

Published in *The Mountain Astrologer*, Issue #108, April/May 2003.

An Interview with Nick Champion

by Darrelyn Gunzburg

Nick Champion is past president of the Astrological Association of Great Britain and the Astrological Lodge of London. He has been a student of astrology since the early 1970s and has taught the subject since 1980: for London's Camden Institute, the Faculty of Astrological Studies, and, most recently, for Kepler College. He is currently a graduate student in the Study of Religions Department at Bath Spa University College (England), where he is pursuing research into the extent and nature of contemporary belief in astrology and is now Senior Lecturer at the Centre for the Study of Cultural Astronomy and Astrology.

His books include An Introduction to the History of Astrology (1982), Mundane Astrology (with Michael Baigent and Charles Harvey, 1984), The Practical Astrologer (1987), The Book of World Horoscopes (1988), The Great Year (1994), The New Astrology (1999), Zodiac (2000), and The Ultimate Astrologer (2002).

He is the winner of the 1992 Marc Edmund Jones Award, the 1994 Prix Georges Antares, the 1999 Spica Award for professional excellence, and the 2002 Marion D. March Regulus Award for Public Image.

Darrelyn Gunzburg: Nick, there are many things for which you are known in the astrological field, but the one which seems to crop up constantly is your mundane work. We may say that this is the oldest field in which your astrological interest lies. But there is a newer and possibly greener field, and that is the new developments within the university environment. Here, you have been a lynchpin, both for Kepler College and the Masters Course at Bath Spa University College, where you have recently been appointed Senior Lecturer. So, this interview is going to cover what is presently the alpha and omega of your life: the current world situation as seen from the mundane point of view and the new developments of astrology in the academic fields.

Let's begin with the world on the brink of war. What is your understanding of current events, with regard to mundane and country charts?

Nick Champion: The first thing we have to understand, in terms of the principles of mundane astrology, is that the Saturn-Pluto opposition of 2001 and the attacks of 9/11 describe the period in which we are now living. The trauma that accompanied the celestial alignment was so profound that I'm sure 9/11 has coloured the world situation for at least the next decade up to 2010-12 and perhaps for the next hundred years. September 11 was as significant a defining moment in the American psyche as Pearl Harbor or the assassination of President Kennedy. As long as the memory of 9/11

continues to shape America's perceptions of itself and the rest of the world, we'll be living with the symbolism of the 2001 Saturn-Pluto conjunction for a long time to come. It doesn't matter what new transits come along. If we think in Jungian terms of the shifting of archetypes in the collective unconscious, Saturn-Pluto will still be with us just as the Uranus-Pluto conjunction of the 1960s is still with us or, for that matter, the Neptune-Pluto conjunction of the 1890s.

We can come back to Saturn-Pluto in a moment. But first, I've been doing a lot of thinking recently about what questions astrology can answer. I am devoted to scepticism, by which I mean true scepticism. Not the debunking of ideas one doesn't like — but the constant questioning of one's own ideas. So, from that perspective, I'm honestly not sure if astrology has anything useful (rather than merely interesting) to say about the world situation. The reasons are, firstly, that even though you can use astrology to predict periods of crisis, having predicted this, what do you do about it? Frankly, outside a few Asian countries, the influence of astrologers on the world situation is *nil*. And secondly, we're already in a period of crisis. The crisis in the Persian Gulf goes back to just after 1980, when Iraq invaded Iran. It then subsided and heated up again when Iraq invaded Kuwait. The current phase began on 9/11. So, my question is: As we're already in a period of crisis, can the outcome be predicted? My experience of mundane astrology is that, while periods of crisis can be predicted and even described quite accurately, outcomes cannot. I know that there are some people who will disagree with me on that one. My other question is: So what if we can predict it? What good can it do? And that leads me to my other conclusion, which is whether we as astrologers, should even be involved in political action. But when we get to that point, there can be no consensus: some astrologers will support the war with Iraq, but others will oppose it.

