

# The Down-to-Earth Sky: An Introduction to Morin's Method of Determination by Penny Seator

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The character and physical make-up are actually brought to completion by the disposition of the sky which at a suitable time brings the child forth from the womb in accordance with its destiny. And - as it were - a seal is imprinted on the native which is a representation of the nature, condition, location, and particular determinations of the celestial bodies.

- *Astrologia Gallica*, Book 21

Jean-Baptiste Morin de Villefranche, 17th-century French astrologer, physician, and mathematician, wrote a 26-book treatise on astrology and natural philosophy that sets out a systematic and practical astrological approach.<sup>1</sup> The treatise, written in Latin, was published posthumously in Paris in 1661 under the title *Astrologia Gallica*. Morin intended in the work to cull a reasoned and elegant system of horoscope interpretation from what he saw as a compromised Western astrological history.

Morin's method of determination, which is the foundation of his system, relies on astrological houses to show how influences<sup>2</sup> enter individual lives. The method highlights the Ascendant as the basis of down-to-earth astrology.

Morin demonstrates that a planet and the sign it occupies have general (or universal) significations that do not reveal the planet's particular significations in a horoscope. He identifies the misuse of planets' universal significations as an error that compromises astrology. This essay tracks Morin as he considers the use and misuse of universal significators, and as he defines planetary *nature*, *celestial state*, and *terrestrial state*. It follows him as he systematically combines these factors by means of *analogy* to specify a planet's significations in a horoscope. In Morin's system, a planet's nature and celestial state - its placement in the Sky - show its influence; houses, particularly the Ascendant, represent the native, the receiver of influences who determines the planet's particular effects. One section of this essay glances at the Ascendant through the lens of Morin's method; another section notes some of the method's implications for understanding human action. The essay demonstrates the basics of Morin's system using the natal horoscope of Sarah Vaughan, and concludes with recognition of Morin's gift to astrologers.

## Misuse of Universal Significators

Morin demonstrates that astrologers have misused the universal significations of planets and signs. A *universal significator* refers to all members of a class or category, without distinction among them. A planet is a universal significator of those sublunary things that are analogous to its categorical nature.<sup>3</sup> In other words, a planet signifies by its nature a whole class of things with which it has an analogy<sup>4</sup> - the things the planet is said to rule. Each thing in the category a planet rules is a potential referent of the planet in a horoscope; it is a thing the planet universally signifies.<sup>5</sup>

Morin says astrologers have relied on planets to show, by nature alone, which of their analogical significations operate in a horoscope. A universal significator, however, does not distinguish among members of the category it rules; a planet by its nature signifies, without distinction, all its categorical meanings. To make the point, Morin quotes a question that the 16th-century astrologer Girolamo Cardano posed:

'Cardanus' states that Ptolemy introduced a great deal of confusion when he assigned several meanings to one significator, and made the Moon, for example, the significator of the body, the morals, the health, the wife, mother, daughters, maid-servants and sisters. Says Cardanus: 'What then must be the condition of the Moon in the horoscope of one whose wife had died in childbirth but himself lived a long life, who had many healthy daughters but also maid-servants who ran away, who had a sound body but a mother who died young, and who himself showed a poor moral character?'<sup>6</sup>

Morin imagines others may say that sign occupation and aspects condition a planet's significations and thereby specify the planet's meaning in a horoscope. Morin agrees that what he calls (in translation) a planet's *celestial state* qualifies the planet's meaning in a horoscope. Yet, although celestial state qualifies and, therefore, narrows, it does not particularize:

Ptolemy, Cardanus, and others were also in error when they claimed that in every diurnal horoscope judgment concerning the father of the native is to be made from the celestial state of the Sun ... [T]hey did not see that this is absurd, because if the Sun were in Leo and, for example, conjunct or trine Jupiter or Venus no child would be born anywhere on earth during the course of that day whose father would not be fortunate and long-lived ... And of course, as this aspect would remain in effect for several days it is clearly foolish to suppose that during this period every child born would have the same kind of father ... <sup>7</sup>

Celestial state, which refers to all significant elements of a planet's placement<sup>8</sup> in the Sky, includes (1) a planet's sign occupation, particularly whether it is in domicile, exaltation, triplicity, exile (detriment),<sup>9</sup> fall, or is peregrine; (2) the nature and celestial state of the planet's dispositor and the planet's aspectual relationship, if any, with its dispositor; (3) aspects from other planets considered by nature and celestial state, and as delivered in a particular aspect form; and (4) various other factors such as planetary motion (direct or retrograde, rapid or slow), whether the planet is oriental of the Sun or occidental of the Moon, and so on.

