



Traditional Synastry and Relationship Astrology

Robert Bailey, Dip Astro (FAA)

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The Purpose of this Lecture

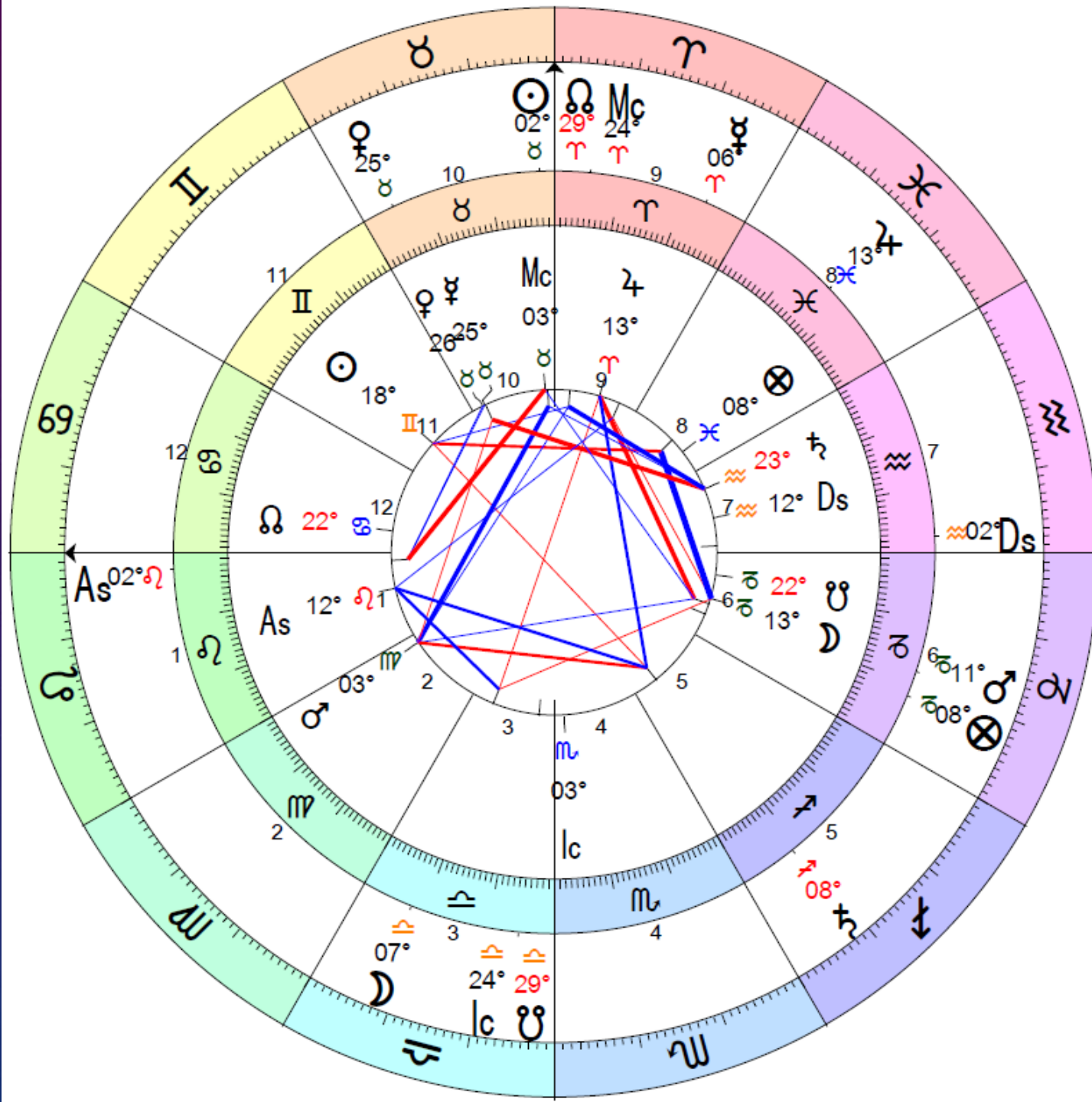
- To reconstruct the original system of synastry from the Hellenistic tradition of astrology
- To achieve this goal, I set aside everything I knew about synastry, so that I could read the texts with fresh eyes and without importing modern ideas
- This enabled me to get a clearer picture of the original way synastry was theorised and practised
- My goal is not to slavishly follow these old methods, but rather to **understand** the way synastry was originally practised, so that we can benefit from that knowledge and combine it with modern approaches



An Introduction to Synastry

- Synastry is the practise of comparing two people's birth charts to assess the quality of their relationship
- Commonly used to determine compatibility in romantic relationships
- Can also be used to assess other kinds of relationships, such as friendships, family members, partnerships and workplace relationships
- Often examined using a "bi-wheel", where one birth chart is overlaid on another





Overview

Part One: The Origins of Synastry

- Evidence for synastry in the ancient world
- Synastry in Ptolemy and Dorotheus
- Transmission and synthesis in the Middle Ages

Part Two: The Techniques of Traditional Synastry

- The key placements for synastry
- The benefics and malefics
- The angles

Part Three: Example charts

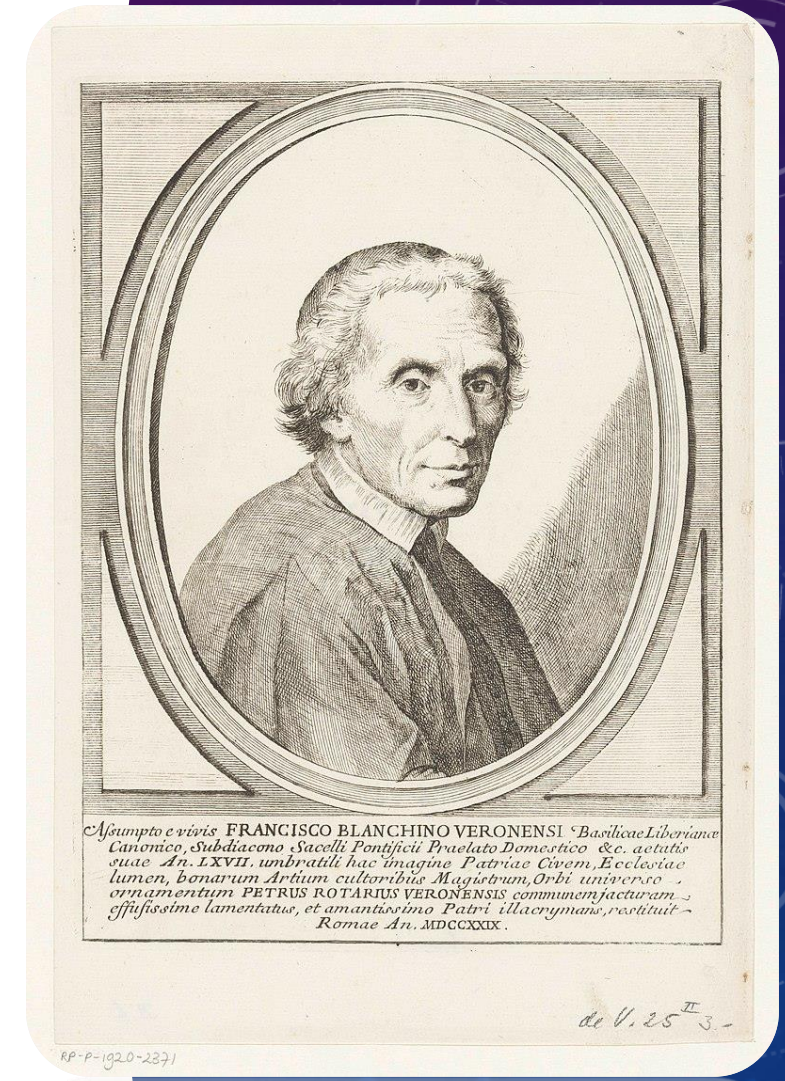


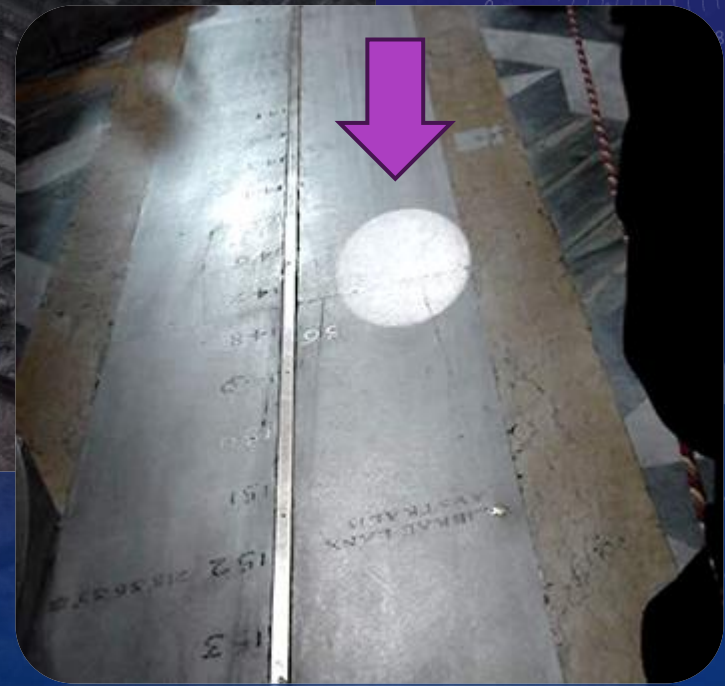
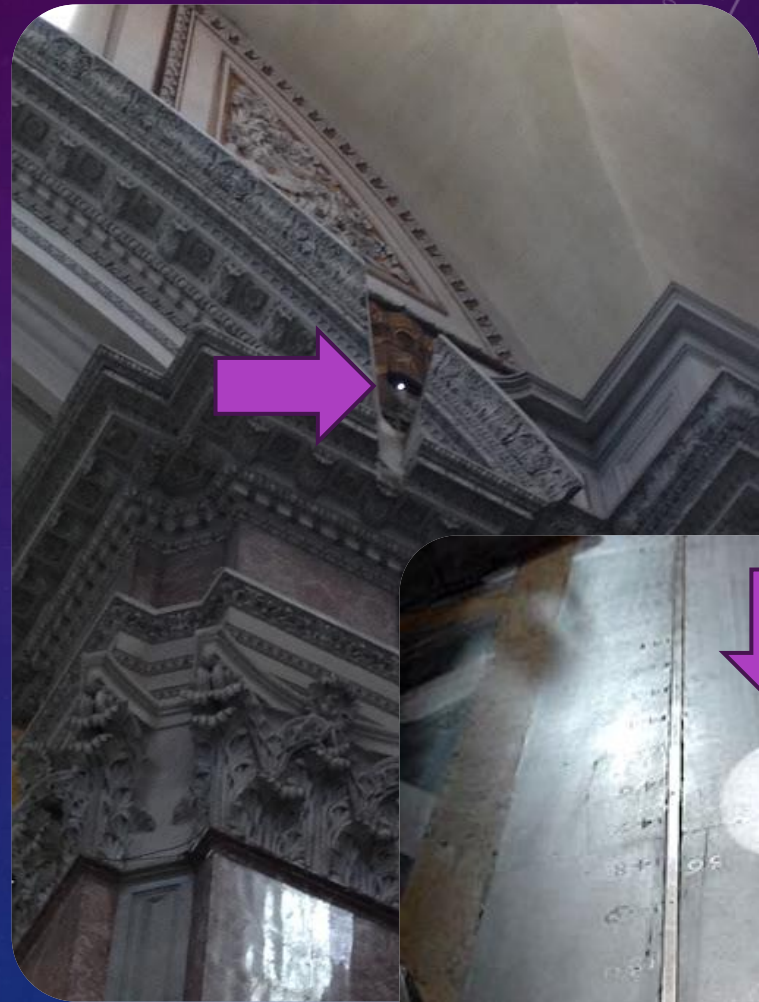
The background is a dark blue gradient with a subtle starry pattern. On the right side, there are several technical diagrams, including a large circular scale with numerical markings from 80 to 210 and arrows, and other smaller circular diagrams with dashed lines and arrows. The text is centered in the middle of the frame.

Part One: The Origins of Synastry

Francesco Bianchini

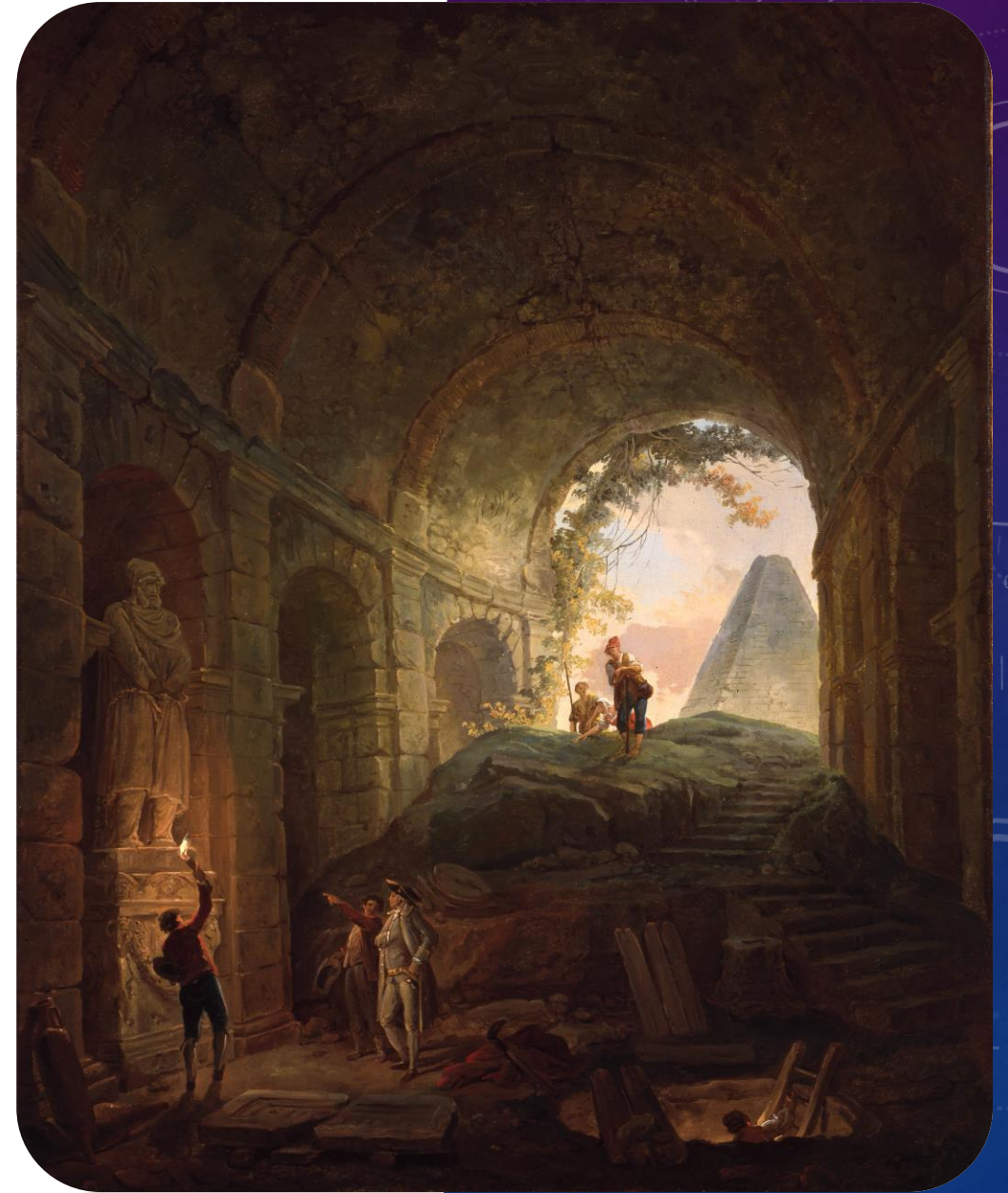
- This is Francesco Bianchini (1662–1729)
- In his day, a famous scientist, astronomer, historian, and an early archaeologist
- A friend of Isaac Newton, who made him an honorary member of the Royal Society
- One of his most famous achievements was installing a gigantic meridian line in the church *Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri*, used to check the accuracy of the Gregorian calendar, which you can still see today





A Fascinating Discovery

- In 1724, Pope Clement XI appointed Bianchini as the President of the Antiquities of Rome
- The next year, Bianchini began excavating the Aventine hill, one of the ancient seven hills of Rome
- During his dig, he made a fascinating discovery – an astrologer's board dating from the 2nd century AD



Astrologer's Boards

- In the ancient world, astrologers displayed the positions of the planets to clients using a board
- Markers were placed on the board representing the Ascendant and the seven traditional planets