Perhaps, at this point, I should explain some of my basic attitudes toward mundane astrology. Firstly, I don't think that predictive astrology should ever become too complicated. Because it has to take so many factors into account and the unknowns so vast, the astrology has to be simple. This is in contrast to "retrospective" astrology, which can be used to demonstrate that astrology "works" for past events by identifying complex factors that are, in fact, quite minor. At least that's what frequently happens, although it's not something I do myself. My use of mundane astrology is always simple. I use mainly major planetary transits (both between planets and to national horoscopes), major aspects, lunation charts, and Astro*Carto*Graphy.

At the moment, I'm much more interested in talking about astrological issues generally: astrology as a phenomenon, its values, implications, and consequences. I realised some time ago that (a) if I'm attempting to use astrology to predict political events and they are in any sense correct and (b) I do not wish to have anything to do with politicians and (c) even if I did, I would be unable to influence the flow of events — then the only purpose in making such predictions is to gain a personal philosophical insight into our

collective consciousness, into the manner in which human beings behave in completely predetermined, unthinking ways, almost as biological machines, not unlike termite nests. And if that sounds like a pessimistic point of view, then I'd counter that by saying it's a realistic one.

The idea that we all have huge amounts of free will is an 18th-century Enlightenment myth. It's one which is particularly dear to our culture, especially our political culture, yet it's completely contradicted by nearly every academic discipline. Virtually every way we have of looking at human beings - from physics and chemistry to sociology and history - challenges the extent to which human beings have free choice. This problem is not often talked about because people would get upset. The only publicly available journals which address these issues are the scientific ones, such as *Scientific American* or *New Scientist*. You won't find this addressed where they should be, in the political literature.

So, we come to the current crisis in the Gulf. Back in 1991, when the last invasion took place, Charles Harvey publicly and accurately predicted the date that the land war would begin.¹ When I congratulated him on this, he responded by saying, "Where's the glory in predicting the death of thousands of people?" I took this to heart. Ever since, I have had a fundamental problem with what can be seen as the heartlessness of astrology, when it comes to explaining and predicting catastrophes. In fact, I think the response of some astrologers who, within hours of a major catastrophe, start promoting their own versions of rectified charts, for example, is fundamentally inhumane.

I'm interested in taking this question a bit further and asking: "What sort of information do we extract from a horoscope for a country? What level of information does it yield?" If the Sagittarius-rising chart for America tells us that one of the motivating archetypes is the Cowboy or the Horseman (some would agree with me on this, and others wouldn't) — and many Americans have said to me that the Gemini-rising chart fits them also, because they talk a lot — then what sort of information does the chart give us about the American government at the moment? Does the chart — indeed, any chart — tell us that the government is made up of completely evil, venal, greedy, cynical manipulators, which I would say is true? Would an astrologer working for the Republican Party agree with that? And if an astrologer working for the Republican Party *did not* agree with that, then we would have to try to identify at what point the horoscope stops yielding information that we can agree upon.

I think the horoscope gives us two sorts of information: One is timing, and the other is perception. I'm not sure to what extent a horoscope can tell us anything which is real beyond collective perceptions of the moment.

Actually, I've gotten to a point in my own life where, having seen that astrology can make accurate predictions and therefore confirmed my intuition when I was a teenager

(perhaps normal at that age!) that freedom of choice is largely a myth, I'm losing interest in making such predictions for the future. So, I ask myself, why would I want to do it? I ask that because I'm an obsessive introvert, and I always answer a question with a question.

DG: *(laughs)* You're not an obsessive introvert. You're an honorary Jew! I can say that because I'm a Jew. Haven't you heard that old joke? A gentile asks a Jew: "Tell me, why do Jews always answer a question with a question?" The Jew shrugs and replies, "Why shouldn't we?"

NC: *(laughs)* Exactly. Why shouldn't we? And I've been thinking about that for the last couple of weeks: Why shouldn't we? I like that!