Skeptics argue that astrologers make statements that are general and, therefore, broadly apply to many people. Morin would say that astrologers' statements reliably apply to a particular person only if we make right use of astrological determinations. Yet, as Morin notes, sometimes interpretations based only on planetary nature and celestial state seem to work. In some horoscopes, the Sun *does* signify honors; sometimes the Moon *is* a significator of moral constitution. As a result, Morin says, astrologers have come to misuse universal significators to the compromise of astrology.

## Terrestrial State

In Morin's method, astrological houses limit and direct - that is, *determine* - the universal meanings of planets and signs to particularize and concretize their meanings in a horoscope. Morin sets out his method of determination in *Astrologia Gallica's* Book 21.

*Determine* derives from the Latin *terminare* ("to set bounds to") and can be defined as: "to limit; (*logic*) to limit by adding differences, to limit in scope; to give a terminus or aim to, to give tendency or direction to, to decide the course of, to impel to; to give a direction or definite bias to."<sup>10</sup>

Morin shows that the houses of a horoscope determine and so particularize astrological effects. He explains that planets transmit influences that houses receive and determine to earthly realizations: Astrological houses limit and direct significations inherent as potentials in a planet's nature and celestial state to shape the planet's influence in a life. Morin (in translation) refers to a planet's placement within the houses as its *terrestrial state* or *local determination*.

In descending order of influential strength, a planet's terrestrial state is its (1) *location*: the house in which it sits; (2) *rulership*: the houses it rules (which answers the question: from where does this planet come?), the house location of its dispositor (which answers: to where does this planet go?), and the house location of planets it disposes (which fleshes out the answer to: from where does this planet come?); (3) *aspects* and (more weakly) *antiscia*: the planet's relationship by aspect or antiscion with planets located in houses, and with house rulers and house cusps; and (4) *reflection*:<sup>11</sup> the planet's influence on the house opposite the one in which it sits. These determinations are reducible to the two basic forms of local determination: location and rulership.

Robert Corre uses the image of an artesian spring to explain the means by which houses - which represent Earth and earthlings - determine the Sky. An artesian spring bubbles up from beneath the ground in a manner determined by its nature, quantity, and quality, and by forces that propel it. Once it rises to the surface, the topography of the land onto which the water courses directs and conditions its flow. Without knowledge of the land onto which the water emerges, we cannot know where the water will flow when it reaches the surface, or whether it will become stream, fountain, lake, or flood.

Morin shows that, to transliterate the Sky into earthly meanings, we rely on the houses to represent life on Earth. Houses relate to things and events that people care about. We care about body, home, partner, children, work and career, friends, food, money, health, illness, death, and so on. Morin gives us a scheme that enables us to translate the Sky's symbols into human terms.

### **Nature, State, Determinations, and Analogies**

Morin's method shows its power when he uses *analogies* to combine a planet's *nature* with its *celestial state* and *local determinations*. Morin demonstrates how, with systematic combination of these factors, the astrologer can assess the strength, quality, and direction of each planet's influence. To form an image of a living person from the horoscope's symbols, the astrologer systematically analyzes combinations of houses, signs, and planets whose effects are actualized and made visible through analogy. Morin's system guides the astrologer to see analogies as they selectively light up networks of influence and determination that planets and signs string among themselves and direct from house to house.

When a planet's nature, celestial state, and local determinations are unified by shared analogy, the planet realizes signified house affairs. For example, if Jupiter is well-placed in Sagittarius in the 10th house and receives a trine from the Sun in Leo in the 5th, the shared analogies to honors, creativity, and visibility signify a publicly honored and creative destiny. Each planet, however, exists in a community of planets in which each has a distinct nature, particular state and determinations, and powerful influence. It is usually necessary to evaluate and synthesize multiple planetary placements that affect particular house affairs to understand their relative and combined influences. Combinations of planetary placements that are confluent (analogous) and strong (or, in the absence of beneficial realization, weak) are needed to predict readily apparent results.

Morin's discussions of planetary nature, strength, and celestial state, are multifaceted. In basic terms, a planet's *nature* shows whether the planet will realize house affairs. A planet's influential nature<sup>12</sup> is known through its categorical analogies; these analogies are the source of the benefic or malefic<sup>13</sup> nature of a planet's influence. A planet's *strength*<sup>14</sup> - a measure of the *quantity* of its influence - calibrates *how much* the planet will realize in the house affairs that it influences. Its *quality*, seen in *celestial state*, indicates whether realization of house affairs will be refined, satisfying, and stable, and whether realization will be achieved through ethical, well-timed, and harmonious means.

