

Horary Astrology

Part of 6

go to part:

1 2 3 4 5 6

Resources

Dignities Quiz

Playing the interactive quiz '20 Questions on Dignities & Debilities' will test and reinforce your knowledge of dignity rulerships

View

Ptolemy's Table of Essential Dignities

View Lilly's Table to Examine the Strength & Debility of Each Planet

The Classical Use of Triplicities

Explains the basis of triplicity rulership and examines the way it was used in Hellenistic astrology

The Philosophy of Sign Rulership

A clear explanation of Ptolemy's account of the reasoning behind the rulership scheme

Introducing Dignity

Ptolemy's Table of Essential Dignity

The Use of Dignity in Judgement

Essential Debility

Assessing Dignity through 'point-scoring'

The Use of Reception between Dignities

Take a Test on Planetary Dignities & Debilities

The art of synthesizing chart factors in the process of analysis calls us to consider many factors. One of the most important is to consider the strength and dignity of the planets. The 'benefics' are not constant sources of good fortune, the 'malefics' are not always damaging; nor is it fair to assume that all planets express an equal importance at all times.

The planets - their location in the sphere, and their interaction with each other - are the symbolic heart of astrology; all other considerations - houses, signs, fixed star alignments - are secondary considerations that take their place as supporters and moderators of planetary meanings. Good astrology is reliant upon the ability to discriminate between standard textbook meanings and altered forms of expression; to recognize where the strength of one planet will override the contradictory influence of another.

These factors are largely determined through assessing the level of 'dignity' that each planet has. Familiarity with the process soon allows the astrologer to develop a fluent insight into how the planets are operating and where the fundamental focus of the chart is taking place. Yet modern textbooks often fail to explain the importance of assessing dignity and many students are unfamiliar with Ptolemy's table of essential dignity. This article is designed to act as an introduction to its use and meaning, particularly in its ability to offer descriptive symbolism of direct value to predictive branches such as horary.

Dignity: Essential or Accidental?

There are two kinds of planetary dignity - **essential** and **accidental**. Ptolemy's table of 'essential' dignity is so named because it shows the parts of the zodiac where the traditional planets are *always* dignified. We consider these regions to have a fundamental relationship with the

planet itself, inasmuch as Mars will always have a special association with Aries, regardless of its house position or specific location in the chart.

'Accidental' dignity indicates the strength that a planet gains for some reason other than its zodiacal position. Mars on the midheaven, for example, is accidentally dignified due to the prominence of its position in the chart. Accidental dignity can be conveyed by any attribute that fortifies the planet - such as being direct, swift in motion, angular, free from combustion, in a beneficial aspect to a fortunate planet or conjunct a fixed star of a fortunate nature.

In allegorical terms, the difference between essential and accidental dignity can be illustrated through an example question - 'will I get the job?' - a man represented by a planet with essential dignity may receive promotion because he has qualities and skills that suit him to the job, while one represented by a planet with accidental dignity may get it because someone has helped him or because he was in the right place at the right time. (The former could be shown by accidental dignity derived from a beneficial aspect, the latter by angularity.)

Both essential and accidental dignity indicate promotion of planetary strength. In horary charts an essentially dignified planet is more likely to be favourable in its influence - like a contented person, the planet is operating within an environment that suits its temperament. Being contented, it is less likely to be destructive in its influence, and the actions of an essentially dignified planet are usually expected to be honourable. However, strength and dignity do not always go together. Where a planet lacks essential dignity, but is brought to prominence through accidental dignity - such as angularity and an unhindered motion - the result is a powerful planet that may or may not be beneficial. If that planet is acting as the ruler of an unfortunate house, is located in its sign of detriment, and is making hard aspects to other unfortunate planets, then the factors that offer accidental and essential *debility* are overwhelming. The planet's influence will be detrimental while its power to express the influence is augmented. Although there are point-scoring tables to help determine the planet's overall position of dignity, it should be remembered that indications of dignity and indications of debility do not necessarily cancel each other out in a way that can be properly summarized by a numerical score. The astrologer needs to assess the factors and remain mindful of how they operate simultaneously to reveal the planet's true nature and influence.

### **Ptolemy's Table of Essential Dignity Explained**

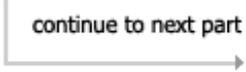
*The planets also have familiarity with the parts of the zodiac, through what are called their houses, triangles, exaltations, terms, and the like... (Ptolemy, Tetrabiblos I. 17)*

The use of exaltations, terms, faces and triplicities is very ancient and was certainly not invented by Ptolemy. In his day various schemes existed offering alternative term boundaries and Ptolemy amalgamated these into a system which he argued offered the

greatest sense of consistency and philosophical justification. William Lilly refers to this on p.103 of his *Christian Astrology*, where he introduces Ptolemy's table saying:

*There hath been much difference between the Arabians, Greeks and Indians concerning the Essential Dignities of the Planets.... After many ages had passed, and until the time of Ptolemy, the Astrologians were not well resolved hereof, but since Ptolemy his time, the Grecians unanimously followed the method he left, which ever since the other Christians of Europe to this day retain as most rational.*

The next page displays the table with explanations of how it is read. A short assignment is included so that you can test your ability to take dignities from it correctly. This article then continues with a review of how dignities can affect interpretation.