Anyway, let's talk about astrological specifics. In late 1999, when I wrote my forecasts for 2001 (which were never published – the editor cut them), I argued that the Saturn–Pluto opposition of 2001 would hark back to two periods of crisis and doubt in the American psyche which took place with Saturn–Pluto squares and that it would perhaps come as a chance to avenge or bury them. These two periods were the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the years 1973–75 when America was defeated in Vietnam and suffered the Watergate scandal. My understanding of the United States at this time is that it's passing through a drama which links to these events.

It seems to me that America has finally been able to put behind it the self-doubt caused by the collapse of respect for the presidency and the global humiliation which arose from the U.S. defeat in Vietnam. You can see that process taking place in many little ways. For example, one of the consequences of the Watergate scandal was that the CIA was no longer allowed to assassinate people overseas. That rule has just been overturned. Now, the CIA can assassinate people overseas. That's a tiny, simple example, but it indicates that the U.S. has rediscovered the imperial mission which, to a large extent, it had lost.

Another way you can see that process taking place is in the difference between this Gulf crisis and the last one: In the first Gulf crisis, George Bush Senior felt he had to try to settle the Palestinian crisis as an integral part of solving the Iraqi problem and thus demonstrate to the world that America was balanced and fair. So, Washington brought the Israelis and the Palestinians to the peace negotiating table. This time around, America is acting overtly as Israel's ally, and there's been no sense at all that the U.S. needs to settle the Israeli problem to keep Arab opinion on their side. The U.S. has supreme self-confidence. The brutal diplomacy of the current Bush administration over a whole host of issues - like the decision to pull out of the Kyoto global warming accords, which predate 9/11 - has alienated every single one of America's former Cold War allies, except Great Britain (and even there, a huge proportion of the British people are deeply unhappy). And from the sound of people like Donald Rumsfeld, this Bush

administration doesn't seem to care that it now has no guaranteed friends, apart from small countries which it can buy. The Empire is striking back! All this is Saturn-Pluto. The other, often unremarked feature of America's imperial Saturn-Pluto expansion is the stationing of troops throughout central Asia – a truly dramatic expansion of U.S. military might.

DG: And could we say that, when the next Saturn-Pluto square comes up, there will be another echo of what's been going on with this whole cycle?

NC: Yes. The next Saturn-Pluto square will take place in February 2010 in the cardinal signs Libra and Capricorn. So, when Saturn squares the U.S. Sun. I use the Sibley Chart with 12 degrees of Sagittarius rising (see Book of World Horoscopes No. 370) in November 2010, there should be an international crisis - because it will also square the European Union's Sun, it will conjunct Germany's Sun, it will conjunct France's Sun, and it will transit the significant degrees which (in 1989) coincided with the collapse of Communism. But it will also be a forerunner to the Uranus-Pluto square of May 2013 at 11° Aries-Capricorn. Then, in April 2014, the square will be at 13° Aries-Capricorn, which will be right on America's Sun - as well as significant degrees in the charts of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the European Union, and the United Nations - so, there will be a huge amount of reshuffling in the world at that point. ²

I think you can easily trace these patterns back to the beginning of the Roman Empire, because that was the first state to unite a substantial part of the European world into states in their current form - with bureaucracies and towns and roads and hierarchies and literacy. We are still living within the collective drama initiated by the Romans, not least in their constant confrontations with the East. Perhaps, we should trace the East-West battle back to Alexander the Great's confrontation with the Persians, or the Greek-Persian wars of the fifth century B.C.E. This is just simple geopolitics, overlaid with the latest cultural veneer. So, when people describe the current crisis as a struggle between Christianity and Islam, that's just one subplot in the rivalry between East and West that is of much greater import and scale. It's simply that, before religious rivalry came into play, the main problems were military and economic.

These cycles in the European psyche (and I include America in the European psyche) can be described by two important alignments in the horoscope of the Roman Empire ³ (see **Chart 2, ****):

1. A Sun-Pluto opposition from 21° Capricorn to 26° Cancer which indicates crisis.
2. Jupiter at 21° Gemini square Neptune at 21° Virgo, also aspecting the Sun-Pluto opposition. An example of this is the Lunar eclipse that occurred at 21° Virgo on March 12th 1914 prior to the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria, [(JUNE 28, 1914) and it was this assassination which was the first shot in the First World War.

