

Essential Dignities

Unlocking the Secrets of the Natal Chart with Classical Astrology



by Kevin B. Burk

Essential Dignities are the heart and soul of classical astrology. If we use the analogy that the planets are the actors and the signs are the roles that they play, then the Essential Dignities are the reviews of how effective that planet (actor) is in that role (sign). Unlike real actors who get to choose roles that suit them, in astrology all seven personal planets¹ will play all twelve roles. Sometimes you get Meryl Streep in *The Hours*, and other times you get Sylvester Stallone in *Romeo and Juliet* ... playing Juliet.

Before exploring the Essential Dignities, however, it's important to consider their context. When working with a natal chart, dignified planets are not "good" and debilitated planets are not "bad." The measure of the "strength" of a planet is an important part of horary astrology and certain types of predictive astrology, but on its own, it is not a useful criterion when interpreting a birth chart. As individuals, we are able to grow and evolve, becoming more skillful in the ways that we express the energies of the planets in our charts. When applying the Essential Dignities to a natal chart, always remember that the limitations and challenges of the planet do not necessarily translate to limitations or challenges for the individual.

Classical astrology uses a system of five Essential Dignities: Rulership, Exaltation, Triplicity, Term, and Face, plus two Essential Debilities: Detriment and Fall.

Planets in **Rulership** are the masters of their own domain. They Rule themselves, they set their own agendas, and they don't answer to anyone else. Planets in Rulership receive a score of +5.²

Planets in **Exaltation** are very strong. They don't set their own agendas, but they are treated as honored guests. As such, they're on their best behavior, and other planets do things for them on their behalf. Planets in Exaltation receive a score of +4.

Planets in **Triplicity** are strong, but really what they are is lucky. Things work out for these planets because they're in the right place at the right time. The problem with luck, though, is that as soon as you depend on it, it has a nasty habit of running out. Triplicity depends on whether the chart is Diurnal (a day chart, where the Sun is above

the horizon in houses 7 through 12) or Nocturnal (a night chart, where the Sun is below the horizon in houses 1 through 6). Planets in Triplicity receive a score of +3.

Planets in **Term** are in diminished circumstances. They have an interest in the matter, but they lack the skill, strength, or resources to make a difference on their own. Planets in Term receive a score of +2.

Planets in **Face** are in very bad shape. They have no power and no influence, but they are very concerned about the matter. A planet that has dignity by Face is exhibiting *fear*. Planets in Face receive a score of +1.

A planet that does not have dignity by Rulership, Exaltation, Triplicity, Term, or Face is **Peregrine**. Peregrine planets tend to wander. They have no influence and are in unfamiliar circumstances. Peregrine planets receive a score of -5. (In the classical system of dignities, a Peregrine planet is considered to be strongly debilitated, even damaged in some way. While this distinction is important in a horary chart, it does not apply when interpreting planets in a natal chart.)

Planets in a sign opposite a sign they Rule are in **Detriment**. Planets in Detriment are very strong, but they use their strength in ways that get them into trouble. This would be Sylvester Stallone playing Juliet on Broadway because he's convinced it's the best thing for his career, and since he's Sly Stallone, no

one is going to tell him he's wrong. Planets in Detriment operate on the mental/emotional plane and tend to worry about their circumstances. Planets in Detriment receive a score of -5.

Planets in the sign opposite the sign of their Exaltation are in **Fall**. Planets in Fall are also quite strong; however, they are unable to use their strength because of circumstances beyond their control. This would be Stallone playing Juliet because his agent got him the contract, and he can't get out of it. Planets in Fall operate on the physical plane. A planet in Fall receives a score of -4. (See the **Table**, below.)

When working with the Table of Essential Dignities and Debilities, note that the degree numbers for Term and Face represent the end points, and all planetary positions are rounded up to the next whole degree. For example, notice that Jupiter has Term for the first 6 degrees of Aries. This means that, from 0°00' to 6°00' Aries, Jupiter would have

dignity by Term. At 6°01' (which would round up to 7°), Venus would take over.

The dignity score of a planet provides critical information when working with horary or electional astrology, but when it comes to natal astrology, it's not especially useful. If we look beyond the score, however, Essential Dignities can open doors to more accurate, specific, synthesized, and deep interpretations of any natal chart.

Classical Astrology and Modern Astrology

The difference between modern astrology and classical astrology boils down to the definition and understanding of what Rulership means. In classical astrology, Rulership is one of five Essential Dignities. It has very specific and very practical applications that determine how a particular planet expresses itself in form. In modern astrology, "rulership" is more of a system of affinity, where planets "rule" the signs that they are the most

like. The modern "rulerships" evolved in order to accommodate the discovery of the outer planets Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. In classical astrology, the only planets that have Essential Dignity or that Rule any signs are the personal planets. Saturn is the Ruler of Capricorn and Aquarius; Mars Rules Aries and Scorpio; and Jupiter Rules Sagittarius and Pisces.

I would like to offer a practical argument in favor of working exclusively with the classical Rulers, at least when applying any of the techniques illustrated in this article. The distinction between the personal planets and the outer planets is significant. The personal planets are, well, *personal*. They exist within us, and ultimately, we can learn how to master them. That critical voice inside your head that's always pointing out what you did wrong? That's your Saturn. And the next time someone cuts you off in traffic, don't forget to say hello to your Mars. You'll recognize him, because

Ptolemy's Table of Essential Dignities and Debilities as shown in *Essential Dignities* by J. Lee Lehman, Ph.D.