[continue to next part](#) 

[top](#) 

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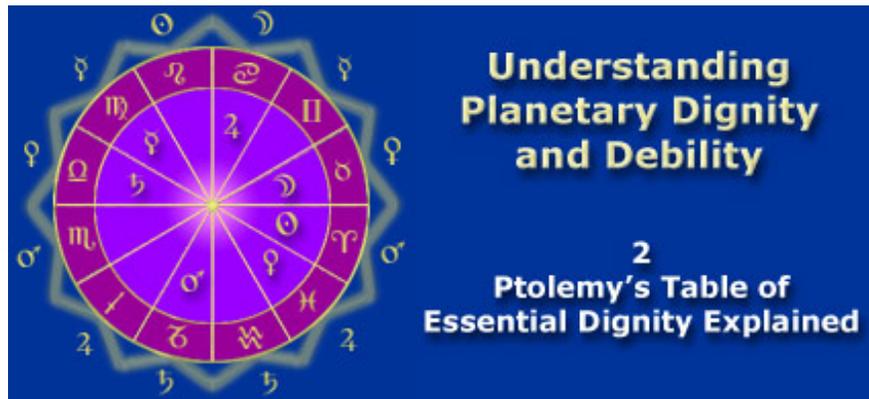
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- Introducing Dignity
- Ptolemy's Table of Essential Dignity**
- The Use of Dignity in Judgement
- Essential Debility
- Assessing Dignity through 'point-scoring'
- The Use of Reception between Dignities
- Take a Test on Planetary Dignities & Debilities



◀ back to part 1

**How to read Ptolemy's table of Essential Dignities**

1 Sign	2 House	3 Exalt.	4 Trip. D. N.	5 Terms of the Planets	6 Faces	7 Det.	8 Fall
♈	♂ D	☉ 19	☉ 4	♄ 6 ♀ 14 ♃ 21 ♂ 28 ♃ 30	♂ 10 ☉ 20 ♀ 30	♀	♃
♉	♀ N	♃ 3	♀ ♃	♀ 8 ♃ 15 ♄ 22 ♃ 28 ♂ 30	♀ 10 ♃ 20 ♃ 30	♂	
♊	♀ D	♁ 3	♃ ♃	♃ 7 ♄ 14 ♀ 21 ♃ 25 ♂ 30	♄ 10 ♂ 20 ☉ 30	♄	
♋	♃ D/N	♄ 15	♂ ♂	♂ 6 ♄ 13 ♃ 20 ♀ 27 ♃ 30	♀ 10 ♃ 20 ♃ 30	♃	♂
♌	☉ D/N		☉ 4	♃ 6 ♃ 13 ♀ 19 ♄ 25 ♂ 30	♃ 10 ♄ 20 ♂ 30	♃	
♍	♀ N	♀ 15	♀ ♃	♀ 7 ♀ 13 ♄ 18 ♃ 24 ♂ 30	☉ 10 ♀ 20 ♃ 30	♄	♀
♎	♀ D	♃ 21	♃ ♃	♃ 6 ♀ 11 ♄ 19 ♃ 24 ♂ 30	♃ 10 ♃ 20 ♄ 30	♂	☉
♏	♂ N		♂ ♂	♂ 6 ♄ 14 ♀ 21 ♃ 27 ♃ 30	♂ 10 ☉ 20 ♀ 30	♀	♃
♐	♄ D	♁ 3	☉ 4	♄ 8 ♀ 14 ♃ 19 ♃ 25 ♂ 30	♀ 10 ♃ 20 ♃ 30	♀	
♑	♃ N	♂ 28	♀ ♃	♀ 6 ♃ 12 ♄ 19 ♂ 25 ♃ 30	♄ 10 ♂ 20 ☉ 30	♃	♄
♒	♃ D		♃ ♃	♃ 6 ♃ 12 ♀ 20 ♄ 25 ♂ 30	♀ 10 ♃ 20 ♃ 30	☉	
♓	♄ N	♀ 27	♂ ♂	♀ 8 ♄ 14 ♃ 20 ♂ 26 ♃ 30	♃ 10 ♄ 20 ♂ 30	♀	♀

[ [view a larger table](#) ]

The first column of the table indicates the signs of the zodiac.

The second column shows the traditional rulers of the signs. It is headed 'house' because ancient terminology referred to the signs that the planets ruled as being their natural 'houses' or 'homes'.

Apart from the Sun and Moon, each of the planets rules one sign by diurnal expression (D) and one by nocturnal expression (N). Hence Mars rules both Aries and Scorpio, but in Aries, its diurnal rulership, its energies are expressed more openly and directly; in Scorpio (its nocturnal rulership), its energies are more introverted and unconsciously driven. Diurnal simply means 'of the nature of the day'; nocturnal, 'of the nature of the night'. The terms 'diurnal and nocturnal' are synonymous with 'masculine and feminine', 'yin and yang',

**Horary Astrology**

Part of 6  
 go to part:  
 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Resources**

**Dignities Quiz**

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**The Philosophy of Sign Rulership**

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'extrovert and introvert'. Diurnal energy usually gives a more spontaneous reaction where inner drives are consciously expressed and clearly apparent. Nocturnal energy is usually more reflective and operates at a deeper level of consciousness.

In considering the traditional scheme, note from the illustration at the [top of the page](#) how the planetary rulerships fan out in a symmetrical pattern from the union of the Sun and Moon.

The **third column** shows where each of the planets are exalted. The specific degree of exaltation is included - these degrees are particularly notable although the dignity of exaltation is generally applied to the whole of the sign. Hence Mars is dignified at any position in Capricorn, the sign of its exaltation, but the dignity will be especially apparent in the 28th degree. The traditional exaltations of the nodes are included although I have never really seen these put to good use in judgements.

**The fourth column** shows the planetary rulership of the triplicities. You will see that the pattern repeats for the fire triplicity - Aries, Leo and Sagittarius; the earth triplicity - Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn; the air triplicity - Gemini, Libra and Aquarius; and the water triplicity - Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces.

