

CHAPTER FOUR

SIGN-POSITION

IN my view sign-position is the least obvious of the three main factors that compose the horoscope.

Let me put it this way. Tabulate twenty cases wherein Mars is in Leo, and as many more in which it is in the 5th house, and again, twenty wherein it is in conjunction with the Sun: I believe that it will be found that the last list will show the action of the conjunctions clearly, and in the second list also the value of the house-positions will be easily discernible; but, without an intimate knowledge of the dispositions of the natives, it will sometimes be found hard to discover the significance of the sign-positions.

It is also difficult to distinguish the difference between one planet in a sign and another body in the same sign. One can, of course, distinguish in theory between, let us say, Mercury in Leo and the Sun in Leo; it is easy to do so. But it is not so easy to discover the actual difference in disposition in two individuals respectively having these positions.

Again, try to distinguish Saturn in Cancer on the M.C. and the same planet in Capricorn in the same mundane position. Again we can talk easily enough as to what the difference *should* be, but in actual practice the distinction is not so easy, and I believe that, in such a configuration, roughly two-fifths of the totality

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of significance is derived from the planet and as much to the mundane position, whilst only about a fifth can be ascribed to the sign concerned.

Sign-position, I venture to assert, is the finer shading of the nativity, and requires the deepest insight into character for its understanding as well as the most effective mastery of language for its expression.

Even the ascending sign, whilst very prominent in most cases, may be overshadowed by a rising planet. Supposing you had to hit off the most striking parts of a man's character, would you rather know what planet he had rising but not what sign, or what sign was on the ascendant, but not what planet? Personally I would certainly prefer that, if there were to be one or other limitation on my knowledge, I should know the rising planet, Neptune being, perhaps, the body which seems as a rule to modify the rising sign least. This, of course, by reason of its mild nature.

This statement must not be misunderstood as an affirmation of the non-importance of sign-values, but of their true relative value. I have tried to write on this subject, but I have been forced to the conclusion that, whilst one could do so from a theoretical point of view (as, in fact, others have already done), a treatise based on actual cases is impossible, inasmuch as an intimate knowledge of enough lives is unobtainable. And only a very great familiarity with temperament reveals the action of the sign-positions, at least in the majority of cases.

In this work I feel called upon to attempt some solution, or at least to express an opinion, upon the vexed and difficult problem of what we may continue, in medieval language, to call the planetary dignities.

In my *Astrological Aspects* I have expressed the view

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that aspectual values may be modified by sign-position values, e.g. it is better to have a square between dignified bodies than a trine between debilitated ones.

While writing *The Astrology of Accidents* fresh knowledge forced me to reconsider this view, for it became evident, from the tables therein printed, that planets—or at least several of them—reach their maxima values as indications of accidents when in their own negative dignities. This was shown to be the case in regard to the Moon, Jupiter, and Saturn, and Mars may almost be included, though his actual maximum was reached in Virgo. Of course it is admitted that the number of cases used cannot be regarded as sufficient to prove that these *are* the actual maxima, but it does probably suffice to show that these bodies are certainly not *less* liable to cause accidents when in these signs. And, if they are not well-placed from the accident-standpoint when in their negative dignities, it seems reasonable to suppose that they would also not be helpful from any other, for accidents are but one manifestation of disharmony. Thus a physical fall is but a specialized form of a tendency of which a fall from power (socially, politically, or economically) would be another.

Note that the table in question contains no evidence that the positive dignities are good; they, in turn, seem to be of indifferent value so far as accidents are concerned and I have never seen any statistical evidence that they have any special significance at all.

In a word, the table in *Accidents* implies that the positive dignities are meaningless and the negative ones are, at least in some cases, bad.

What is necessary is further statistical research to decide, if possible, whether (a) there is anything in

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sign-position at all;¹ (b) whether there is any truth in the traditional table of dignities and debilities and, if so, whether it is applicable in a general sense or only in a special sense and, if the latter, in what; (c) if the traditional tables are wrong, is there another which is valuable and, if so, is it of general application, or is each sign-position good or bad from specific points of view?

One might be tempted, pending the execution of this somewhat formidable programme, to decide that the traditional table is probably worthless and that every sign-position must be judged on its own merits, in relation to specific fields of activity. But the table in *Accidents* seems to indicate that the tradition is not groundless, but misunderstood and perhaps incorrectly handed down to us.