Factors of planetary *strength* include location or rulership in angular houses (especially the 1st or 10th), occupation of cardinal signs, disposition of many or key planets, disposition by a strongly placed planet (especially with an aspect from the dispositor), participation in exact aspects or in aspects with many planets, aspects to the Ascendant or Midheaven or their rulers, aspects to the Sun or Moon or their dispositors, and aspects to other key planets. The other end of the spectrum of strength includes location or rulership in cadent houses, occupation of dual (mutable) signs, disposition of no planets or few relatively weakly placed planets, a dispositor whose placement is relatively weak, and participation in few or wide aspects, especially to relatively weakly placed planets. The lights (the Sun and Moon) strongly placed, especially in aspect to the Ascendant and to each other, or to the Midheaven, also contribute mightily to strength.

Primary factors of a planet's *good celestial state*, which favorably condition its nature and show the *quality* of its influence, include occupation of a sign with which the planet's nature is compatible (where it is in honor by domicile, exaltation, or triplicity),<sup>15</sup> favorable aspects from benefic planets, absence of unfavorable aspects from malefic planets, and a dispositor well conditioned by celestial state.

Morin shows that a planet in a horoscope first identifies itself by house *location* and *nature*. A natural benefic located in a fortunate house realizes house affairs through the benefic analogies that planet and house share. A natural malefic located in an unfortunate house (primarily the 6th, 8th, or 12th) tends to give effect to unfortunate shared analogies. The confluent effect is further heightened when

the planets celestial state also bears an analogy to its nature and determinations. Contrary analogies or the absence of analogies limit or deny realization of house affairs. A natural benefic located in an unfortunate house protects the native from misfortunes of the house, and tends to bring out the house's potentially beneficial significations. A natural malefic - primarily Saturn, Mars, and (post-Morin) the modern planets - located in a fortunate house tends to obstruct or disrupt realization.

When Morin looks at determination by house location, he considers the influence on house affairs of one planet located in a house. He also considers multiple planets located in a house and measures their relative and combined influence on the house. He weighs each planet's influence based on considerations of its rulership in the house, its analogy with affairs of the house, its orb of conjunction to the house cusp, its relationship to its dispositor and to the house ruler, and its place in the sequence of planets through the house, among other factors.

After Morin considers a planet's nature, location, and celestial state, he factors in *remaining elements of terrestrial state*. *Rulership* is the second most effective form of local determination. Morin looks at the effect of a house ruler located in a house it rules, and he considers the effect of a house ruler located in another house. He shows that planets related by disposition shape each other's local determinations, and demonstrates how a planet and its dispositor combine the effects of one house with those of another. House rulers include rulers primarily by domicile, importantly by exaltation, and weakly by triplicity. Planets that rule a sign placed in a house but do not rule the house cusp also act as rulers of the house.

The third form of local determination is given to a planet by *aspect*. A planet that sends an aspect to a house cusp, house ruler, or a planet located in a house is thereby given a determination to the affairs of the house it influences. An aspect between planets acting in accord with their local determinations modifies the terrestrial state of each mutually aspecting planet. Planets combine the affairs of one house with those of another by their mutual aspects.

Morin considers the panoply of combinations of natural benefics and malefics in good, intermediate, and poor celestial state given determinations to fortunate and unfortunate houses. For example, a natural benefic in good celestial state that is given a determination to a fortunate house to which it bears an analogy generates refined, satisfying, enduring, and well achieved realization of house affairs. A natural benefic in poor celestial state realizes affairs of a fortunate house; the realization, however, may be of compromised quality, may prove unsatisfying or unstable, or may be accomplished by questionable means. The poor celestial state of a natural malefic renders its influence more difficult to manage. A natural malefic's good celestial state lends it benefic effect, and gives it capacity to realize fortunate affairs or avert some unfortunate realizations - at least in the fortunate houses. Yet, whatever its state, a planet always influences by its nature:

[A] malefic even in good state always grants things attended by imperfections, or through evil methods or in difficult ways, or with some accompanying misfortune, because of the malefic nature of the planet through which it is more prone to evil than to good. Whence it can be said that malefics in good celestial state in the fortunate houses are like a dissonance in music that has been resolved to produce a consonance.<sup>16</sup>

## The Ascendant

The rising point, or Ascendant, is the originating place where the band of Sky in which the planets wander touches the Earth. In most methods of house division, the Ascendant is the first point the system defines and, with the Midheaven, the point from which houses are constructed. The Sky enters the ken of earthlings at the Ascendant. We turn east (from Sanskrit *ushas*, "dawn") at sunrise to know and enter the coming day; we turn to the Ascendant to know a person. The Ascendant describes the person and the person's orientation (from Latin *orienter*, "to place facing east") to life.

Consistent with tradition, Morin refers to the 1st house as the House of Life. Robert Corre teaches, as Zoltan Mason taught, that the Ascendant is 80% of the horoscope: the sign on the ascendant and planets connected to the Ascendant contribute to the formation of personality.<sup>17</sup> Mason placed his finger on the Ascendant as he interpreted a horoscope to remind himself to keep track of the rising point.