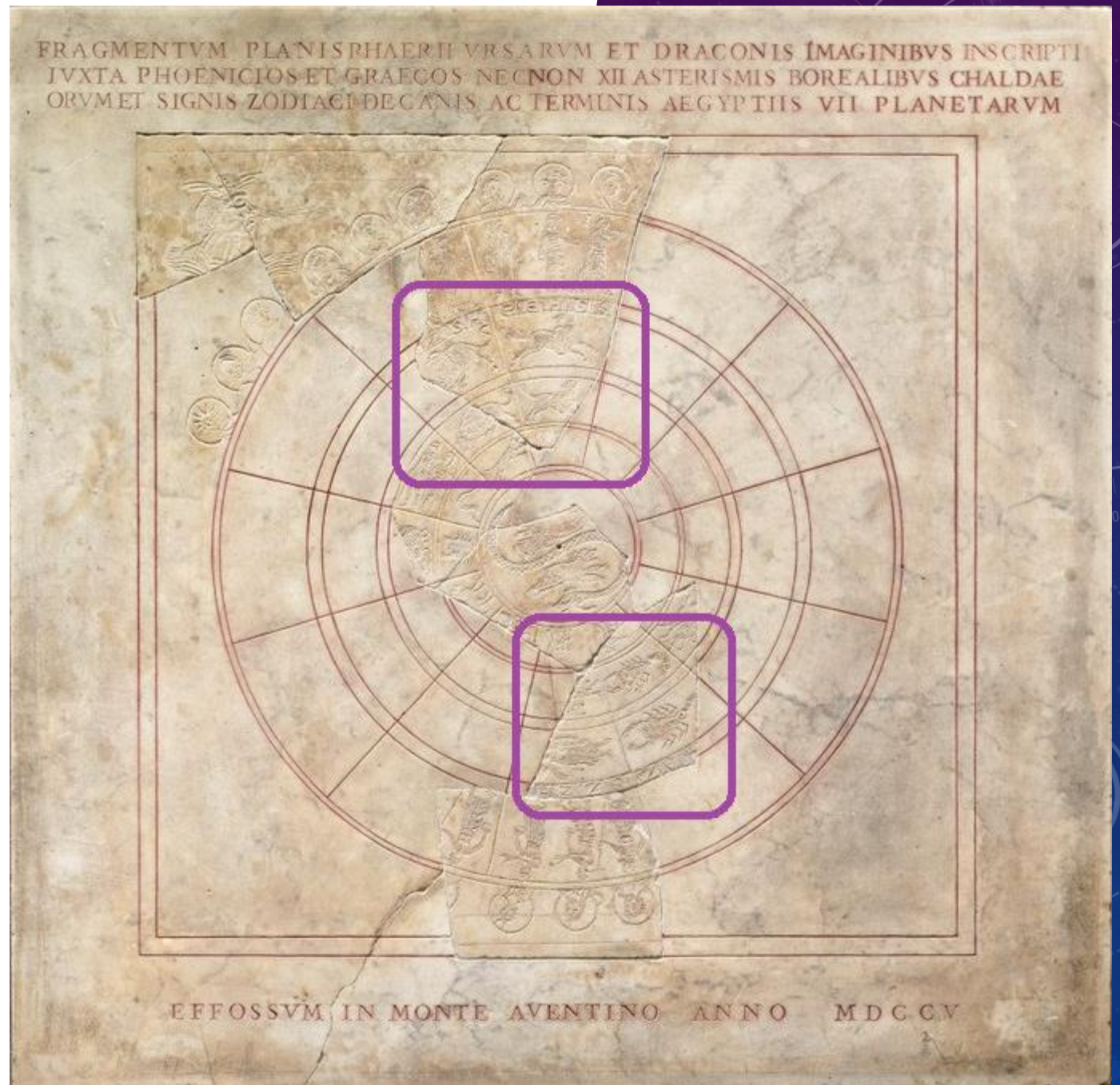


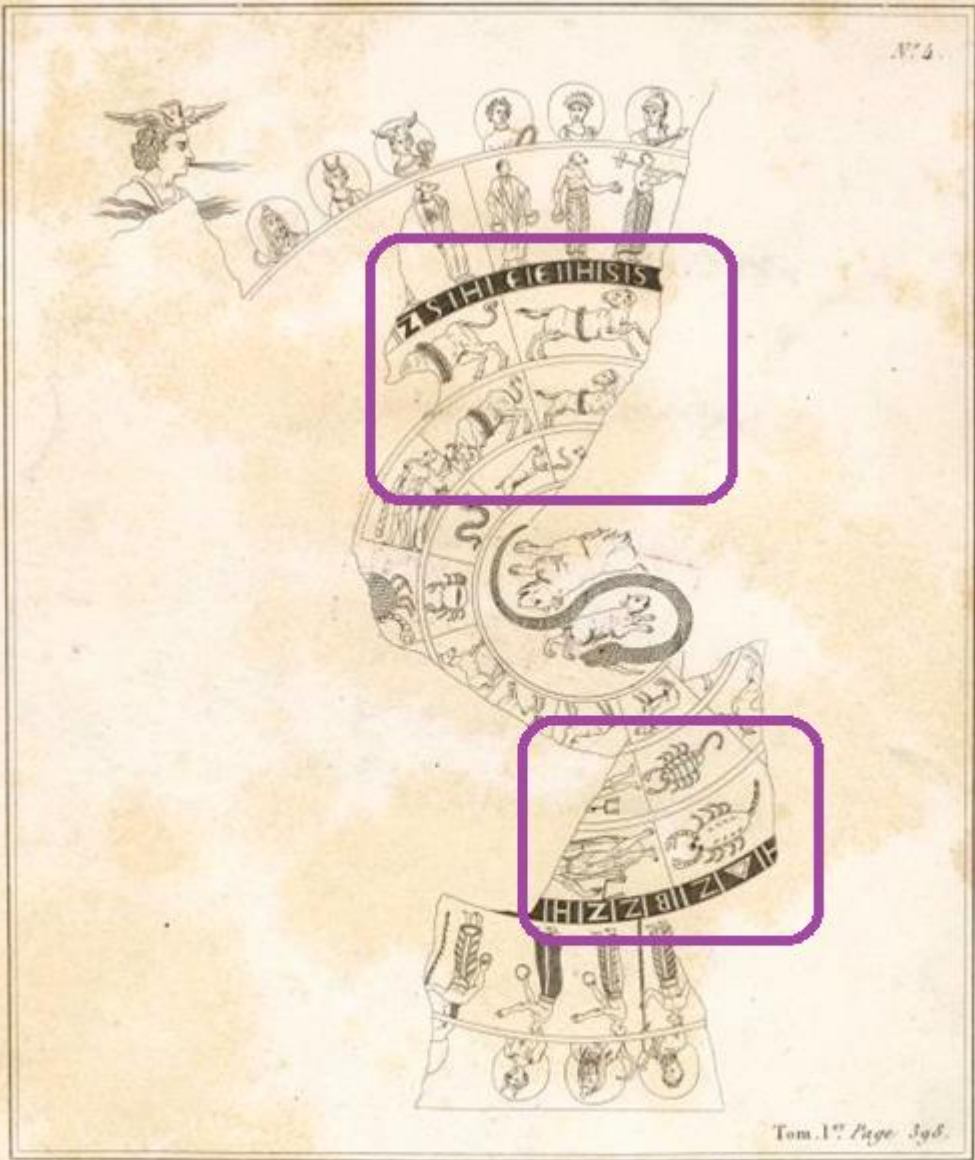
The Bianchini Tablet

- The zodiac board discovered by Bianchini was made of marble, and it was a little damaged
- Only one fifth of the board survived, and it had to be pieced together
- You can see it today, if you visit the Louvre museum in Paris, France
- There is one remarkable feature of Bianchini's tablet ...



- ... it has a double zodiac, like a modern bi-wheel
- This allows the astrologer to display two sets of placements – one in the inner wheel, and another in the outer wheel
- Scholars believe that the Bianchini tablet was used for synastry readings





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Planisphere Astronomical
Egyptian style.

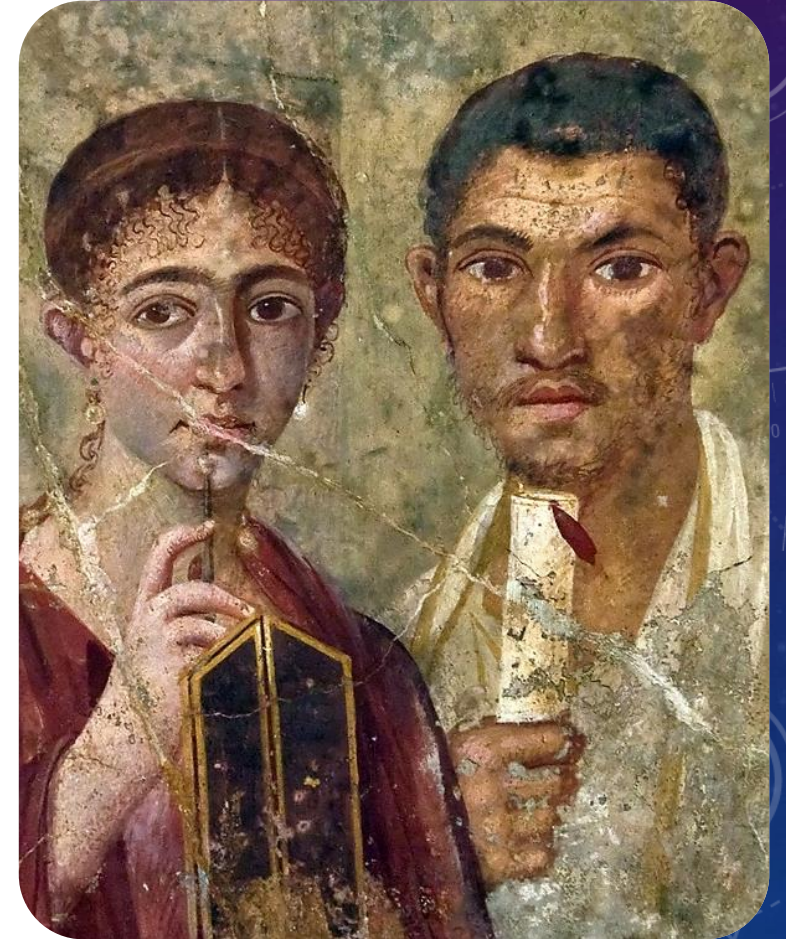
Zodiac

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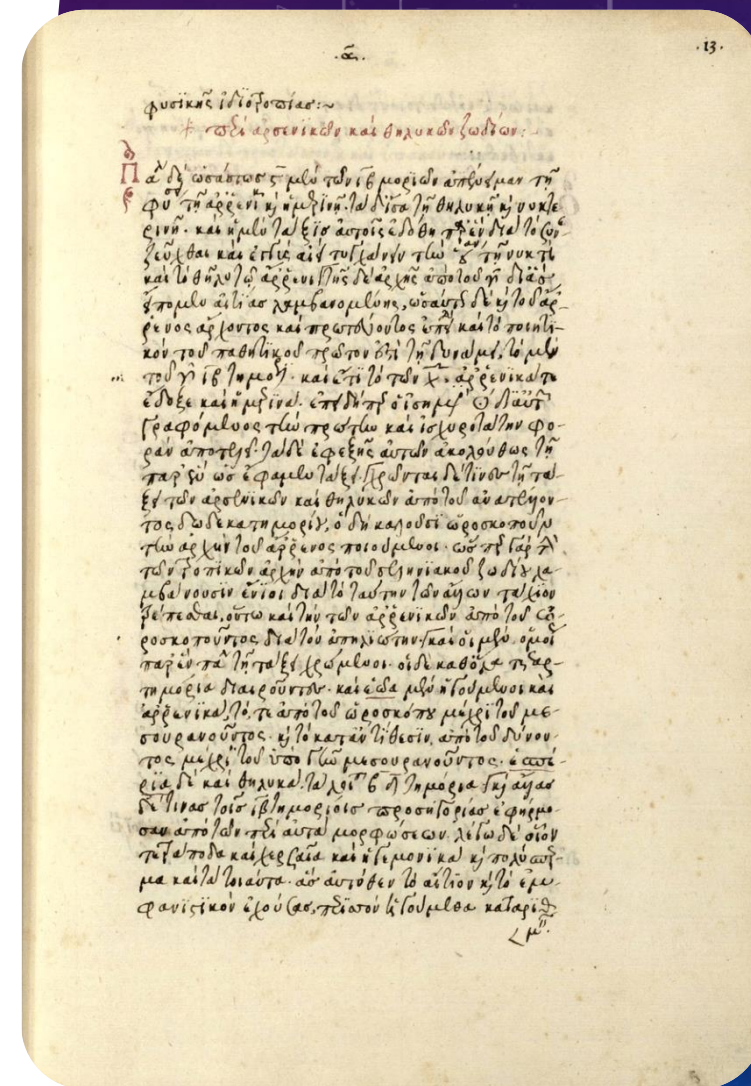
Synastry in the Ancient World

- In the ancient world, synastry was used to examine a wide variety of different relationships:
 - Marriages and romantic relationships
 - Friends and allies
 - Enemies and rivals
 - Family members (parents, children, siblings)
- In the surviving astrology texts on synastry, there is more material on friendships than on marriage
 - This may reflect cultural norms at the time



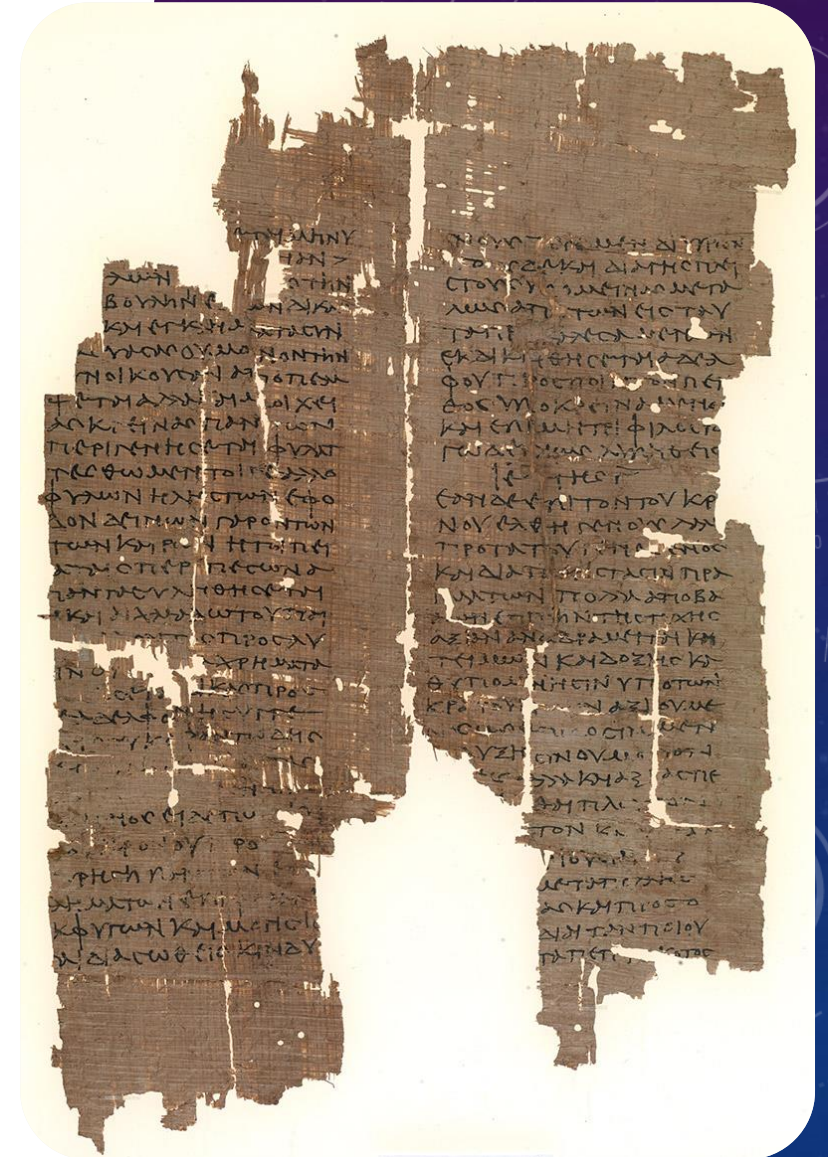
The Oldest Surviving Texts on Synastry

- The oldest texts containing synastry techniques that have survived are:
 1. The ***Carmen Astrologicum*** (“Song of Astrology”) by **Dorotheus of Sidon** – 1st century AD
 2. The ***Tetrabiblos*** (“The Four Books”) written by **Claudius Ptolemy** – 2nd century AD
- Both texts present similar methods, suggesting that they were using a common source
- Based on my research, it appears that all of the later material in the Hellenistic and medieval traditions on synastry are based on these two texts