There is, of course, a strong belief among astrologers that the tradition of dignities is both correct and important, and I held this view myself, as mentioned above. Unfortunately, whenever I have tested the validity of this particular piece of tradition by objective methods, it has proved unreliable or definitely incorrect, and I am forced to the conclusion that, like many other things, sign-positions are good or bad according to circumstances. What these may be, only prolonged investigation can determine. Some we can guess with a fair chance of being correct, e.g. we may safely believe, for several reasons, including some statistical research, that the Sun is not well-placed in Pisces so far as longevity is concerned. But we should probably

¹ One may probably regard this as proven by (a) first principles, (b) the evidence of tradition, (c) our actual daily experience, (d) certain statistical work, which needs, however, much extension.

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be correct in assuming that it is a quite good position for the occupation of nursing. Yet how often our surmises are incorrect! In *Astrology* for December 1933 it was shown, as a result of the examination of 160 cases of cavalrymen, that the Sun was *least* often in Sagittarius and Virgo: the fact that Virgo is low would surprise no one, but that Sagittarius should share this distinction seems a clear reversal of all we know about the sign in connection with horses! Truly scientific astrology is as yet but a babe; we are at the beginning of things. Tradition has been a faithful beast and has carried us for many centuries, but she is unequal to modern requirements.

It is, of course, not difficult to find isolated cases to support almost any argument. For example, the map of the ex-Kaiser might be adduced as an example of the value of mutual reception. Despite an opposition of the Sun and Saturn, involving the 2nd house, he accumulated great wealth; he was, in fact, particularly successful in this respect. But, as a matter of fact, *any* configuration of these two bodies favours money-making, as can be demonstrated by the examination of the horoscopes of the rich, though an opposition may certainly cause heavy losses. A great many of our arguments about aspects, houses, and signs are due to insufficient real knowledge. For instance, I have heard a system of house-division condemned because "it puts Jupiter into my 2nd and I am not rich." Jupiter in the 2nd, even when strong, does not necessarily confer wealth (see Case No. 2, *Encyclopaedia of Psychological Astrology*, second edition). On the other hand, Saturn in the 2nd, even when weak, is compatible with riches (see Case No. 1 in the same work).

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Passing from the consideration of particular planets in particular signs we must pay attention to the general distribution of bodies in the zodiac.

As it seems that aspectual groupings and the principle of Integration relate to the power or energy in the nativity, so it appears that zodiacal distribution has to do with *balance*, and on the whole a good psychological result will follow, others things being equal, if there is not too heavy a preponderance:—

1. In the early part of the zodiac at the expense of the later, or vice versa.
2. In one quadruplicity or mode at the expense of the others.
3. In one triplicity or element at the expense of the others.
4. In positive signs or in negative.

Lack of balance and even development due to any of these four may be to some extent rectified by a mundane position or even by an aspect. For example, lack of air may be assisted by a rising Mercury or lack of fire by a rising Sun or Mars.

As regards 1 above, a preponderance of bodies in the first three signs indicates in many cases what would be often styled a *primitive* ego. This does not necessarily imply criminality and in its highest expression this type is objective, practical, and effective from a worldly point of view. But there is usually some crudeness and failure to appreciate intellectual and aesthetic values. At worst there can be violent criminality; and an examination of the maps of violent criminals will dispel any doubts that the reader may have as to the importance of this particular form of unbalance. I have certainly seen the maps of criminals of this type with the last signs heavily tenanted, but they are a marked exception.

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This rule does not appear to apply to crimes of dishonesty.

Horoscopes containing most bodies in the last three or four signs indicate an idealistic or, in undeveloped cases, a dreamy and imaginative type. It is notorious how often those with Aquarius and Pisces heavily tenanted are unpractical and wasteful of their time, possessing small executive abilities.

The former class seem to be possessed with the energy that makes them anxious, in any given circumstances, to "do something about it" and to assert themselves.

The classes Nos. 2 and 3 above hardly call for examination, for every astrologer learns the nature of the elemental and modal types from his first text-book, unless this is particularly unpsychological. The same is true of the positive and negative classes.

It may, however, be pointed out that a modal preponderance implies aspectual affliction. One cannot have most planets in cardinal signs without danger, either of a satellitium, or of several squares and oppositions, and the same is equally true, of course, of the two other modes.

Thus too much in cardinal signs usually imports not only much energy, but a taint of destructiveness; at best a reformer, at worst a violent criminal. High intelligence often goes with cardinal afflictions.

Preponderance in fixed signs tends also, unless the bodies happen to miss being in affliction, to violence, but of a very sudden character, breaking out from a normal static condition.

Preponderance in mutable signs indicates intelligence, but vacillation, nerve tension, and irritability.

Again, taking the elements, excess of fire runs to animal spirits and sometimes to lust; or, if there is