The horoscope shows how the native receives and determines influences. Factors that do not appear in the horoscope are also determinative. Those factors are, first, whether the horoscope is correctly cast; and second, whether it is the horoscope of a human birth - circumstances the horoscope does not show. Nor does the horoscope show the person's social, cultural, and religious background, gender, or (without calculation from planetary positions) age. As Morin explains and Corre emphasizes, the horoscope shows only half the picture; the other half is the context in which the horoscope operates.

## Action and Determination

In Ptolemaic cosmology,<sup>18</sup> the *primum caelum*, which translates to "first heaven," is the first moveable sphere and the sphere of fixed stars. The *primum caelum*, as the first cause in Nature, imparts motion to lower celestial spheres that carry planets in their orbits. In the traditional view that informed Morin's thought and practice, the Unmoved Mover inspires love - experienced as breath - that animates the cosmos and generates life as it also draws the creature home to its source.

In Morin's model, at creation the Author of Nature determined the nature and active power of the *primum caelum*, and determined the planets' essential natures and active powers; the planets determined the zodiacal signs. As a result of planets' original determination of signs, planets and signs work as (cooperative or uncooperative) partners through relationships found in rulership, sign occupation, and analogies. Since creation, planets and signs mutually determine each other. Planets, acting as transmitters of signs' influences and as senders of their own natural and conditioned influences, are first causes that actively influence houses; houses - which represent Earth and so represent us - receive and determine influences of planets and signs. When humans act as a result of influences we receive, we become, Morin says, "particular causes of [our] own effects."<sup>19</sup>

This model of the relationship of cause, creative determination, and effect is a schema of cosmic order. It shows how human beings become creative actors: In Morin's traditional view of cosmos, we are secondary causes who act to determine the particular effects of celestial first causes. With Morin's method, we can assess influences, circumstances, and potentials in accord with cosmology to focus the crucial question about human action that arises again and again: What is the best I can do in these circumstances under these influences at this time?

## An Application of Morin's Method

Sarah Vaughan was a great jazz singer whose highly successful career began when she was 18 years old and spanned almost 50 years. Vaughan's phenomenally strong, flexible, and captivating voice had an extraordinarily wide range. One of the early influential bebop musicians, she used her voice as a horn. Vaughan crossed boundaries that redefined musical genres and profoundly influenced jazz singing. She performed successfully in jazz and pop genres and sang with symphony orchestras. She was largely self-taught and perfected her art by working with other great musicians. She had a wonderful musical imagination; she created and executed to perfection intricate harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic changes. She was a master and innovator of scat singing, which is the art of improvising in sounds and syllables without words. Vaughan's voice retained its beauty, expressive power, and flexibility throughout her long career; as she aged, her lows became richer, and her musicianship matured to become increasingly masterful.

In view of the wealth of information that a horoscope encodes, the challenge is to glean what is salient for a given purpose. The purpose here is to demonstrate some basic principles of Morin's method. The focus here will be on the most publicly outstanding characteristics of Vaughan's life - her voice and musical artistry - with an occasional glance at other matters. The 2nd is the house of the throat and mouth and, thus, of voice and nourishment; it is the house of money and material resources. Musical artistry is a 5th-house matter.<sup>20</sup>

## The Ascendant: Life and Direction

In order to understand the effect of any planetary placement, it is necessary to understand *who* is subject to the influence. Scorpio rises in Vaughan's horoscope. As the eighth sign, Scorpio connects Vaughan with 8th-house affairs. The house locations of Ascendant rulers Mars and Pluto confirm the connection and direct Vaughan to the 2nd/8th axis: Ascendant ruler Pluto is located in the 8th house in Cancer; it throws a tight opposition to Ascendant ruler Mars, which sits exalted in Capricorn in the 2nd. The Moon in Capricorn sits in exile in the 2nd house, where it disposes and tightly aspects Pluto within an orb of 20 minutes. In Morin's system, each house has accidental significations that mirror the

essential significations of the opposite house, and a dispositor of a house ruler can become as effective in house affairs as the ruler itself. Thus, Pluto's 8th-house location and its disposition to the 2nd further intertwine Vaughan's life with 2nd-house matters.

These major arteries powerfully connect the Ascendant with the 2nd/8th axis, with a decided tilt toward the 2nd; they vitally direct Vaughan's life toward 2nd-house affairs. This confluence of factors directed toward the 2nd is striking. It becomes more striking still. Three planets, including the 2nd-house ruler, are located in the 2nd; what's more, every planet in the horoscope pours its influence into the 2nd, and all are tied to the Ascendant or Ascendant rulers.

