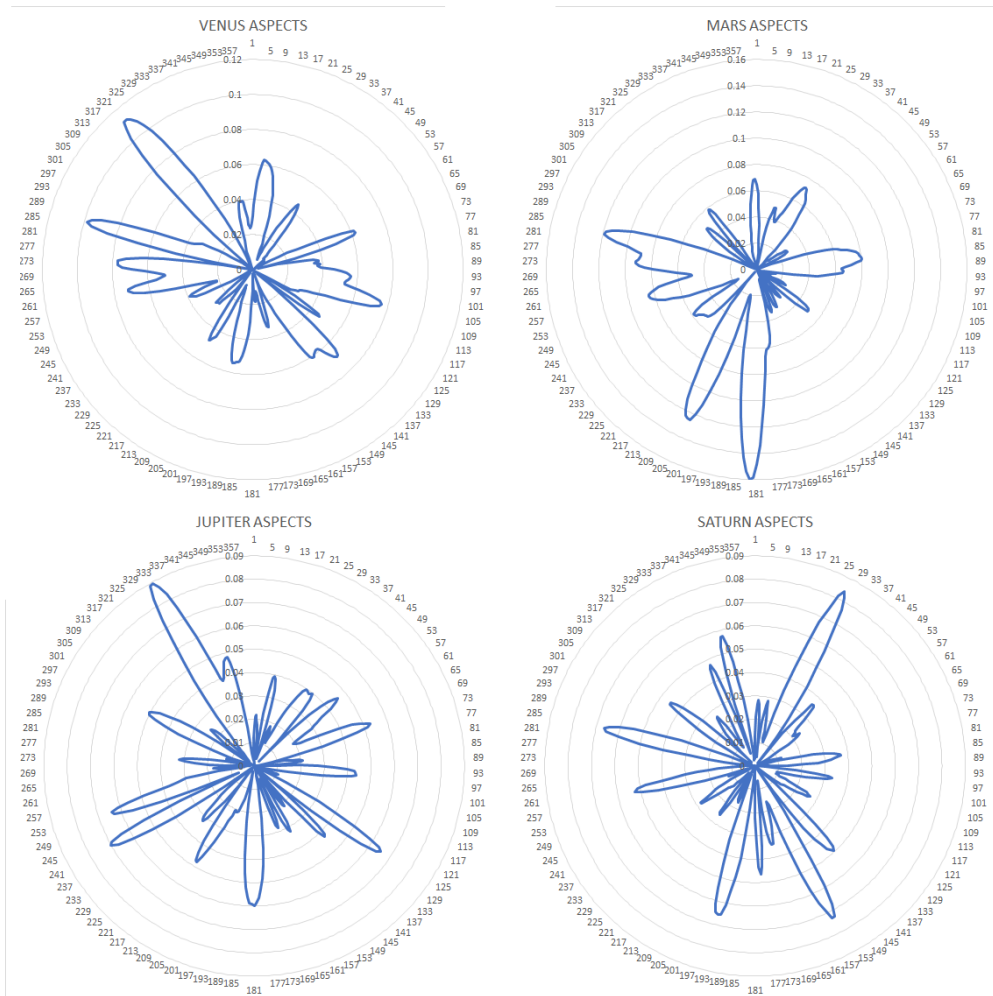


Figure 1 Aspect patterns for the Ascendant, Sun, Moon and Mercury



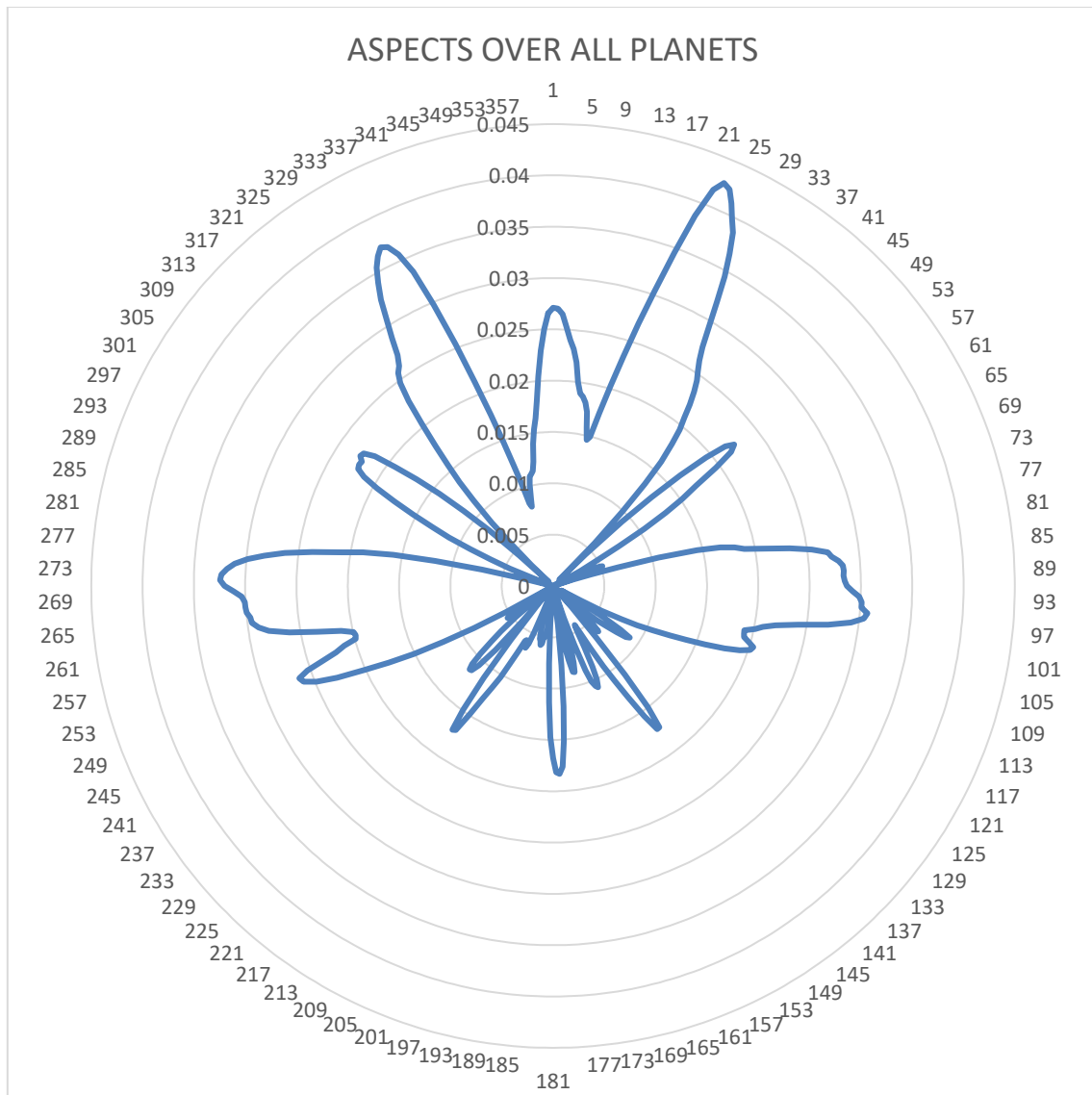


Figure 3 Aspect patterns averaged over the Ascendant and the Planets Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn

All the traditional aspects, i.e.- the multiples of 30°, are supported. This plot, therefore, can be taken as evidence that both the Planets and the traditional Aspects have significance.

And again, in linear plot (Figure 4):

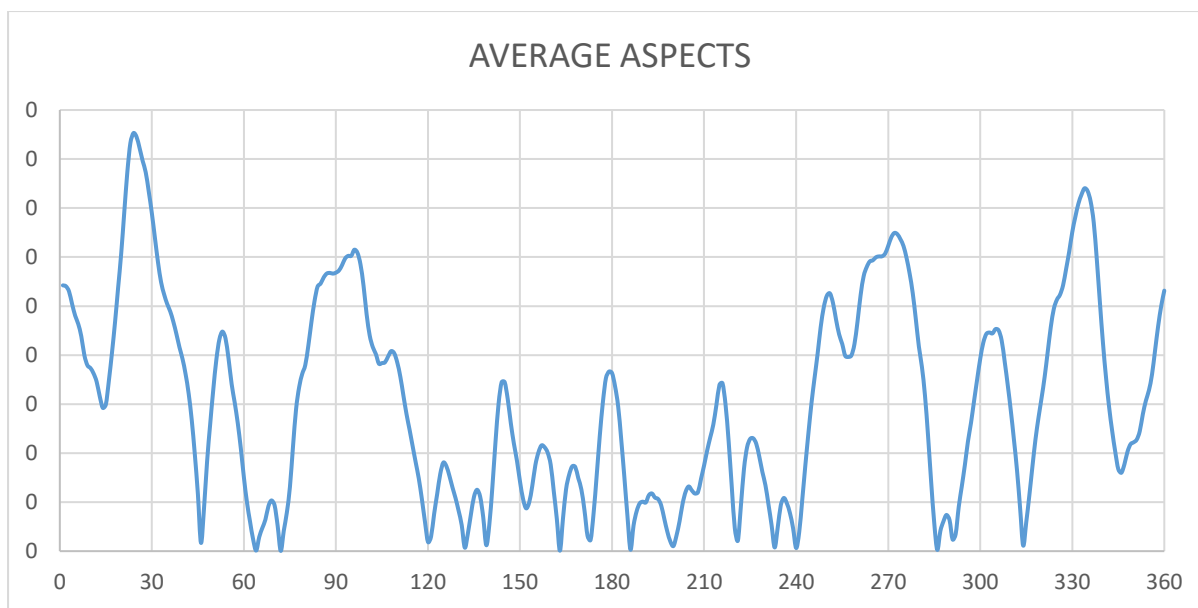


Figure 4 Aspect patterns averaged over the Ascendant and the Planets Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn

As said, all the traditional Aspects are found, but there are some surprises.