The *Carmen Astrologicum*

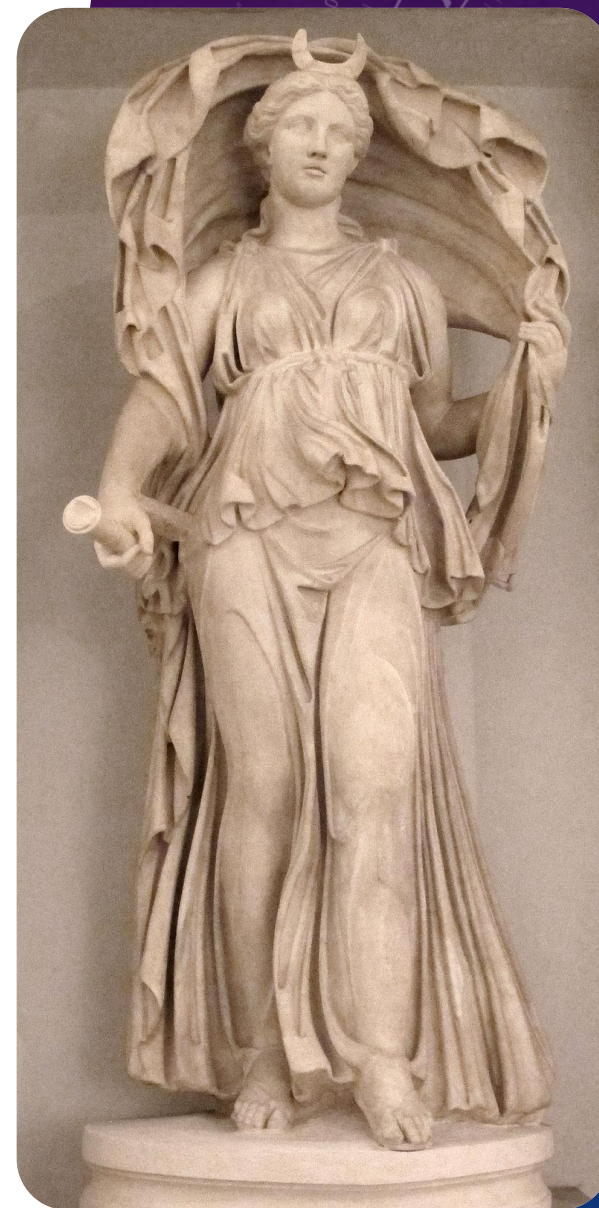
- Written by Dorotheus in the late 1st century AD
- Dorotheus says he travelled to many countries, including Egypt and Babylon, to learn astrology, and then compiled what he learned in his book
- Originally written in Greek as a **didactic poem**, but the original text has not survived – we only have fragments of the poem, quoted by later authors
- Translated into Persian in the 3rd century AD
- The Persian version was translated into Arabic in the 8th century AD by 'Umar al-Tabari – this Arabic version has survived more or less intact



A Verse from Dorotheus on Synastry

*“If anyone – husband or wife – has Mēnē in the animal
That occupies the place of the Bad Spirit of the other,
That one will wield the strength over both: the one who
has*

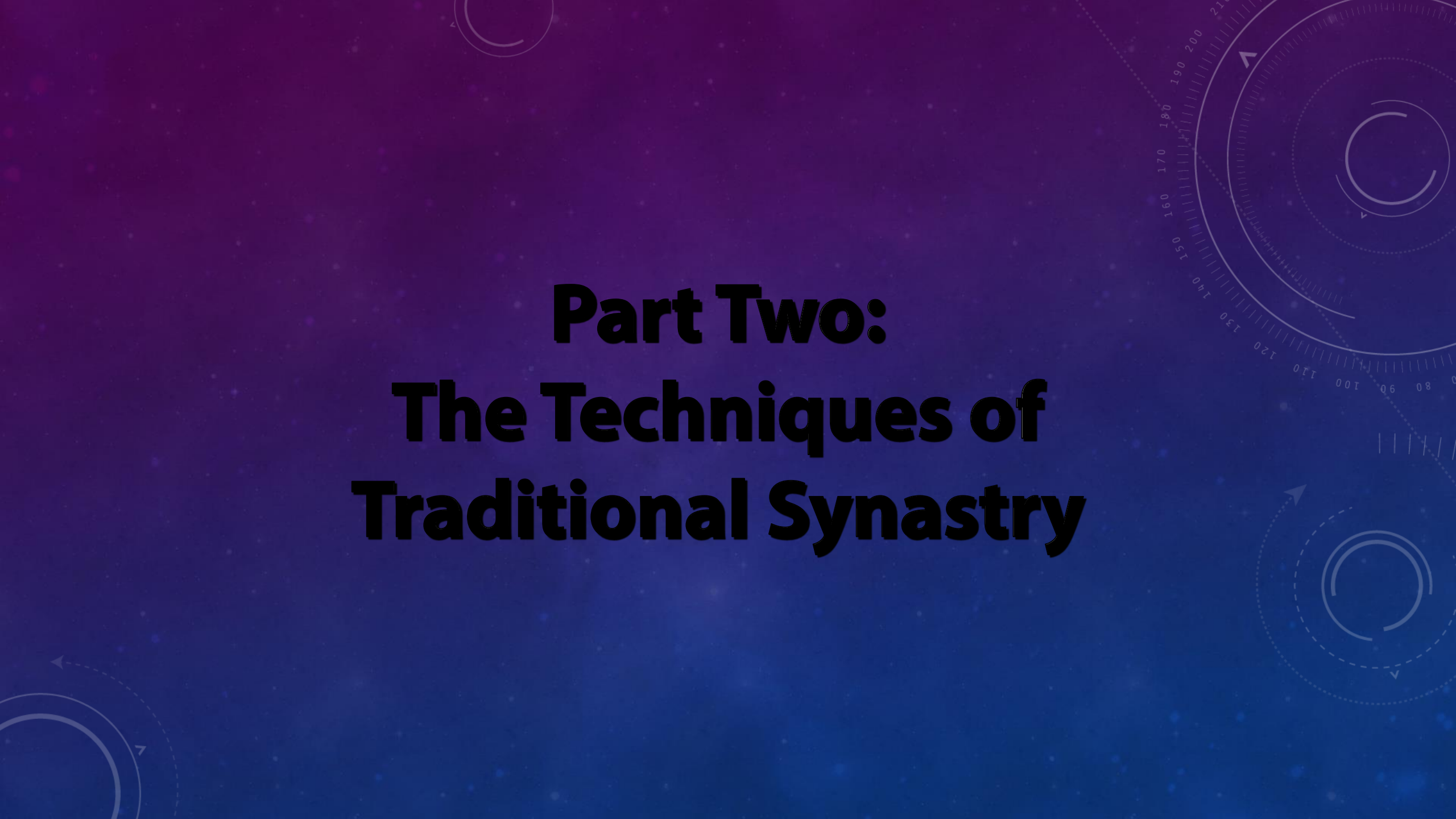
*Selēnē by the twelfth region from the Hour-divider
In the nativity of the other, like a master will be.”*



Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*

- The most influential text on astrology in history
- Originally written in Greek, in Alexandria, Egypt, in the 2nd century AD
- Translated into many different languages (Latin, Persian, Arabic), and transmitted for generations
- Not intended to be a textbook – more a summary of astrology, for a larger encyclopedia on sciences
- Presents a “rationalised” account of astrology, changing older material to make it more logical, and leaving out things Ptolemy didn't agree with
- Contains two large chapters on synastry



The background features a dark blue gradient with a subtle pattern of white stars and technical diagrams. On the right side, there are several circular diagrams with concentric lines and arrows, resembling a technical drawing or a diagram of a circular mechanism. One of these diagrams has numerical labels (100, 110, 120, 130, 140, 150, 160, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210) around its perimeter. In the bottom left corner, there is a dashed circular arrow pointing counter-clockwise. The overall aesthetic is clean, modern, and technical.

Part Two: The Techniques of Traditional Synastry

A Method for Traditional Synastry

1. Identify the key places in both charts
2. Examine the aspects of the key places:
3. Examine the benefic and malefic planets:
 - aspects with the key placements
 - aspects with each other
4. Examine the angles of both charts



Step 1 - Identify the Key Places

- Today when we do synastry we tend to compare the entire chart of one person with the entire chart of the other person, looking for connections between all of the placements in both charts
- However, in the traditional approach to synastry we focus on only a few **key places** - the *epíkairos* (Greek: appropriate, topical) places
- To assess the relationship, we look at how each of these placements is configured with the same placements in the other person's chart



The Key Places

1. The Luminaries – the Sun and the Moon

- Associated with perception, the soul and character
- The Sun signifies your rational mind and intellect
- The Moon signifies your instincts and your needs

2. The Lot of Fortune

- Signifies the role of chance and fortune in your life
- What you “end up doing” or “find yourself doing”

3. The Ascendant

- How you behave, how you move through life



Ptolemy's Three Kinds of Synastry

1. Synastry with **the Luminaries** indicates friendship or enmity based on **choice**
 - Do the parties choose to be friends or rivals?
 - Important for marriage and romantic relationships
2. Synastry with **the Lot of Fortune** indicates friendship or enmity based on **benefit** – do the parties benefit from being friends or rivals
 - Do the parties benefit from being friends or rivals?
3. Synastry with **the Ascendant** indicates friendship or enmity based on **pleasure or pain**
 - Do the parties enjoy each other's company or not?

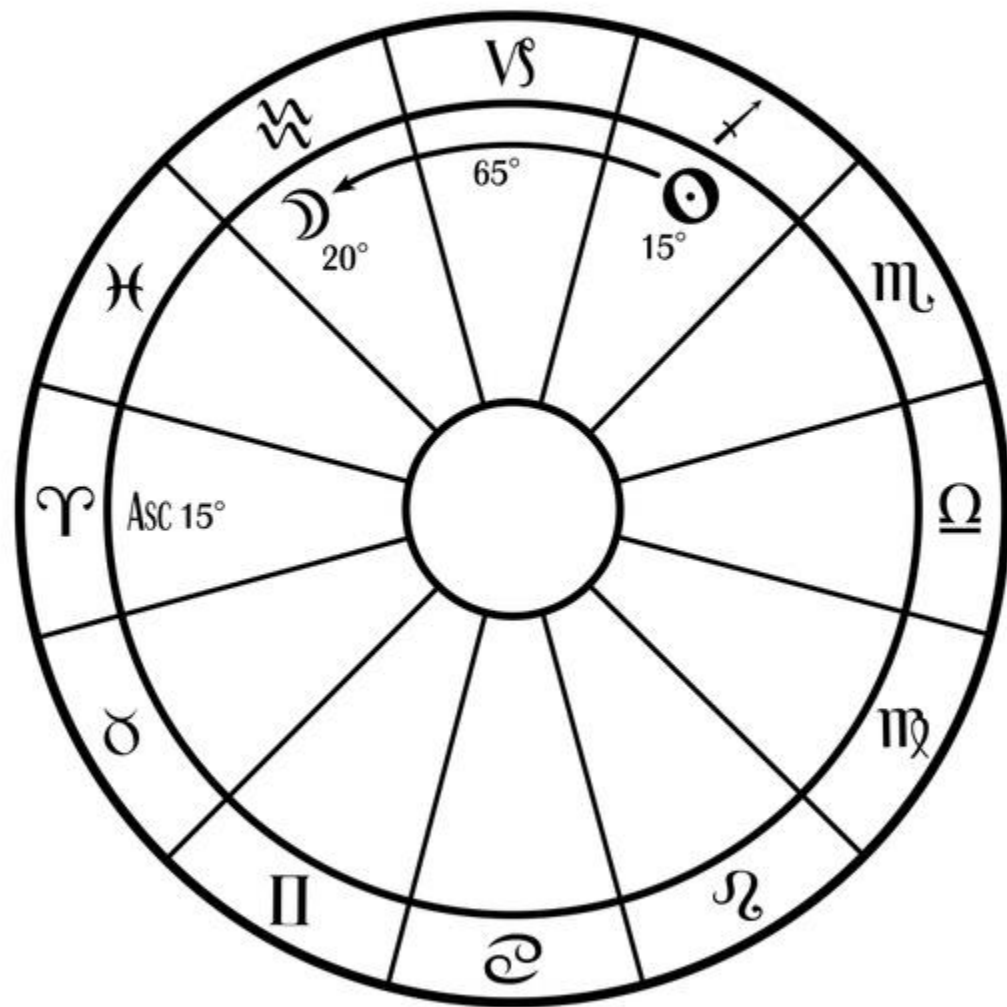


Calculating the Lot of Fortune

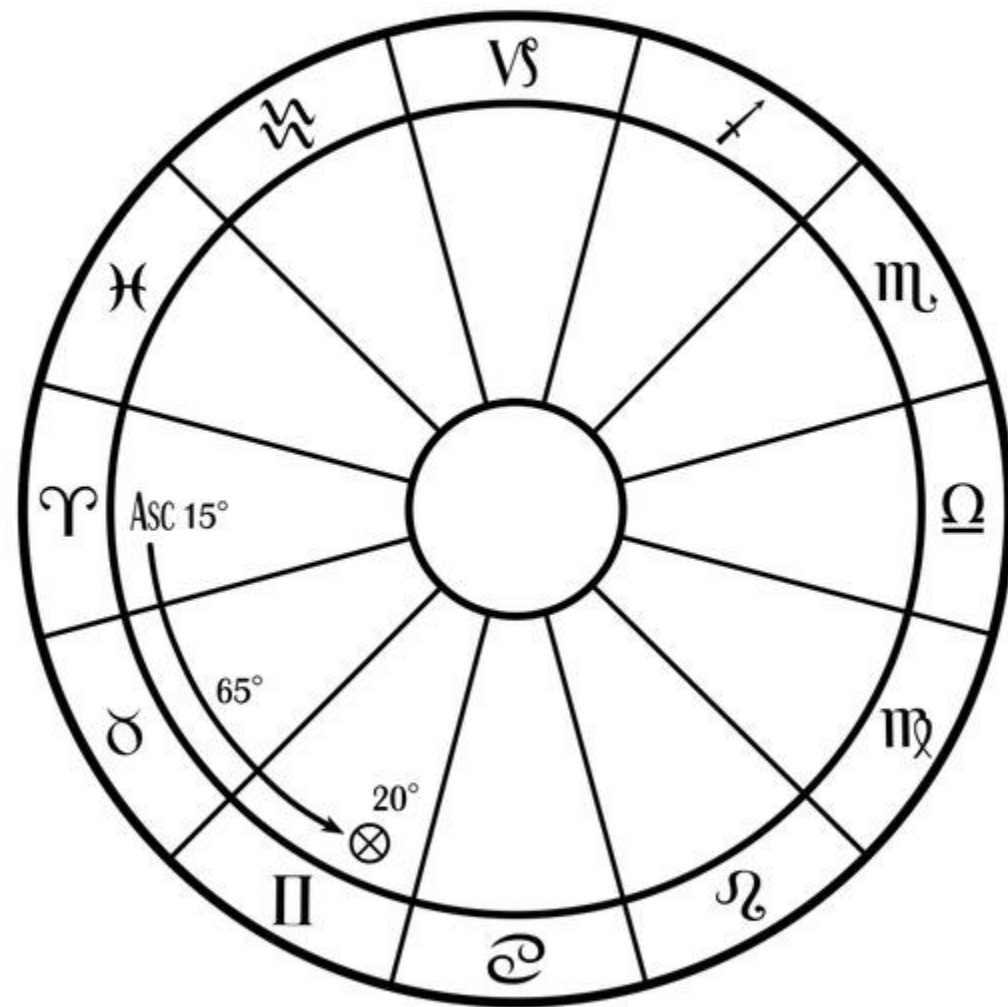
- The Lot of Fortune is based on the phase of the Moon. Its calculation differs by day and by night.
- For those **born during the day**, find the distance **from the Sun to the Moon**, in zodiacal order, and then measure that out from the Ascendant
- For those **born during the night**, find the distance **from the Moon to the Sun**, in zodiacal order, and then measure that from the Ascendant
- Wherever the measurement lands, that is where the Lot of Fortune is located



Calculating the Lot of Fortune by Day



Distance from the Sun to the Moon



Same distance measured from the Ascendant

Step 2 - Configuration of the Key Places

- This is the most important part of ancient synastry
 - *Schēmatothesia* (“the arrangement of figures”)
- Generally, we look at the key places **in pairs**, seeing how (for example) the Luminaries in one person’s chart are configured with the Luminaries in another person’s chart
- The key places can be configured in two ways:
 1. By aspect
 2. By placement in **signs that see each other** or **signs that hear each other**



