

# Planetary Condition according to the Ancients

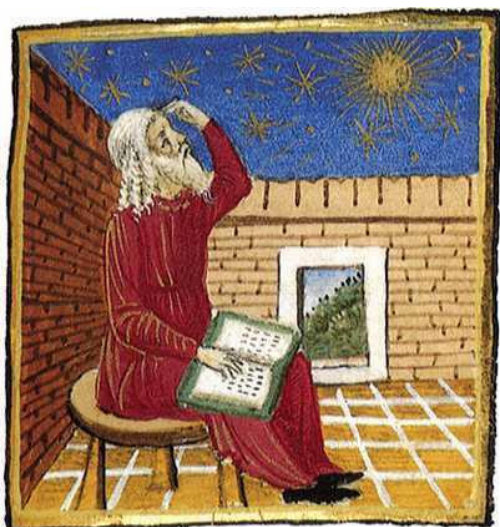
by Tess Cullen

The condition of a planet is at the very core of astrology according to the ancients. Everything is delineated through this fundamental viewpoint. Over the past 25 years, many translations of ancient Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian and Italian texts have become available to astrologers, circulating new information and techniques for the astrologers' tool bag<sup>1</sup>. This enables us to understand at a profound level the mechanisms that analyse the condition of a planet. The delineation processes regarding planetary power found within the ancient texts are essential for the modern astrologer to research and to incorporate into the structure of our craft - the reading of universal energies through the astrological chart.

The ancient astrologers only had the luminaries, namely the Sun and the Moon, and the visible planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn to work with. All attributes and delineations of an individual's character and behaviour, their circumstances and influences had to come from these seven heavenly bodies. The outer planets and the Asteroids did not exist. In the modern psychological view the outer planets Chiron, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto have become the easy receptacle of all those difficult, less than nice influences that affect our behaviours and decisions. Over time, the depth of information that can be gleaned from the luminaries and visible planets has suffered from this shift of focus.

## Planet Glyphs

☉	Sun
☿	Mercury
♀	Venus
☾	Moon
♂	Mars
♃	Jupiter
♄	Saturn
♅	Chiron
♁	Uranus
♆	Neptune
♇	Pluto



Through the study of ancient techniques and a look into the mindset of that time, we gain a thorough assessment of how a planet acts according to its sign and placement. Each planet's condition has important nuances that give a depth of colour and a more refined story to its behaviour. To the mind of the ancient astrologer planets were external forces that affected our lives. The planets can be likened to a group of people that influence your life. Your astrological chart indicates how these 'people' or influences will support you or undo you

<sup>1</sup> [www.projecthindsight.com](http://www.projecthindsight.com)

A group of well respected astrologers established Project Hindsight and, by 2003, they had published 15 units of translation on its Hellenistic Greek track (amounting to about 2/5 of the surviving astrological writings from Hellenistic times, 15 units of translation on its Medieval Latin track (making a serious dent in the vast number of Medieval Latin writings on astrology), as well as one unit of translation from Hebrew. The large majority of these works have never before been translated into English, and many have never been translated into any modern language.

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The ancients defined most of the visible heavenly bodies, Sun ☉, Moon ☾ Jupiter ♃, Venus ♀ & Mercury ☿, as benefic - inherently able to bring their riches to the table. The other two, Mars ♂ and Saturn ♄, are named malefics -. “They are malefic not because of their basic nature, but because they tend toward extreme expressions of themselves.”<sup>2</sup> The malefics were likely to cause harm if not well placed in the chart layout. (See chart one for planet glyphs).

In this article the focus is on the planet and its ability to function within a sign. This includes the systems of essential dignity; that is rulership, exaltation, detriment and fall, and the triplicity lords. There is however a secondary group regarding planetary condition namely term lords and face, they differ by assigning planetary rulership over particular degrees within a sign. These will not be discussed in this article but are worth looking into because they provide further insights into the behaviour of a planet.