The Conjunction (0°) and Opposition (180°) are satisfyingly strong, and the Squares (90° , 270°) very powerful indeed- with orbs so wide they probably subsume many lesser aspects.

There is an aspect of 24° (and 336°), Kepler's Quindecile, which is a 15H involvement and is quite the strongest shown. Addey (*Harmonics in Astrology*, pp.126-127) notes this aspect (and its multiples, which include the conventional Trine) "...are indicative of the *enjoyment of and facility in some form of activity* as shown by the planet involved" (Addey's italics). However, the strength of the Quindecile may be a concomitant of the occupation being the distinguishing factor of the Charts examined. The 48° Aspect is apparently weak, surely debilitated by the Planets' necessarily being in different elements.

The Semisextile (30°) appears less important than this aspect of 24° , but is much more powerful than is usually considered. Again, however, the use of occupations might exaggerate the 12H involvement (combining as this does 3H "ease, facility", 2H "inter-personal difficulty", 4H "challenge", and 6H "opportunity", all important considerations for the career). Quincunx (150° , 210°) is comparably powerful.

The Semisquares 45° and 315° seem to be of no significance. However, the Sesquiquadrates 135° and 225° are of interest.

The Septiles (51° and multiples) are indeed quite strong.

The Sextile at 60° is weak, but not that at 300°. M. Seymore-Smith never accepted this as an easy Aspect; the Aspect of opportunity, but opportunities are not always taken. Still the weakness is surprising.

The Quintiles (72° and 288°) are weak, but the 144° and 216° multiples are strong.

The Trines don't seem to peak at their expected values; the 120° Trine peaks at 125° and the 240° correspondingly early at 235°. However, their orb is wide, and it may be that the association of these with states rather than events permit one to lag and one to anticipate. They are also quite weak-looking, but once more, may have psychological significance that doesn't translate in terms of occupation.

The orbs appear so large as to overlap, but this is likely an artefact of the statistical spread over the occupation categories- this also obscures many of the weaker Aspects.

Conclusion: both the Planets and the traditional Aspects have significance.

THE SIGNS AND THEIR RULERS

Aspects to the Vernal Point

The above procedure can be applied to the Vernal Point 00AR00 and significant Aspects to this point revealed.

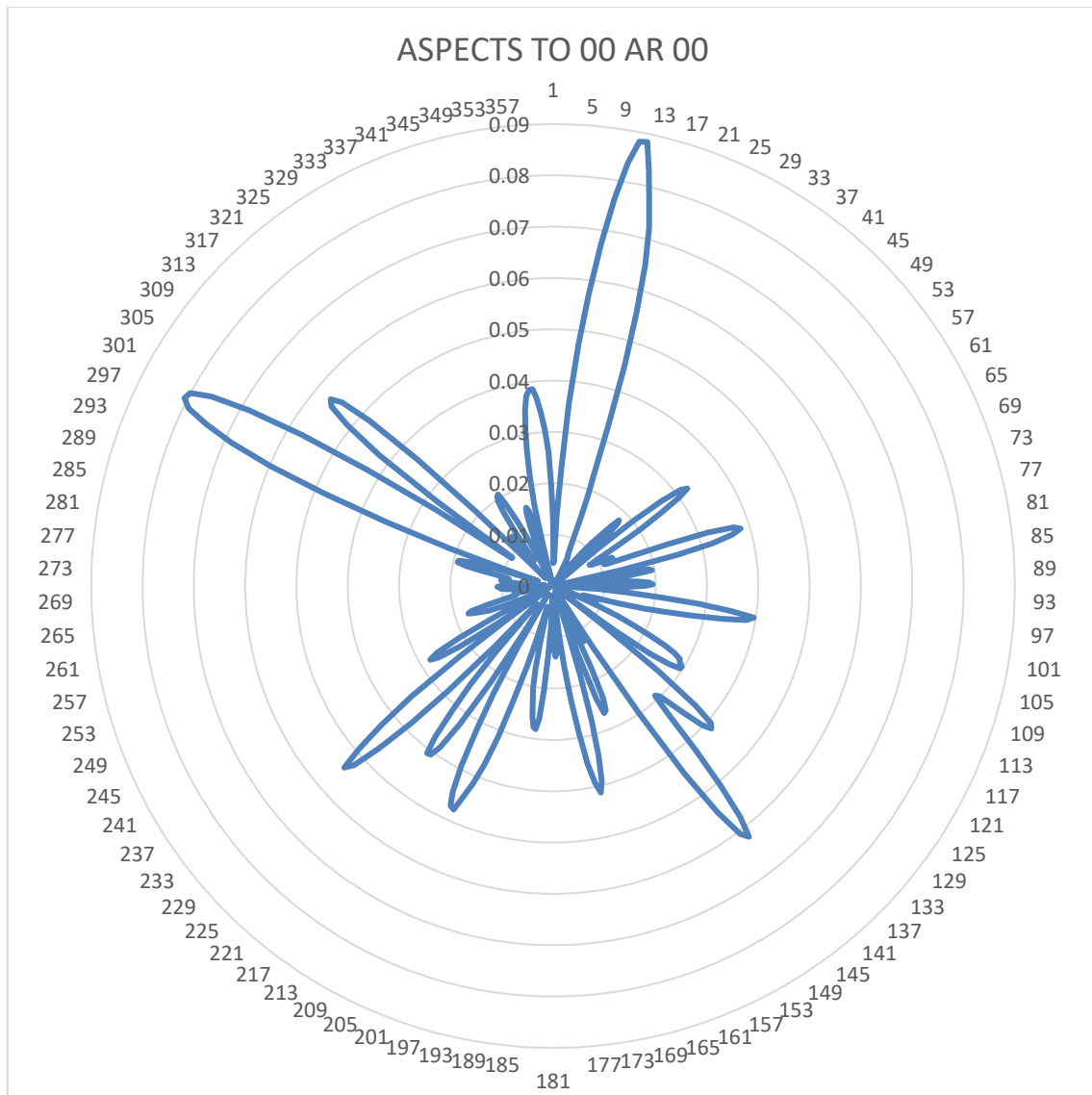


Figure 5 The powers of the aspects made by the angles ASC, MC and each planet MO, ME, VE, SU, MA, JU, SA to the Vernal Point (00:00 Aries).

A peak coincides with an area of high influence for any Planet, i.e. the principles of any Planet may be strongly positive or strongly negative in that area, but will not be of no influence. Note the near symmetry about the axis 120°-300°.

These consistent Aspects may be the underlying phenomena approximated by the traditional Signs- certainly, that Aspects to the Vernal Point are significant is *one* interpretation of what the Signs mean. However, further evidence of the Signs as traditionally understood is found by taking the 6H plot of the Ascendant degree to the Vernal Point.

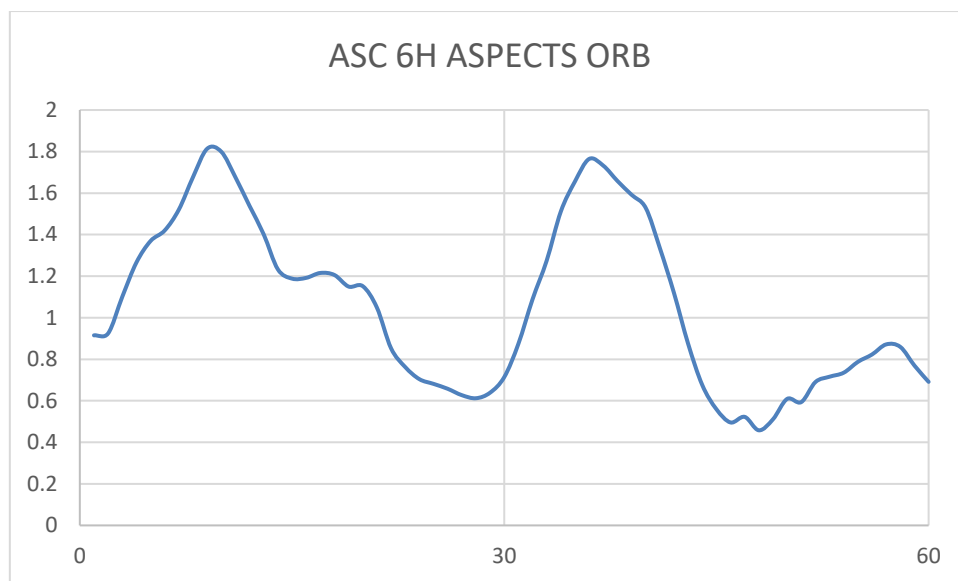


Figure 6 The 6th Harmonic plot of the Aspects made by the ASC to the Vernal Point (00:00 Aries).