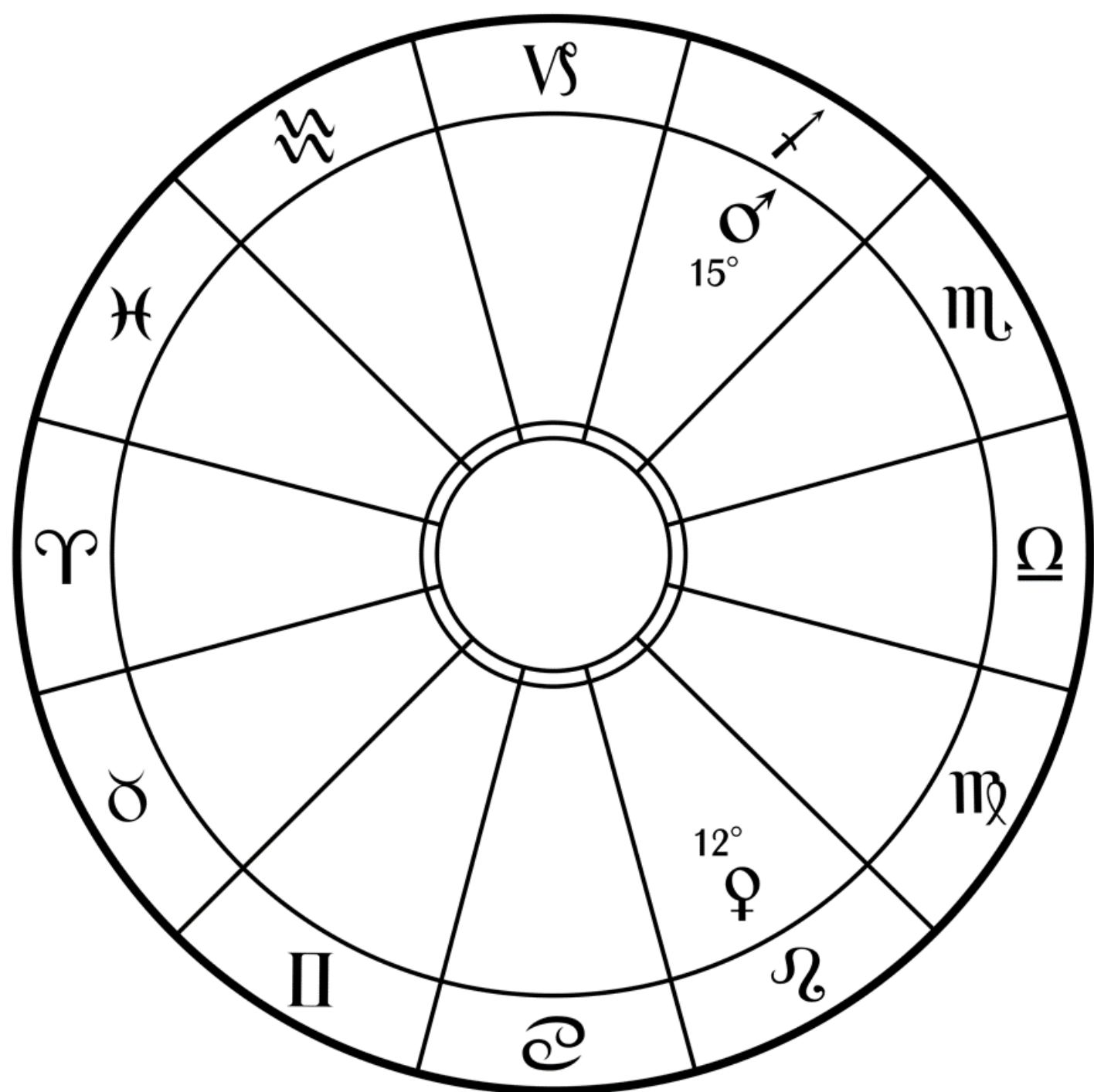
Aspects: Looking and Connecting

- In traditional astrology, there are two types of aspects
- Degree-based aspects (**connecting**) – when the planets are configured by a certain number of degrees (e.g. a square is 90° , a trine is 120°)
- Sign-based aspects (**looking**) – when the planets are configured by a certain number of whole signs, regardless of their position in the sign by degree
- Connecting has a stronger impact than looking
- In ancient synastry we tend to focus on looking, so don't worry too much about orbs or degrees here



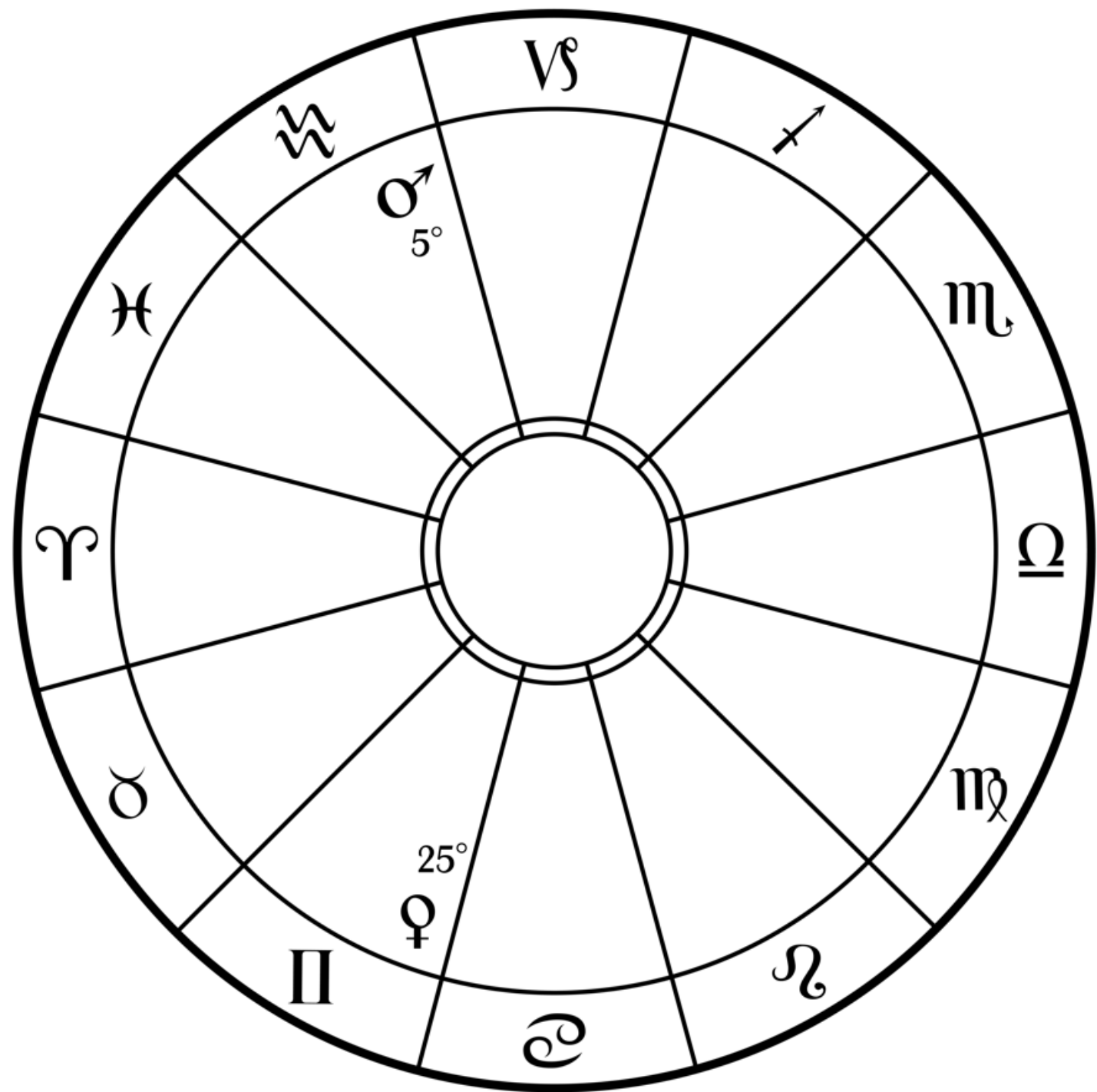
Connecting

- Connecting is based on **degrees**
- Venus is at 12° Leo, and Mars is at 15° Sagittarius
- The trine aspect is 120°
- Venus and Mars are **connecting by trine** because they are close to the exact trine aspect of 120°



Looking

- Looking is based on **signs**
- Venus is at 25° Gemini, and Mars is at 5° Aquarius
- They are 145° apart so they are not connecting by trine
- However, Venus and Mars still **look at each other** by trine, despite the distance between them, because their signs are configured by trine



Aspects in Synastry

- **Copresence** (being in the same sign) has the strongest effect, indicating unity and familiarity
 - **Conjunction** (by degree) is an even stronger effect
- **Sextile and trine** signify harmony and agreement, so they indicate friendship or love
- **Square and opposition** signify disharmony and disagreement, so they indicate enmity or rivalry
- **Aversion** (a lack of any classical aspect) signifies a complete lack of connection between the parties, so it is particularly bad for romantic relationships



Aspects Between the Luminaries

- The ideal scenario is to have one party's Sun in the same sign as the other party's Moon (**exchange**)
- Both partners having the same Sun sign or the same Moon sign is also very good
- Sextiles or trines between the parties' luminaries shows harmony and agreement
- Squares or oppositions between the partner's luminaries show disharmony and disagreement
- The worst case-scenario is to have the luminaries in aversion, with no classical aspect between them



Ptolemy on Aspects of the Luminaries

“Marriages for the most part are lasting when in both the genitures the luminaries happen to be in harmonious aspect, that is, in trine or in sextile with one another, and particularly when this comes about by exchange ; and even more when the husband's moon is in such aspect with the wife's sun. Divorces on slight pretexts and complete alienations occur when the aforesaid positions of the luminaries are in aversion, or in opposition or in quartile.”

- *Tetrabiblos*, Book IV, Chapter V



Aspects Between the Lots of Fortune

- If the parties have the Lot of Fortune in the same sign, or in sextile or trine, this indicates a friendship based on having shared goals in life
 - The partners are “on the same team”
 - Working together will benefit both parties
- If the parties have the Lot of Fortune in square or opposition, this indicates a rivalry or enmity based on having opposed or misaligned goals
 - The partners are “on opposing teams”
 - Working against each other is in their interests



The Moon and the Lot of Fortune

- As mentioned earlier, the Lot of Fortune is associated with the phase of the Moon
- For this reason, aspects between the Lot of Fortune of one party and the Moon of the other party are highly desirable in ancient synastry
- The following configurations are especially potent:
 - The Lot of Fortune of one party in the same sign as the Moon of the other party
 - The Lot of Fortune of one party in trine with the Moon of the other party



Aspects Between the Ascendants

- The Ascendant signifies how you behave, so in synastry it shows how your behaviour is received
- If the parties have their Ascendants in the same sign, or in sextile or trine, this indicates will enjoy each other's company and have fun together
- If the parties have their Ascendants in square or opposition, or in aversion, they may find each other unpleasant or difficult to be around
- Relationships based only on synastry between the Ascendants may be fun but not very strong



Step 3 –Benefic and Malefic Planets

- The benefic (“good”) planets are Venus and Jupiter
- The malefic (“bad”) planets are Mars and Saturn
- The benefic planets help other planets:
 - when they are in the same sign
 - when they are configured by **any aspect**
- The malefic planets harm other planets:
 - when they are in the same sign
 - when they are configured **by a square aspect or by an opposition aspect**



The Benefic Planets in Synastry

- If one partner has a benefic planet in the same sign as one of the key places of the other partner, this is a very good indication
- If both partners have the same benefic planet in the same sign, this was also considered a very good indication
- If one partner has a benefic **in any aspect** with a key place of the other partner, this is helpful – note this happens often!



The Benefics as Mitigating Factors

- Benefic planets have a mitigating effect, improving the condition of other planets they are configured with
- If the parties' have luminaries in square or opposition, but a benefic is also configured with those places, the benefic will mitigate the difficulty of the square or opposition aspect
- This can improve what might otherwise be a difficult or challenging relationship
- But if the luminaries of the parties are in aversion, the benefics cannot overcome that fundamental lack of configuration



The Malefic Planets in Synastry

- The malefic planets harm other planets by copresence, square or opposition – the sextile and trine of malefics does not harm
- If one partner has a malefic planet in the same sign as a Luminary of the other partner, this is a strongly negative indication
- If one partner has a malefic planet in square or opposition to a Luminary of the other partner, this is also a negative indication



The Malefics as Aggravating Factors

- When the malefics are configured with the key places, they have a harmful effect
- If key places are copresent or in sextile or trine, but a malefic planet is copresent or in square or opposition with those places, it harms an otherwise good relationship
- If key places are in square or opposition, and a malefic planet is copresent or in square or opposition, it makes the relationship worse



Step 4 – The Angles

- The Ascendant and the Midheaven are important places in every birth chart
- If one partner has a **Luminary** in the same sign as the Ascendant or Midheaven of the other partner, this is a very positive indication
- If one partner has a **benefic planet** in the same sign as the Ascendant or Midheaven of the other partner, this is also a very positive indication
- Conversely, if one partner has a **malefic planet** in the same sign as the partner's Ascendant or Midheaven, this is a negative indication



Other Factors in Ancient Synastry

- There are several other factors in ancient synastry that I did not have time to cover in this lecture
- Assessing dominance – we can use synastry to tell which partner will be dominant and take control
- More Lots – other lots were used in synastry besides the Lot of Fortune (e.g. the Lot of Spirit, the Lot of Eros)
- The pre-natal syzygy – the most recent New Moon or Full Moon that occurred before birth
- Signs ruled by the same planet (“in the same belt”)



Part Three: Example Charts



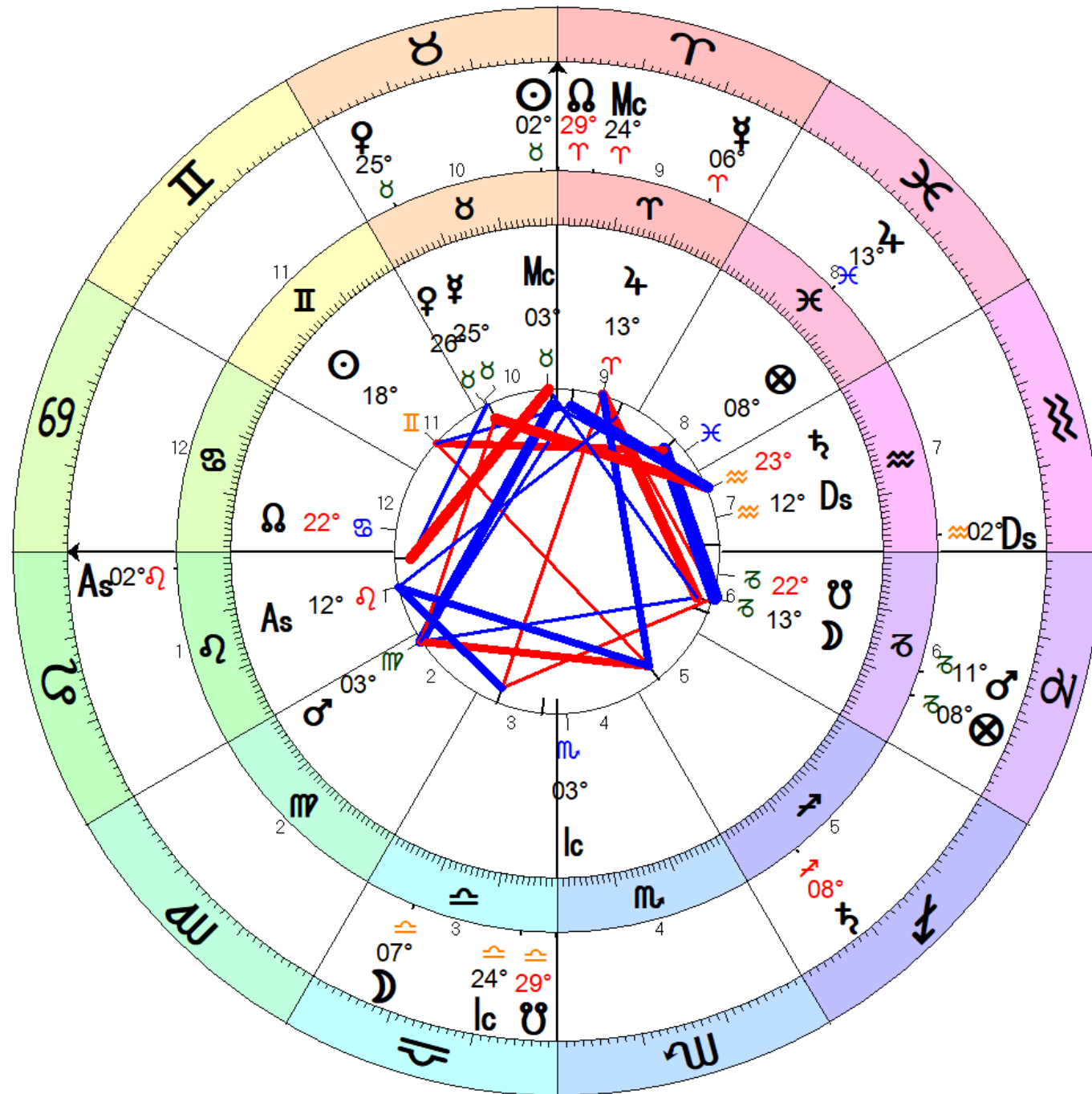
Johnny Depp and Amber Heard

- Johnny Depp and Amber Heard first met in 2009, married in February 2015, divorced in 2016
- During divorce proceedings, Heard claimed that Depp had abused her physically, which he denied. The media picked up the story
- In 2018, Heard published an op-ed in *The Washington Post* discussing the alleged abuse
- In 2022 Depp sued Heard for defamation
- The court ruled both parties defamed each other. They both appealed the verdict, then settled out of court with Heard paying Depp \$1million USD.