Uranus, Neptune, and Venus are the planets that most closely aspect the Ascendant. All three planets are strongly connected to the 2nd house by disposition or final disposition<sup>21</sup> and by aspect. Jupiter, which rules in the 1st (representing Vaughan) and in the 4th (representing Vaughan's foundation and ancestry), is the 2nd-house ruler; it is placed powerfully in domicile closely conjunct the 2nd cusp, and disposes Ascendant ruler Pluto by exaltation to the 2nd. The Sun and Mercury, the 10th-house rulers in Aries in the 5th house, aspect into the 2nd and are disposed there by Ascendant ruler Mars; they aspect both Ascendant rulers. Saturn, which rules in the 2nd, sits in the 12th in Scorpio, the ascending sign, in mutual reception by domicile with the Ascendant ruler, exalted Mars. This comprehensive and tightly woven pattern signifies Vaughan's integrated focus on 2nd-house affairs and the affairs of the 2nd/8th axis; it also shows the remarkable complexity of those affairs. Vaughan, with a Scorpio Ascendant, was directed to voice, money, others' money, food and drink, sex, trauma, regeneration, and death.

Uranus in Pisces sits in the 4th, an angular house that it co-rules; it makes the closest aspect to the Ascendant and aspects both Ascendant rulers, Mars and Pluto. Uranus is located in the house of parents, past, foundation, and ancestry in a sign of music. It is disposed to the 2nd and in a tight square to its powerful dispositor, Jupiter; it is disposed to the 9th by Neptune, which has honor of elevation in the royal sign of Leo; Venus, which sits powerfully angular in domicile, sextiles and disposes Uranus by exaltation. Uranus' final dispositor is the exalted 10th-house ruler, the Sun in Aries, which is located in the 5th house of performance, music, and creativity. As these placements presage, Vaughan burst into visibility with song. Her parents were amateur religious and traditional musicians. Vaughan got her start in music when she sang in the choir and played organ in church as a child and adolescent; her jazz roots were in innovative bebop, with its revolutionary harmonies and rhythms. Vaughan's past led her to unique, visible, and inspired musical performance.

The second-closest aspect to the Ascendant is Neptune's square from the 9th house. Neptune participates in fiery trines with Jupiter in the 2nd and with its dispositor, the exalted Sun, conjunct Mercury in the 5th; it closely squares Venus in domicile on the 7th-house cusp. Neptune is a significator of longing and divinity in a sign of royalty and performance in a house of aspiration and divinity; the exalted Sun that disposes Neptune is a significator of royalty and divinity in the fortunate and musical 5th house. Vaughan sang ballads of yearning and romance in a beautiful lush voice; laudatory critics sometimes called her voice "operatic." Vaughan was known as the "Divine One"; she said her favorite and best among her early recordings was "The Lord's Prayer." Vaughan's aspirations led her to divine song.

Venus makes the third-closest aspect to the Ascendant. Venus is one of the two angular planets and is a benefic powerfully placed in its earthy domicile closely conjunct the 7th-house cusp in a Scorpio-rising chart. The 7th signifies the public as well as the partner. Venus sextiles Uranus and disposes it by exaltation. With analogies to throat and voice in a sign with the same analogies, Venus is disposed by exaltation to the 2nd house and casts aspects into the 2nd to its dispositor, the Moon; it closely squares Neptune. "Tenderly" was one of Vaughan's signature songs; another was "Misty." Vaughan sang ballads and innovative jazz; she also made recordings backed by string orchestras. Venus' placement gave Vaughan's music divine, sensual beauty and stunning creative originality; her rich and arrestingly beautiful vocal expression brought her success with a devoted public.

### ***The Midheaven: Action and Destiny***

The Midheaven in Vaughan's horoscope is very powerfully placed and, in itself, promises something extraordinary. Vaughan's Midheaven falls into strong, fixed, fiery Leo. Its ruler is the exalted Sun in Aries, which is disposed to the 2nd by exalted Mars. The Sun comes from the elevated 9th and 10th houses to the fortunate 5th, where it sits closely conjunct the cusp it rules by exaltation. The Sun participates with Mercury, which also rules in the 10th, in powerful fire-sign trines that occur in strongly-

placed fortunate houses. All the planets in these key fiery trines - Jupiter in domicile on the 2nd cusp, the exalted Sun on the 5th cusp where it trines and disposes elevated Neptune in the 9th, and Mercury conjunct its exaltation dispositor - are given determinations to the 2nd by location, rulership, dispositorship, and aspect: Vaughan's actions and destiny are directed to the 2nd house by way of the fortunate 5th and 9th. Both 10th-house rulers aspect the Ascendant rulers and are disposed by Ascendant ruler Mars. Vaughan's actions, signified in the 10th and its rulers, are integrated with her self and her life, shown in the 1st and its rulers. Vaughan was destined for actions that created brilliant, inspired, visible performance in song.