Over the 60° arc, there is a clear periodicity- one complete wave to a Sign, with the Cusps at every 30°. This demonstrates something special about the 30° segment. A principle use of the Signs is to determine the Ruler of the Ascendant, and hence the above plot argues strongly for the Signs as real phenomena of the Tropical Zodiac. Moving now to the 12H plot,

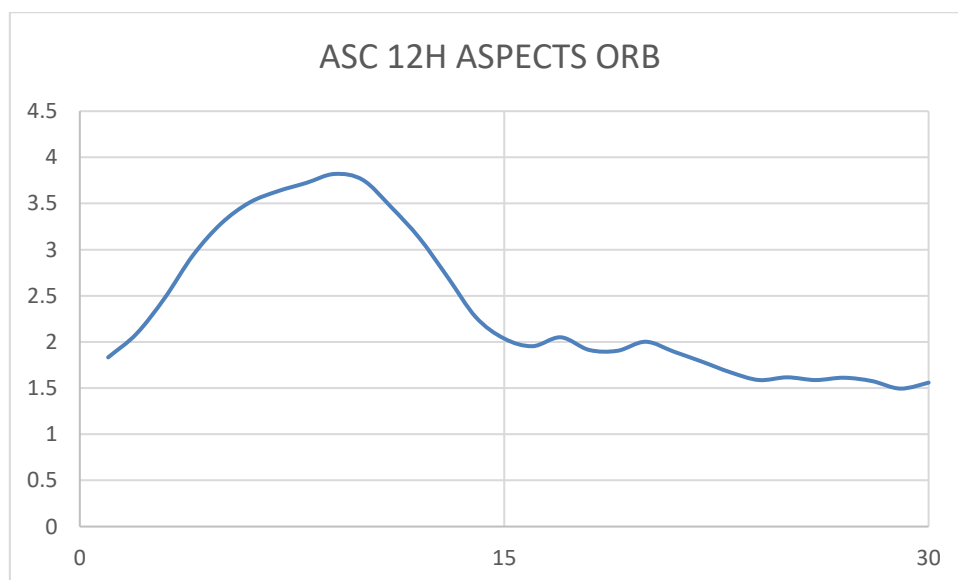


Figure 7 The 12th Harmonic plot of the Aspects made by the ASC to the Vernal Point (00:00 Aries).

We note also that there is a change in power over the Sign, and that there may be some difference in Significance between the first and second halves of a Sign. Certainly there is a traditional distinction between the first and second halves of both Sagittarius and Capricorn.

Conclusion: There is evidence that the Signs, as traditionally understood, are significant.

The Ruling Planet of the Chart

If the Ruling Planet (i.e. the Ascendant Ruler, the Ruler of the Rising Sign) is identified for each Chart, it becomes another single factor for investigation, and its Aspects can be examined like any other. The results of such an investigation are given below.

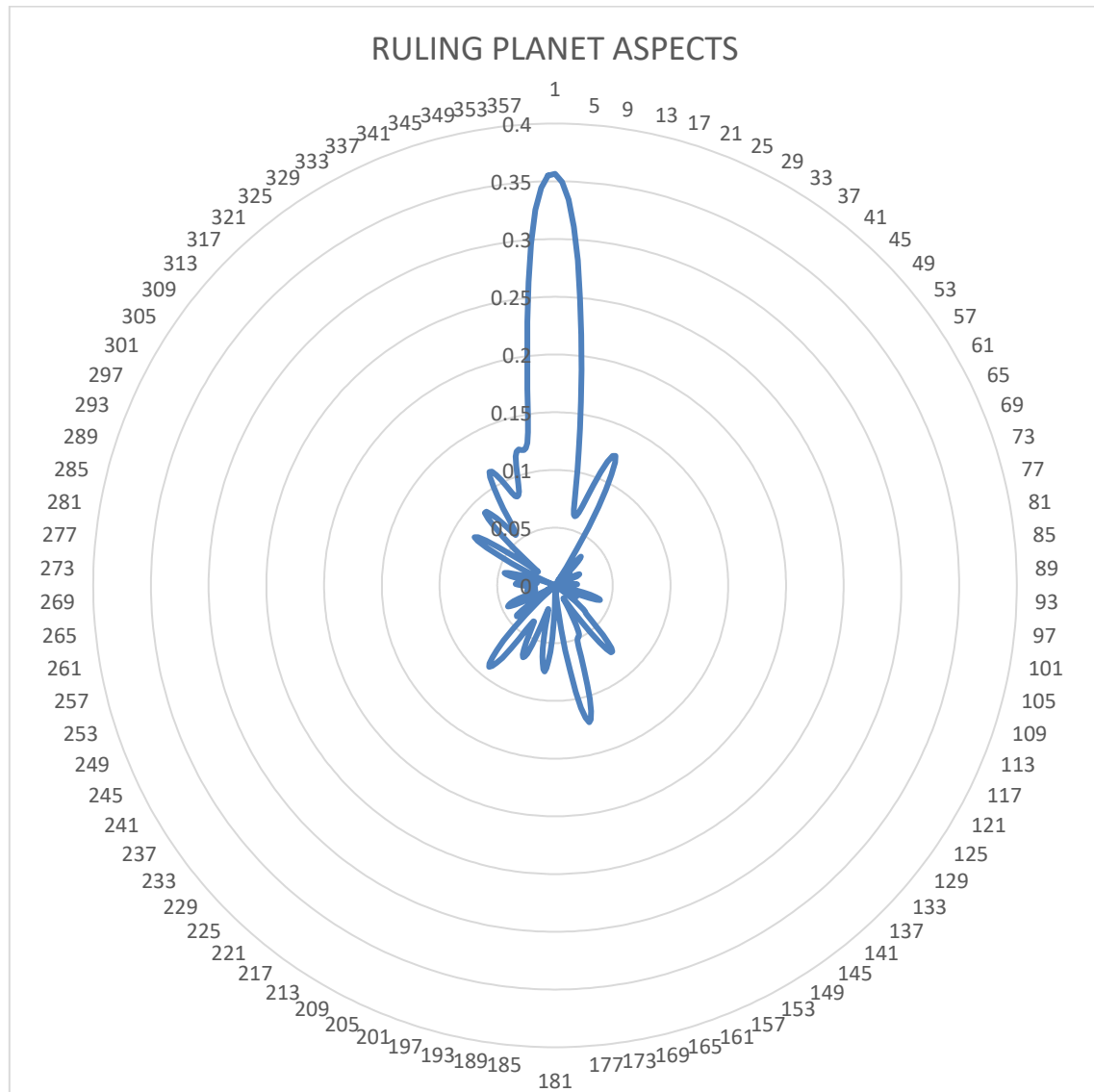


Figure 7 Aspects made to the Ascendant Ruler of each of the Charts.

It can be seen that the Conjunction of a Planet or Point with a Ruling Planet has considerable significance, much more so than a Conjunction (or any other Aspect) in general. Indeed, the Aspect involvements of a Ruling Planet are simply more significant than those of a Planet

which is not the Ascendant Ruler. Here is the above Figure superimposed on that for the Aspects in general:

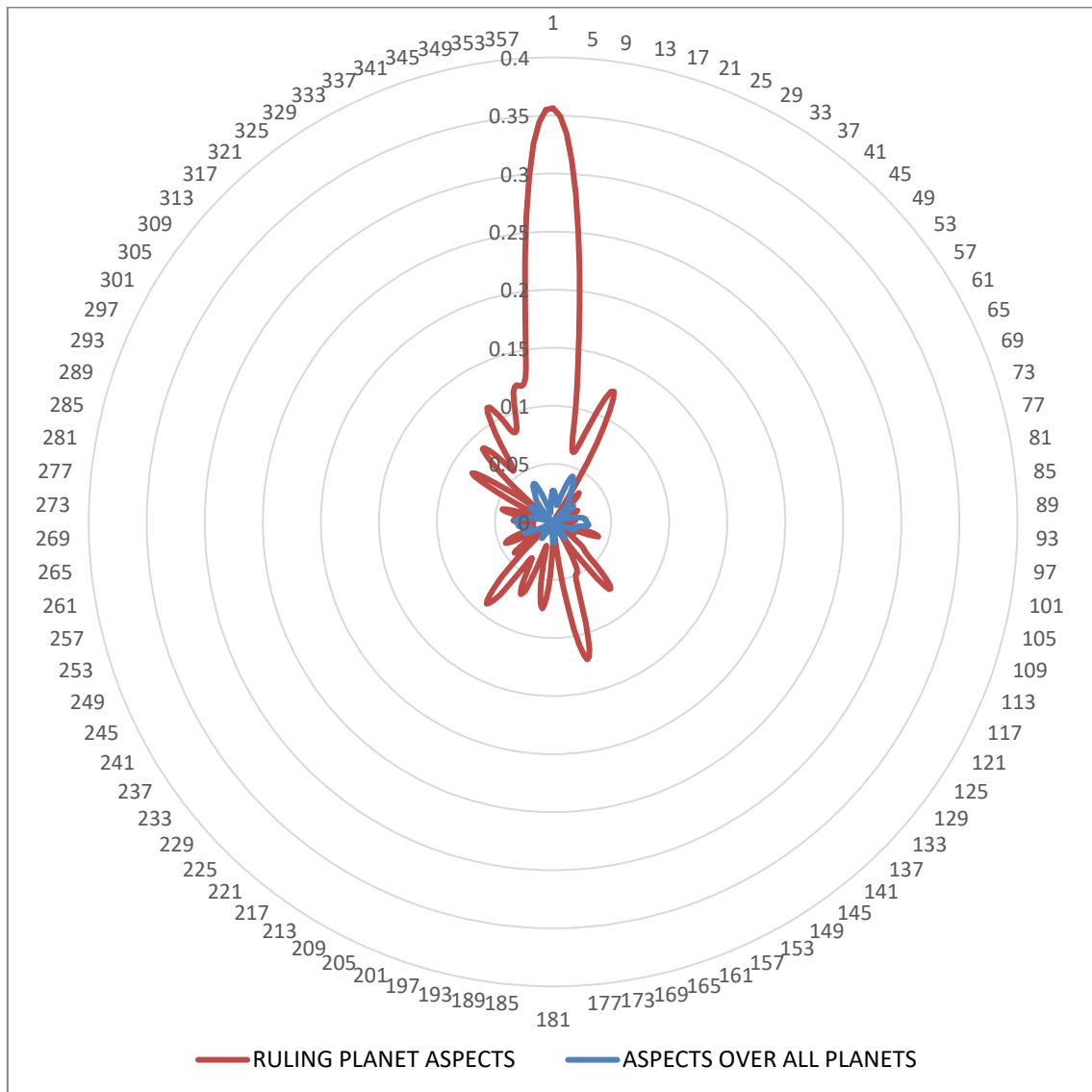


Figure 8 Aspects to the Ruling Planet compared to Aspects to a randomly chosen Planet.