### Essential Dignity

The construct of the Essential Dignity of a planet begins this journey of discovery into the ancient astrologers’ tool bag. Essential dignity gives a definitive process for weighing the strengths and weaknesses of a planet by its zodiacal position. (see chart below) The term Rulership is current in modern astrology yet a lot of finer details, depth and relevancy will become clarified by this study.

Planet	Rulership	Exaltation	Detrim ent	Fall
♄ Saturn	♈ ♉	♌	♍ ♎	♏
♃ Jupiter	♈ ♉	♌	♍ ♎	♏
♂ Mars	♏ ♐	♈	♉ ♌	♍
☉ Sun	♌	♏	♈	♌
♀ Venus	♈ ♉	♌	♏ ♐	♑
☿ Mercury	♍ ♎	♏	♈ ♉	♌
☾ Moon	♌	♈	♈	♌

**Rulership** places the planet in its **Domicile**, its home territory. The planet resides in the sign where its inherent capabilities are fully supported and enhanced. Notice that is Mars in Rulership in Scorpio, Saturn in Aquarius and Jupiter in Pisces. These traditional rulerships have often been slipped into the background since astrologers began their obsession with the outer planets. The rulership placement creates a planet that is a strong, effective helper/influence in the chart, able and courageous, one that will “fulfil its promise”. This placement has an inherent confidence that ‘wishes do come true’, you only have to ask for what you want. This is a very strong placement and creates a planet that can easily dominate a chart through its drive to manifest.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Crane, *A Practical Guide to Traditional Astrology*, ARHAT, 1997, p4

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Zodiac Glyphs	
♈	Aries
♉	Taurus
♊	Gemini
♋	Cancer
♌	Leo
♍	Virgo
♎	Libra
♏	Scorpio
♐	Sagittarius
♑	Capricorn
♒	Aquarius
♓	Pisces

The rulership relationship between planet and sign has a dual role because it also acts as the **dispositor** in the chart. The dispositor is the planet that has domicile rulership over the sign in which a planet is placed. eg. The Sun in Aries is disposed by Mars. The dispositor plays the backstop, effectively or ineffectively depending on its condition.

**Exaltation** is also a very benevolent position that allows the planets wishes, drives and goals to be fulfilled. Exaltation has a difference to rulership whereby in this placement the planet must work, step forth and put in some effort towards its goals. Even though this placement oozes confidence, the embodiment of the planetary energy never quite relaxes into complacency because of the effort involved in fulfilling its purpose. It doesn't want to lose what it has gained. This is a place in which we strive for the highest, move through our limitations and break through the barriers that we are born with.

However it must be said that, for rulership and exaltation, the embodiments of these planets wishes are not always positive. The planets placement and relationship to other planets and the angles also drive it. Is this planet and its placement such that it is effective in the chart? Is its dispositor in a strong condition with good position, and therefore giving sound advice? The drive of planets placed in rulership or exaltation is strong and they will succeed, for better or worse!

**Detriment** is a most interesting placement. The planetary placement is in the sign opposite its domicile rulership. ie for example, Mars is in its rulership in Aries and Scorpio and therefore in its detriment in Libra and Taurus. In detriment a planet resides in a sign that is in someway uncomfortable with the natural manner of the planet. Sometimes this school of 'hard knocks' manifests as an ebb and flow of success, learning through loss as much as through gain. The influence of a planet in detriment chooses an individual approach. The individual often has a different value system to the mainstream of the time. They can be quite successful in life just not in the usual way. This planet, friend or influence values success differently, the focus can be placed on the journey rather than the destination. Stepping out of the box will sometimes pay off and sometimes it will not, there is always a risk when you depart from the status quo.

**Fall** is the sign placement that lands opposite a planets sign of exaltation - Mars is in its exaltation in Capricorn and therefore in its fall placement in Cancer. Fall is a place where the expression of the sign and planet are truly at odds with each other, either too free or too restricted or as in the case of the Moon in the sign of Scorpio the warrior, the expression is too martial, too intense. At worst it can exacerbate the negative qualities of each, the planet and the sign, and make for seemingly odd decisions or no decision at all. With this placement the activity of the planet will not fit within the norms of society or even the norms of your family. The 'black sheep' going its own way, driven by a very personal answer to 'what is success'. As a friend

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or influence it has the element of unpredictability and cannot always be relied upon because it may just let you down. It may just as easily surprise you with unique thought processes that create radical choices.