To me, that Jupiter–Neptune square indicates the dream of the Unlimited Empire, the dream of Endless Expansion. The Romans believed that their empire was the world empire, and America has now inherited that idea from the British. One of the sustaining ideologies of imperial nations is the need to believe that they are the centre of the world. The Chinese had it. The Japanese believed it in the Second World War. The Nazis had it. The French had it and have never quite forgiven the British (and then the Americans) for taking it away from them. It goes along with being an empire. As a result, it's difficult for America, collectively, to imagine a world outside itself.

Another related shift that the 2001 Saturn–Pluto opposition represents, in America, is a change in the national discourse. The U.S. has also inherited from the British Empire a belief that its role in the world is entirely beneficial and has to do with spreading human rights, for example. But its critics would say its role was to prop up tyrannical regimes for economic advantage. After 9/11, the question we heard everywhere in America was: "Why do they hate us?" I believe the answer is quite simple: If you are a member of an imperial nation, you are hated by your subject peoples. It seems to me that, if America could simply admit, "We are an imperial nation," then the answer to the question would become obvious. Now, some people do say that. We are always generalising when we talk about a country. When we talk about "America" or "Americans," we are, of course, talking about what is temporarily a dominant discourse in the country, rather than the many opposition discourses. In fact, while we talk about Saturn–Pluto and America - meaning "Bush's America" - I haven't spoken to a *single* person who supports him.

Perhaps, the dominant discourse of freedom and human rights is represented by the Gemini-rising and Sagittarius-rising American charts. ⁴ One could say that the Saturn–Pluto opposition challenged those signs. But who best represents that zodiacal pair? Is it the liberals and their opposition to the Homeland Security Act? Or is it President Bush, with his determination that America should act *how* it likes and *when* it likes - whatever the consequences may be?

When we look at the Cancer-Capricorn polarity, we see much more important issues. On the 4th of July, 1776, the Sun was in Cancer, and there are strong Cancerian symbols within American mythology. The ideas of family values, Mom's apple pie, the President giving fireside speeches, Abraham Lincoln moving from a log cabin to the White House, and the fact that the presidential palace is called a "house" — all of those are Cancerian images. Cancer is not a sign of freedom. It's a sign concerned with emotional security, and it will fight for this security, as Capricorn will fight for material security. So, perhaps there are other elements of the American national mythology which need to

be better recognised. Gemini and Sagittarius, when faced with a problem, will shrug and move on, but Cancer and Capricorn are far more likely to fight about minor issues.

Even the Mafia is called the Family. I used to watch "The Godfather" movies endlessly, and it seemed to me they were extremely good representations of how the American government works. So, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, and all my friends who were hostile to the American government were saying that America was only going into Kuwait for the oil, I think that was only partially true. I think there was a deeper emotional process going on, in the sense that Kuwait was part of the American family, or the "Bush crime gang," as one of my friends puts it. If George Bush Senior was Vito Corleone (the Godfather), then Kuwait was one of the junior gang members collecting money from the numbers rackets on some street corner who had just been beaten up by a rival gang. So, of course, America was going to go to the aid of Kuwait. And it struck me *then* that it was very much a family situation for America.

I mean, now it's not. Now, the American government's wish to invade Iraq is far more connected with guaranteeing the oil supply, in case Saudi Arabia should become unstable, and making money for members of the administration, all of whom have huge involvements with the oil industry. And this represents a view of this new successful, post-9/11, self-confident empire, where no country in the world is allowed to disagree with the American government and, if it does, it will be crushed. I heard the American writer Gore Vidal speaking on the BBC this morning, describing the Bush takeover of the White House in November 2000 as a coup d'état of the Texas oil and gas men. Even now, it's amazing to think that the losing candidate actually became President through a process of fraud that was so open and obvious anyone could spot it. Again, I come back to the expression of Saturn and Pluto, where no opposition will be tolerated.