That tight little knot of blue is that of the Aspects over all the Planets, including when these are not Rulers. Therefore the attainment of Rulership enormously increases the Significance of a Planet- in the case of the conjunction, by about ten times. This is strong evidence for the validity of Rulerships, and hence indirectly for the existence of the Signs.

Curiously, Conjunctions of the Ruling Planet with the Ascendant are not strongly significant, but the angles 300° (Closing Sextile), 80° & 280° (multiples of the Novile), and 103° & 255° (Bi-Septiles) are very strong- it seems that 7H and 9H have particular affinity for this Angle. Only interactions between the Ruler and other Planets show the strong Conjunction.

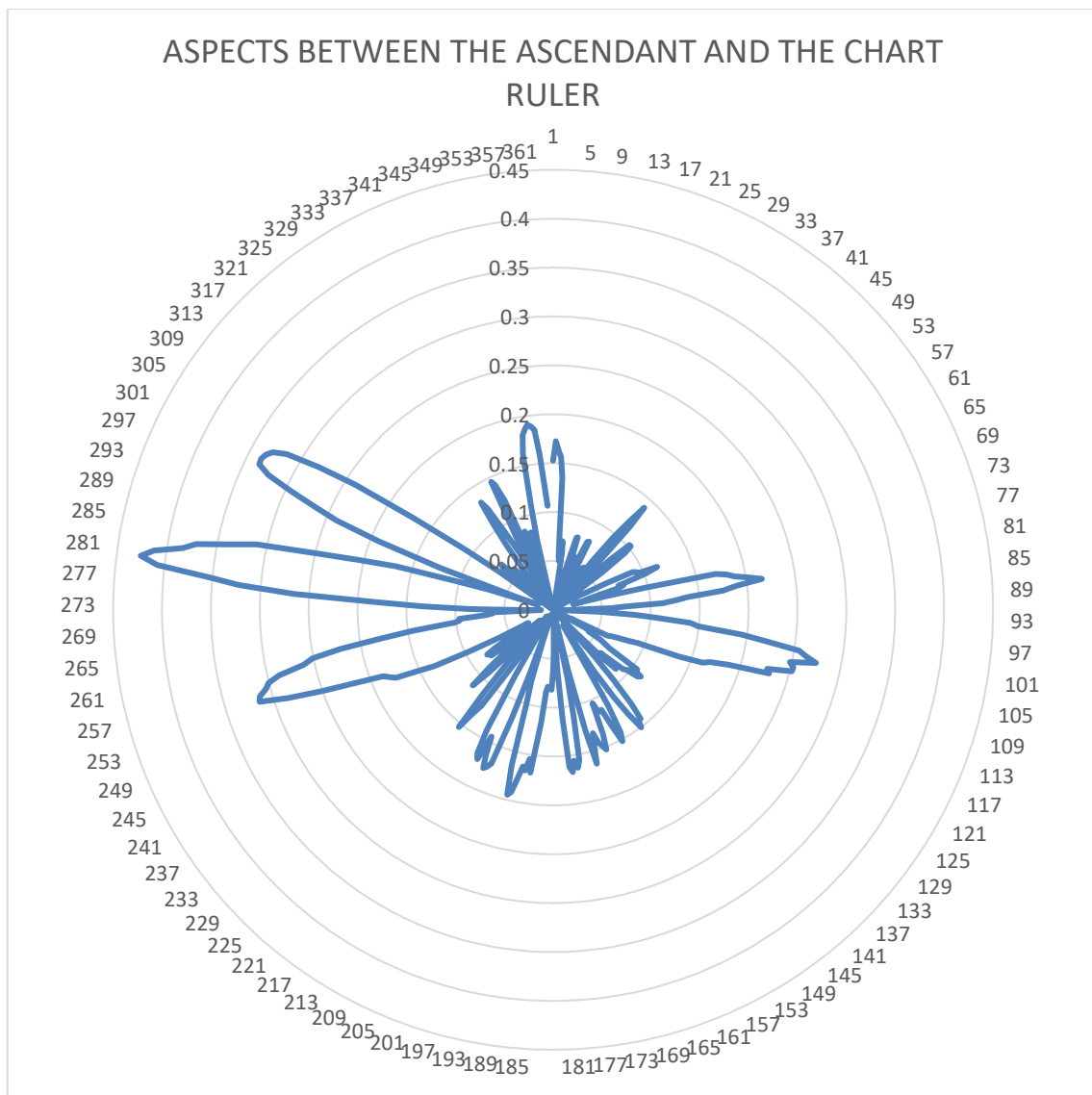


Figure 9 Aspects between the Ascendant and the Chart Ruler.

Much of the power here comes from the Sun's involvements— all these, but especially the Conjunction between the Sun and the Ruling Planet are especially powerful.

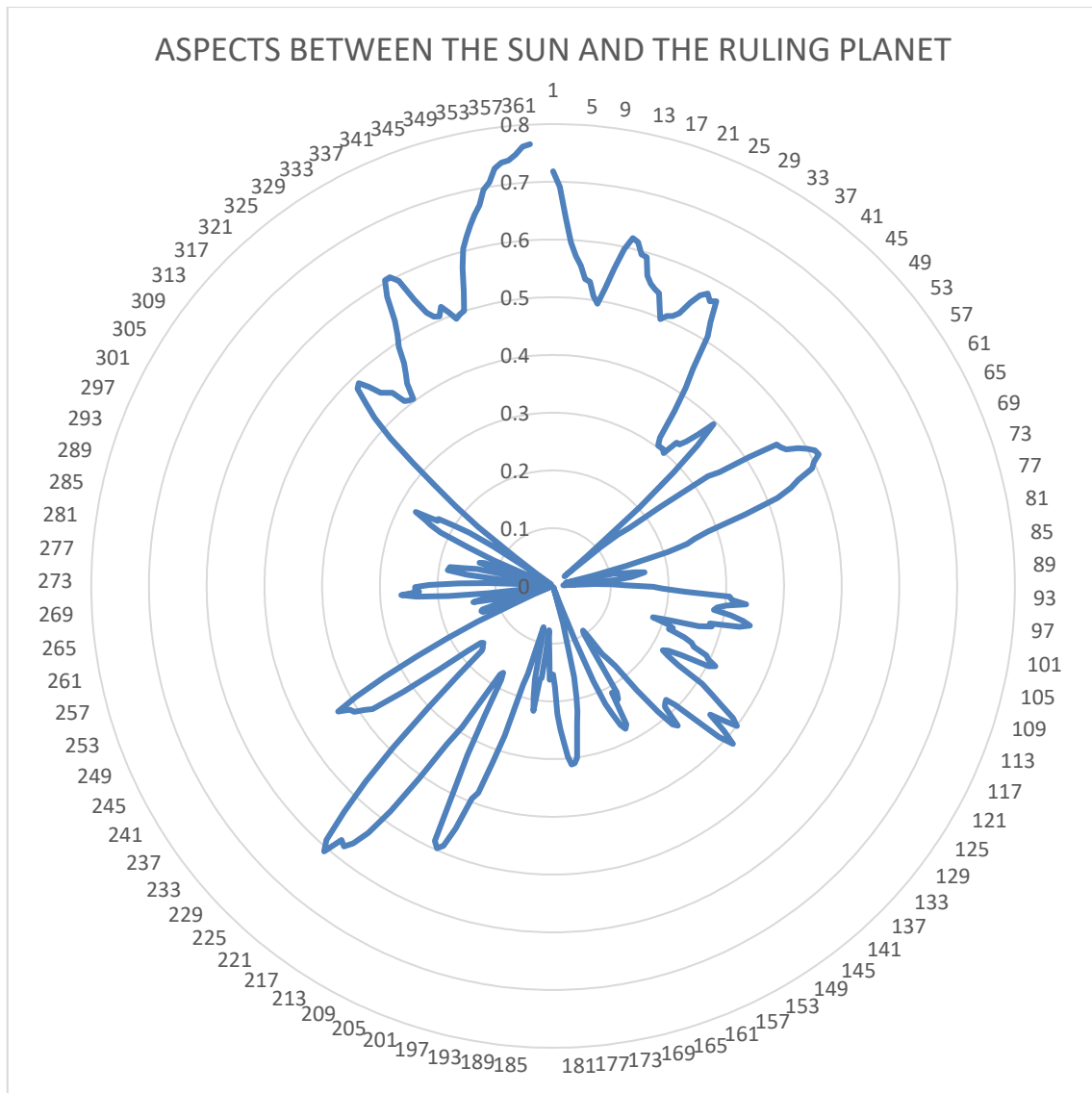


Figure 10 Aspects between the Sun and the Chart Ruler.