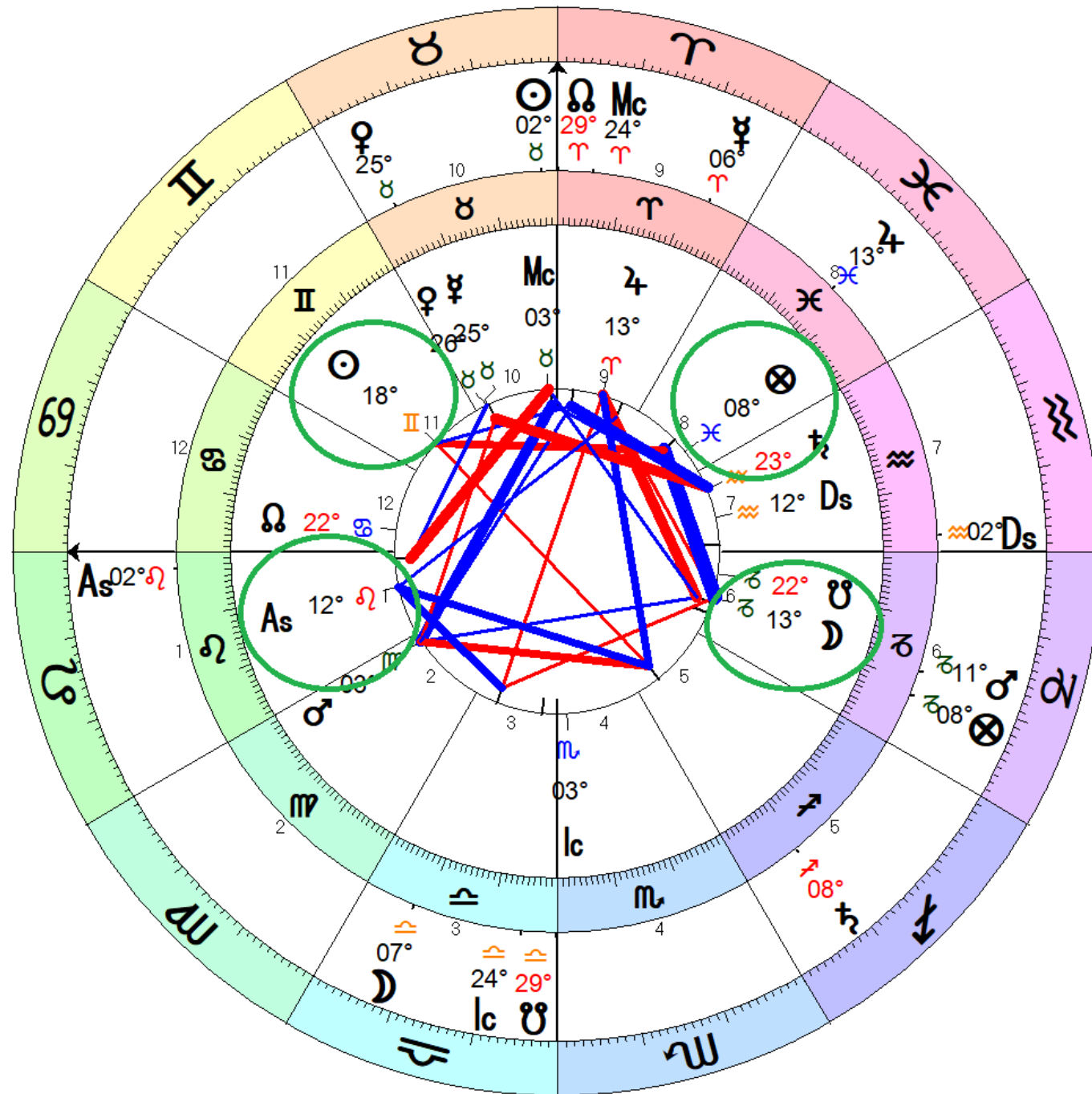
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Male Chart
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Outer Wheel
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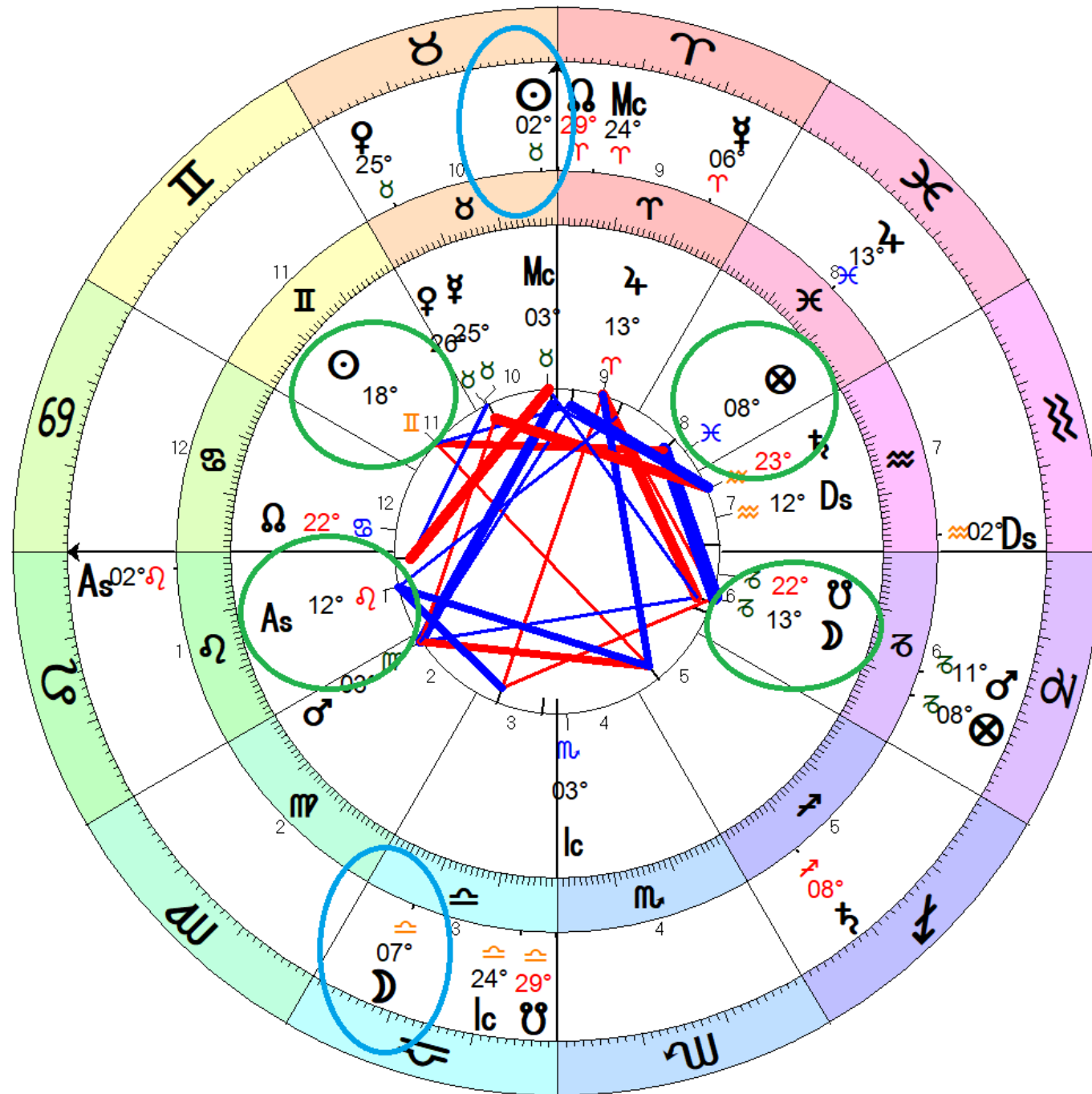
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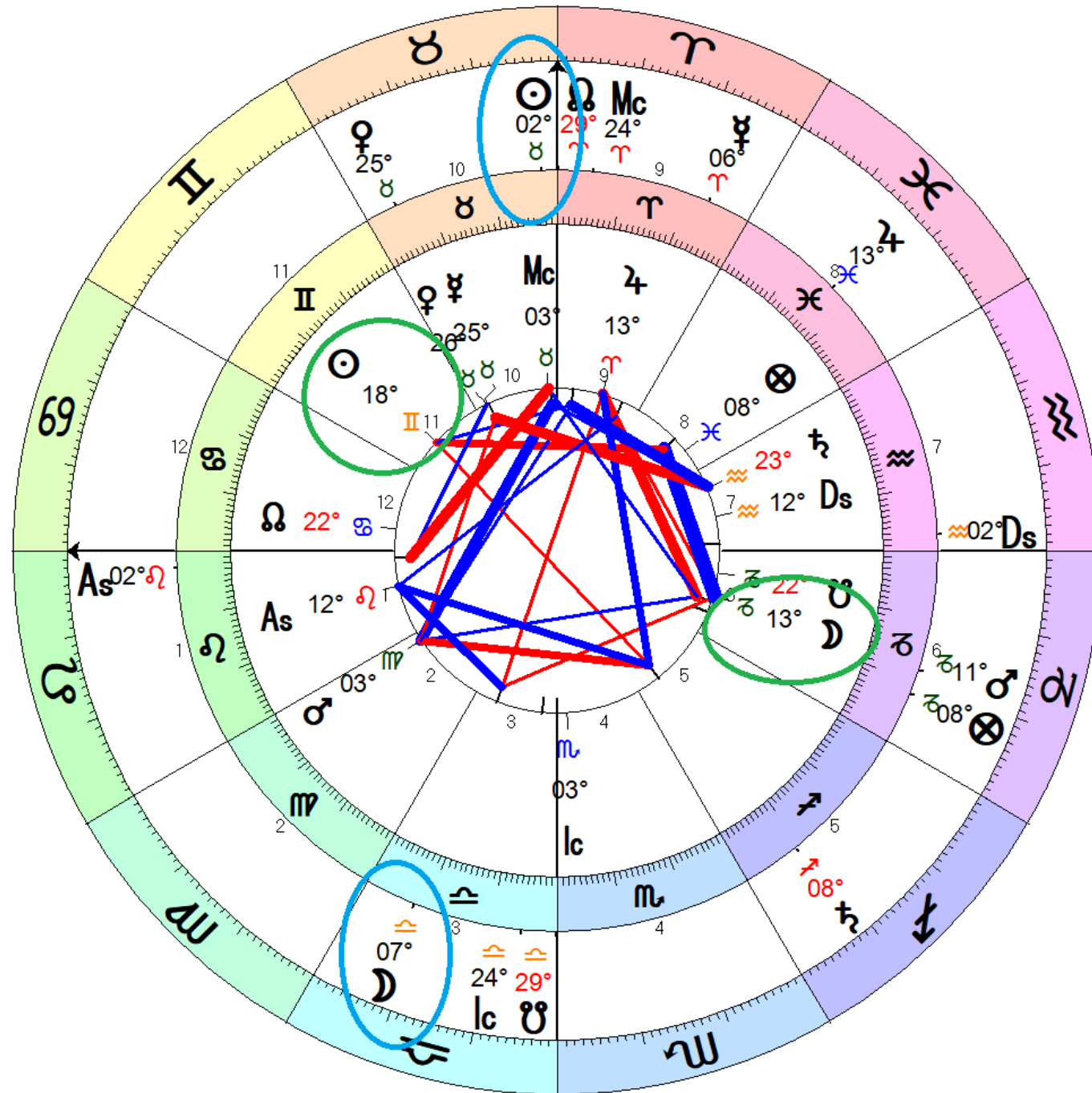
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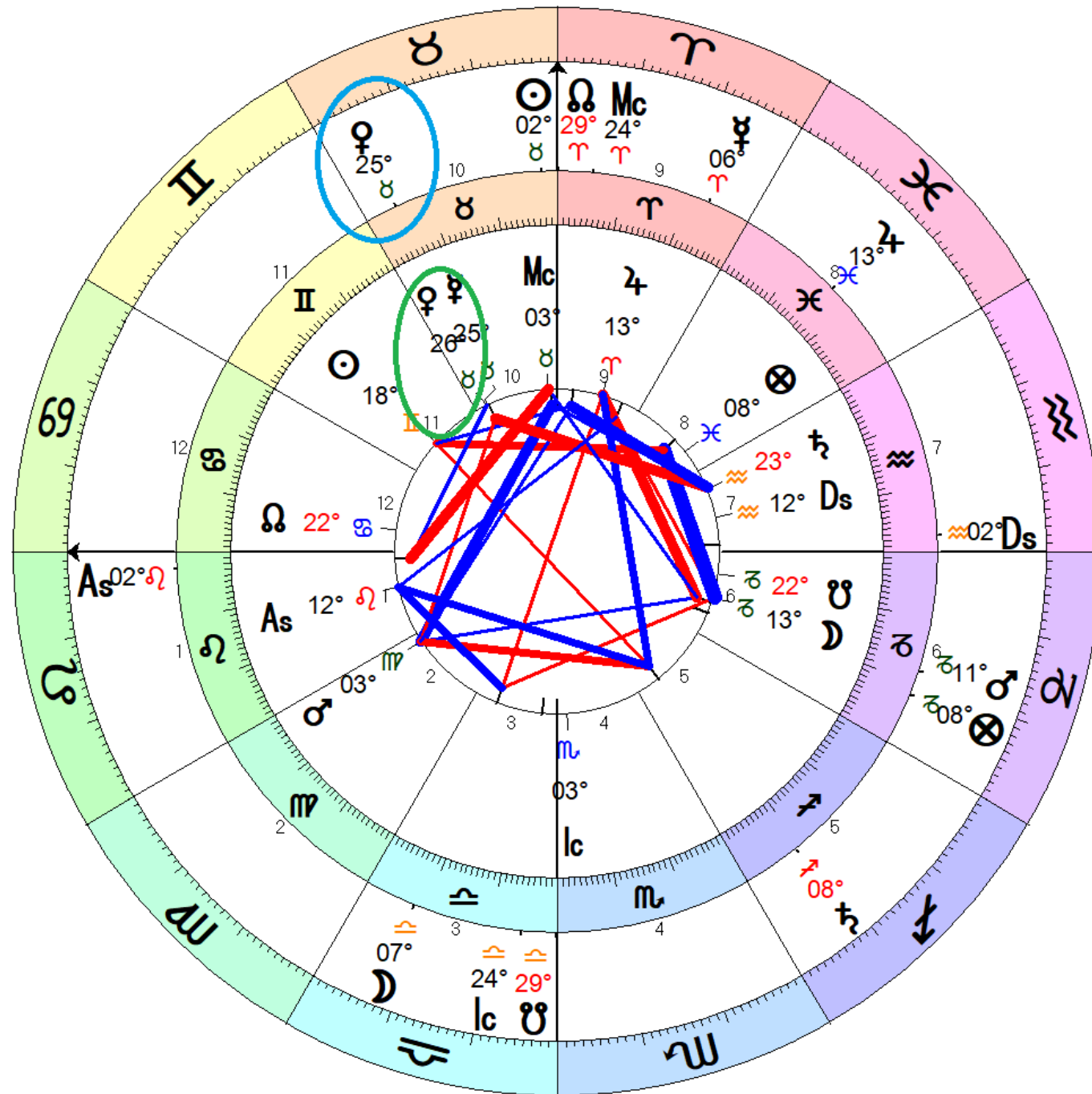
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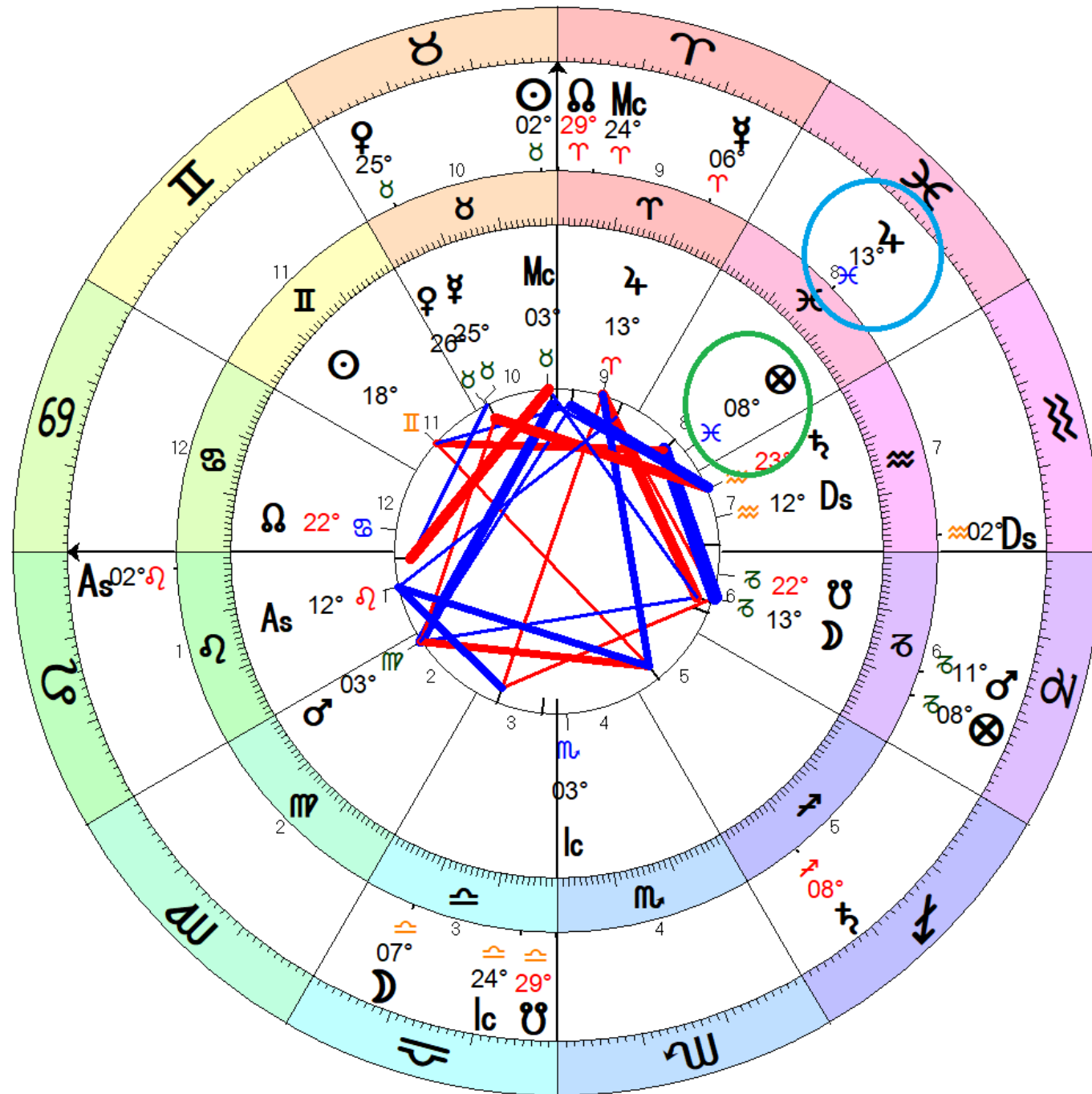