DG: What significance could we read into Uranus's move into Pisces?

NC: I'm honestly not sure. That's a Piscean answer! I think we'll see lots of interesting headlines having to do with electric fish, nuclear power stations being flooded, electrical explanations for psychic phenomena, and submarines. In my perfect world, we could also reduce our dependence on oil and gas. That said, culturally, I'd look back to the last time that Uranus was in Pisces at the beginning of the 1920s - the Jazz Age and a huge period of liberation after the First World War.

The big moment, though, arrives in 2006–2007 when Uranus squares the U.S. Gemini and Sagittarius Ascendants. (I use both!) America has a pattern of taking sharp turns at such points. If we note that, on the 4th of July in 1776, Uranus was around 9° Gemini, then the critical period begins in 2005. Sometimes, such periods witness internal strife,

such as the Civil War or the race riots and Vietnam War protests of the 1960s. Sometimes the strife is external, as in the Spanish-American War. But before we get pessimistic, we should remember that strife arises from the awareness of alternatives. For even though I do think that, collectively, the human species tends to have no control, over its destiny, for us as individuals, alternatives do matter.

DG: That's great, Nick. Thank you. Now, can we move onto the new developments of astrology in the academic fields? Can you talk about how the MA course came to be set up at Bath Spa University College?

NC: The idea for the MA course at Bath Spa first came to fruition when a wealthy astrologer in the U.K., who wishes to remain anonymous, put up a million pounds. The original proposal was to fund a chair in astrology at a British university. But that revealed two problems: There were no existing critical studies of astrology in a British university. And there was only one individual in the U.K. who had both an in-depth knowledge and experience of astrology *and* a Ph.D. (that was Patrick Curry), and you can't really set up a chair with an attendant department – and all this entails – on the basis of one individual.

So, in March 1998, representatives from every astrological society and school in the U.K. (about 50 people, including some academics) held a weekend think tank and reached two conclusions: Firstly, the vocational teaching of astrology should remain with the private schools of astrology, although if any of them wished to upgrade their course to BA level, the Sophia Project would help them. Secondly, the group also worked out a way to fund the critical study of astrology in universities; thus was the Sophia Project born and, to its credit, it now has five projects under its wing. These are all quite different projects, but they are all about developing astrology at university level in the U.K. They are:

1. The creation of the Research Group for the Critical Study of Astrology (RGCSA) at Southampton University. This is an informal group which exists under the patronage of Professor Chris Bagley in the Social Studies Department and is administered by Pat Harris, former Press Secretary of the Faculty of Astrological Studies, who is currently working for her Ph.D. by looking at astrological factors in infertility treatment. So, the RGCSA exists to undertake studies into the validity of astrology.
2. The creation of short-term fellowships at the Warburg Institute, a graduate school within London University which specializes in the history of ideas up to 1700 but is particularly well-known for the work that's been done in the history of astrology, the history of magic, and the history of esoteric beliefs, especially in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. We've funded two short-term fellowships there so far. The second fellow, a

Polish academic who'll be studying the work of Vettius Valens, begins a three-month-long post in May 2003.

3. The funding of the creation of modules in cosmology and divination at the University of Kent at Canterbury, as part of their MA in Mysticism and Religious Experience. Astrology is examined as part of those modules. I gave a guest lecture there last year, looking at modern popular astrology and the function and development of Sun-sign astrology as a popular oracular system.
4. The latest project we are funding is at Leicester University. In 2000, Clive Ruggles was appointed as the U.K.'s first Professor of Archaeoastronomy, and he's now been given funding to develop an MA course in Archaeoastronomy.
5. But by far the biggest project is the Sophia Centre for the Study of Cultural Astronomy and Astrology at Bath Spa University College. The MA course was launched in October 2002.