SIGNS	RULERSHIP	EXALTATION	TRIPPLICITY		TERM					FACE			DETRIMENT	FALL
			DAY	NIGHT										
♈	♂	☉	☉	♃	♃ 6	♀ 14	♀ 21	♂ 26	♄ 30	♂ 10	☉ 20	♀ 30	♀	♄
♉	♀	☽	♀	☽	♀ 8	♀ 15	♃ 22	♄ 26	♂ 30	♀ 10	☽ 20	♄ 30	♂	
♊	♀	♋	♄	♀	♀ 7	♃ 14	♀ 21	♄ 25	♂ 30	♃ 10	♂ 20	☉ 30	♃	♅
♌	☽	♃	♂	♂	♂ 6	♃ 13	♀ 20	♀ 27	♄ 30	♀ 10	♀ 20	☽ 30	♄	♂
♍	☉		☉	♃	♄ 6	♀ 13	♀ 19	♃ 25	♂ 30	♄ 10	♃ 20	♂ 30	♄	
♎	♀	♀	♀	☽	♀ 7	♀ 13	♃ 18	♄ 24	♂ 30	☉ 10	♀ 20	♀ 30	♃	♀
♏	♀	♄	♄	♀	♄ 6	♀ 11	♃ 19	♀ 24	♂ 30	☽ 10	♄ 20	♃ 30	♂	☉
♐	♂		♂	♂	♂ 6	♃ 14	♀ 21	♀ 27	♄ 30	♂ 10	☉ 20	♀ 30	♀	☽
♑	♃	♅	☉	♃	♃ 8	♀ 14	♀ 19	♄ 25	♂ 30	♀ 10	☽ 20	♄ 30	♀	♋
♒	♄	♂	♀	☽	♀ 6	♀ 12	♃ 19	♂ 25	♄ 30	♃ 10	♂ 20	☉ 30	☽	♃
♓	♄		♄	♀	♄ 6	♀ 12	♀ 20	♃ 25	♂ 30	♀ 10	♀ 20	☽ 30	☉	
♈	♃	♀	♂	♂	♀ 8	♃ 14	♀ 20	♂ 26	♄ 30	♄ 10	♃ 20	♂ 30	♀	♀
	+5	+4	+3		+2					+1			-5	-4

Ruler  Exaltation  Detriment  Fall 

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he's the one making the impolite hand gestures.

The outer planets, however, are forces outside of our experiences as individuals. We can neither embody nor master these energies. When we encounter these energies, all we can do is surrender to them, keep our heads down, and ride out the storm.

One of the practical ways that we can work with Rulership is to learn more about specific areas of life. We look at the sign on the cusp of a house, and the planet that Rules that sign is the planet in charge of the affairs of that house. If we allow that the outer planets rule Aquarius, Pisces, and Scorpio, then we're asserting that there will be three (or more) areas of our lives that are completely and utterly beyond our control. If we have Aquarius on the 7th house, and Uranus is in charge of our one-to-one relationships, then what hope do we have? We wouldn't expect anyone to stick around long enough for us to learn their last names, let alone get married. However, if we look to Saturn for infor-

The planet that Rules a sign actually governs and controls any and all planets that are in that sign.

mation about our relationships, at least we can find practical guidance that can help us to improve and strengthen them.

Dispositor Trees

The simplest way of working with the Essential Dignities involves looking at the hierarchy of Rulerships in a natal chart. Rulership means exactly that: The planet that Rules a sign actually governs and controls any and all planets that are in that sign. When a planet Rules another planet, it is said to be the **dispositor** of that planet's energy. The Moon, for example, Rules all planets in Cancer — it is the dispositor of any planet in the chart in Cancer. Planets in Cancer will look to the Moon for guidance on how they can express themselves. The Ruling planet is thought to impose form and structure

on the expression of the planet Ruled. Of course, the quality of the guidance, and the nature of the form and structure imposed, depend entirely on the location, position, and condition of the Ruling planet. Mars in Cancer, for example, will be more grounded and practical in its expression if the Moon is in Taurus, and more scattered and quick to react if the Moon is in Gemini.

We can create a diagram — called a dispositor tree — to show how the planets in the chart relate to each other based on their Rulerships. Dispositor trees are extremely helpful in uncovering the themes of a natal chart, because they quickly and obviously reveal which planets are the bosses and which planets must do the bidding of the Ruling planets.

Sometimes, dispositor trees will reveal a key pattern or theme in the chart that would be difficult or even impossible to see with any other technique. Other times, they won't provide any critical information. However, once you understand how to diagram them, they take less than a minute to create, so I find that it's always worth the effort.

When creating a dispositor tree, we always begin with planets in their own sign: These planets will be at the top of the tree, because they are their own Rulers and don't answer to anyone else. We then work through the rest of the planets in the tree, starting with the planets that are directly Ruled by the

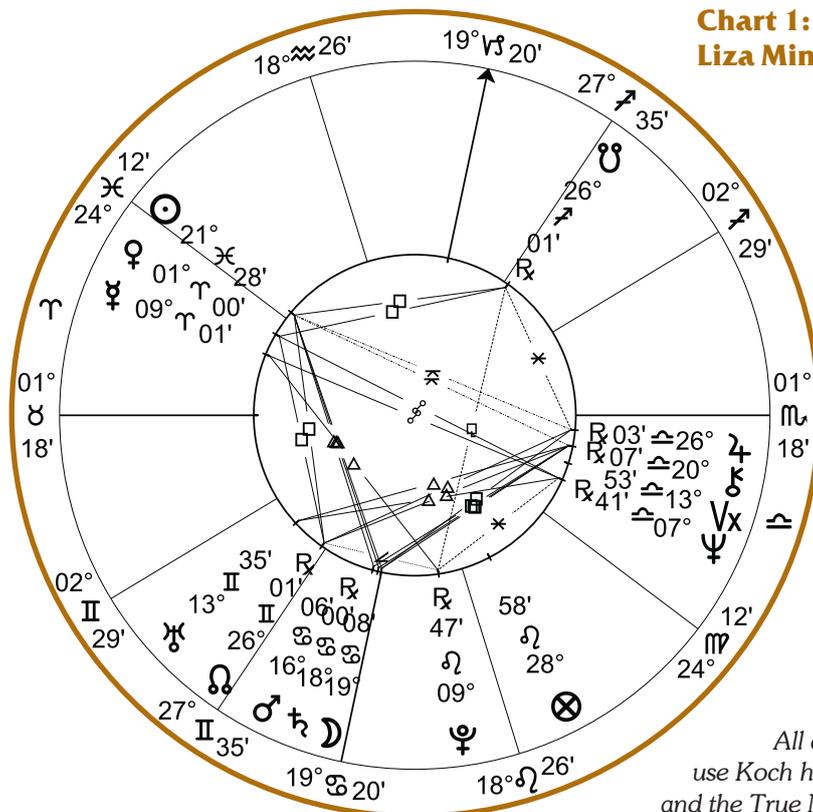
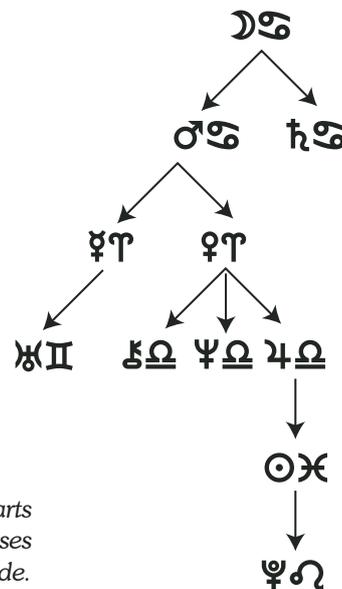


Chart 1:
Liza Minnelli



All charts use Koch houses and the True Node.

planet in Rulership, then moving down to the next level by looking for the planets Ruled by these planets, and so on. Although we can include the outer planets in the dispositor tree, they do not Rule anything themselves; they are only Ruled.