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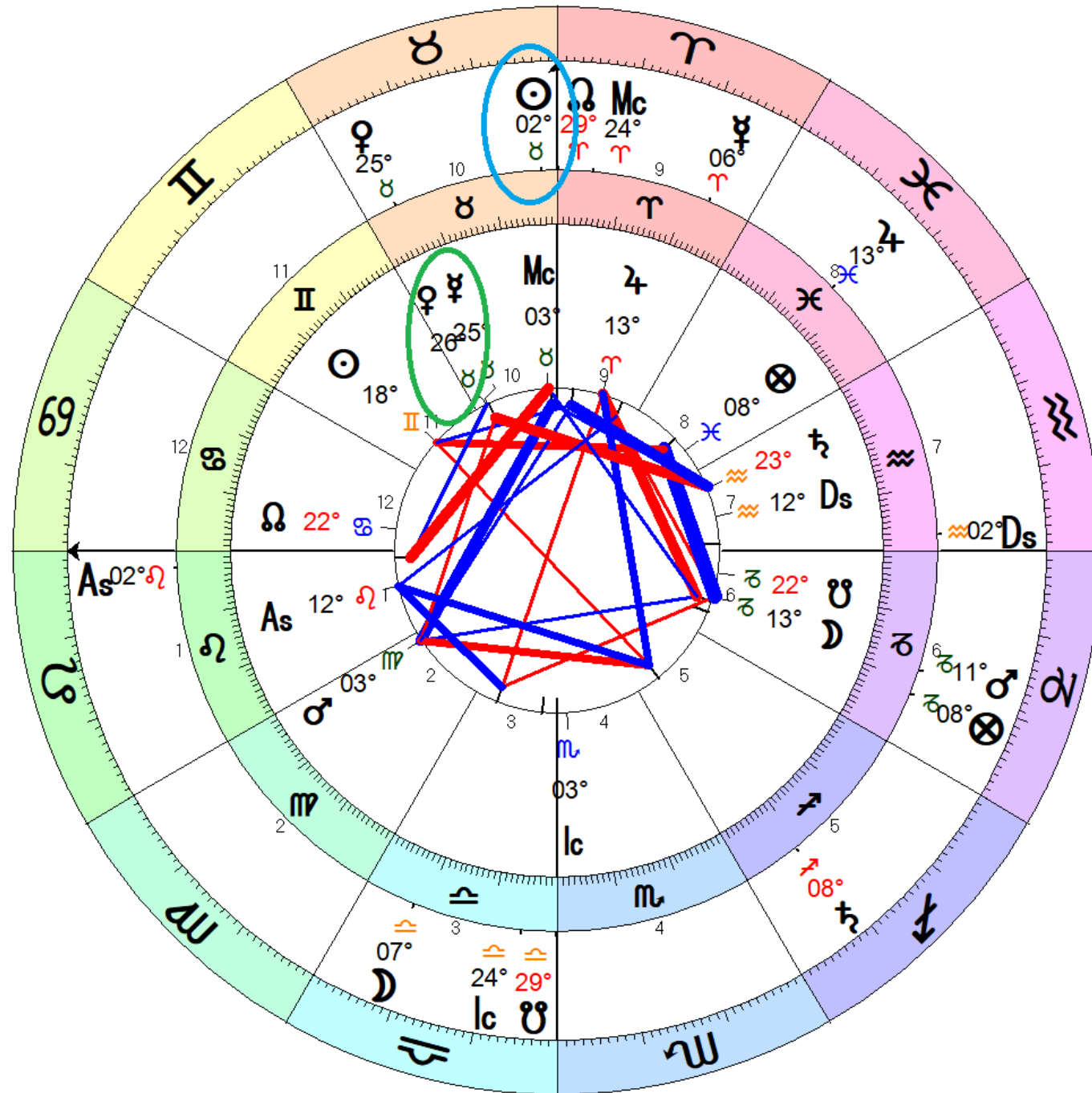
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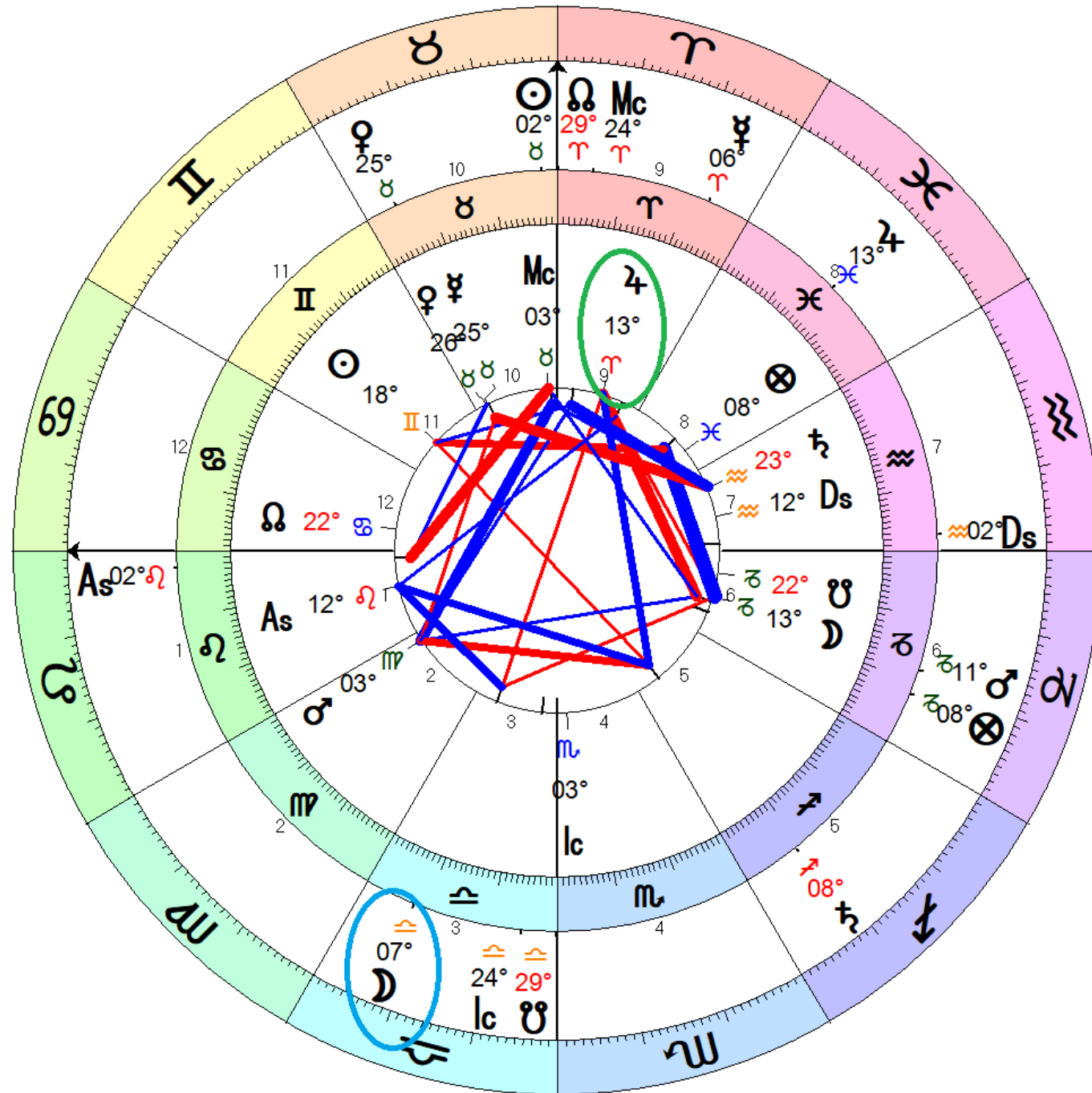
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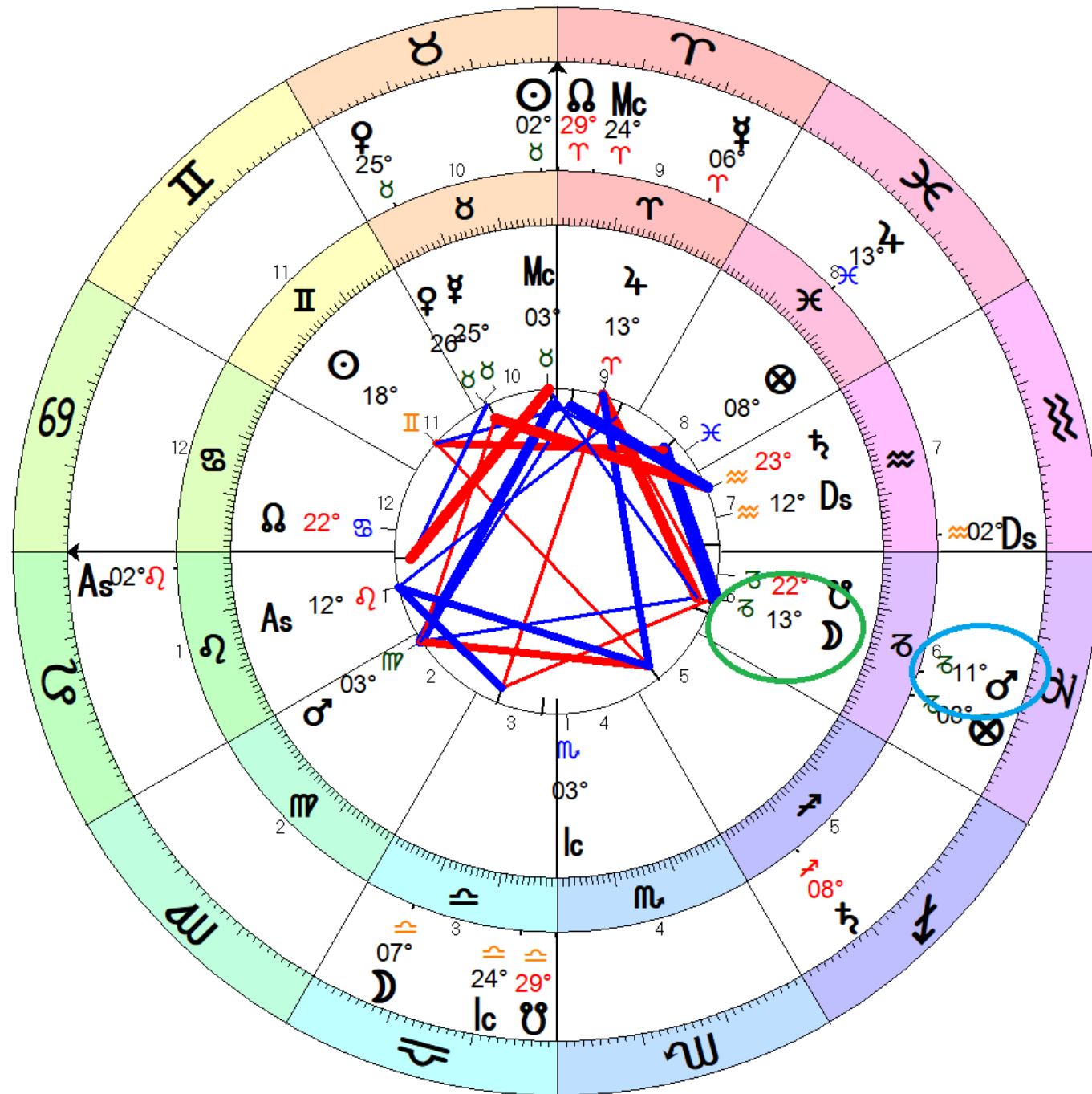
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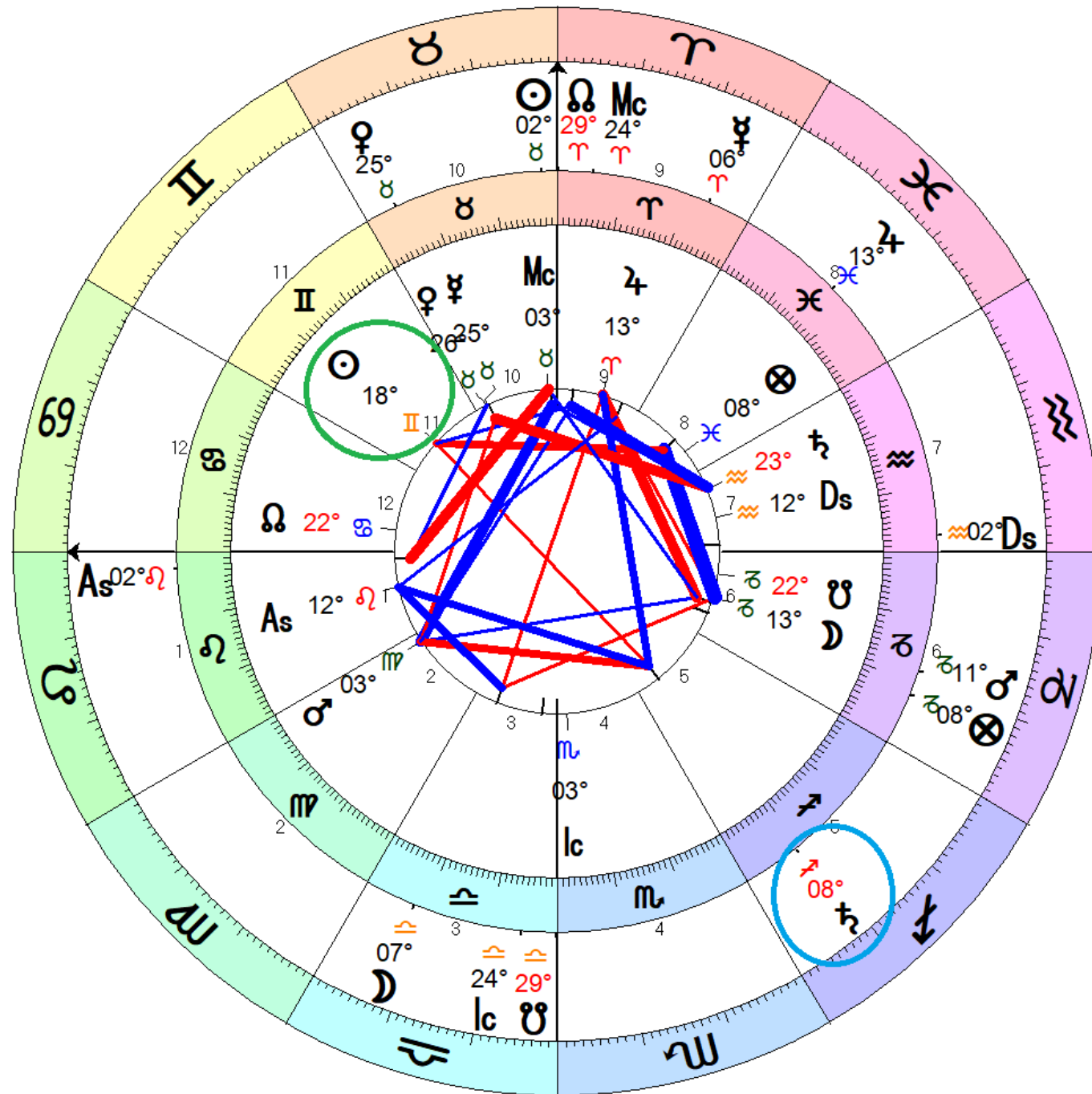
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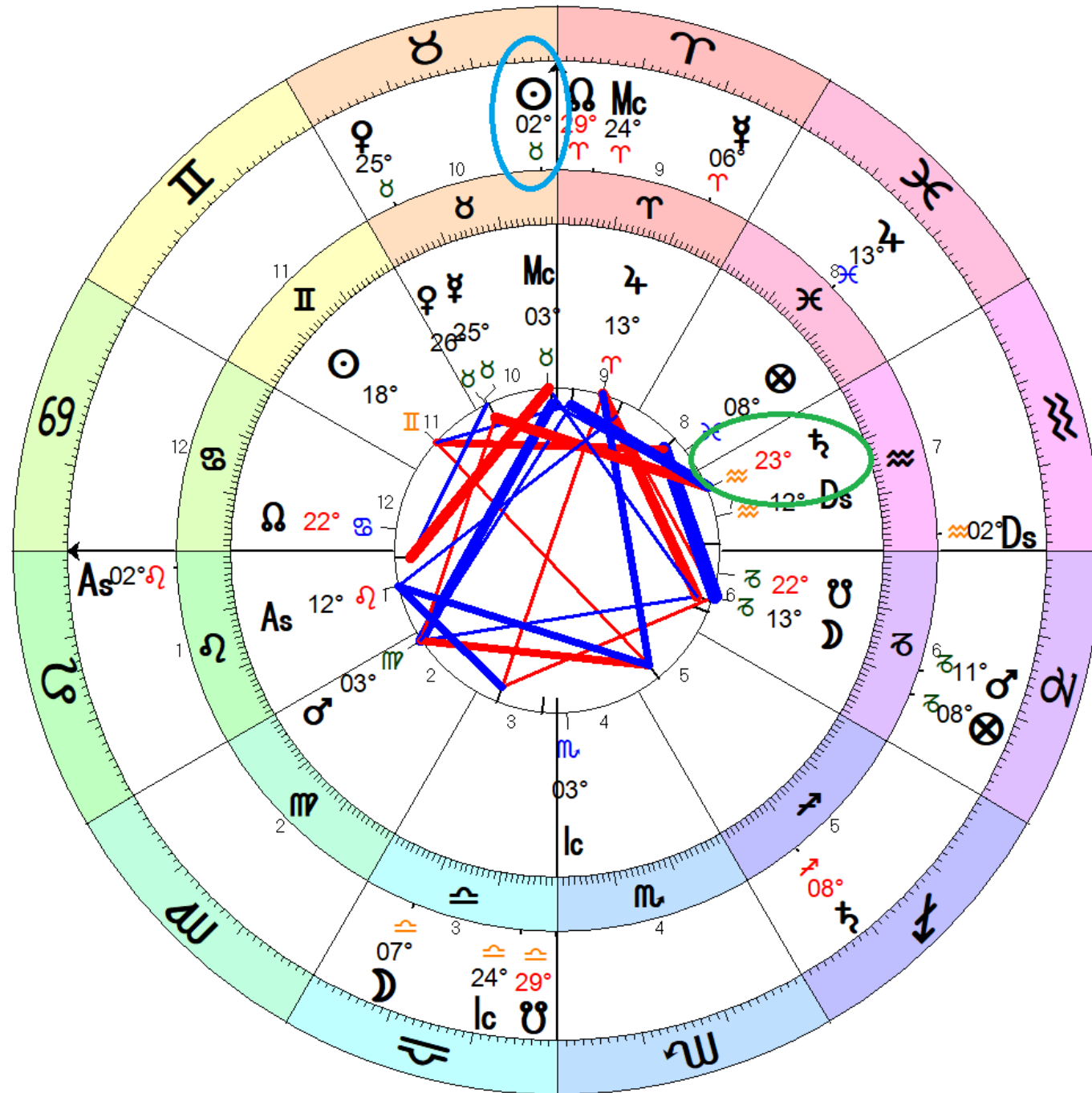
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 Owensboro, Kentucky
 37°N46'27" 087°W06'48"
 Geocentric
 Tropical
 Whole Signs
 Mean Node