Both these placements, detriment and fall, lead people down inherently different and difficult paths which do not always gain the simple congratulations of outer society or family. We must remember the underlying rules of behaviour are set as much by our family of origin as by our culture. These placements can create a “wild card” effect, the individual must learn to work with this, befriend this essentially uncomfortable part of their nature and find ways to express it usefully. Left unchecked or unbalanced by other stronger and more positive influences this placement can find it very difficult to achieve its goals. Do not be disheartened for plenty of “wild cards” make quite a life for themselves. This can be the one thought that can object to the general order and make a choice toward the difficult path of going against the crowd if need be.

Using all four of the essential dignity placements to find a lot more definition and character associated with the behaviour of a planet within the territory of a chart. The following example shows the use of the essential dignity placements in action, the chart belongs to Michael Hutchence of INXS fame, who died in 1999.

### **Micheal Hutchence**

Chart details: 22 Jan 1960, 5am, Sydney, Australia<sup>3</sup>

The chart of Michael Hutchence has planets in all the essential dignity placements. The planets Jupiter and Saturn are in rulership, Mars is in exaltation, the Sun is in detriment and the Moon is placed in fall.

Saturn in Capricorn in the 12 house is lord of his ascendant and aspects the MC. This makes it a extremely effective planet in his chart that is out to fulfil its promise. It has tenacity, a commitment to hard work and long term goals.

Jupiter in rulership in Sagittarius has the quality of those born to rule, as well as the acquisition of riches and fame. Jupiter is conjunct and disposes Venus, lord of the MC, denoting his career in the arts. These two planets work together to drive Michael toward greatness and huge popularity. His father wrote that he admired Michaels “wonderful spirit..... he was so confident and enterprising - and they [the band] did meet the right sort of people.”<sup>4</sup>

Mars is in exaltation in Capricorn and is also lord of an angle, the IC, it is equally driven by its conjunction with Saturn toward success. This combination has enormous resources of energy but never knows when to stop; it can work itself too hard.

The Sun placed in detriment in Aquarius charismatically placed on the Ascendant and shines its uniqueness to the world. Ordinary boy makes good!! Music Journalist, Toby Creswell, states “Hutchence was disarmingly different from what anyone would

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<sup>3</sup> Solar Fire

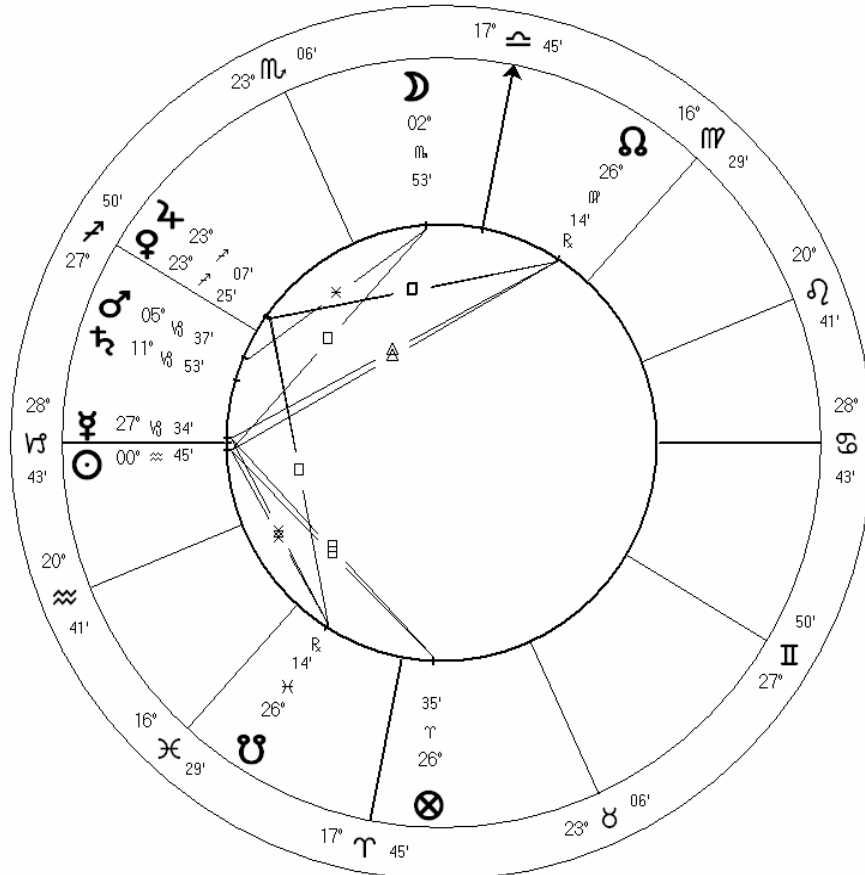
<sup>4</sup> Kelland Hutchence <http://www.michaelhutchence.org/life/> accessed 25.4.05