Here are the step-by-step instructions for creating a dispositor tree for any chart.

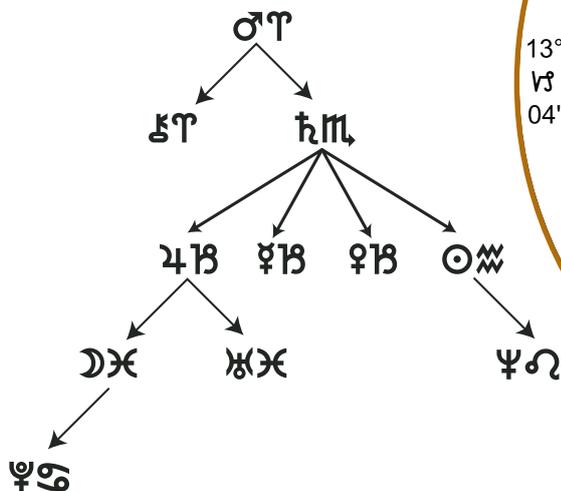
Step 1: Find any planets in their own sign (Rulership). Each one of these planets will be at the top of its own tree. *Note:* It is possible to have multiple trees for a single chart — and a tree can sometimes contain only one planet. We will use Liza Minnelli’s natal chart here (see **Chart 1**, facing page).

We start with the Moon in Cancer (the only planet in Rulership), which goes at the top of the tree. The Moon Rules all planets in Cancer — in this case, Mars and Saturn, and they get placed in the second tier, reporting directly to the Moon.

Saturn Rules all planets in Capricorn and Aquarius, but as Minnelli has none, this branch of the tree ends here.

Mars Rules all planets in Aries and Scorpio. Minnelli has both Mercury and Venus in Aries, so they get placed on the third tier, reporting directly to Mars.

Mercury Rules all planets in Gemini and Virgo. Minnelli has Uranus in Gemini, and that goes on the fourth tier, reporting directly to Mercury.



Venus Rules all planets in Taurus and Libra. Minnelli has Chiron, Neptune, and Jupiter in Libra, and they all go on the fourth tier, reporting directly to Venus.

Jupiter Rules all planets in Sagittarius and Pisces. Minnelli has the Sun in Pisces, which goes on the fifth tier, reporting directly to Jupiter.

The Sun Rules all planets in Leo. Minnelli has Pluto in Leo, which goes on the sixth tier, reporting directly to the Sun.

Minnelli has only one dispositor tree for her chart, and every planet in the chart can be traced back to the Moon. This is known as a **sole dispositor** or a **final dispositor**. What does this tell us? Because the Moon is the absolute boss of her chart, Liza Minnelli is entirely ruled by her emotions and her safety needs. Everything she does, every choice she makes will ultimately be based on how she feels. Every planet in her chart serves the Moon in Cancer’s agenda of creating and maintaining strong, nurturing emotional connections with others.

Let’s look at another example, Paul Newman (see **Chart 2**, below).

We start with Mars in Aries, which goes at the top of the tree. Mars Rules all planets in Aries and Scorpio. Newman has Chiron in Aries and Saturn in Scorpio, and these get placed on the second tier, reporting directly to Mars.

Chiron doesn’t Rule anything, so that branch is done.

Saturn Rules all planets in Capricorn and Aquarius. Newman has Jupiter, Mercury, and Venus in Capricorn and the Sun in Aquarius, so all four planets go on the third tier, reporting to Saturn.

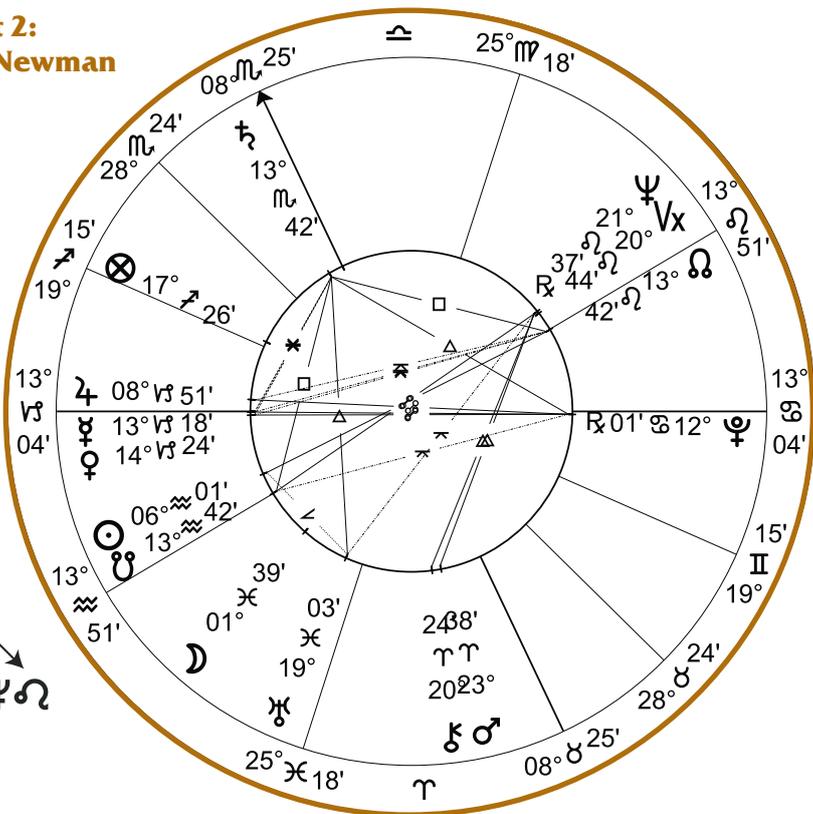
Jupiter Rules all planets in Sagittarius and Pisces. The Moon and Uranus in Pisces go on the fourth tier, reporting to Jupiter. Uranus doesn’t Rule anything, so that branch ends here. The Moon Rules all planets in Cancer, and Pluto in Cancer goes on the fifth tier, reporting to the Moon. Pluto doesn’t Rule anything, so that branch ends.

