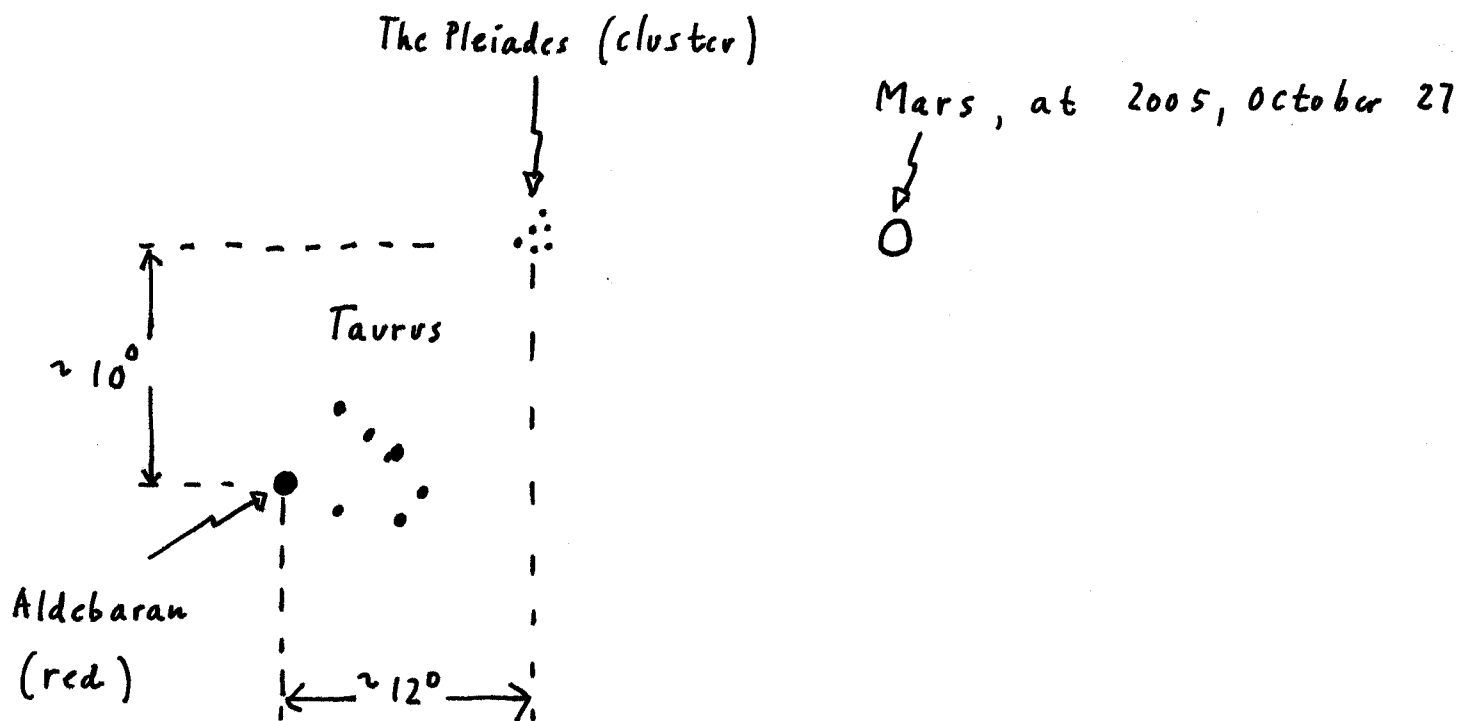


The prominence of Mars

Mars was in opposition around October 27, but will continue to be particularly bright for several more weeks. The last opposition, in 2003, August, was our closest encounter for tens of thousands of years, but Mars remained low in the sky from the U.K.

Look East around 10 p.m. and the brightest celestial object you see will be Mars. A simplified star map is below. Estimate angular separations in units of "Moon diameters." That is, in units of half of one degree.



Over the course of the next few weeks, plot the position of Mars in the sky. Record the date and time of each observation. Use α Tauri (Aldebaran) as the reference point and express the position of the planet as so many degree above and so many degrees to the West. Even a few days' sightings will reveal an easily-discernible change in the location of Mars with respect to the fixed stars.

DF
2005, October 27