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expect of an Oz rock pop star. He was fiercely ambitious but he took little other than his music with too much seriousness.”<sup>5</sup>

The Moon in Scorpio in the tenth puts his personal life and emotional intensity on show to the world. This fall placement sits on the fringe of society but its unpredictability can also be its downfall. It was noted by Toby Creswell that Michael was “a wonderful man who had weathered many ups and downs in his life”<sup>6</sup>

**Michael Hutchence**  
**Male Chart (10)**  
22 Jan 1960  
5:00 am -10:00  
Sydney, Australia  
33°S52' 151°E13'  
Geocentric  
Tropical  
Placidus  
True Node  
Rating: B



These are simplistic statements referring only to the essential dignity of the planetary placements. Incorporating this way of delineating planets can help us to define the storylines of this chart.

### Planets in their Triplexity

Another important system of rulership that has been rediscovered for use by the modern astrologer is the Triplexities. The ancients defined a relationship between the planets and the elements which, when properly aligned, is of benefit to the planets nature. This rich and powerful delineation tool gives minor dignity to a

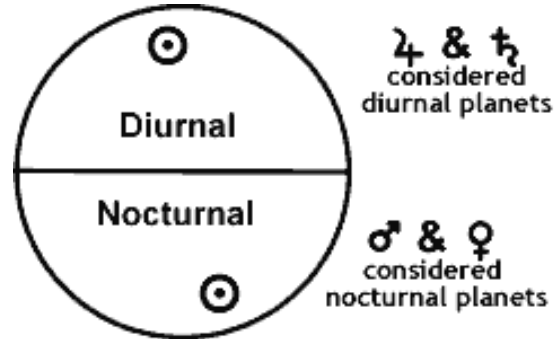
<sup>5</sup> Toby Creswell *The man and his music* - <http://www.michaelhutchence.org/media/>

<sup>6</sup> op cit

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planet. There is much more than dignity to the Triplicities and studied further they will give more information about reception, the house system and stages of life.

To understand the triplicities we must understand that the ancients saw all things, where possible, within the duality of diurnal (day) and nocturnal (night) and assigned charts, rulerships and planets accordingly. Diurnal means that the Sun is above the horizon; nocturnal means that the Sun is below the horizon. The only exception to this is the Sun. When its placement is less than 10 degrees below the horizon it is considered diurnal, the time of light has begun for that day. The chart of Michael Hutchence would be considered diurnal even though the sun is below the horizon.



The diurnal planets are the Sun, Jupiter and Saturn. The nocturnal planets are the Moon, Venus and Mars. Mercury never to be pinned down was considered by nature more diurnal than nocturnal and is associated with the diurnal planets for this triplicity rulership.