Conclusion: A Planet is more powerful as a Chart Ruler than at any randomly chosen position.

Domicile

We now consider the concept of Domicile. Is a Planet in its own Sign of different significance to the Planet in general?

The technique chosen is to isolate those charts in each category in which Mars is in Either Aries or Scorpio. Since this reduces the data to less than a sixth what it was, the investigation will be by Decanate rather than degree. After this, the procedure is as detailed in the Appendix. The Decanate plot of the Aspects made by Mars from its own Signs will then be compared to the Decanate Chart of Mars' Aspects in general.

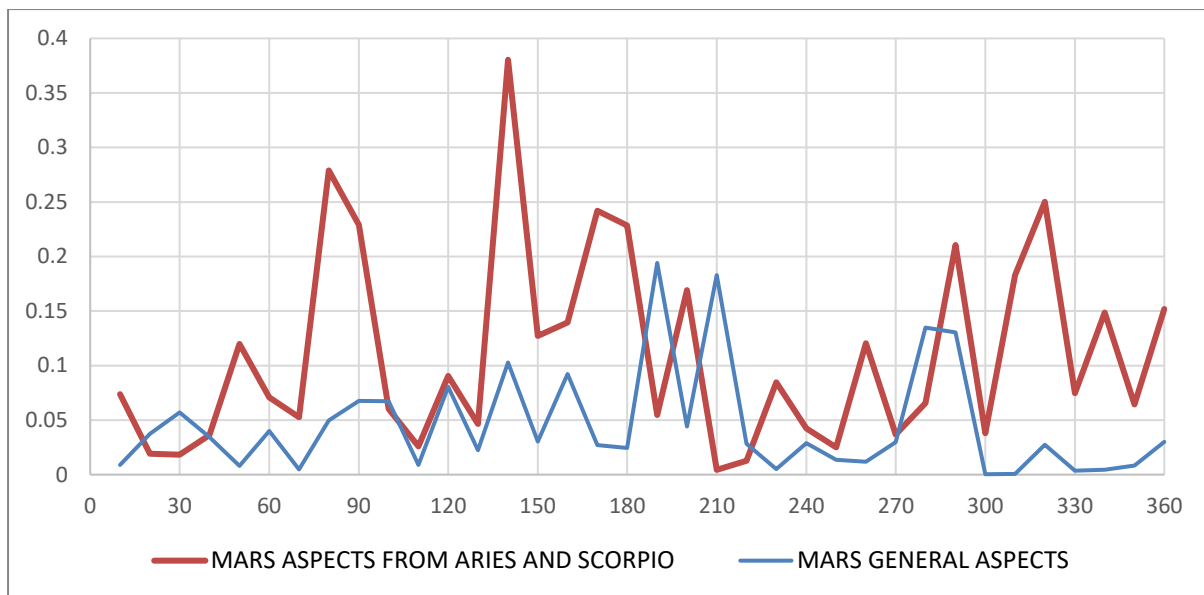


Figure 11 Aspects from Mars in Aries and Scorpio compared to Aspects made from Mars throughout the Zodiac.

We can see that the plot of Mars' Aspects from Aries and Scorpio is substantially different from the general plot. More importantly, however, the Aspects are proportionally much more powerful. Well- that analysis didn't take long. Bearing in mind that the test has only been performed on one Planet, Mars, in its traditional Signs we can conclude as follows.

Conclusion: Mars is more powerful in Aries and in Scorpio than in a randomly chosen Sign.

Secondary Conclusion: There is evidence for the significance of Domicile, the Astrological belief that a Planet is more powerful in its own Sign.

HOUSES

It should be noted that over such a large sample of Charts, the Cusps of all House systems- Regiomontanus, Campanus, Placidus etc.- will tend to even out around Equal-House Cusp values. This is because the average distance between the Ascendant and the Midheaven is 90° (well, 90.18°, which is certainly close enough). Therefore, an investigation of the significance of the 30° arcs beginning at the Ascendant does indeed constitute an analysis of the Houses, but we will have to put up with a good deal more fuzziness.

The plot of Aspects to the Ascendant of course shows this point to be of importance (Figure 12).

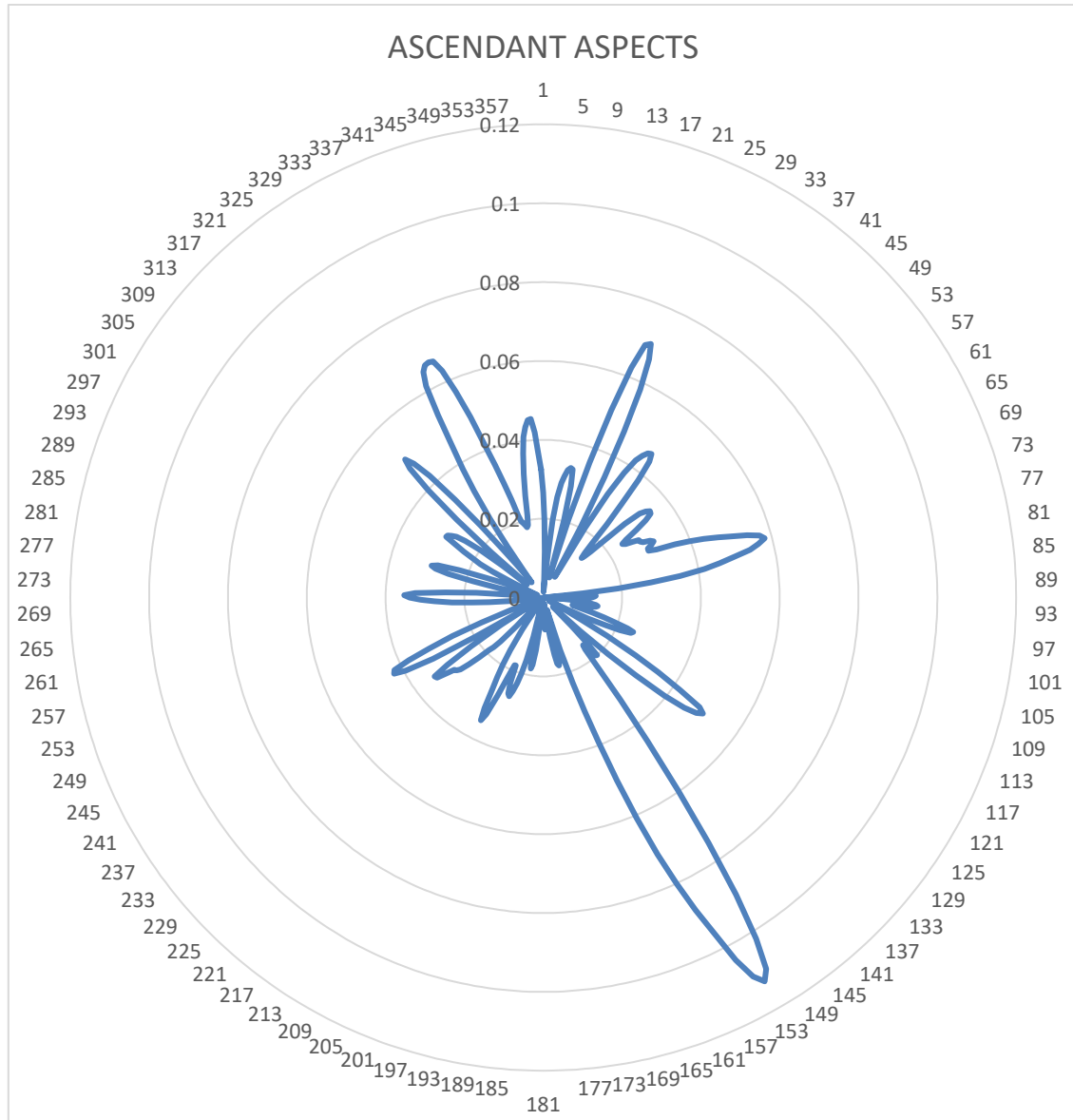


Figure 12 Aspects to the Ascendant.

There is little activity at 270°, the Tenth House Cusp of career, which is surprising and disappointing. Surely this would be prominent in a set of Charts segregated by career? We note, however, the huge peak at 150°, the Sixth House Cusp, that of service, which is perhaps neglected as a career indicator. Is it possible that the association of the Tenth House (personal ambition, the father) with career is no longer sound? At one time, the words “father” and “career” were practically synonymous- one did what one’s father did- and one’s personal ambition was expressed entirely through one’s public life. Nowadays, things are not so clear

cut, and in the case of the career-exceptional may never have been. Nevertheless, the ASC-Planet plot gives *some* small evidence for the significance of the Houses.

Both the 12th and 6th Harmonic Charts, however, are encouraging; there is indeed some significance to the Cusps, and this significance repeats at 30° intervals.