Outer Wheel
Amber Heard
Female Chart
 22 Apr 1986, Tue
 12:00 pm CST +6:00
 Austin, Texas
 30°N16'01" 097°W44'34"
 Geocentric
 Tropical
 Whole Signs
 Mean Node



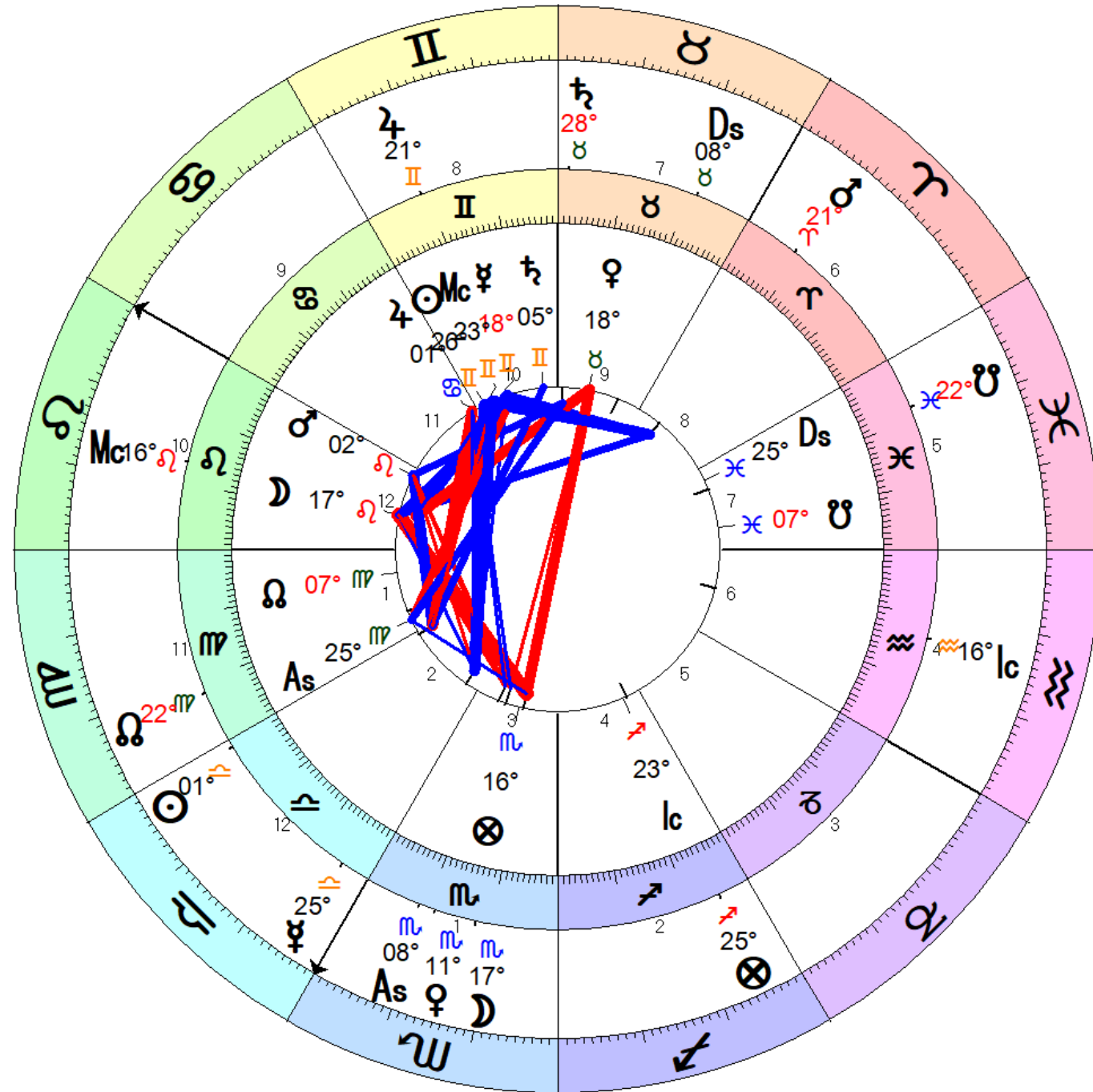
Paul and Linda McCartney

- Paul met Linda in 1967 while Linda was on a photo assignment in her job as a photographer
- They quickly fell in love and married in 1969
- Paul was attracted to Linda physically but also loved her rebellious spirit and her relaxed attitude.
- Linda admired Paul's creativity and kindness.
- Paul was also a good step-father to Linda's daughter Heather, and they formed a strong bond.
- Marriage lasted for 29 years until Linda sadly passed away from breast cancer in 1998



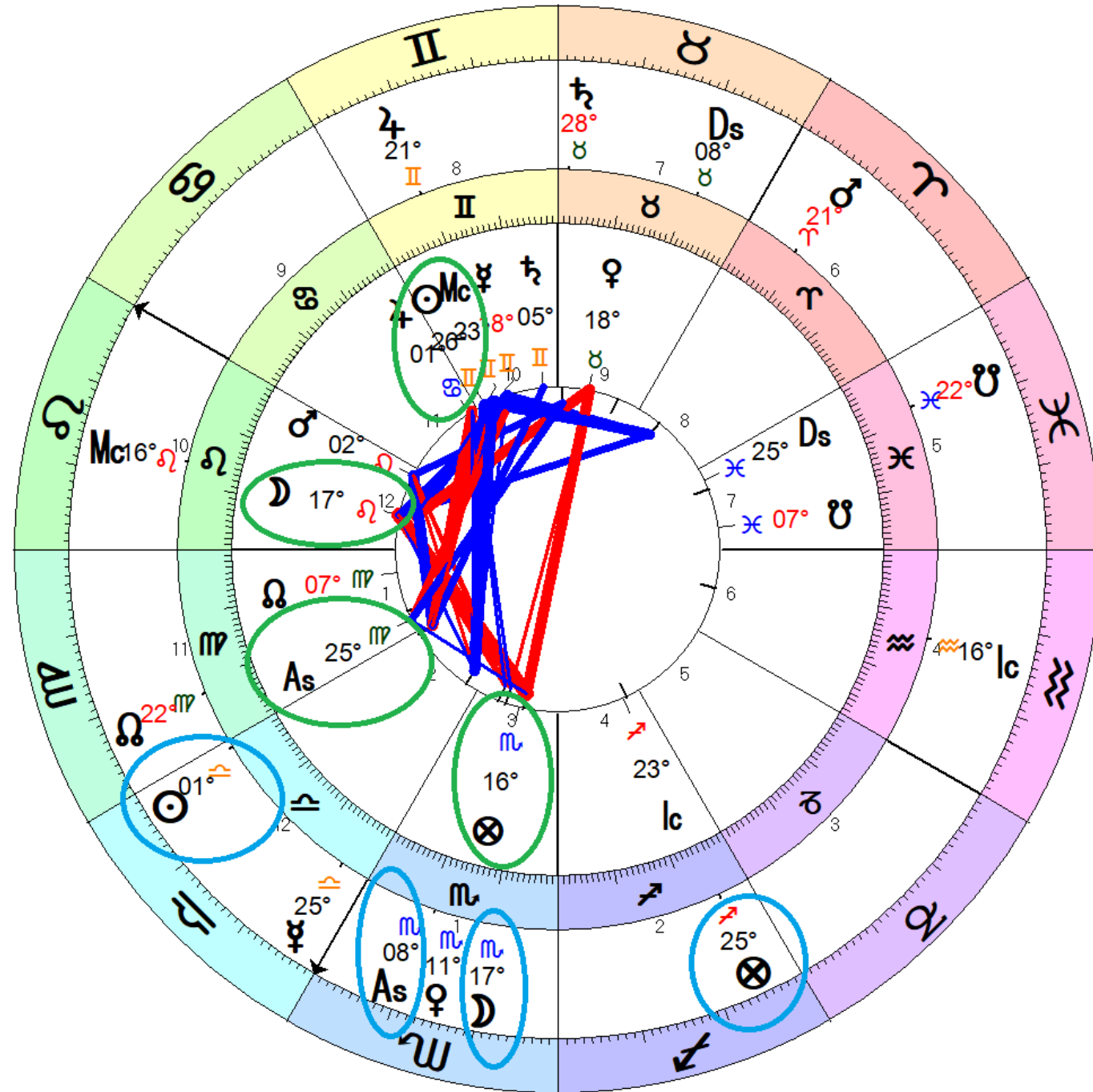
Inner Wheel
Paul McCartney
Male Chart
18 Jun 1942, Thu
2:00 pm BDST -2:00
Liverpool, England
53°N25' 002°W55'
Geocentric
Tropical
Whole Signs
Mean Node

Outer Wheel
Linda McCartney
Female Chart
24 Sep 1941, Wed
10:00 am EDT +4:00
New York, New York
40°N42'51" 074°W00'23"
Geocentric
Tropical
Whole Signs
Mean Node



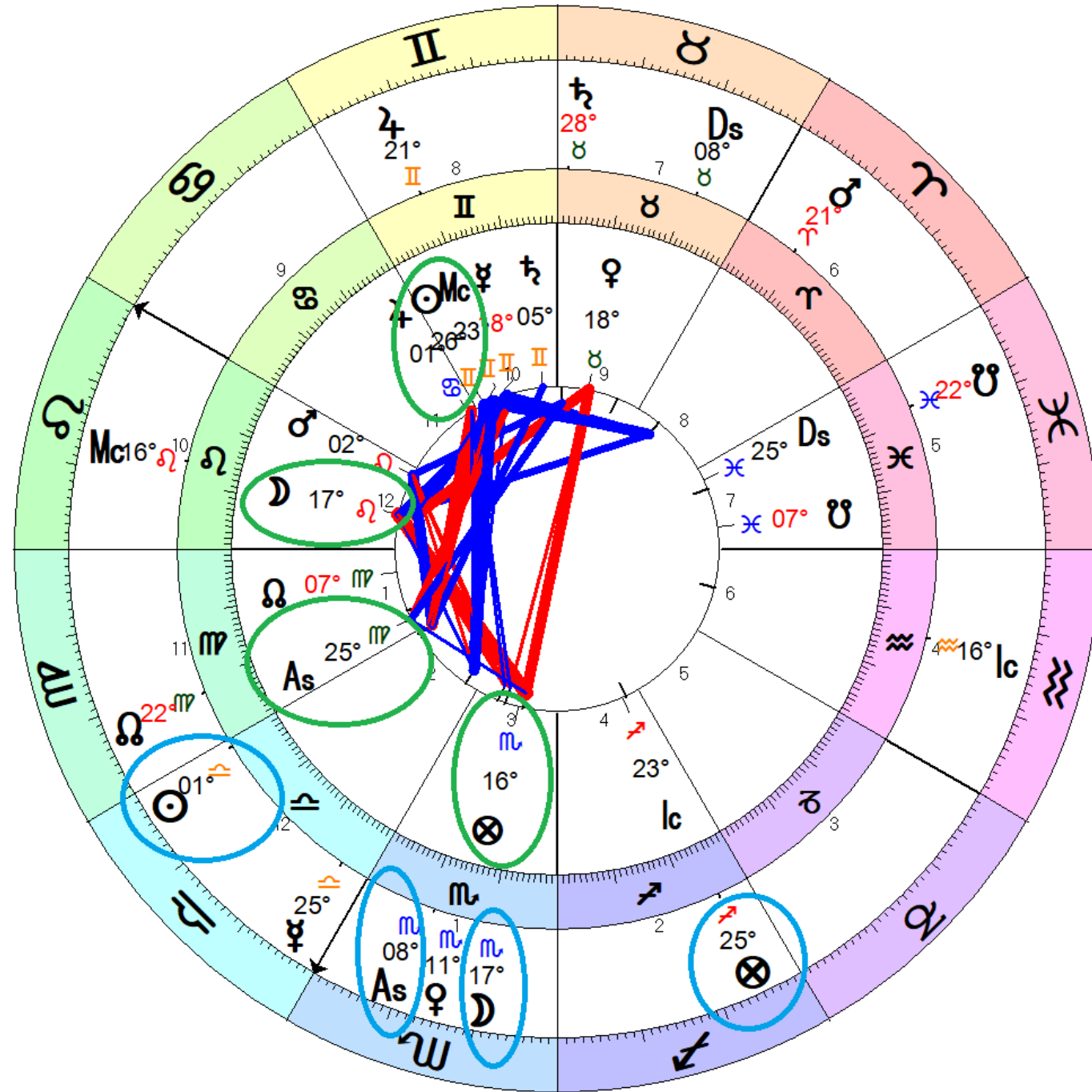
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Male Chart
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 2:00 pm BDST -2:00
 Liverpool, England
 53°N25' 002°W55'
Geocentric
Tropical
Whole Signs
Mean Node