The Centre has three teaching staff and one secretary. Dr. Michael York heads the Centre. He is a Californian who studied astrology in the mid 1960s. He used to attend AFA meetings in Los Angeles and was holding regular astrology lunches in San Francisco in 1967. By 1970, he found himself in Amsterdam, teaching astrology. He lived in France for quite a long time, before coming to the U.K., and was awarded his Ph.D. at Kings College, London. Michael is an acknowledged authority on the New Age movement and neopaganism. Patrick Curry has been involved with astrology since he studied with Liz Greene in the early '70s, and he got his Ph.D. at University College, London, in the mid '80s, studying 17th-century astrology. There's myself. And then there's our secretary, Alice Ekrek, who did her MA at King Alfred's College, Winchester, in the late 1990s. She wrote her thesis on spirituality in contemporary astrology.

In the first term (October–December 2002), we taught three modules: One was a compulsory Introductory Module, which looked at the whole field of astrology and the cultural applications of astronomy in general – as well as related topics like myth, religion, and science. Patrick Curry taught an optional module on Science and Scepticism, which dealt with the history and nature of sceptical critiques of astrology and examined some of the major scientific research into astrology, such as the Gauquelin work. And I taught an optional module on the History of Astrology, from the Babylonians right down to the present day.

In the second term (February–May 2003), the compulsory module is Research Methodologies. We are casting a wide net here. In research, the emphasis is on qualitative methods, not quantitative, so we are not particularly concerned with *statistical* research, though I know this is what research means to a lot of astrologers. One of our guest lecturers will be Professor Yiannis Gabriel of the Management School at Imperial College, London; his specialty is storytelling. He'll be giving a class on how organizations tell stories about themselves. If we're encouraging people to research astrology, then it's pretty important to understand the stories that astrologers tell about themselves in the modern world. For example, if you're thinking of looking at astrology statistically, why would you want to do that? What stories are you telling about astrology, if you think it can be examined using statistical methods? Or, alternatively, what story are you telling, if you think astrology can lead to spiritual growth? Those are the sorts of issues I hope will come out of Professor Gabriel's class.

We will also have an optional module on Stellar Religion. Our guest lecturers there include Dr. Andy Letcher, who will be teaching a class on neopagan cosmologies, and Komilla Sutton, founder of the British Association for Vedic Astrology, who will be teaching a class on the religious context of Indian astrology. And I'm giving classes on Egyptian Astrology and Astral-theology, Astrology and the Bible, Astrology and Christianity, and Modern Belief in Astrology.

The third module is on Psychological Perspectives in Astrology, taught by Patrick Curry, with guest lecturers Liz Greene, Babs Kirby, and Maggie Hyde.

So, it is an extremely thriving, highly attractive Centre. The inaugural enrolment of the MA course had 12 students – 4 full-time and 8 part-time – and they are an incredibly wonderful collection of individuals. We also have two Ph.D. applications pending.

The classes are astonishingly lively! It is fascinating to be teaching classes at the Sophia Centre at Bath Spa because there are such animated and vigorous discussions. When you've got Bernard Eccles, former president of the Astrological Lodge, who has been teaching astrology for over 20 years; Bernadette Brady who (of course) needs no introduction; Wendy Stacey, who's Chair of the Astrological Association; Kim Farnell, who's extremely well-known in Internet circles, edits the AA newsletter, *Transit*, and wrote a biography of Sepharial; and other students who've studied with the Faculty of Astrological Studies or the Company of Astrologers or who've taught themselves over many years and have practiced astrology – then you have people with such a huge wealth of knowledge and experience that, when you have a class discussion about whether astrology is divination or science, you have the most astounding high-level discussions. Looking back, I wish that we'd taped a lot of the classes. But if you tape them, sometimes you end up destroying the spontaneity of the moment and pre-empting the discussions of future classes.

DG: And why was Bath Spa University College chosen as the university for the Centre?