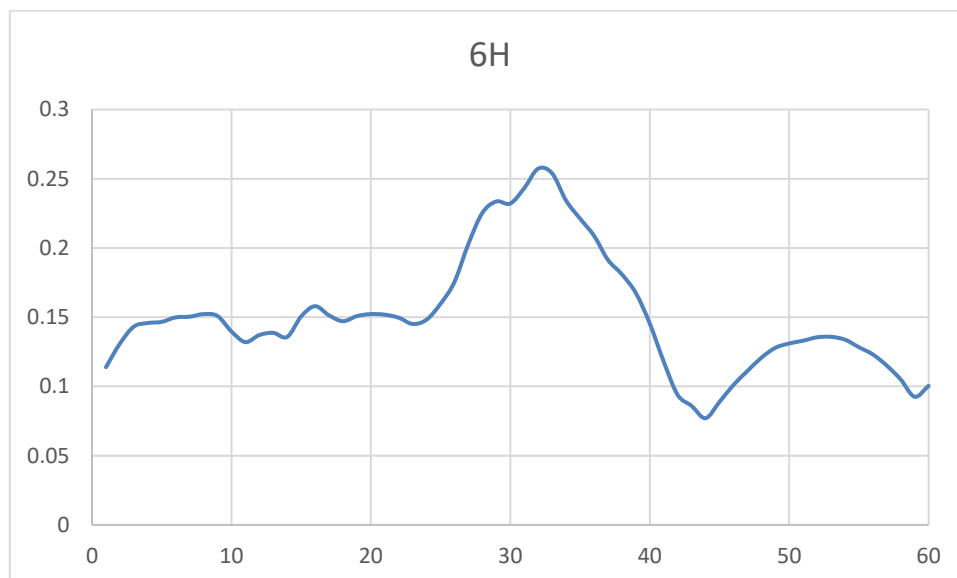


Figure 13 The 6th harmonic Chart of the Aspects to the Ascendant

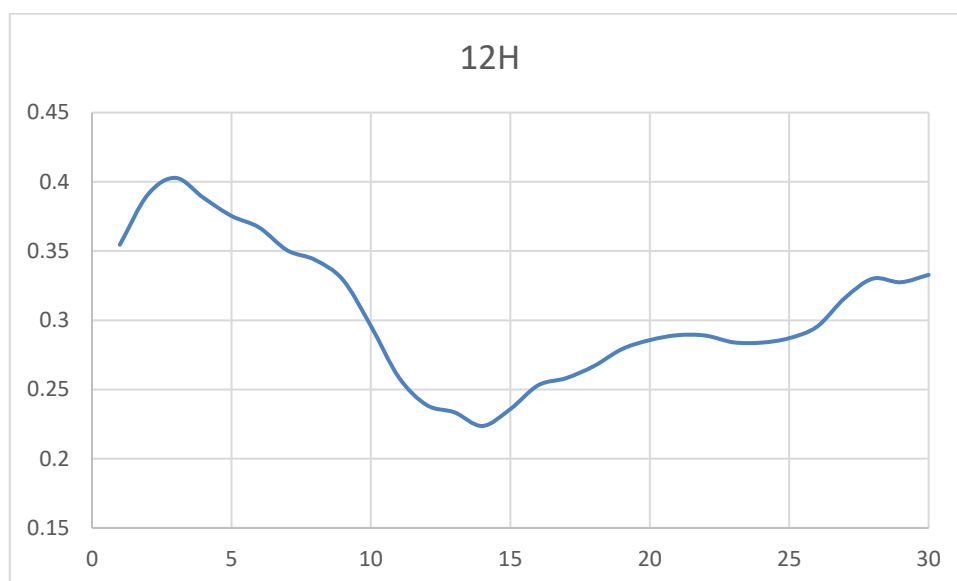


Figure 14 The 12th harmonic Chart of the Aspects to the Ascendant

The greater strength of the relationship seems to be for Planets placed just before the Cusp and immediately after, from -5° to $+10^\circ$. Compare this with the Ascendant's 6th Harmonic to the Vernal Point, which we took to indicate the demarcation of the Signs- there we observed 30° intervals with strength *between* the Sign Cusps. Perhaps the Cusps, treated as points of influence every 30°, should supersede the Houses?

While neither of these findings are decisive, they are certainly not negative.

Conclusion: the datasets support the existence of the Houses (or at least, the Cusps).

CONCLUSION AND PERSONAL NOTE

The above, then offers the following conclusions.

- Both the Planets and the traditional Aspects have significance.
- There is evidence that the Signs, as traditionally understood, are significant.
- A Planet is more powerful as a Chart Ruler than at any randomly chosen position.
- Mars is more powerful in Aries and in Scorpio than in a randomly chosen Sign.
- There is evidence for the significance of Domicile, the Astrological belief that a Planet is more powerful in its own Sign.
- There is evidence for the existence of the Houses (or at least, the Cusps).

APPENDIX 1

The Astrodienst date was sorted into ten categories. The expected distribution for each criterion (Aspect to Planet or Point) was found from the total dataset.

For example: One of the categories was made by combining the posted POLITICS and LAW datasets. The Aspects between Mars and the Ascendant or this data was sorted into a frequency table for each of the 360° of angular separation, the Aspects. The frequency of each Aspect is taken to be the observed value. The data is then corrected to its proportional difference to the expected value, i.e.

$$\text{corrected value} = \frac{\text{observed value} - \text{expected value}}{\text{expected value}}.$$

The data was then smoothed by taking a moving average over 4°. The result is given in plot A1.

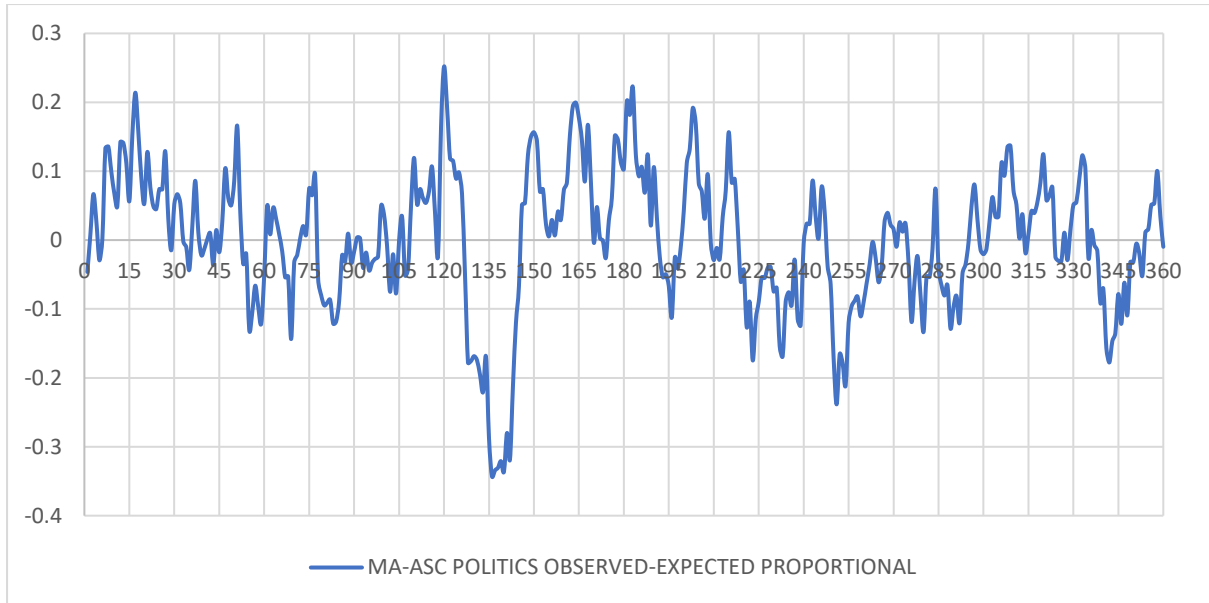


Figure A1

This certainly has some points of interest , including prominent Trines and an impressive Sesquiquadrate. However, there are surprising prominences where there are no traditional Aspects, and the Squares (for instance) are not distinguished from these.

If we repeat the procedure over ten such occupation categories, we get a dense and confused set of data, plotted in A2.

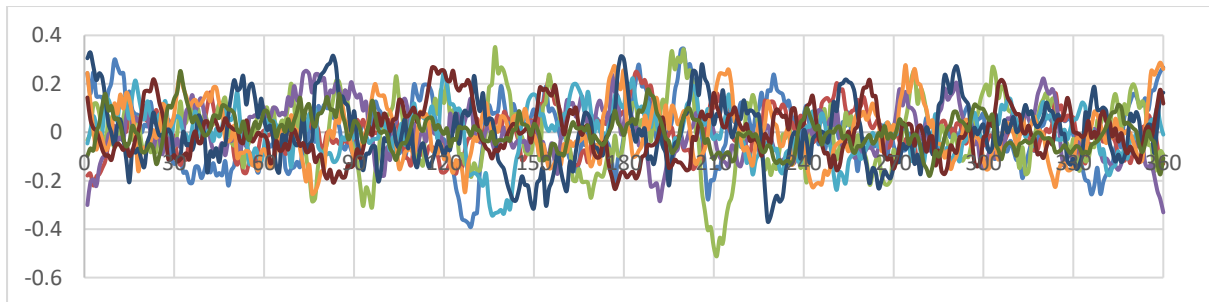
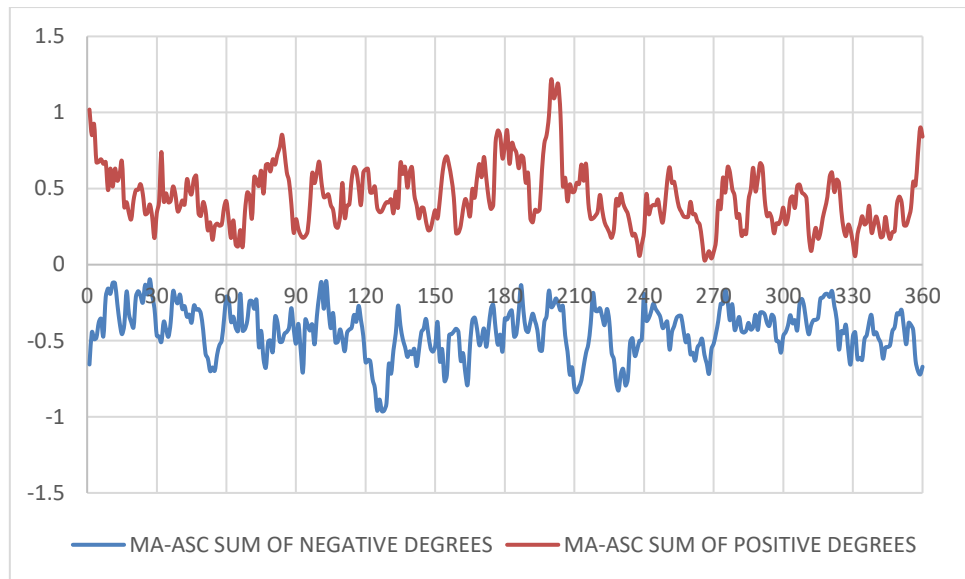


Figure A2

If however we go through the datasets, degree by degree, adding together all negative values (points below the zero line) and positive values (points above), we get just two curves:



The proportionality correction ensures that all the datasets are directly comparable. It can be seen that there is a lot of complementarity in these plots: a peak above the zero line tends to correspond to a trough below, and vice versa.