In the Dorothean system of Triplicities, there are three different rulers - a diurnal, nocturnal and participating ruler, as shown in the table below. For the purpose of this article in which we are looking at the inherent dignity of a planet, these divisions are not considered - only the planets relationship to the element is. In the Dorothean Triplicities the benefic planets, the Sun, the Moon, Jupiter, Venus and Mercury are placed in the elements most suited to their nature. The malefics are placed in elements that balance or modify their behaviour. For example Saturn is warmed up in Fire and given expansion in Air whereas Mars is slowed down in Earth or cooled by water.

Element & Sign	Diurnal	Nocturnal	Participating
<b>FIRE</b> Aries, Leo, Sagittarius	☉ Sun	♃ Jupiter	♄ Saturn
<b>EARTH</b> Capricorn, Taurus, Virgo	♀ Venus	♁ Moon	♂ Mars
<b>AIR</b> Aquarius, Libra, Gemini	♄ Saturn	☿ Mercury	♃ Jupiter
<b>WATER</b> Cancer, Pisces, Scorpio	♀ Venus	♂ Mars	♁ Moon

### DOROTHEAN TRIPLICITIES

In the Triplicity system, the condition of a planet is that when a planet is in its own triplicity it is in rapport with that element and gives the planet minor dignity. That is to say that when the Sun is in a fire sign it has a natural rapport with the fiery

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element and is thus able to act truer to its nature. Thus the story of the Sun in a fire sign is that in Leo it is in rulership and its own triplicity, in Aries it is in exaltation and its own triplicity and in Sagittarius it is in its own triplicity which assigns the sun various degrees of dignity in all the fire signs. From this viewpoint we find the luck associated with being born with the Sun in a fire sign.

Let's look at Saturn's story. Saturn is in its own triplicity in a fire sign, whereby it improves its disposition and is therefore able to bring forth its better qualities. If Saturn were in a water sign it would add to the coldness of its nature, and make it even more dour than it already is. As this article is written Saturn is in the latter degrees of Cancer, in detriment and not in its triplicity, and will soon move into Leo. When Saturn moves into a fire sign, its triplicity placement, we can expect an improvement in its nature, a little spring in its step perhaps. Triplicity is not as great a dignity as rulership or exaltation but there is a sense of comfort, of moving forward and improving. The story of nuances begins by combining rulership, exaltation, detriment, fall and the triplicities; we can gain more information about a planet's condition and therefore its behaviour. We can even go further and say that Saturn prefers its rulership in Aquarius more than Capricorn because in the Air sign of Aquarius it is in its own triplicity and will bring a lighter more creative manner to its expression.

There are many placements where a planet has no essential dignity or triplicity story for example Mars in Sagittarius, Leo, Aquarius or Gemini - in these circumstances the planet / friend / influence is not helped or hindered, just left to its own devices. The condition of the planet's dispositor is of direct influence. Think of Mars as the warrior, the soldier or the manual labourer without strong guidance, and left to its own devices. Mars, to be truly useful, needs to be very good at what it does, with luck and synchronicity on its side, or sound advice from its dispositor. Without this luck, synchronicity or guidance, Mars will keep going and not know when to stop fighting, or working. With not enough activity or direction Mars will create havoc. Give thy Mars a useful activity and keep him busy.

Michael Hutchence's Moon in Scorpio gives us an example of the inter-relationship of planetary condition. The Moon which is in detriment is prominently placed in the tenth house of his chart. Its placement in a water sign places it in its own triplicity which improves the effect of its behaviour. This helps Michael to choose music and song as his emotive medium of expression. The Moon's dispositor is an exalted Mars also in its triplicity placement. Mars comes to the aid of and backs up the Moon. Michael's enormously energetic performances were intensely moving experiences showcasing his vulnerability and sexuality. The triplicity placements of both the Moon and the exalted Mars help to create a positive outlet for the wild emotional world of the Moon in Scorpio.

There is so much more than that can be said about planetary power. As the understanding of these ancient interpretive techniques are integrated the modern day astrologer will discover the incredible depth found in these simple yet direct answers to life's issues abundantly useful. Wisdom from the ancients can easily be incorporated into our tool bag. It is time to embrace this astrological knowledge. This is only the beginning.