NC: That University College was chosen because I was studying for my Ph.D. in the Study of Religions Department, so I had the personal contact. In fact, all five Sophia Project developments have been set up as a result of personal contacts. I told the head of our department, Dr. Marion Bowman, that we could get money to start an MA module within the existing MA in the Study of Religions Department. I envisaged a module on “Astrology in the Modern World.” However, her exact words were: “Why don’t you start a Centre?” I hadn’t dared hope for something so ambitious. I thought it would be best to start small and then build up – whereas, in fact, we started big. Then Marion left, and I had to get a new proposal together. I put it to the head of the Graduate School, and she secured agreement from the College Deputy Director and the Director *within hours*. It then took us two years to sort out the details, what with delays, people leaving, and so on.

I suppose a lot of the responsibility (as well as the pushing and shoving) rested on my shoulders because I was on both the Sophia Steering Committee and in the college, so I was the point of overlap. I also set the academic parameters by coming up with the idea of cultural astronomy. The term “cultural astronomy” is one that I invented. I used it as the subtitle for *Culture and Cosmos*, the historical journal I started in 1997, on the basis that the study of “astronomy-in-culture” has been developing, in a small way, in American universities amongst individual academics. However, in 2000, I found an essay on cultural astronomy dating back to 1993, written by Nicholas Saunders and Clive Ruggles, who is now Archaeoastronomy Professor at Leicester University. I guess the step from astronomy-in-culture to cultural astronomy is not such a big one!

For me, astrology exists within a cultural framework that allows us to look at the sky, encourages certain perceptions of the stars, and uses the planets to tell stories. I wanted it broaden it and enable us to look much further than most definitions of astrology allow. By bringing in the idea of cultural astronomy and astrology, we could have people studying solar myths amongst the Japanese, astral imagery in the paintings of Joan Miró, the cultural significance of the space race, or the relationship between photographs of the Earth from the Moon and environmental activism. So, the whole concept of the study of cultural astronomy and astrology *as a package* is one that I started. I think, so far, it’s worked out to be highly stimulating.

The wonderful thing about the academic process is that we are constantly being challenged to answer new questions. The language you use is disputed, and your assumptions are overturned. For the first lot of papers, in the opening term, Michael York asked the students to do two things: to define cultural astronomy and not to mention astrology until the end of the paper. That really got the students thinking and was quite a difficult assignment.

What I've learnt about teaching the MA at Bath Spa is that, while there's an element of providing information about the history of astrology, about scientific research into astrology and the human relationship to the cosmos, the essence of it is teaching people to *think*. That, for me, is what is so wonderful, because the more you learn to think, the more you can begin to be free from the presiding myths of your culture.

DG: Was Kepler College being developed before you considered Bath Spa?

NC: They overlapped. I was involved in developments at Kepler from around 1995 when Maggie Nalbandian, famous as one of the originators of Kepler, asked me if I would teach history for the college. Over the next few years, I was involved in a small amount of preparation. Things really got going in late 1999, when Demetra George, Rob Hand, and I were asked to set up the first-term syllabus for Kepler College. The first term started in July 2000.

Meanwhile, the big meeting that got the Sophia Project firmly off the ground in the U.K. occurred in March 1998. The idea of starting a Centre for the study of astrology at Bath Spa University College came up in December 1999, but teaching didn't start until October 2002.

We could say that teaching started at Bath Spa two years after teaching started at Kepler, but the teaching at Bath Spa is at the MA level, whereas the MA syllabus at Kepler is still being planned. This is being capably handled by Cathy Coleman, the college president, supported by our excellent deans, Lee Lehman and Dennis Harness.

It's been extraordinary to be involved with Kepler College as well. It was fantastic to be in at the beginning. I remember being picked up at the Seattle airport by a member of the local astrology group and driving into Seattle and getting this strange kind of sinking feeling – half panic and half excited anticipation – that we were about to launch a degree in astrological studies. I was not just going to a conference to give some lectures and then disappearing. On about the third day, Demetra, Rob, and I all realised that something incredible was happening. That “something” was also highly revolutionary for astrology as well; we knew we were working the students so hard that we were going to turn out graduates of astrology who were extremely well-informed and that this would have a ripple effect throughout the astrological world. And then Lee Lehman arrived to give the first public guest lecture and start planning the second term, and we realised that we four had, between us, pretty much every aspect of astrology covered. It was a most wonderful moment, enhanced by an astonishing degree of utterly ego-less collaboration.