In triplicity rulerships the planetary rulers change according to whether the chart is a daytime chart, (which features the Sun above the horizon), or a night-time chart, (where the sun has set). The 'D' and 'N' at the top of the column indicate the rulers by day and night. So if the chart is cast for noon then Saturn acts as the triplicity ruler of all the air signs; at midnight Mercury would be used instead.

**The fifth column** shows the degrees where rulership by term transfers. That is, Jupiter rules the first six degree of Aries, from 0°00' - 5°59'; Venus rules from 6°00' - 13°59' Aries.

Notice that the Sun and Moon do not rule any of the terms. Also that the malefic planets, Mars and Saturn rule the final terms of every sign (this principle is fixed from 27 degrees to the end of the sign). The malefics do not rule any of the middle terms (from 6 degrees - 19 degrees), which are all held by Mercury, Venus or Jupiter.

**The sixth column** shows the degrees where rulership by face transfers. That is, Mars rules the first ten degree of Aries, from 0°00' - 9°59'; the Sun rules from 10°00' - 19°59' Aries.

Notice how the order of planetary rulership over the faces winds across the column in descending order of their proximity to earth; that is - Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon.

As you read their order down the column, you find the pattern that matches the order of the days of the week - Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn:

Sun - Sunday

Moon - Monday

Mars - Tuesday (equivalent Scandinavian god *Tyr* - O.E.: *Tiw*)

Mercury - Wednesday (equivalent Scandinavian god *Odin* - O.E.: *Woden*)

Jupiter - Thursday (equivalent Scandinavian god *Thor*)

Venus - Friday (equivalent Scandinavian god *Frigg*)

Saturn - Saturday

**The seventh column** shows the signs where the planets experience detriment. These are the signs opposite the ones they rule, so apart from the Sun and Moon, each planet has two signs of detriment just as they have two signs of rulership.

**The eighth column** shows the signs where the planets experience fall. These are opposite the signs of exaltation, so each planet has only one sign of fall, just as they have only one sign of exaltation. Although the debility is applied throughout the sign, the specific degrees mentioned in the list of exaltations carry extra significance, so the 28th degree of Cancer is particularly notable as a degree of debility for Mars, being the sign and degree of its fall.

The following sections in this article explain the use of dignities, debilities and reception in chart interpretation. Before moving on, try the exercise below to make sure that you understand how to take dignities and rulerships from Ptolemy's table.

### Test your ability to read the table correctly

If you want to check that you can read this table correctly, try the following exercise - a link to the answers is given below.

- 1) In a day-time chart, Saturn is placed at 15°35' Taurus. List the planets that rule Saturn's position by sign, exaltation, triplicity, term and face. Does Saturn have any essential dignity in this position?
- 2) In a night-time chart, the Moon is placed at 19°45' Cancer. List the planets that rule the Moon's position by sign, exaltation, triplicity, term and face. Does the Moon have any essential dignity in this position?
- 3) In which three signs is Venus essentially debilitated?
- 4) In a night-time chart Mercury is at 26°12' Aries. List the planets that rule Mercury's position by sign, exaltation, triplicity, term and face. Does Mercury have any essential dignity in this position?

[View answers](#)

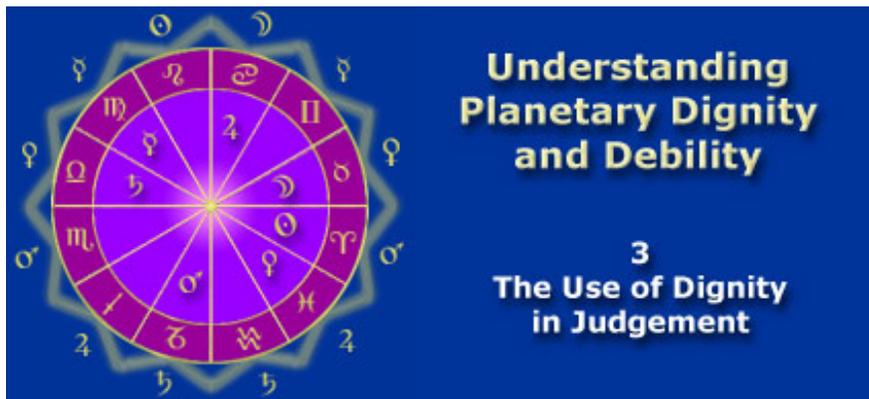
[continue to next part](#) 

[top](#) 

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- Introducing Dignity
- Ptolemy's Table of Essential Dignity
- The Use of Dignity in Judgement**
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- Assessing Dignity through 'point-scoring'
- The Use of Reception between Dignities
- Take a Test on Planetary Dignities & Debilities



[◀ back to part 2](#)

Throughout history, astrologers have used allegorical examples of territory ownership to illustrate the meaning of dignity in judgement. Although this may seem naive and unsophisticated to modern students, the technique of demonstrating interpretations via images we can conjure in our minds is an extremely effective way of communicating essential principles. The technique will be followed here by reference to historical examples.

### Dignity Rulership by Sign

Each classification of dignity, from sign down to face, represents a section of zodiacal territory that is said to belong to one of the planets. The strongest rulership is the dominion of the planets over the signs of the zodiac. Ptolemy and most early authors referred to the signs as the 'houses' of the planets, because the signs where the planets held their rulerships were regarded as their natural homes.