### ***The Lights***

The Sun, as noted above, is very powerfully placed. Like the Sun, the Moon is placed in a cardinal sign in a succedent house. The two lights are in close square to each other; both are strongly configured with the Ascendant rulers. The Sun is exalted and in a square with its exalted dispositor; the Moon sits in exile with the same exalted dispositor, Ascendant ruler Mars. Both lights are given determinations to the 2nd, 5th, 9th, and 10th houses; both rule fortunate, elevated houses: The Sun is the Midheaven ruler, and the Moon is the 9th-house ruler; the Sun also rules the fortunate 5th by exaltation; the Moon rules by exaltation in the angular 7th house. The placement of the lights confirms Vaughan's strength, integration, powerful motivation, and visibility.

### ***Quantity: Strength***

Vaughan's strength is immediately apparent. The strong placement of the Ascendant and the lights, and the very strong placement of the Midheaven, even taken without other factors, give the horoscope enormous strength and promise an unusual life.

The Ascendant is in Scorpio, a strong, fixed sign. The Ascendant rulers, Midheaven rulers, both lights and the dispositors of the lights all occupy cardinal signs, and all are located in succedent houses. Both Ascendant rulers make favorable aspects to the Ascendant, and many other planets send tight aspects to the Ascendant or its rulers. The strength of the Ascendant enabled Vaughan to make effective use of her remarkable gifts under demanding conditions.

In Vaughan's horoscope, many planets, including the 1st and 10th rulers, are related by tight aspects. All the planets, except Saturn in mutual reception with its exalted dispositor (Mars), are in domicile or exaltation, or else they aspect planets that dispose them by domicile, exaltation, or both. In general, the most important aspect a planet can receive is from its dispositor; aspects between planets and their dispositors strengthen, stabilize, and integrate the chart.

The horoscope shows a preponderance of placements in the active and powerful fire element; no planets occupy air signs. The poet Rumi's line applies: "The reed is played with fire, not wind." Vaughan was creatively inspired; she had enormous physical energy and, as she recognized, was prone to excess. Her first nickname was "Sassy." She worked and socialized for long hours, and her social life included overindulgence in food, drink, and other substances; when she was young, she stretched the limits of her body's great endurance by getting by on very little sleep. Jupiter's powerfully benefic presence in domicile closely conjunct the 2nd-house cusp gave Vaughan's voice enormous strength and durability. Vaughan's strength, and the strength of her voice, enabled her to keep on singing wonderfully, despite demands on her body and compromises to her well-being.

Two benefics, Venus and Jupiter, sit in domicile on the cusps they rule - Venus angular. Uranus is located in the angular house it rules and casts tight aspects to the Ascendant and key planets. Only two planets, Saturn and Neptune, are in cadent houses; although they are located in cadent houses, both planets partake of strength. Neptune is elevated and is disposed by the strongly placed Sun. Saturn is in mutual reception by domicile with exalted Ascendant ruler Mars in a succedent house. Both planets in mutable signs partake of strength: Jupiter sits in domicile on the cusp of the succedent 2nd house where Vaughan's life is powerfully directed; Uranus is angular and receives a tight square from its powerfully placed dispositor, Jupiter. The two strong mutable sign placements alleviate the horoscope's weight and single-minded focus, even as they contribute to its intensity.

### ***Quality: Nature and Celestial State***



The progress of planets through the 2nd house describes Vaughan's voice. Jupiter in domicile on the 2nd cusp has paramount influence on this pivotal house. Three planets of varied nature and state in the 2nd - benefic Jupiter in domicile, the benefic Moon in exile, and malefic Mars exalted - and the many influences on the house show enormous complexity in 2nd-house affairs and great variety in Vaughan's voice. Vaughan often stated a melody in pure tones with grace (under the influence of Jupiter's placement); took it through unique changes that incorporated great leaps, harsh or flat tones, and dissonance (still under Jupiter's placement and under the exiled Moon's); and brought it to a successful resolution (under Jupiter and Mars). Vaughan followed a similar progression within phrases; she even carried the pattern into single held and shaped sounds. Vaughan's vocal genius was powered by the exalted Sun's brilliance, guided by Jupiter's overarching influence, "jazzed" by Uranus, sensitized by Neptune, embodied in Venus, rendered magnetic through Pluto, informed by Mercury's discrimination, and given voice through Jupiter, the Moon, and Mars. The placement of the exiled Moon, in a house under the sway of Jupiter, shows Vaughan's often-heard musical humor and her humor in performance.