Kepler, like Bath Spa, is also an academic college: It's not a vocational school. In the first year, we teach the history of astrology. After that, the students do learn astrological techniques, but they learn them in an academic context. So, they are expected to know where the techniques came from, who devised them, and how to evaluate and compare them. In the second term of the second year, there is a wide-ranging introduction to modern astrological techniques, taught by Georgia Stathis and Bruce Scofield. In the third term, Demetra George teaches Hellenistic astrology, Dennis Harness teaches Vedic astrology, and the students are encouraged to compare and contrast these systems. By the end of that second year, the students have an evaluative and comprehensive knowledge of modern astrology, Hellenistic astrology, and Vedic astrology – they are getting a technical education, but it's within a critical academic framework.

DG: One difference between the two colleges is that Bath Spa is sited in a building and is part of a university, whereas Kepler floats.

NC: That's right. Kepler is an independent college, and Bath Spa exists within an established institution; each position has advantages and disadvantages. Kepler isn't part of an existing university deciding *when* it's going to teach and *where* it's going to teach and questioning its budget. It has a Board of Directors, but Cathy Coleman, the president, does the essential day-to-day administration with a huge amount of work also being done by Joanne Wickenburg, the Chairman of the Board.

At Bath Spa, we have the great advantage of being part of an established institution with marketing facilities, a library, a huge support structure, cleaners, technicians, admissions clerks - a huge infrastructure.

Kepler currently has about 16 students in the first year of study and about 40 students spread over all three years. After the college has been in operation for a certain period of time, students are then eligible for loans. That will take away some of the financial pressure.

As far as the cultural phenomenon is concerned, it is interesting that Kepler College and Bath Spa University College have come to fruition in roughly the same time period - and I'm wondering if the link might be the entry of Pluto into Sagittarius. I don't mean that Pluto in Sagittarius has *made* these things happen, but in astrological literature, there was talk about Pluto in Sagittarius in terms of astrology going into universities. We may be looking at a fine example of astrologers looking at something in the sky, then deciding to do something positive, and succeeding: a self-fulfilling prophecy of the best kind.

I am a great believer in education because I think that, if we have minds, then we should use them. I've gained a huge amount from returning to student life and have benefited enormously from having an institutional framework in which I can receive constructive criticism and support for my work. That has transformed my studies over the last few years. I'm evangelical about both Kepler and Bath Spa because they are teaching the virtues of critical thought and encouraging students to question their ideas, learn how to effectively communicate their thinking and raise the calibre of their perceptions. Yet, above all, it's the collective enterprise and shared experience in both colleges which make them so valuable.

DG: Nick, thank you so much for your time and your insights. I know the whole global astrological community wishes the Sophia Centre at Bath Spa University College and Kepler College many prolific and bountiful years in setting new benchmarks in the world of astrology.

Further Information

For details of the Master's degree in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology at Bath Spa University College, go to www.bathspa.ac.uk/sophia/ or e-mail the administrator, Alice Ekrek: a.ekrek@bathspa.ac.uk

For details of the Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Astrological Studies at Kepler College, go to www.kepler.edu; for information about Nick Campion's books, *Mundane Astrology* and *The Book of World Horoscopes*, go to www.NickCampion.com

References and Notes

1. See the *Astrological Journal*, Vol. 33, no. 2, March/April 1991, p. 77.
2. Nick Campion, *The Book of World Horoscopes*, Bristol, U.K.: Cinnabar Books, 1996. United States, Chart 370; European Union, Chart 420; Germany, Chart 133; France, Chart 114; Fall of the Berlin Wall, Chart 437; United Kingdom, Chart 357; United Nations, Chart 359. For information about the availability of this book, please e-mail bwh@caol.demon.co.uk
3. *Ibid.*, Chart 255.
4. For a complete survey of all major U.S. national horoscopes, see *The Book of World Horoscopes*, pp. 397-427.

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