In symbolic application, a planet is in its strongest position when it is in its own home. In war and sport it's easy to see how the advantage goes to those who operate in their own territory and familiar ground. Lilly noted that in judgement, a planet or significator is in its own sign:

...represents a man in such a condition, as that he is Lord of his own house, estate and fortune; or a man wanting very little of the Goods of this world, or it tells you the man is in a very happy state or condition....

For the philosophical reasoning that lies beneath the structure of sign rulership, read the accompanying article [The Philosophy of Sign Rulership](#).

### Dignity Rulership by Exaltation

## Horary Astrology

Part of 6

go to part:

1 2 3 4 5 6

### Resources

#### Dignities Quiz

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#### View

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After its own sign, the next best place for a planet to be is in its sign of exaltation. In symbolic terms this is comparable to being an honoured guest in someone else's home. There is not the same level of freedom or strength as when a planet is in its own sign but it shows a dignified position, often indicating a person of respect or rank.

One has only to consider the meaning of the word 'exalted' to understand the use of this dignity in judgement. The 12th century Hebrew astrologer, Ibn Ezra, said that a planet in its own exaltation "*is like a man in the pinnacle of his rank*", while Lilly less flatteringly notes that it: "*presents a person of haughty condition, arrogant, assuming more unto him than his due*".

### **Dignity Rulership by Triplicity**

For anyone who has not encountered rulership by triplicity before, a brief word of introduction is necessary.

Much of classical astrology developed as a result of the Hellenistic perspective towards numerology and geometry. In this, the shape and form of the triangle and the metaphysical meaning of the number three was paramount. Hence the triplicities - triangles drawn within the zodiacal wheel - were extremely important.

At an early stage the triplicities were associated with the elements of Fire, Earth, Air and Water, but the basis of their harmonious relationship was the triangular form that bound them together.

The rationale behind the selection of the triplicity rulerships can only be explained by reference to how the triplicity rulers were used in Hellenistic astrology. The article [the classical use of triplicities](#) demonstrates their early use and also explains a philosophy that became an intrinsic foundation to aspect meanings. It is worth noting that there were originally three rulers for each triplicity, which changed their priority of rulership according to whether the chart was cast for day or night. Triplicity rulership became simplified to one main ruler by day and another by night as the significance attached to their use became diminished through the ages.

Ptolemy's table shows the primary ruler for each triplicity; again, this changes according to whether the chart is cast during the day or at night. The Sun is the principal ruler of the Fire triplicity by day but after sunset the principal rulership is transferred to Jupiter. Venus principally rules the Earth triplicity by day, with the onus of rulership given to the Moon at night. Saturn principally rules the Air triplicity by day, Mercury by night. The water triplicity, however, is principally ruled by Mars, both day and night, for reasons explained in the above-mentioned article.

Finding a ruler of a triplicity situated in its triplicity during its period of power is another indication of dignity and strength. Lilly says that it shows a man: *modestly endowed with the Goods and Fortune of this world*. While good, its condition is not as strong as a planet in its own

sign or exaltation. Ibn Ezra compared the situation to a man in the house of his relatives - his position is not as strong and comfortable as when he is in his own home, and he wouldn't expect to receive the same level of respect as an honoured guest, but he is in a familiar, relaxed environment and so this is considered to be a comfortable position.

### Dignity Rulership by Term

The word 'term', from the Latin *termini*, means 'boundary' or 'limit'. No-one knows exactly when term rulership was introduced into astrology but it is known to have been used by the ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians, though in a slightly different arrangement. Ptolemy argued on philosophical grounds that he had combined the best of both ancient systems to produce his own tables, and that his term boundaries were sympathetic to (and therefore supportive of), the use of signs, triplicities and planetary exaltations.

When a planet is in its own terms it is recognized as being in a situation of temporary strength, even though it may not otherwise be suited to the sign it is in. For example, Saturn is in detriment in Leo, yet if it is in the first 6 degrees it is in its own terms so this overall condition of weakness is somewhat alleviated. Ezra referred to such a planet as "like a man in his seat". We could compare the situation to someone who rents or owns a holiday villa abroad. The country may be generally unfamiliar but there is a sense of security when surrounded by one's own possessions.

The terms are also useful for showing physical description. That is, a significator in the terms of Saturn describes the native as Saturnine in appearance. This seems to be the principal use of the terms by Lilly, for although he considered a planet in its own terms to be fortified he thought that it: *rather shows a man more of the corporature and temper of the Planet, than any extraordinary abundance in fortune.*

### Dignity Rulership by Face

The lowest form of essential dignity is dignity by face - the 'decanates'. These owe their origin to the ancient Egyptian calendar, which divided the year into 36 ten-day periods, each presided over by a particular stellar deity. The decans or decanates (meaning 'tens') are known to have been important in late Egyptian astrology and we are told by the 4th century Roman astrologer Firmicus that the astrologer King Nechepso "... by means of the decans predicted all illnesses and afflictions". Nechepso reigned during the 7th century BC although Firmicus probably got his information from the astrological textbook of Nechepso and Petosiris, written around 150 BC.

Firmicus placed great emphasis on essential dignity by face saying that a planet in its own decan is as good as in its own sign (*Mathesis* II.IV. II). Later authors gave it less value. Ezra described a planet in its own

face as corresponding to a man with his ornaments and clothing, while Lilly said that in judgement:

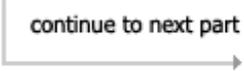
"A Planet having little or no dignity, but by being in his Decanate or Face, is almost like a man ready to be turned out of doors, having much ado to maintain himself in credit and reputation."

It portrays a picture of a person who carries some respect, but is struggling to maintain it.