Mercury Rules all planets in Gemini and Virgo; Newman has none, so that branch is finished.

Venus Rules all planets in Taurus and Libra; Newman has none, so that branch is finished.

The Sun Rules all planets in Leo. Neptune in Leo goes on the fourth tier, reporting to the Sun. Neptune

Chart 2:
Paul Newman



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doesn't Rule anything, so that branch is finished.

Paul Newman also has a sole dispositor in his chart, Mars in Aries. One would think that this would make him aggressive and impulsive in all things. However, a closer look at his dispositor tree shows that, while Mars in Aries is the *final* dispositor, the only planet that reports directly to Mars in Aries (other than Chiron) is Saturn in Scorpio. In order to get to Mars, every other planet has to go through Saturn first. Mars in Aries is the General ready to order his troops into battle. However, this General has a very cautious and responsible Lieutenant, Saturn in Scorpio, who filters and screens the intelligence reports before Mars gets them. This means that Newman was far less likely to take rash, impulsive action. When he took action, he probably had a plan that carefully evaluated the risks and insured that, contrary to all appearances, he was acting in a responsible manner.

Without the dispositor tree, it would be difficult to recognize how important

the relationship between Mars in Aries and Saturn in Scorpio is for understanding Paul Newman's chart. The two planets do not aspect each other, and their relationship in the dispositor tree is the only real connection they have. But what a critical connection it is! With the dispositor tree, we have an immediate and obvious context that shapes the rest of the interpretation of the chart.

Step 2: Find any planets in Mutual Reception by Rulership.
Each pair of planets in mutual reception will be at the top of its own tree.

Let's look at Meryl Streep's chart now (**Chart 3**, below). We begin with Step 1 and look for any planets in Rulership. Streep has Mercury in Gemini, which goes at the top of its own tree. Mercury in Gemini Rules all planets in Gemini and Virgo. Streep has Mars in Gemini and Saturn in Virgo, and they go on the second tier, reporting directly to Mercury.

Mars Rules all planets in Aries and Scorpio; Streep has none, so this branch ends here.

Saturn Rules all planets in Capricorn and Aquarius. Streep has Jupiter in

Aquarius, and that goes on the third tier, reporting to Saturn.

Jupiter Rules all planets in Sagittarius and Pisces. Streep has Chiron in Sagittarius, and that goes on the fourth tier reporting to Jupiter.

This is the end of the Mercury tree in Meryl Streep's chart. Since we're still missing a few planets, and there are no other planets in Rulership in her chart, we move on to the next step and look for planets in Mutual Reception.

Planets in Mutual Reception rule each other. For example, Mars in Capricorn (Ruled by Saturn) and Saturn in Aries (Ruled by Mars) would be in Mutual Reception.

Meryl Streep's Moon in Taurus (Ruled by Venus) and Venus in Cancer (Ruled by the Moon) are in Mutual Reception, so they go to the top of a new tree, with a double-arrow showing that they receive each other.

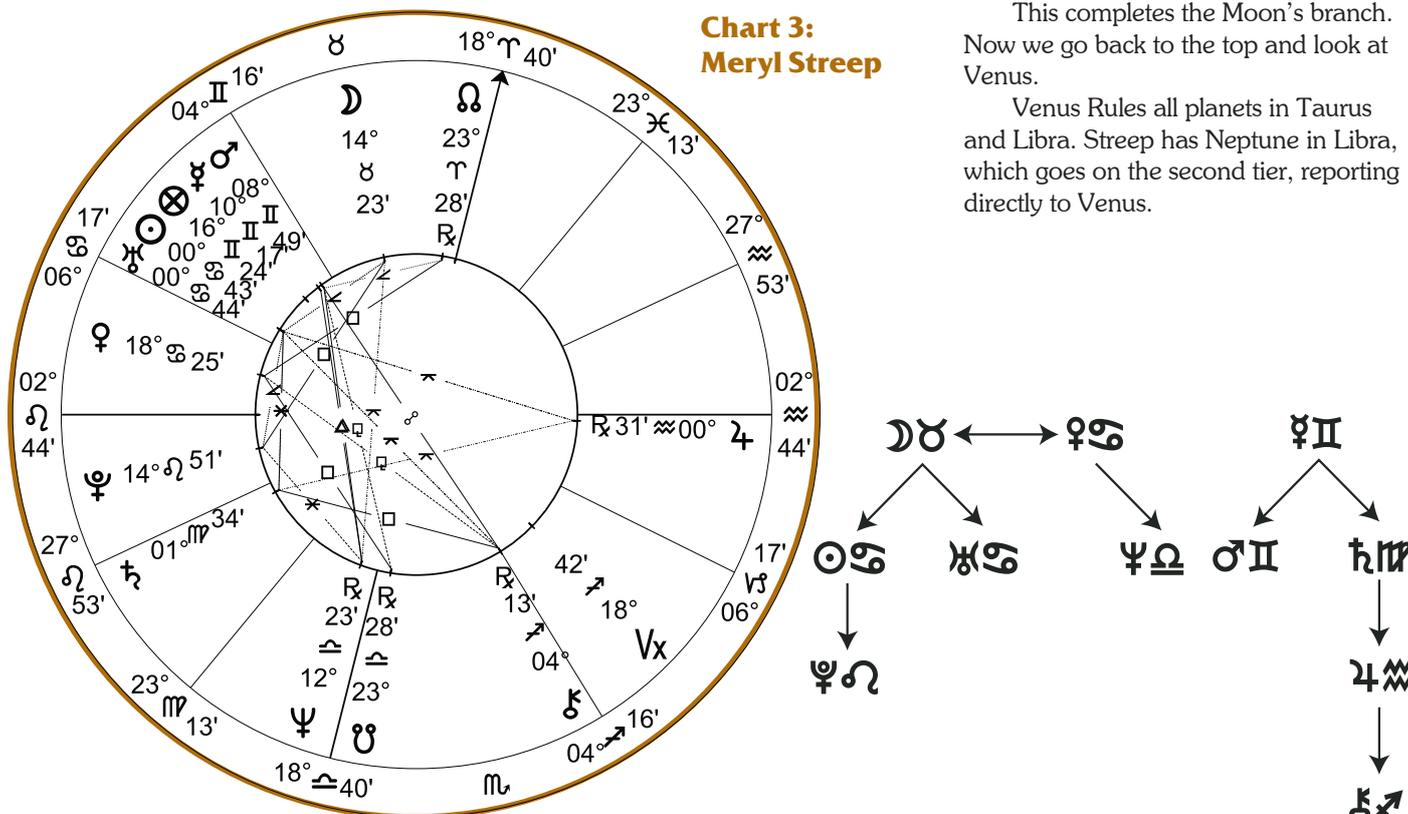
The Moon Rules all planets in Cancer. In addition to Venus, Streep has the Sun and Uranus in Cancer. The Sun and Uranus go on the second tier, reporting directly to the Moon.