Mars (natural significator of timing) and Saturn (natural significator of time itself) combine by mutual reception; the Moon (natural significator of the measured sense of time) combines with them by conjunction and disposition. The placements of these planets show Vaughan as a master of timing and rhythm in song who was able to integrate phenomenally diverse patterns of sound, rhythm, and silence. Vaughan's accompanists - most of whom found working with her exhilarating, inspiring, and musically revelatory - described how they hung in wait as Vaughan masterfully calibrated the timing of her next note. Saturn's disposition of Mars and the Moon pulled timing into a 12th-house realm that seemed to threaten its loss. Exalted Mars's disposition of the Moon and its disposition of Saturn into the 2nd, all under the influence of Jupiter, brought Vaughan flawlessly back to solid ground.

Vaughan was recognized as a great jazz musician; she also had a parallel career as a financially successful pop singer. The rulers of her Scorpio Ascendant in Capricorn and Cancer - security-conscious cardinal signs - tightly configured with an exiled Moon on the 2nd/8th axis show Vaughan strongly oriented toward money. Factors that describe her orientation to money coalesce with Venus's determinations (including Venus's disposition by the exiled Moon in the 2nd) to describe Vaughan's husbands as interested in her money. Venus is finally disposed by Saturn in Scorpio in the 12th (because the Moon disposes Venus by exaltation, and Saturn disposes the Moon by domicile). This placement, combined with Venus's rulership of the 12th, describes Vaughan's husbands as her secret enemies, particularly in financial matters. These placements, combined with the placements of Mars, Pluto, and Uranus (including Uranus's exact sextile to the Descendant and its tight sextile to Venus), show the husbands were controlling, confining, and prone to violence. Vaughan was the money-maker in her three failed marriages. She supported her parents after she became successful, and also supported her daughter, whom Vaughan and her second husband adopted and whom she and her mother reared. Saturn in Scorpio disposes the Moon and Mars from the 2nd to the 12th house of loss and misfortune. Jupiter's powerful placement and analogy with wealth reveal Vaughan's wealth. These factors and the sequence of planets through the 2nd house - Jupiter in domicile on the cusp, with the exiled Moon and exalted Mars following - paint a picture of financial success followed by loss that is resolved. Vaughan recovered from significant financial losses related to her first two marriages to enjoy substantial wealth.

Consistent with her Scorpio Ascendant and direction to the 2nd/8th axis, Vaughan put her singing to financial use. The Moon's exiled state and placement in configuration with multiple malefics describes the poor quality in songs and arrangements that Vaughan recorded for commercial reasons. Her first million record seller, "Broken Hearted Melody," was so musically impoverished that even Vaughan was unable to enliven or draw out beauty in the song. She felt silly every time she sang it. On the other hand, Vaughan found and expressed beauty in songs of varying merit; she applied her genius to any musical genre she touched and created something unique and beautiful. Later in her career, Vaughan was able to focus on material of high musical quality that permitted her to use her innate genius and creativity more consistently than some of her earlier popular material had allowed. By that time, Vaughan had narrowed her repertoire to a relatively small number of songs that she performed repeatedly - although wonderfully and often differently from performance to performance. The continuing influence of Jupiter placed in domicile on the 2nd cusp, and the exalted Mars that concludes the series of planets in the house, show dissonance in Vaughan's compromises resolved to consonance.

### **Analogies**

Vaughan's horoscope directs her ineluctably to brilliant, visible, innovative musicianship and promises a powerful, beautiful, and highly expressive voice. The analogies, including those noted above, are strong. The Sun, Moon, Jupiter, Uranus, Leo, exaltation, fire, and the 5th, 9th, and 10th houses have



analogies with visibility, brilliance, and creativity. Jupiter, Neptune, Venus, Sagittarius, Pisces, fire, water, and the 9th, and 12th houses have analogies with divinity and the creative poetry of sound. The Moon, Pluto, Neptune, water, and the 4th, 8th, and 12th houses have analogies with mystery, illusion, riveting power, and affecting depth. The malefic analogies in the horoscope, which become relevant to the discussion in the section below, are also strong.

### ***Malefics and Unfortunate Houses***

The same horoscope that describes Sarah Vaughan's strength and her brilliance, expressive genius, visibility, and success also describes misfortune. Ascendant rulers Mars and Pluto are natural malefics that are in hard aspect to each other and are given determinations to the three unfortunate houses; they both cast hard aspects to the two lights. Neither of the two principal angles - the Ascendant and Midheaven - nor their rulers, and neither light, receives close harmonious aspects from well-conditioned benefics. The malefic analogies are apparent and effective. These fundamental signifiers of Vaughan and her life, under substantial malefic influence and with little benefic support, represent a life that included a significant share of difficulty and pain.