Essential dignity then, is used to symbolise rank, position, and someone's material standing in the world. As a sign of esteem, it is also used to represent personal honour and integrity. The more essential dignity a planet has, the greater its position of strength, which is why it is very important to distinguish this when judging charts drawn for trials, contests, wars or elections.

The use of essential dignity is also crucial in numerous other matters, where the strongest, most dignified planet indicates who has the most to offer in a relationship, is the most likely to stand their ground, is better placed to receive a contract, and so forth. To have a significator essentially dignified is an all-round indication that the person is well suited and inherently capable of achieving what they are striving for.

The next section considers what it means when a planet has no essential dignity at all or is classed as essentially debilitated.

[continue to next part](#) 

[top](#) 

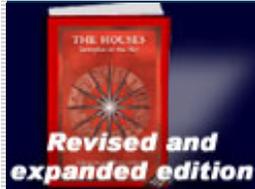
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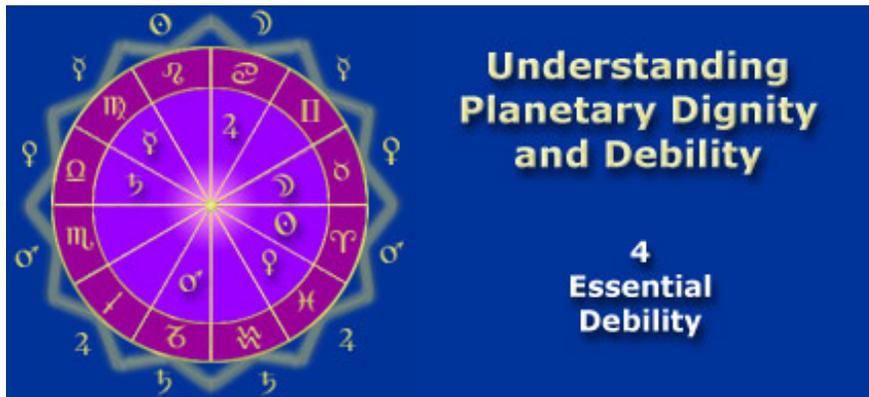
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Home Articles Forum Consultations Horary Section Quiz Events Database Links

- Introducing Dignity
- Ptolemy's Table of Essential Dignity
- The Use of Dignity in Judgement
- Essential Debility**
- Assessing Dignity through 'point-scoring'
- The Use of Reception between Dignities
- Take a Test on Planetary Dignities & Debilities



[◀ back to part 3](#)

### Peregrine

*A Planet is then said to be Peregrine, when he is in the degrees of any Sign wherein he hath no essential dignity, As Saturn in the tenth degree of Aries, that Sign being not his House, Exaltation, or of his Triplicity, or he having in that degree neither Term or Face, he is then said to be Peregrine; had he been in 27, 28, &c. of Aries, he could not be termed Peregrine, because then he is in his own Term. (Lilly, CA, p.112)*

Just as essential dignity signifies strength and a capacity for beneficial action, lack of it implies weakness or a harmful disposition. A planet with no essential dignity is called **Peregrine**, a Latin word meaning 'alien' or 'foreigner' (*pereger* = beyond the borders, *ager* = land, *i.e.*, 'beyond one's own land'). In old English, to 'peregrinate' means to wander far from home.

In symbolic terms, a peregrine planet describes a drifter - someone with no title or stake in his or her environment. Though it's helpful to think in terms of property, the comparison lends itself to the general tenor of the chart. If the peregrine planet represents a job offer, for example, it may suggest that there is little status attached to the job, or that there will be a poor sense of personal attachment to the position.

Property owners tend to view drifters with suspicion, and distrust their lack of stability. Peregrine planets share this dubious reputation so that in questions of theft a peregrine planet in an angle or the 2nd house is a classic indication of the signifier of the thief. (CA. p.112)

Under normal circumstances a peregrine planet lacks the necessary strength to convey lasting benefit. Its position of weakness can be alleviated, however, if it is strongly dignified accidentally or if it forms

### Horary Astrology

Part of 6  
go to part:  
1 2 3 4 5 6

#### Resources

##### Dignities Quiz

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##### View Lilly's Table to Examine the Strength & Debility of Each Planet

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a mutual reception with a stronger planet.

### Detriment and Fall

*As in taking the Fortitudes of the Planets, great care ought to be had, so their Debilities must be observed with no less care and prudence; wherein I advise you to beware of the Effects or Influence of a Planet when he is in Detriment; rather than when he is in Fall. For a Planet in his Detriment is like a person cast out of all his Estate without hopes of Recovery, whereas the Fall shows but a present subjection unto a misfortune with hopes of Recovery. (William Lilly, 'Choice Astrological Aphorisms' Merlini Anglici Ephemeris, 1676)*

If a planet is situated in a sign which opposes its own it is said to be in **detriment**, a word which literally means to be harmed or damaged. Since a planet's own sign is regarded as its stronghold, it follows that the furthest sign from this should be viewed as its most vulnerable position.

Similarly, just as signs of exaltation are said to elevate the planetary influences to their highest level, their opposing signs are known as signs of **fall**, because here the planets suffer loss of strength and a reduction of potency.