The Sun Rules all planets in Leo. Streep has Pluto in Leo, which goes on the third tier, reporting directly to the Sun.

This completes the Moon's branch. Now we go back to the top and look at Venus.

Venus Rules all planets in Taurus and Libra. Streep has Neptune in Libra, which goes on the second tier, reporting directly to Venus.

Chart 3: Meryl Streep



Between the two dispositor trees, we have accounted for all eleven planets.

Notice how Streep's chart is split between the planets that "report" to her Mercury in Gemini and the planets that "report" to her Moon-Venus mutual reception. Right away, we can tell that Streep has a very clear division between her emotional and feeling nature (Moon-Venus) and her intellectual approach to the world (Mercury) — something that will prove to be a key theme in her chart.

But what happens when you have a chart with no planets in Rulership and no planets in Mutual Reception? Not all dispositor trees are as neat and tidy as these examples. Often, we end up with a chart where three or more planets are linked to each other, and they in turn Rule some or all of the rest of the chart, as is the case with Sylvester Stallone. In these cases, we have to move on to Step 3.

Step 3: Look for a committee of Rulers.

Let's examine Sylvester Stallone's chart (Chart 4, below). He has no planets in Rulership and no Mutual Receptions, so we will need to look for a committee of Rulers. To do this, we pick a planet at random and work backwards through the dispositors until we come back to a planet and close a loop. Let's start with his Sun in Cancer. The Sun in Cancer is Ruled by the Moon; his Moon is in Libra, Ruled by Venus; his Venus is in Leo, Ruled by the Sun — and we now have a closed loop. The Sun, Moon,

It's important to remember that dignified planets aren't "good" and debilitated planets aren't "bad."

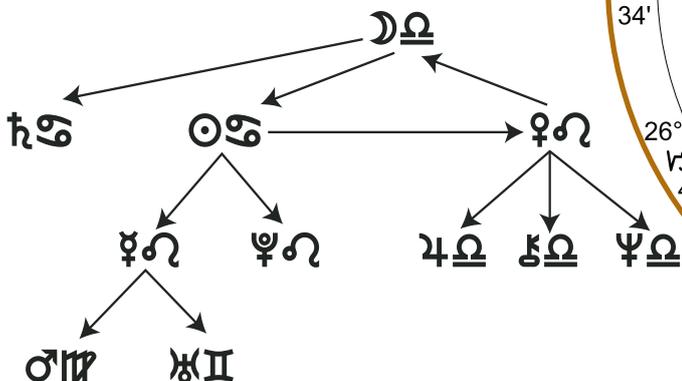
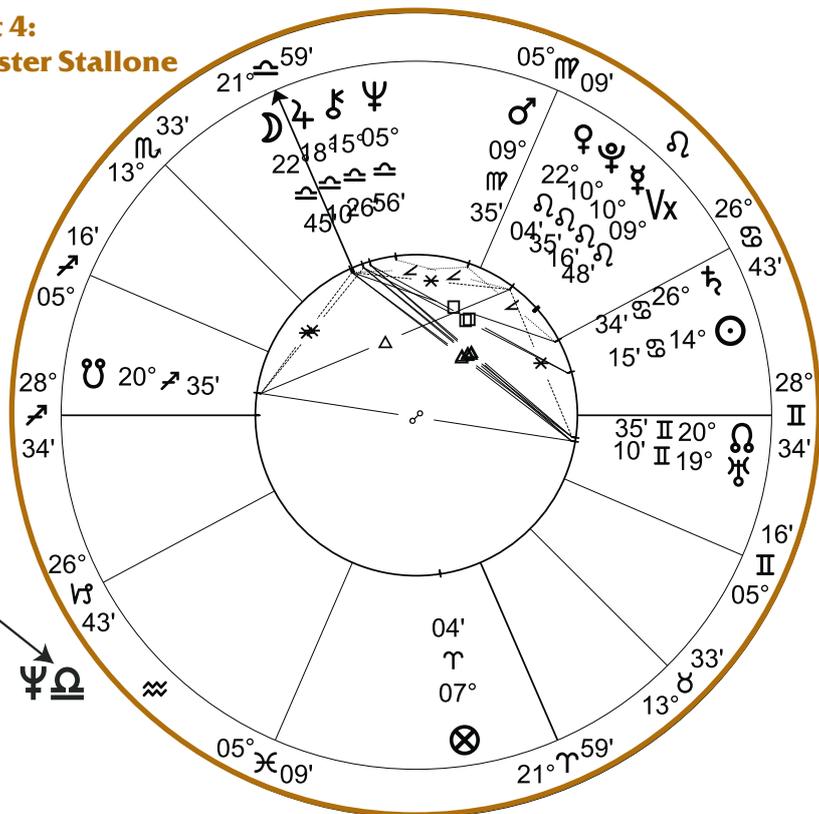
and Venus form a committee that will be at the top of a dispositor tree. As you can see from the illustration, every other planet in Stallone's chart reports to one of the three members of the committee.

It is possible for three, four, or even five planets to Rule the dispositor tree in committee. However, no matter where we start looking, we'll always find the committee. All we need to do is pick any planet that's neither in Rulership nor in Mutual Reception. For example, if we start with Stallone's Mars in Virgo: Mars in Virgo is Ruled by Mercury in Leo. Mercury in Leo is Ruled by the Sun in Cancer. The Sun in Cancer is Ruled by the Moon in Libra. The Moon in Libra is Ruled by Venus in Leo. Venus in Leo is Ruled by the Sun in Cancer. No mat-

ter where we begin, we'll always end up with the closed loop of the Sun, Moon, and Venus.