If, then, we take the difference

positive corrected frequency — negative corrected frequency,

subtract the average of all data points, and take the absolute value (so both points above and below the line are given positive values), we get a plot in which all Aspect relationships are strongly emphasised (A3). Here we begin using Excel’s “radar” plot, which displays the Aspects clockwise, and emphasises the peaks.

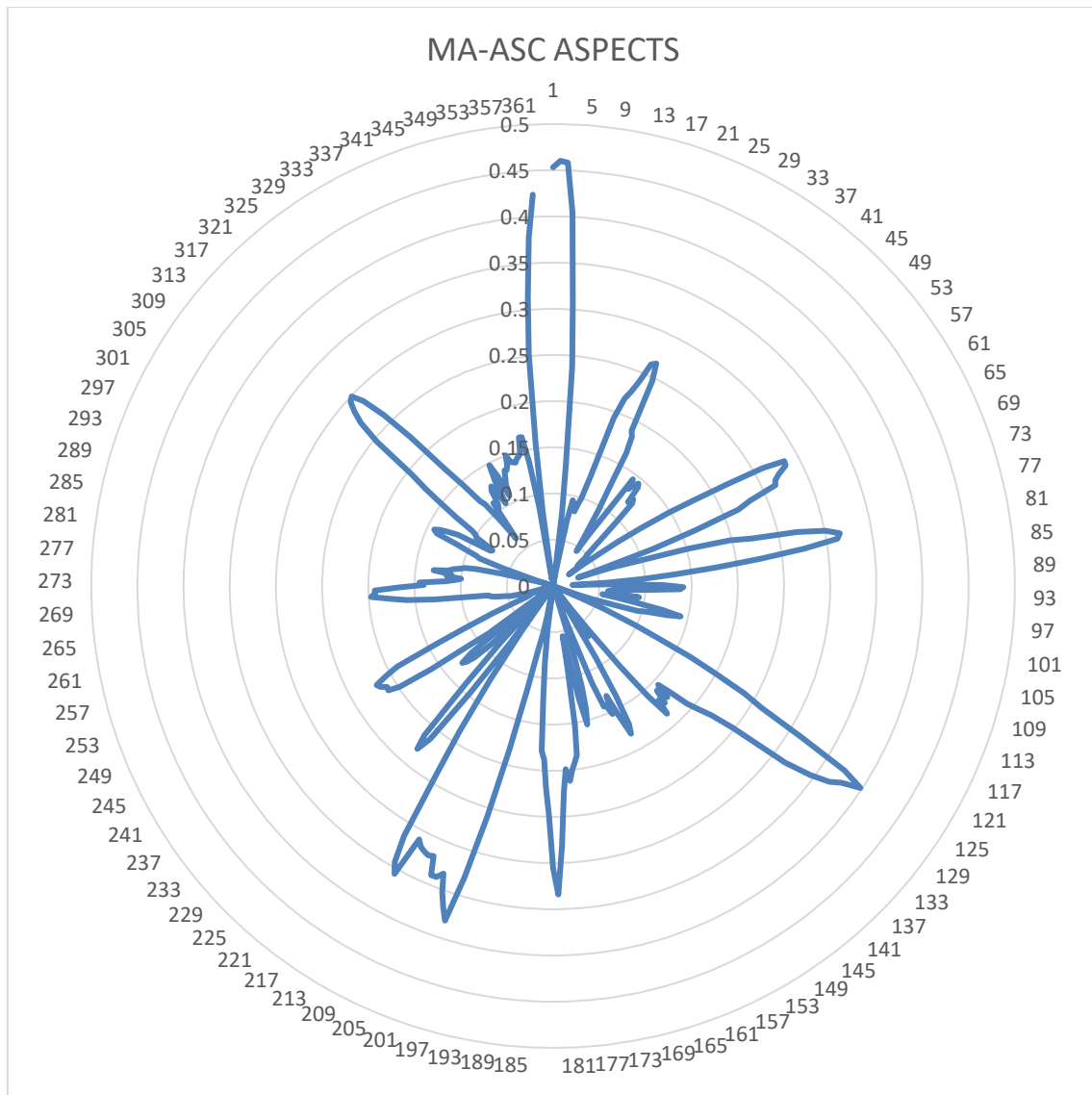


Figure A3

Now performing the same procedure for Mars against the MC and all the other planets, we can take the average of these. The result will be the plot for *all Aspect relationships of the Planet Mars*, Figure A4.

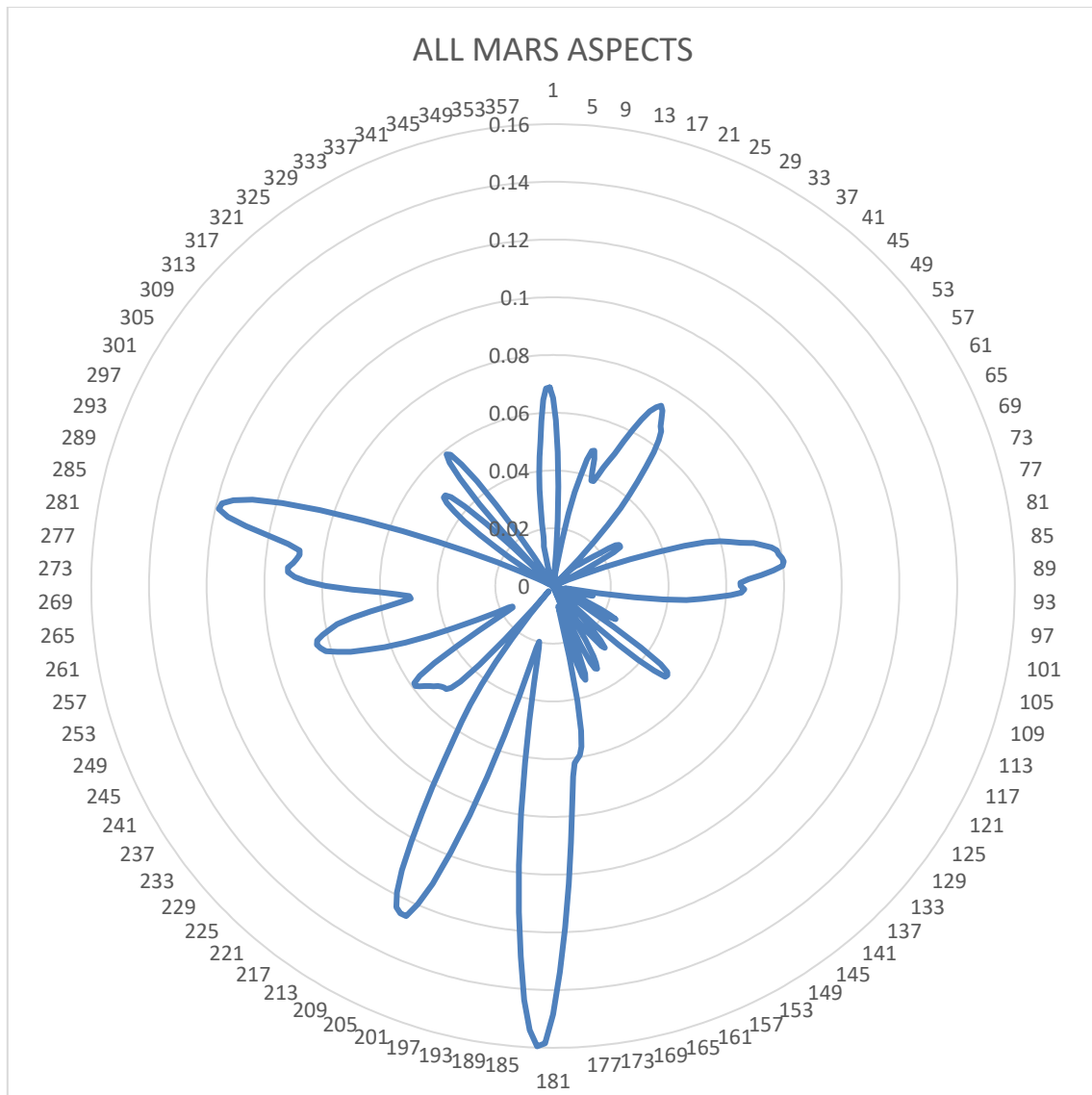


Figure A4

It can be seen that all the traditional Aspects are revealed to be important, though what's going on at 205° and 283° I have no idea— multiples of the biseptile perhaps?— and the Trines look startlingly disjointed and complicated.