A planet in detriment or fall is in a precarious condition, more so if it is peregrine or otherwise afflicted. In horary the use of this symbolism is often remarkably literal and can be used to describe someone who has 'fallen' from grace or is incapable of maneuvering a situation to their advantage. In charts drawn to find a missing object, for example, a significator in detriment may suggest the object has been damaged; in its sign of fall it may have physically fallen to the floor. To have many planets debilitated in this way in a nativity is considered a sign of obscurity and low birth. Firmicus described such a person as: *wretched, poor, low of birth and constantly plagued by bad luck (Mathesis, 2.3.3).*

As well as considering a planet's own dignity or debility, it is wise to note how a planet 'responds' to another sign from which it receives an aspect. *"Be not too confident either of a sextile or trine Aspect in violent Signs, nor out of those Signs in which the Planets behold one another, yet essentially suffer" - warned William Lilly in his Astrological Aphorisms for Young Students.*

Thus, Venus in Capricorn benefits more from a trine from a planet in Taurus than one in Virgo, since the aspect from Taurus associates Venus with her sign of dominion while the trine from Virgo links her to her sign of fall.

The next section explains Lilly's table to calculate dignity or debility by numerical score - by use of an example horary.

[continue to next part](#) 

[top](#) 

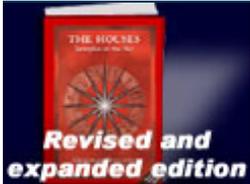
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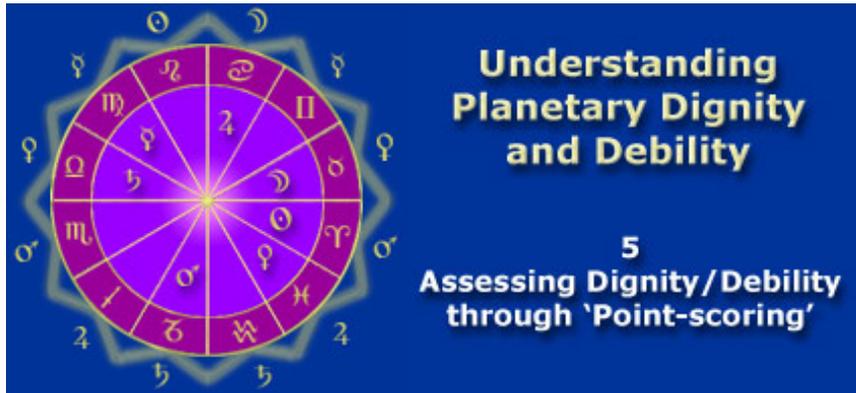


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[◀ back to part 4](#)

Throughout the ages, astrologers have sought a reliable method of evaluating planetary strengths by assigning numerical scores based upon certain dignifying or debilitating factors. The 11th century Arabic astrologer, Al-Biruni, mentions that this was common practice amongst the Babylonians and Persians, who compared the totals of each planet in order to discover which was most eminent in the chart. This was then known as the **Almuten** (from the Arabic: *al-mateen*, meaning 'the firm one' or 'strong in power'), or **Lord of the Geniture** (or Nativity), and given particular consideration for its powerful influence in defining the temperament and observable traits of the native.

Modern simplification of natal technique, which defines the 'Ruler of the Chart' purely by the planet that rules the sign on the ascendant, will obviously fail to draw the correct focus if dignifying and debilitating factors are not accounted for. In horary charts, sensitivity to a planet's overall condition is essential, particularly in contest charts, where the person symbolised by the highest scoring planet would then be judged most likely to succeed.

William Lilly gives a table of factors to consider on p.115 of *Christian Astrology* - 'whereby to examine the Fortitudes and Debilities of the Planets'. According to this, numerical scores vary from +38 for an exceedingly dignified planet to -38 for a severely debilitated one. Similar tables exist with various adaptations - some assign dignity for planets in their house of joy, and detract for planets in houses opposite their house of joy. Some give values for planets increasing in northern latitude and detract it for planets increasing in southern latitude. But overall it's important to understand that these tables exist as a guide to judgement, not a substitute for it. Ultimately common sense and a discretionary eye will replace the need to work with number-scores.

These tables are a good place to begin an examination of the concept of dignity however. Lilly's table is listed below, illustrated through an example chart by Derek Appleby, who set great store upon contest

## Horary Astrology

Part of 6  
go to part:  
1 2 3 4 5 6

### Resources

#### Dignities Quiz

Playing the interactive quiz '20 Questions on Dignities & Debilities' will test and reinforce your knowledge of dignity rulerships

#### View Ptolemy's Table of Essential Dignities

#### View Lilly's Table to Examine the Strength & Debility of Each Planet

#### The Classical Use of Triplicities

Explains the basis of triplicity rulership and examines the way it was used in Hellenistic astrology

#### The Philosophy of Sign Rulership

A clear explanation of Ptolemy's account of the reasoning behind the rulership scheme

charts responding to dignity scores.

### Lilly's Table to Examine the Strength & Debility of Each Planet

Essential Dignities		Essential Debilities	
In own sign or in mutual reception with another planet by sign [1]	+5	In Detriment	-5
In exaltation, or mutual reception by exaltation	+4	In Fall	-4
In own triplicity	+3	Peregrine	-5
In own terms	+2		
In own face	+1		
Accidental Dignities		Accidental Debilities	
In the 10th or 1st house	+5	In the 12th house	-5
In 7th, 4th, or 11th house	+4	In the 8th or 6th house	-2
In the 2nd or 5th house	+3		
In the 9th house	+2		
In the 3rd House	+1		
Direct in Motion [2]	+4	Retrograde	-5
Swift in Motion	+2	Slow in Motion	-2
Saturn, Jupiter, Mars when oriental [3]	+2	Saturn, Jupiter, Mars when occidental	-2
Mercury, Venus when Occidental	+2	Mercury, Venus when oriental	-2
Moon increasing in light (waxing)	+2	Moon decreasing in light (waning)	-2
Free from combustion and Sun's beams [4]	+5	Combust (within 8° 30' of Sun)	-5
Cazimi (within 0° 17' of the Sun)	+5	Under Sun's beams (within 17° of the Sun)	-4
Partile conjunction with Jupiter or Venus [5]	+5	Partile conjunction with Saturn or Mars	-5
Partile conjunction with North Node	+4	Partile Conjunction with South Node	-4
Partile trine with Jupiter or Venus	+4	Beseiged of Saturn and Mars [6]	-4
Partile sextile with Jupiter or Venus	+3	Partile opposition with Saturn or Mars	-4