Stallone's chart, then, is not Ruled by a single planet, but rather by a committee made up of the Sun, Moon, and Venus. And since none of these three planets has any real autonomy in the chart because they each answer to the others, this could indicate an inherent struggle for Stallone. Every choice, every action, every decision that he makes will have to meet with the approval of the committee. And like any governing body, each member of the committee has its own agenda. Each member of this particular committee is Peregrine, so we're not looking at a terribly efficient process. Consider, though, that this chart with little dignity and a Peregrine committee of Rulers has not stopped Stallone from becoming tremendously successful in his chosen fields of endeavor. It's important to remember that dignified planets aren't "good" and debilitated planets aren't "bad." In a natal chart, the Essential Dignities simply help us to understand how each planet is apt to express itself; with this understanding, we can more easily come into right relationship with the planets and express

Chart 4: Sylvester Stallone



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their energies more skillfully in our lives. (Visit www.TheRealAstrology.com/DISP_OSITOR/ for an animated demonstration of how to create dispositor trees.)

Quick Insights with Essential Debilities

A quick way to use Essential Dignities to deepen your interpretations is to keep an eye out for planets in Detriment, Fall, or Face. These conditions immediately tell you something a bit more about the experience of the planet.

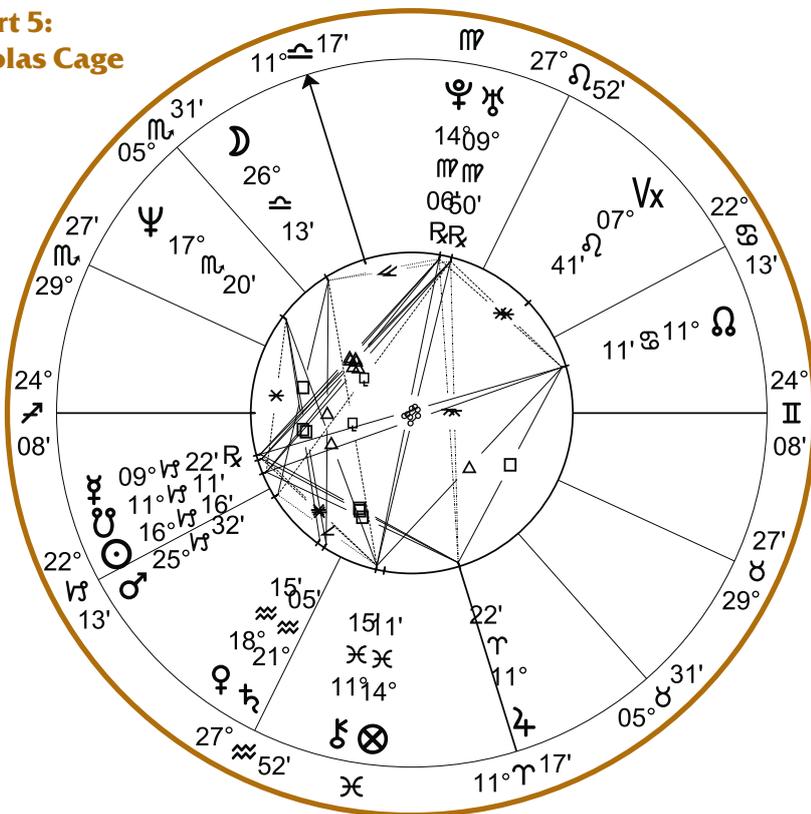
Any time you see a planet in Detriment, remember to think in terms of *worry*. For example, the Sun is in Detriment in Aquarius. The Sun is the planet of the individual, while Aquarius is the sign that only recognizes the group. The Sun in Aquarius *worries* about how to define itself as an individual in the context of the group. Venus, the planet of relationships, is in Detriment in Aries, the sign that only recognizes the individual.

Venus in Aries *worries* that she values self-expression more than accommodating others to maintain relationship. This model applies to every planet in Detriment. And when you encounter a chart that has multiple planets in Detriment, you can immediately assume that your client spends a lot of time in his or her head, worrying about things.

Planets in Fall operate on the physical plane. When you see a planet in Fall, look for the physical challenges of that planet and how your client may experience them. For example, the Moon is in Fall in Scorpio. Individuals with the Moon in Scorpio often have difficulty expressing their emotions, and when they don't express their emotions, they immediately experience discomfort in their physical bodies, most often in the stomach and abdomen. Individuals with Mars in Cancer who have yet to develop a healthy relationship with anger often suffer from the physical side effects of stress and frustration. And those with Saturn in Aries may have a history of challenges with the limitations and laws of the physical world.

When you see a planet with dignity by Face — especially when that is the *only* dignity that planet has — that planet is afraid. The keyword for Face is *fear*. This can be an important distinction in your interpretations. Take the Moon in Libra as an example. In order to feel safe, the Moon in Libra needs everyone to get along. Conflict of any kind is fundamentally threatening. The Moon is Peregrine for most of Libra, but has dignity by Face for the first 10 degrees. Now consider the difference between *disliking* conflict and being actively *afraid* of it. Individuals with the Moon in the first 10 degrees of Libra are more likely to have significant patterns of compromising their boundaries and their values in order to avoid conflict than people whose Moon is merely Peregrine. Any time you see a planet in Face, look at it closely. Consider where the fear is, and explore how that fear may result in limiting behavior patterns. Conquering that fear is often the key to lasting change.

Chart 5:
Nicolas Cage



ESSENTIAL DIGNITIES (LEHMAN)								
Pt	Ruler	Exalt	Trip	Term	Face	Detri	Fall	Score
☾	♀	♌	♍ m	♈	♎	♊	♏	-5 p

Deeper Insights: The Board of Directors

While the planet that Rules a sign gives form to the expression of all planets in that sign and is, therefore, very important, the Ruling planet may not, in fact, be the planet that has the most influence. Each dignity is associated with a set number of points: +5 for Rulership, +4 for Exaltation, +3 for Triplicity, +2 for Term and +1 for Face. The planet that has the most points of Essential Dignity at a given degree is the **almuten**. For example, Venus Rules Libra and receives 5 points. But in diurnal charts, Saturn receives 4 points for Exaltation plus 3 points for Triplicity, making Saturn the *almuten* of Libra with a total of 7 points. Even though Venus gives form to any planet in Libra in a day chart, Saturn really sets the agenda for those planets.

