

# The Faculty of Astrological Studies

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Today, in the 1990s, there is a worldwide network of astrological organizations. For this article, however, I am only going to talk about the development of astrological organizations in the UK.

## *The Theosophical Society*

Up to the end of the 19th century no astrological societies had been founded and survived. Several had been started in London, but there were simply not enough resources or people for these to flourish. Madame Blavatsky founded the Theosophical Society in 1875 (the year of Jung's birth), and it provided the breeding ground for the main astrological organizations which have emerged in the twentieth century. In 1915 the Astrological Lodge of the Theosophical Society was started, and this still exists today. It has been the parent body of three of the main British astrological organizations: the Astrological Lodge of London, the Faculty of Astrological Studies, and the Astrological Association.

## *Spiritual versus Scientific*

There is a historical split in the astrological world between those astrologers who pursue a spiritual approach, and those who maintain that astrology should be a recognized science. In the 1930s and 40s

astrology was polarized between a philosophical/metaphysical bent (the Astrological Lodge) and a scientific bent (the British Astrological Society). The Society, dating from the 1920s, was concerned about 'respectability'. Its members wanted to go out into the world, to see astrology accepted as a branch of physics, to promote 'professionalism', and to offer diplomas.

The Lodge, with its theosophical background, was more interested in spiritual development. Later, Alice Bailey among others began to be active in building bridges between theosophy and astrology. This has developed into a humanistic, person-centred approach — an approach in which the interpretation of the chart acknowledges the freedom of the individual to follow a personal destiny.



## *The Birth of the Faculty and the Astrological Association*

After the War the Society vanished, leaving something of a vacuum. It was in this context, in 1948, that some members of the Lodge decided to form a new teaching body. This was the Faculty of Astrological Studies, and it has developed steadily until the present day, when it is recognized as being one of the world's leading astrological teaching bodies.

In the 1950s, tension grew within the Lodge. Certain members pushed for a split away from the Theosophical Society, and others resisted. In 1958, ten years after the Faculty was founded, a sibling organization was born from the parent Astrological Lodge. In some ways it was the heir to the old Society which leaned towards a more scientific approach, but in fact went much further.

This was the Astrological Association (AA) and, like the Faculty, it has developed steadily to the present day. It is not a teaching body, and is open to all levels of interest. It publishes a bi-monthly Journal and an academic level research journal. It runs an annual residential conference and, more recently, a London research conference.

In the past 15 years there has been an unprecedented expansion in the growth of astrological organizations. There is now a main centre for UK astrology, based in north London, known as the Urania Trust. This has an office, a library, lecture rooms, a bookshop and a residential administrator.

## *The Faculty of Astrological Studies*

Formed in 1948, the Faculty is the longest established astrological teaching body. It has had 43 years in which to transform from a new venture in the post-war era, fuelled by enthusiasm and voluntary energy, to a professional organization with a fee-paying structure.

Today it is generally acknowledged to be the most outstanding teaching body in astrology anywhere in the world, and its diploma (D.F.Astrol.S.) is the highest qualification currently available in astrology. It runs correspondence courses, classes and seminars; it holds annual exams and a residential summer school in Oxford; and it offers astrological training at all levels, from beginners wanting a basic introduction to the subject, to those undertaking a full professional training.

Earlier I mentioned a traditional split in the astrological world between (to put it over-simply) the spiritual and the scientific. In so far as this split is a real one, the Faculty seeks to bridge it by offering a broadly based teaching approach, which does not emphasise a particular branch of astrology, and is not centred on the work or charisma of a single individual.

As President of the Faculty since 1986, I think the Faculty retains much of its early spirit of enthusiasm and dedication among those who work within it. At the same time it continues to reflect accurately an astrological world which has developed out of all recognition over the past 20 years. In a period of such

rapid shifts, it has tried to maintain and raise standards, and to adapt its courses. One of our current issues, which Babs Kirby describes in her article, is the extent to which we incorporate counselling and communication skills within our basic astrological training.

### *Astrological Education*

In addition to the Faculty, there are a growing number of schools and teaching bodies offering both classes and correspondence courses. Some cover particular branches such as Horary astrology, and many reflect a differing emphasis and approach. Astrology is also taught extensively in local education classes throughout London.

All astrological teaching in the UK is now loosely under the umbrella of an organization known as the Advisory Panel on Astrological Education (APAE). Its aims are 'to monitor and safeguard standards in the teaching of astrology in Great Britain'. All the major organizations and teaching bodies can send delegates to APAE meetings. (Its constitution defines a teaching body as having 'a continuous registration of at least 100 students each year for the 5 years preceding its application for membership of the APAE'.) This is, theoretically, a way of keeping communication alive and open in astrological education. It acknowledges the diversity in current astrological teaching, while providing a democratic structure for maintaining standards.

### *Astrology from the Outside*

Not surprisingly, the would-be student can be confused by the plethora of

classes, courses and seminars now available. Until a few years ago these were mainly centred in London, but there is now a swing towards de-centralisation. Local groups flourish, and offer an attractive alternative to studying by correspondence and travelling to London for occasional events. Astrology is now more widely taught in local education classes throughout the country, although provincial areas sometimes still erupt with suspicion and intolerance against the teaching of astrology. Witch-hunting is certainly not dead!

The most recent addition to the national organizations is the Association of Professional Astrologers (APA). This aims to provide a professional body for its members, and to promote an improved image for astrologers by mediating actively between them, the press, and the general public.

It is impossible in a short article to convey the complexity and range of current astrological organizations. But I hope I have succeeded in outlining the main structure of organisations in the UK.