1 ] Mutual reception is explored in the next section of this article. It occurs 'by sign' when a planet is located in a sign ruled by another planet which is simultaneously located in the first planet's sign - such as when Mars is in Libra and Venus is in Aries. Mutual reception 'by exaltation' is where a planet is in a sign that is the exaltation of another planet which is simultaneously located in a sign that is the exaltation of the first planet - such as the Moon in Aries and the Sun in Taurus.

[Back to text](#)

2 ] Not applicable to the Sun or Moon since they are always direct.

[Back to text](#)

3 ] In this context oriental means to rise before the Sun, occidental means to rise after the Sun. Lilly makes this clear on page 70 of *Christian Astrology* where he discusses the physical characteristics of the Sun:

For the Sun, we can only say he is oriental in the figure, or in the oriental quarter of the figure, or occidental, &c., all other planets are either oriental when they rise or appear before him in the morning. Occidental, when they are seen above the earth after he is set.

[Back to text](#)

4 ] The meaning of the terms 'combust', 'sun's beams', and 'cazimi' are explained under **combust** in the glossary of terms.

[Back to text](#)

5 ] A 'partile' aspect is one which is exact, or within 1 degree of perfection.

[Back to text](#)

6 ] Beseiged: *surrounded by hostile forces*; ie., to separate from Saturn and next apply to Mars (or vice versa).

[Back to text](#)

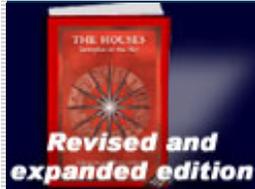
7 ] First published in *Traditional Astrologer* magazine, Issue 2 - Autumn 1993

[Back to text](#)

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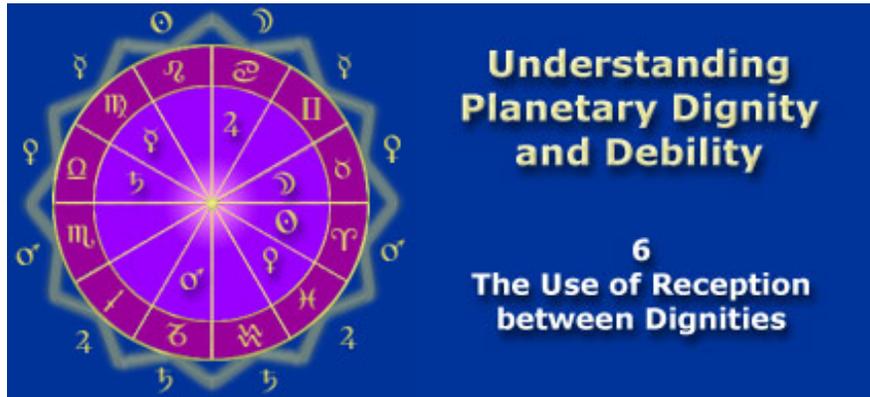


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Home Articles Forum Consultations Horary Section Quiz Events Database Links

- Introducing Dignity
- Ptolemy's Table of Essential Dignity
- The Use of Dignity in Judgement
- Essential Debility
- Assessing Dignity through 'point-scoring'
- The Use of Reception between Dignities**



[◀ back to part 5](#)

### Reception

The 11th century Arabic astrologer Al-Biruni described reception as a planet arriving in the dignities of another and offering it a compliment - such as 'your servant' or 'neighbour'. In giving the visitor 'a reception' there is an implication of tolerance and attention from the host, as well as an element of influence and control.

Consider the Sun in Libra. Venus is said to 'receive' the Sun because *he* is visiting *her* sign. In this capacity Venus is known as the Sun's **dispositor**. Traditional works frequently advise us to consider the strength of a planet's dispositor when evaluating its own condition because a dispositor's well being influences any planet in its sign.

Remembering that the ancients referred to the signs as 'houses', the influence of a dispositor can be likened to that of a property owner towards a residing visitor in his or her home. The owner's benevolence, well-being and disposition towards the guest reflects generally upon the comfort of his stay. It is always a bad indication to find a planet in a hostile relationship with its own dispositor, as it is to find the dispositor weak or badly afflicted.

The Sun in Libra is also received, to a lesser degree, by Saturn since he has dignity in Libra by exaltation. If the chart is a nocturnal one, Mercury offers a milder reception as ruler of the triplicity. Should the Sun be at 25 Libra, the minor receptions by term and face are from Mars and Jupiter respectively. In this degree then, the Sun is received by (and therefore has some familiarity with) all the traditional planets except the Moon.