Putting it another way, consider that each planet in the chart is actually its own business. Like many businesses, each planet has its own board of directors that determines the direction of the company. The planet that Rules the sign is the CEO of the company; however, the board of directors ultimately has the power to overrule the CEO. A planet that has Essential Dignity has a seat on the board and, therefore, has at least

some say in how it expresses itself. Peregrine planets have no seat on the board and have no say at all about how they express themselves. They just sit in their metaphorical office cubicles and do what they're told to the best of their abilities.

Because the members of the board of directors change from chart to chart, depending on the specific degree of the planet and whether the chart is diurnal or nocturnal, the board of directors allows us to shape our interpretations of a planet in a sign. Which planet on the board has the most influence? Saturn's agenda is very different from Venus's agenda, and this perspective helps to create more specific, personalized interpretations.

To illustrate, let's look at the Moon in three charts: Nicolas Cage (see **Chart 5**, facing page), Sylvester Stallone (**Chart 6**, at right), and Sting (**Chart 7**, p. 62). We'll specifically consider the Moon as it represents our safety needs. Cage's Moon is at 26° Libra, Stallone's is at 22° Libra, and Sting's is at 19° Libra. All of the Moons are Peregrine, with a score of -5. On the surface, one would think that they are virtually the same Moon and that each of the three would have very similar safety needs. However, when we consider the board of directors for each Moon, the critical differences are obvious.

The board of directors for Cage's Moon at 26° Libra is comprised of Venus, Saturn, Mercury, Mars, and Jupiter. Venus receives 5 votes for Rulership, Saturn has 4 votes for Exaltation, Mercury has 3 votes for Triplicity, Mars has 2 votes for Term, and Jupiter has 1 vote for Face. Venus has the most influence over Cage's Moon in Libra. His emotions and his safety needs (Moon) will be shaped primarily by his values. The things that he loves and appreciates (Venus) are the things that will help him to feel safe.

The board of directors for Stallone's Moon at 22° Libra is comprised of Venus, Saturn, Mercury, and Jupiter. Venus receives 5 votes for Rulership, Saturn, however, receives a total of 7 votes — 4 for Exaltation and 3 for Triplicity. Saturn is the *almuten*, giving Saturn more influence than Venus. Mercury has 2 votes for Term, and Jupiter has 1 vote for Face. Stallone's Saturn has the

most influence over his Moon in Libra, so boundaries and a sense of responsibility are far more critical to Stallone's ability to feel safe than his values are.

The board of directors for Sting's Moon at 19° Libra is comprised of Venus, Saturn, and Mercury. Venus receives 5 votes for Rulership; Saturn receives 4 votes for Exaltation and 1 vote for Face, for a total of 5 votes; Mercury receives 3 votes for Triplicity and 2 votes for Term, for a total of 5 votes. Sting's board of directors is deadlocked — each of the three planets has an equal amount of influence. His values, his boundaries, and his ability to communicate are equally critical to Sting's safety.

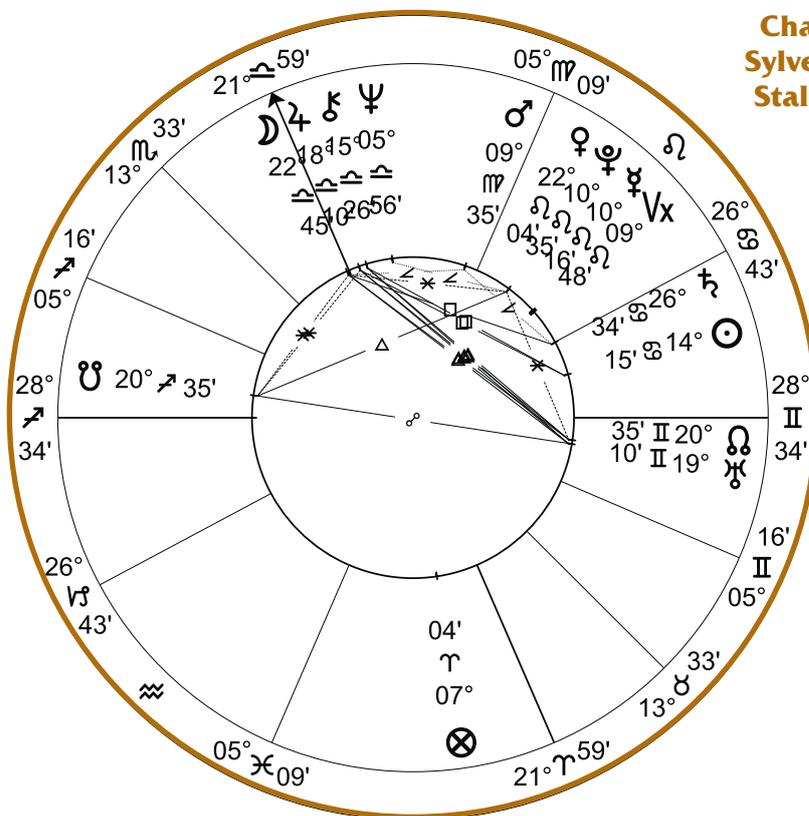
But that's not all. We can go even deeper than this and consider not only the planets on the board of directors, but also the *specific* planets on the board. While it's true that Saturn's agenda is different from Venus's agenda, Saturn in Cancer's agenda is different from Saturn in Gemini's agenda.

The board of directors for Cage's Moon (Chart 5) is made up of Venus in Aquarius with 5 votes, Saturn in Aquar-

ius with 4 votes, Mercury in Capricorn with 3 votes, Mars in Capricorn with 2 votes, and Jupiter in Aries with 1 vote. Venus has the most votes, but who's *really* in charge here? Saturn, of course! Venus, Mars, and Mercury in Aquarius all report to Saturn, who, being in Aquarius, is his own boss. On the surface, Venus is the one making the decisions, but Saturn is unquestionably the power behind the throne. The agenda for Cage's Moon in Libra is absolutely the agenda of Saturn in Aquarius: Be a responsible member of the group and support the greatest amount of freedom for the members of the group. This Moon in Libra isn't going to be threatened by conflict or difference of opinion — as long as it doesn't threaten the laws that define the group itself.