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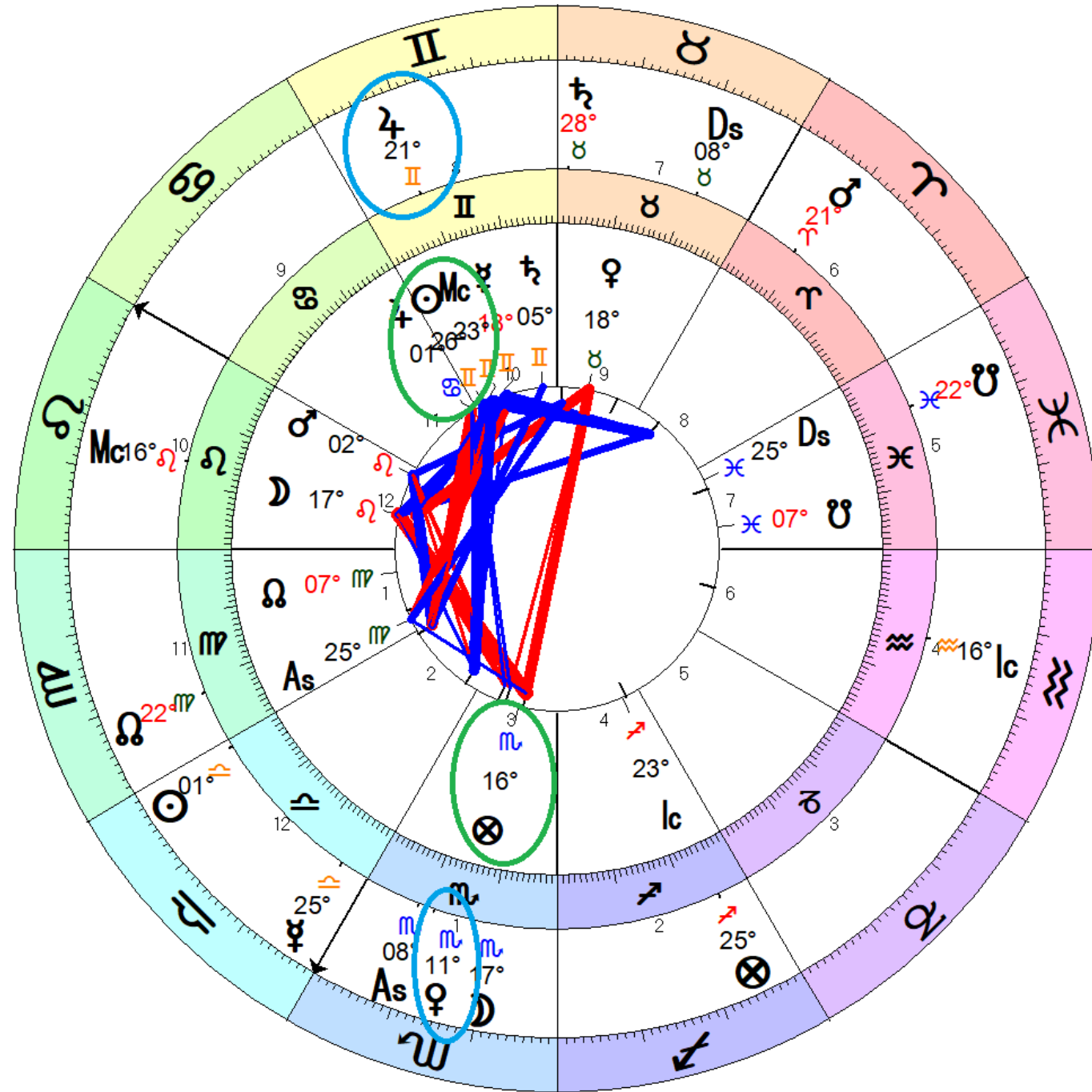
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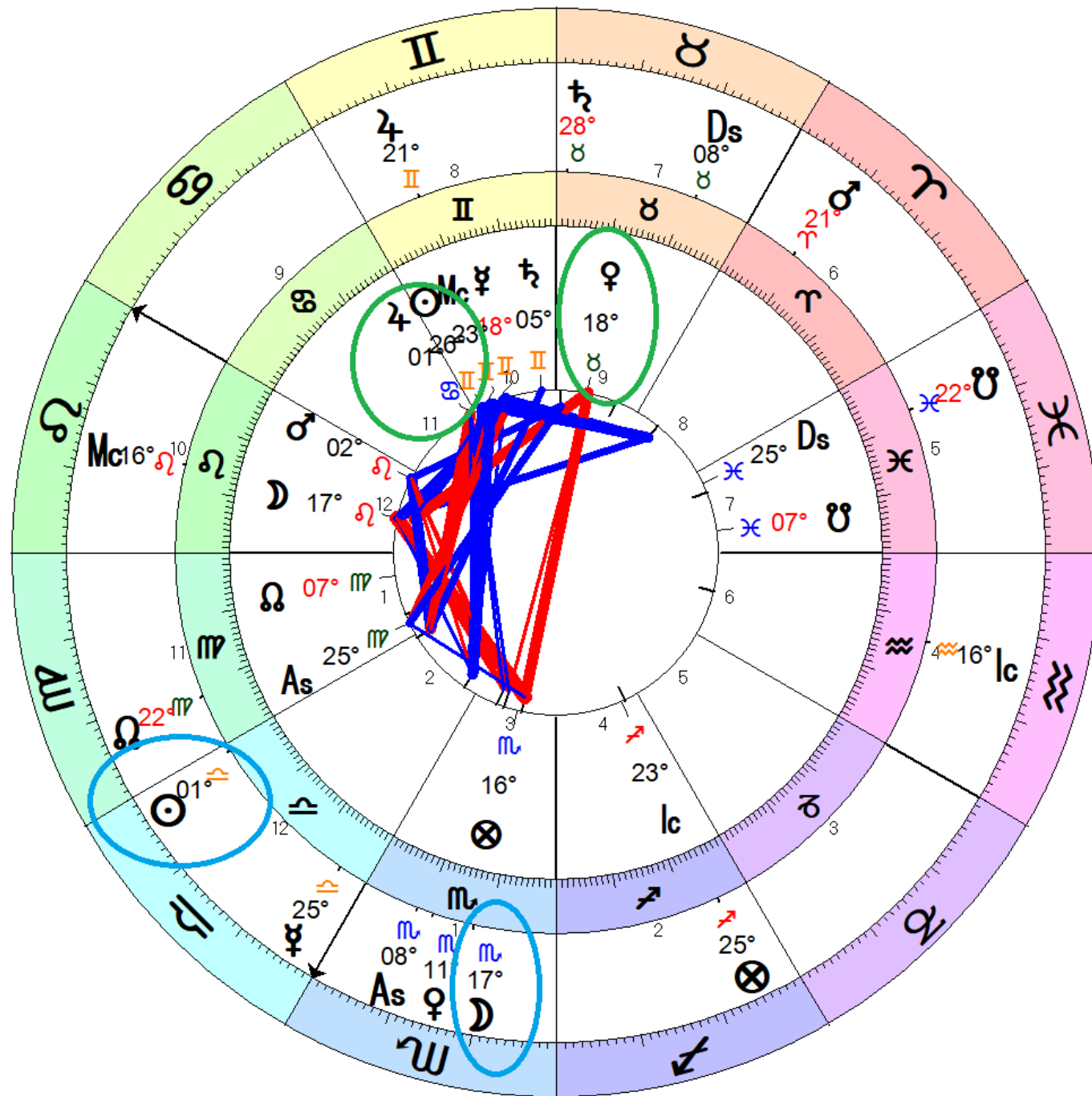
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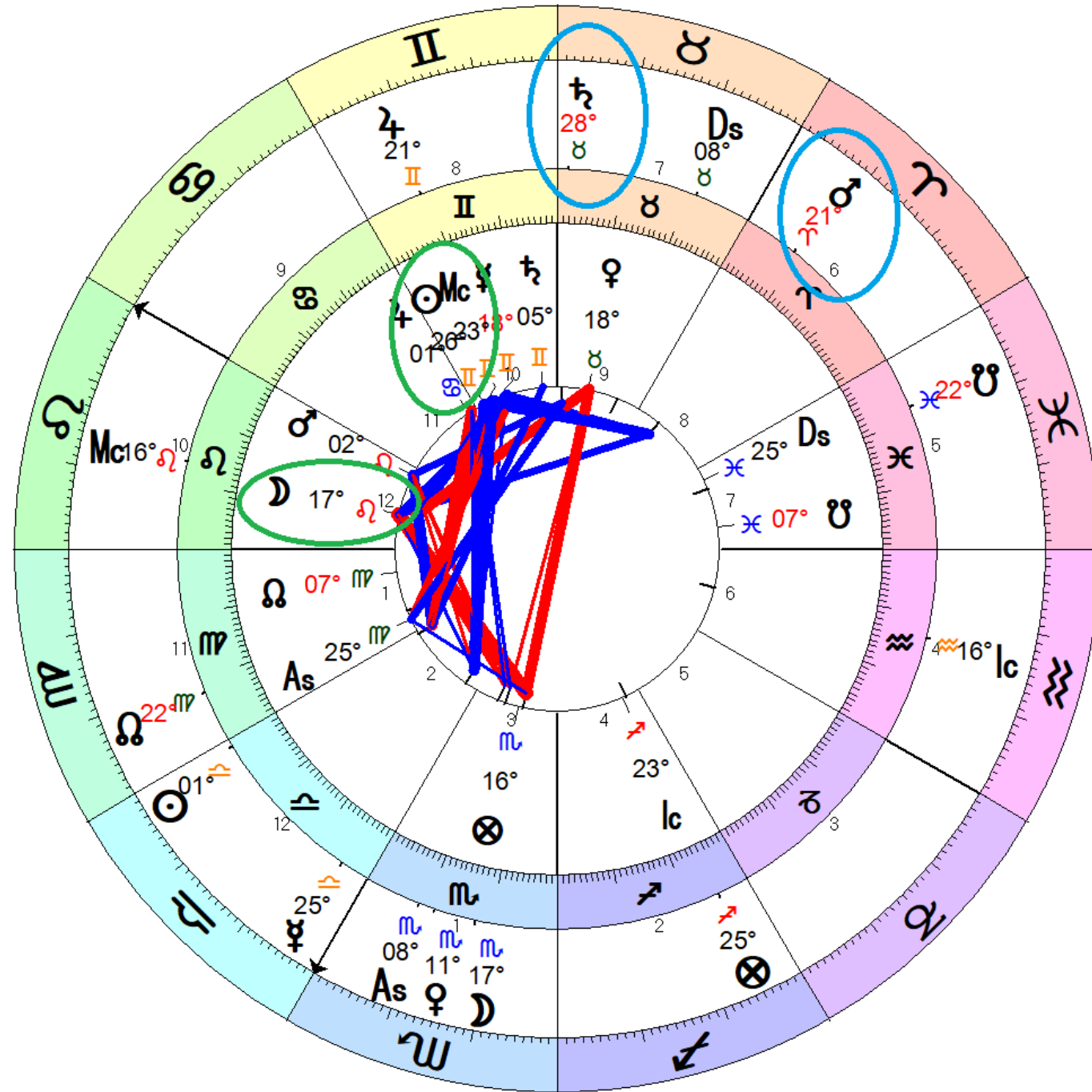
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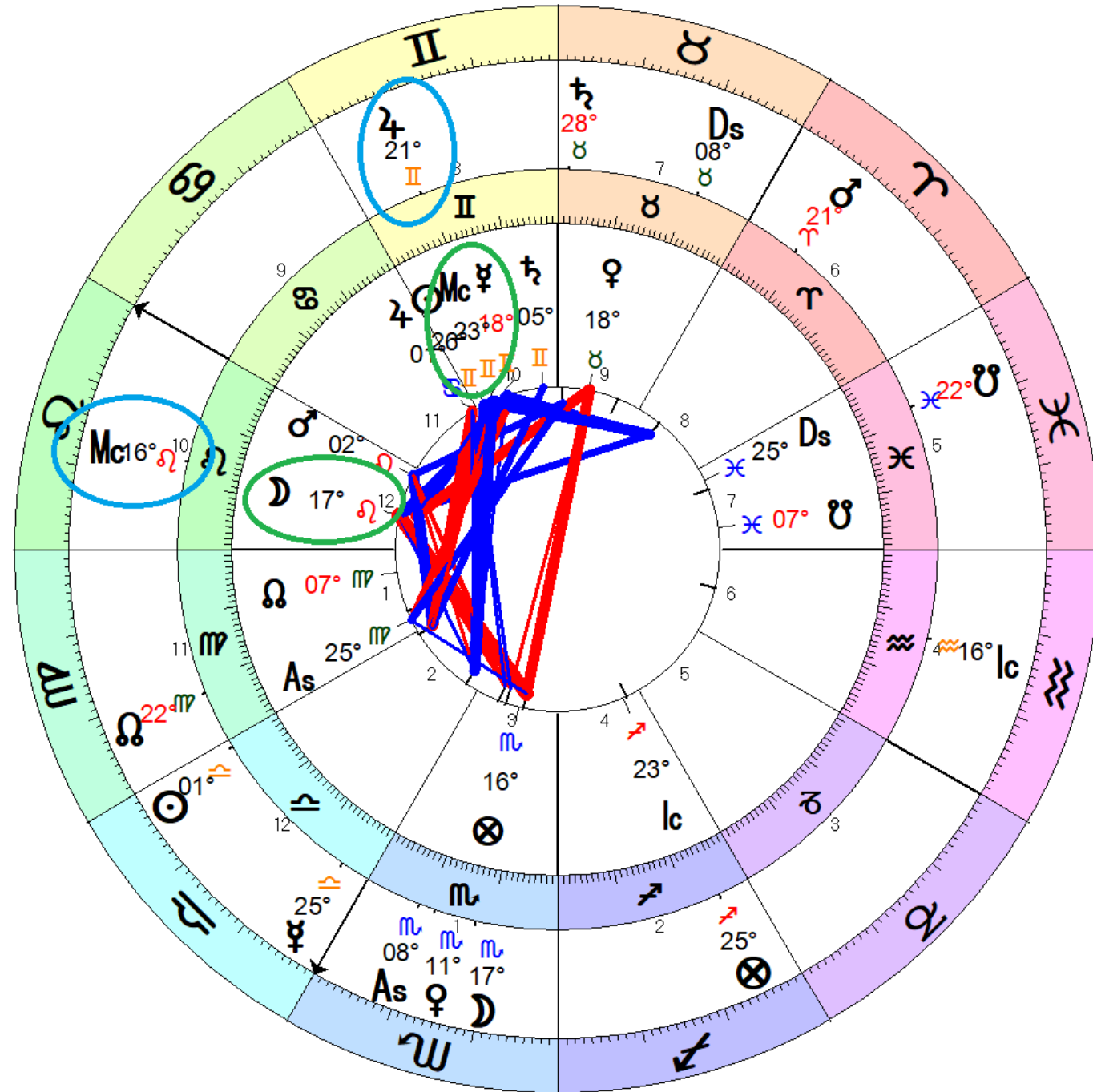
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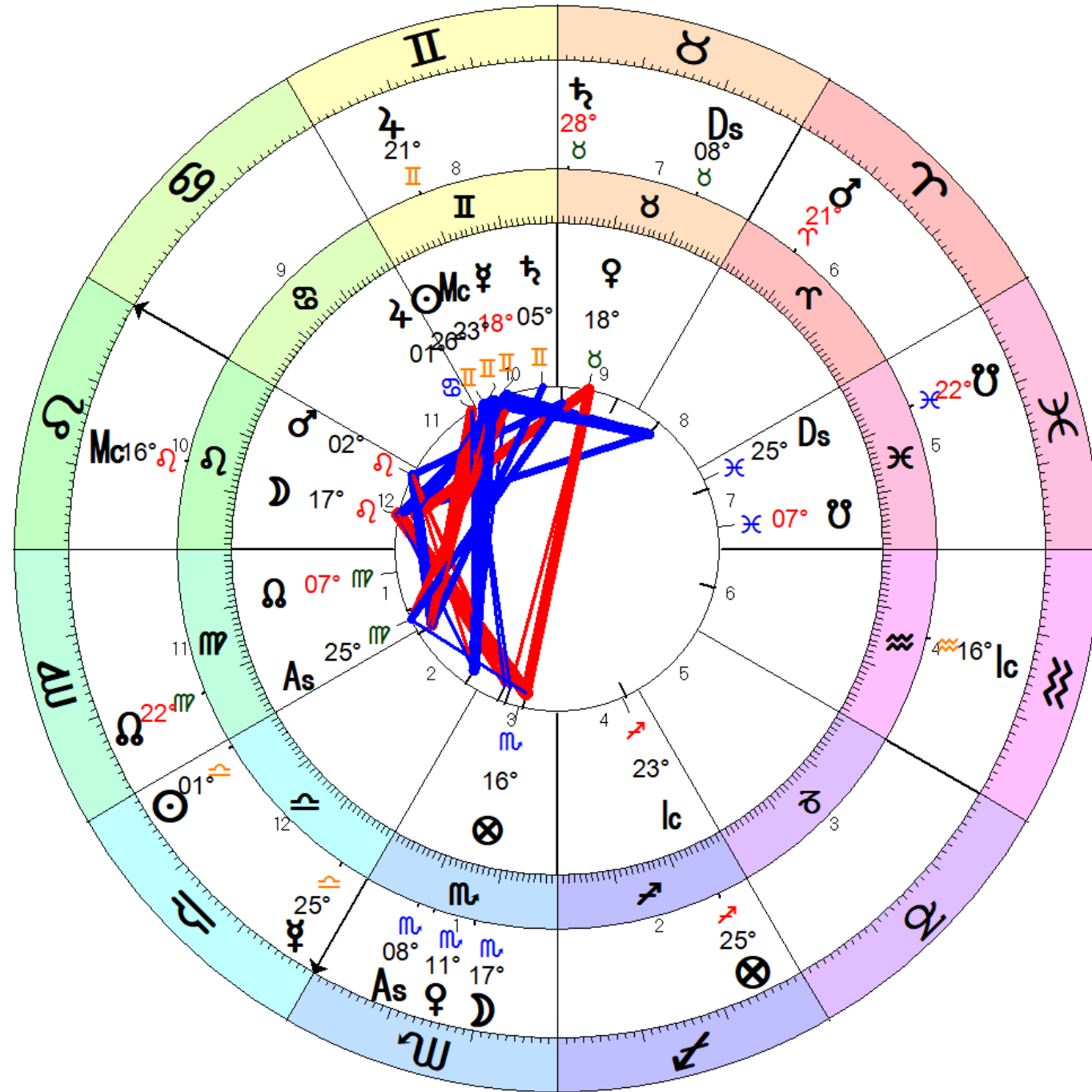
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Conclusion

- My hope is that learning about the origins and techniques of traditional synastry has given you a fresh perspective on a familiar subject
- After this lecture, I'd encourage you to try out some of these techniques and see if they work
- My goal here is not to replace modern synastry, but rather to enhance modern synastry with this knowledge of how our predecessors practised it
- Synthesising traditional synastry with modern approaches may lead to new discoveries and ideas





Questions?

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