The Sun is so located in the following chart:

### Horary Astrology

Part of 6  
go to part:  
1 2 3 4 5 6

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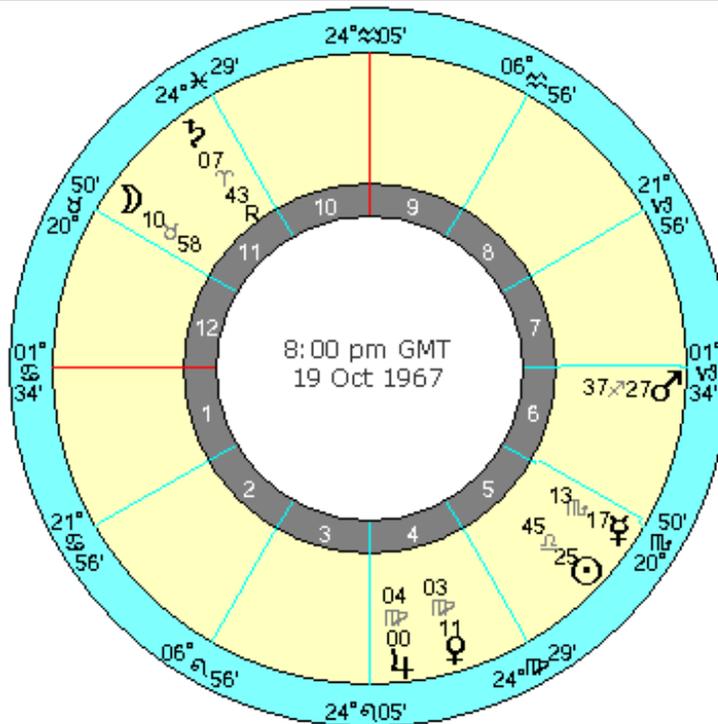
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PL	Long	Rul	Exn	Tri	Trm	Fac	Det	Fal
☉	25° 45'	♀	♄	♃	♂	♄	♂	☉-
☾	10° 58'	♀	D+	D+	♀	D+	♂	
♃	17° 13'	♂		♂	♀	☉	♀	D
♀	11° 03'	♃	♃	D	♀+	♀+	♄	♀-
♂	27° 37'	♄		♄	♂+	♃	♃	
♄	00° 04'	♃	♃	D	♃	☉	♄-	♀
♅	07° 43' R	♂	☉	♄	♀	♂	♀	♃-

Here, not only is the Sun in the exaltation of Saturn, Saturn is also in the exaltation of the Sun. This is called **mutual reception** because the planets are both receiving each other. Mutual reception is a good indication of familiarity between planets and in the above chart will help to lessen the hostility of the opposition aspect. It demonstrates that the planets' need to remain aware of each other and have a reason to be equally considerate. An allegorical example is where the leaders of two hostile countries are simultaneously visiting each other's land. Ordinarily, the hostile situation would suggest great danger, but each feels protected by the knowledge of the other's vulnerability to their power. Remember that exaltation is not always a comfortable dignity. Usually a mutual reception by exaltation will show that each planet feels driven to express or demand respect, and this can create tension as well as flattering attention.

Mutual reception does not have to be by the same level of dignity. If one planet receives another by sign, and the second receives the first by exaltation, that too is mutual reception. Mutual reception only indicates that both planets are receiving each other at the same time, and we can see from the dignities involved the extent to which they are capable of offering benefit through reception. To be received by sign or exaltation is much better than being received by term or face.

Where friendly aspects exist between the planets, mutual reception heightens the benefits that arise from active co-operation; it reveals a situation where there is an easy trade of status and the potential for each planet to acquire something positive from the other. Where unfriendly aspects are involved, being received helps to protect a planet against the damaging effect of the aspect so that it can still draw benefit from the aspect.

- Being received means that a planet is attended to. It is also less likely to be damaged by a malefic planet when it is received by it. This is the reason why many traditional authors have warned that aspects may be unable to produce a positive result if there is no form of reception between the planets.
- Mutual reception shows willingness, potential and inclination from both parties.
- Reception can aid the easy fulfilment of aspectual contact but the overall condition of the planets involved will show whether there is a realistic likelihood of benefit.
- In the example above, mutual reception by sign shows a ready ability for the Sun and Saturn to be receptive to the other's influence. However, both planets are detrimented so they probably have little benefit to convey to each other. Tom Callanan has referred to the mutual reception of planets in detriment as "like two drunks helping each other home". Where there is an easy relationship between the planets this offers only the potential to be affected by each other rather than turn and walk away from the influence. The planets are also in opposition so metaphorically we might expect that these two drunks, taking each other's conversation seriously, will soon start fighting in the street. It's questionable whether mutual reception would really bring much advantage in this situation.
- The *disposing* planet, (that is, the one which governs the territory), is the one which 'receives' the planet visiting its territory. This planet is receptive to the visitor but it also conveys its influence upon it and the planet being received will be affected by this. A planet in the exaltation of another may feel overwhelmed by their disposer, or through contact with them may experience a personally exalted state. The chart as a whole dictates how the influenced is expressed and received. Bear in mind the onus of the meaning is upon transference of influence or power.
- In relationship charts a lack of reception, or disparity suggested when one planet receives another by exaltation whilst the other doesn't receive or receives by only minor dignity, can portray a situation where one partner puts the other on a pedestal, yet the other is oblivious or feels only a passing interest.

- A difficult aspect without the assurance of reception usually shows a strained relationship with no inclination or practical advantages to working around the difficulties.

### Learn the Dignities!

Test your ability to apply this information by taking the fun quiz:

**Twenty Questions on Planetary Dignity and Debility**

[top](#) ↑

### Sources:

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Firmicus Maternus, 4th century, *Matheseos Libri VII*, 4th century, (Trans. J. Rhys Bram, 1975)

Al-Biruni, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, 1029 AD, (Trans. R. Wright, 1934)

Ibn Ezra, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, 12th century, (Trans. Raphael Levy and Francisco Cantera)

William Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 1647

William Lilly, *Merlini Anglici Ephemeris*, 1677.

Reprints of traditional texts are available from [Ascella Publications](#) and can be ordered through online suppliers such as [Midheaven bookshop](#)

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