The board of directors for Stallone's Moon (Chart 6) is made up of Venus in Leo with 5 votes, Saturn in Cancer with 7 votes, Mercury in Leo with 2 votes, and Jupiter in Libra with 1 vote. Since Jupiter in Libra is Ruled by Venus, we can assume that Stallone's Jupiter will always vote with Venus; however, this

Chart 6:
Sylvester
Stallone



ESSENTIAL DIGNITIES (LEHMAN)								
Pt	Ruler	Exalt	Trip	Term	Face	Detri	Fall	Score
☾	♀	♌	♌	♍	♈	♈	♏	-5 p

Essential Dignities

still doesn't give Venus enough votes to overrule Saturn, who has 7 votes. What's interesting, though, is that even though the Moon is Peregrine and doesn't have a seat on the board herself, the Moon Rules Saturn in Cancer, who has control over the board. The Moon may not be able to attend the board meetings, but Saturn has to follow the Moon's agenda. Of course, Saturn in Cancer is in Detriment, so even with the majority of votes, Saturn may not be very effective when arguing the Moon's case, because planets in Detriment tend to get themselves into trouble by using their strength in inappropriate ways. And when we notice that Stallone's Moon and Saturn are square each other, this working relationship becomes even more twisted. Sure, Saturn will put in a good-faith effort to get the Moon's agenda approved, but his majority control isn't as solid as all that (and being in Detriment, this is yet *another* thing

that Saturn has to worry about). Venus doesn't have enough votes to overrule Saturn, but since both Venus and Mercury are in Leo, they share a common agenda (the world should revolve around them) and are apt to combine forces to outvote Saturn.

Taking all of this into account gives tremendous insight into Stallone's challenges in feeling safe. He is apt to feel caught between the need to be fair, balanced, just, and objective and the desire to put his own selfish needs first.

The board of directors for Sting's Moon (Chart 7) is made up of Venus in Virgo, Saturn in Libra, and Mercury in Virgo. Even though each member ostensibly has only 5 votes, Mercury in Virgo is the clear winner here. Venus in Virgo reports directly to Mercury in Virgo, so Venus will always vote with Mercury; moreover, Saturn in Libra is heavily (but not completely) influenced by Venus in Virgo, so much of the time Saturn will vote with Venus. Therefore, in terms of feeling safe, Mercury is the most important influence for Sting. More than anything, he needs to understand the words;

he needs to be able to analyze and dissect and comprehend a situation in order to feel safe.

These are just a few examples of how classical astrology and Essential Dignities can open the door to deeper, specific, and practical insight into the natal chart. I invite you to play with these techniques and see what secrets you can unlock!

Chart Data and Sources

(in alphabetical order)

Nicolas Cage, January 7, 1964; 5:30 a.m. PST; Harbor City, CA, USA (33°N47', 118°W17'); AA: birth certificate in hand from Frank C. Clifford.

Liza Minnelli, March 12, 1946; 7:58 a.m. PST; Los Angeles, CA, USA (34°N04', 118°W15'); AA: birth certificate, quoted in *Dell Horoscope*, 12/1966.

Paul Newman, January 26, 1925; 6:30 a.m. EST; Cleveland, OH, USA (41°N30', 81°W42'); AA: birth certificate in hand, Lois M. Rodden.

Sylvester Stallone, July 6, 1946; 7:20 p.m. EDT; New York, NY, USA (40°N42', 74°W00'); A: from memory; Jany Bessiere quotes his astrologer mother.

Sting (Gordon Sumner), October 2, 1951; 1:30 a.m. BST; Wallsend, England (55°N00', 01°W31'); A: Marion March quotes Arthy Chadbourne, from Sting 10/1996.

Meryl Streep, June 22, 1949; 8:05 a.m. EDT; Summit, NJ, USA (40°N43', 74°W22'); AA: birth certificate in hand from Steinbrecher.

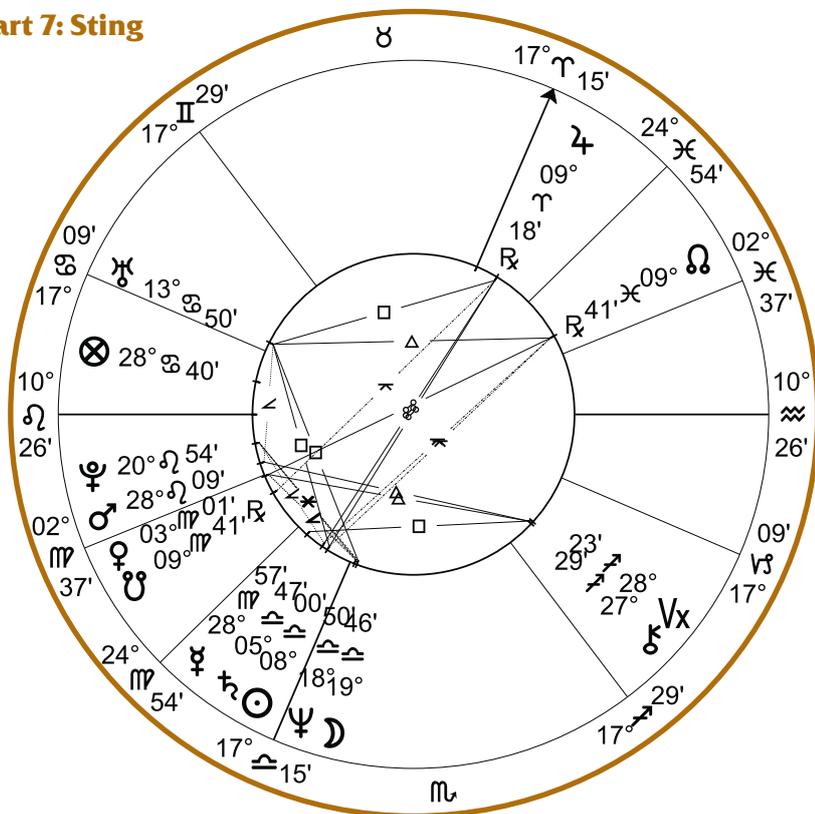
Notes

1. For the purpose of simplicity, I include Jupiter and Saturn (sometimes known as the "social" planets) as "personal" planets.
2. Research suggests that this scoring and weighting system has been in use for a thousand years and possibly longer. For further information, see Robert Hand's article at: www.robert-hand.com/alldign.htm

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Chart 7: Sting



ESSENTIAL DIGNITIES (LEHMAN)								
Pt	Ruler	Exalt	Trip	Term	Face	Detri	Fall	Score
☾	♀	♋	♌ m	♍	♋ m	♌	☉	-5 p