Now performing the same procedure for each Planet against the ASC, MC and all the other planets, all such plots can be combined into the master figure A5 for the Aspect involvements of all the Planets.

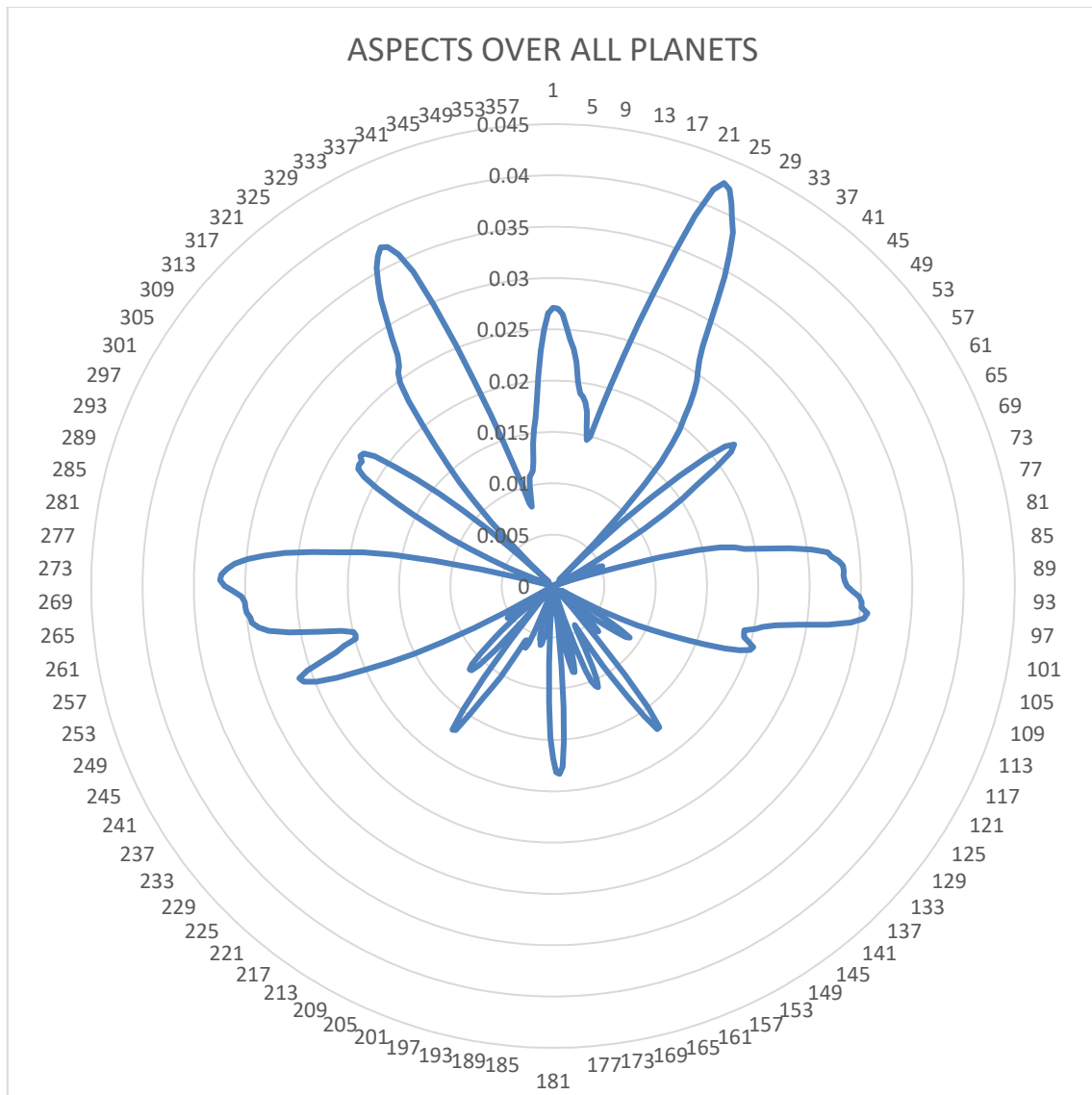


Figure A5

APPENDIX 2

A Third Problem with the Statistical Method

I mentioned that there were two problems with the statistical method. I didn't say there were *only* two! The third problem is numerical. Suppose a researcher gathered together a sample of 100,000 horoscopes, each of whose Natives have some well-defined characteristic in common. By all the assumptions of statistics, this sample should be easily enough to decide any issue of significance on that matter. But taking into account even the seven traditional Planets only, and allowing some significance to each possible degree of separation, there are... well, there isn't a name for the number of possible such horoscopes, but of the order of 1 followed by 17 zeros. And that's not taking into account the "new" Planets and the Angles.

So even the sample of 100,000 horoscopes is relatively *tiny*- and could be wildly divergent in the astrological signifiers associated with the common characteristic. *When an Astrologer interprets a Chart, that soul is using information that cannot have been arrived at by statistical means, even if every person who ever lived had had a chart calculated and had left a complete life history!*

How, then, did Astrology ever come about in the first place? The answer, I think, comes from a long-extended lack of distinction between humanity and the cosmic environment. Astrology preserves information from a time when the individual participated so fully in the life of the surrounding universe that the rising of a given Planet could be perceived, like a change in the ambient light or the shift of a key in a musical composition. We sacrificed this participation for greater individuality and autonomy, winning relative freedom from the skies at a cost we may yet come to regret.

This raises an issue. If the original Astrology resulted from a no-longer existing rapport between humanity and environment, how did Neptune, Uranus and Pluto so quickly arrive at their (surely correct) interpretations?

I believe the answer lies in the way synchronicity works. As an analogy, when consulting the I Ching, one throw yields by far the most information- but after two or three throws, the oracle rebels or is exhausted. Earlier information is contradicted. Time has moved on, and the circumstances under which the original question was asked no longer pertain. I think that with the discovery of Uranus, humanity had its "first throw"; Neptune, its second; Pluto, its third. But those first three were sufficiently far apart to have "answered new questions"- therefore their names were genuinely synchronistic phenomena, and conveyed information about the three Planets' true natures.

Let us examine the circumstances of the naming of the those planets we have come to know as Uranus, Neptune and Pluto.

Uranus

The mythical Uranus actually has very little in common with the accepted nature of the Astrological Planet. The Uranus of Greek mythology is a primitive authority noted for his

overthrow and castration by his son, Saturn. Where is the technological and revolutionary intelligence we Astrologers use? It was not the name, but the technological progress of the time of Uranus' discovery that led to the astrological associations.

That said, Uranus was very nearly called *Georgium Sidus*, after George III. The name of a “mad king” who, in his youth, studied science, *would* also have conveyed the essential nature of the planet. Another suggestion was that the Planet be named *Herschel*, after his discoverer. This would at least have linked it with a huge family of Anglo-German astronomers, so the link between Uranus and science would have been established. (BTW I very nearly got a nice anagram out of Frederick William Herschel- *Cracked, He'll Rewire Himself*- very Aquarian, but I'm a letter out!)

Neptune

James Challis, who missed the opportunity to discover Neptune (and Neptune rules such failures) wanted to call the new world “*Oceanus*”, a name with all the same connotations as Neptune, so no difficulty there. The first name put forward, by Johann Galle, was *Janus*- the Roman god of duality, beginnings and endings, doorways, gates, transitions, and the measurement of time. So had this name been adopted, it is likely that the Planet would again have been quickly associated with Pisces- a dual Sign, concerned with the limits of experience, and with prisons and isolation.

Pluto

Pluto's existence was first predicted by Percival Lowell, and found by Clyde Tombaugh of Lowell Observatory, Arizona. Suggestions for a name were requested of the public, and so there were many possibilities including, of course, *Percival*, but also e.g. Cronus, Odin, Persephone, Erebus, Atlas, Prometheus, and Zymal (not familiar to me- there is however an Islamic personal name, Zimal, meaning a lady's “modesty garment”). It was an 11-year old English girl, Venetia Burney, who suggested Pluto. The director of the observatory, V.M.

Slipher, suggested a monogram of the Lowell's initials *P* and *L* as the planet's symbol. So the alternative name for Pluto is surely *Percival*.

A Knight of the Round table, and the original hero of the Grail Quest, Percival inherits an embarrassment of symbolism; everything to do with seeking and finding an other-worldly treasure. The sexual imagery of the knight's lance and the feminine cup need not be laboured, and are both profoundly Scorpionic. His roots are in the Welsh legend of *Peredur*, in which the cups and cauldrons encountered are pre-Christian symbols of supernatural power and wisdom. (Curiously, *Zimal*, as well as "a modesty garment", also means "provisions for a journey"- so we have the idea of concealment of sexuality plus the quest again; another route to understanding?)

So the link between Perceval and an understanding of the astrological Pluto is a little less direct, but it is certainly there. Given only this name to go on, a 1930s astrologer would surely have arrived at a comparable understanding of the Planet.

For Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto, then, we had sufficient synchronistic credit to make a go of interpreting the new discoveries. That credit is, I believe, now exhausted. After Pluto, the throws have come too thick and fast for new information- a discovery of a new Dwarf constitutes an "empty throw". We have Dwarfs tentatively named after girlfriends and TV stars, following which a committee awards a name. Ultimately we will have so many, the situation will be like trying to give each individual asteroid an interpretation.