Saturn's placement looms large. Saturn is the planet of illness, isolation, and silence that, except for the mutual reception with Mars, sits quite isolated in an otherwise tightly woven horoscope in the hidden, silent, and isolating 12th house in the silent sign of Scorpio. Saturn rules the 12th by exaltation; its only close aspect is a sextile to the Midheaven, the place of action and destiny. The 12th gives a determination to loss, illness, and hospitalization. Saturn, natural signifier of illness, disposes or finally disposes both Ascendant rulers, both lights, both 10th-house rulers, and the rulers of the 6th, 8th, and 12th houses. In fact, Saturn disposes or finally disposes every planet in the horoscope except Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune. Saturn's power as a dispositor, and its mutual reception by domicile with Mars, repeatedly pulled Vaughan from exalted performance and intense living into isolation, silence, and loss - and back again to song. Saturn's placement describes Vaughan's experience of career limitations and private sorrows in a life that included creative mastery, public success, and financial wealth, all achieved against great social odds.

Saturn rules the 4th house. The 4th signifies the end of life; Saturn has an analogy with death and endings. As the 4th ruler in the 12th - with the confluence of other key planets also disposed to the 12th and connected with the 6th, 8th, and malefics - Saturn shows hospitalization at the end of life. The 2nd house gives a determination to what comes out of the mouth - and also what goes in. The malefics rule smoke and health-destroying chemicals. Placements of malefics and unfortunate houses here show a chronic, long-silent illness that arises from what is ingested. With Ascendant ruler Mars, both the 10th-house rulers, and both lights also given determinations to the 6th, 8th, and 12th houses, Pluto's placement as Ascendant ruler in the 8th shows that Vaughan's actions were a cause of her death. Vaughan smoked cigarettes and died at the relatively young age of 66 from lung cancer.

Uranus, located in the house of the home and the end of life, is disposed by domicile and exaltation to three fortunate houses; it aspects into two of those houses. Uranus, given a determination to death by its aspect to Pluto in the 8th, sextiles 12th ruler Venus, who also rules the 11th, the house of friends and love received from friends. These placements signify that Vaughan died at home with support from friends and family.

### ***Morin's Gift to Astrologers***

Morin's view of the misuse of universal signifiers casts a clarifying light on astrological practice. Misplaced reliance on universal signifiers is one reason that Western astrologers now shy away from what has come to be called predictive astrology toward a more amorphous descriptive astrology that focuses primarily on planets, signs, and aspects. Morin says that astrologers can speak reliably of a particular person engaged in life by systematic, proportionate, and right use of signs, planets, and aspects with houses. In Morin's method, factors that combine to shape a person also delineate a life. With use of Morin's system, the astrologer's view of cause and effect becomes clearer and more connected with life as we live it; with these methods, the astrologer can give practical, helpful, and focused consultations that understand lived experience and place it in cosmic perspective.

Morin's approach is comprehensive and systematic. It sits on a strong foundation of basic astrological factors used in accordance with a method that lives intertwined with cosmology, meaning, and tradition. Modern Western astrologers have introduced new factors - for example, asteroids and midpoints - and

their associated techniques. These modern factors can describe details with striking accuracy. If Morin is correct, such factors should find their proportionate and rightful place in systematic and comprehensive horoscope interpretation.

Morin's methods show astrology's symbols as they operate in a horoscope to describe a life. Astrology's symbols in action reveal cosmic order, or - because *cosmos* means harmony and order - reveal cosmos. Modern Western astrologers tend to reject the tradition that categorizes planets as natural benefics or malefics, houses as fortunate or unfortunate, and celestial states as states of honor or dishonor. It is important to recognize value in human experience, including painful or destructive experience. Yet, it serves human beings who seek perspective and guidance to see within our lives patterns of mundane happiness and unhappiness, success and failure, skillful and unskillful actions, and ethical and unethical means.

Morin shows how to look at a horoscope through houses that focus the gaze on life. He shows how to see sublunary life in action under cosmic influences shaped by human determination. In the sacred art of astrology, we join Earth with Sky to know the divine in human life.

*I am grateful to Robert Corre, a New York astrologer and teacher who was a long-time student of Zoltan Mason, for his teaching of Morin's system through the Forum on Astrology. I thank Laura Torbet for her comments on earlier drafts of this essay and Pat Ranger for e-mail exchanges on Sarah Vaughan's horoscope. Errors and limitations are mine.*

## Chart Data and Source

**Sarah Vaughan**, March 27, 1924; 9:44 p.m. EST; Newark, NJ, USA (40°N44^08^^, 74°W10^22^^); AA: quoted birth certificate/record; AstroDatabank cites *Contemporary Sidereal Horoscopes* and *Gauquelin Book of American Charts*. For purposes of this example, I have taken a minute from the 9:45 p.m. birth time given.

## References and Notes

1. Teaching and other information on Morin and his system are available through Robert Corre's Web site: [www.forumonastrology.com](http://www.forumonastrology.com). The Web site is the portal to Mr. Corre's Internet classes on Morin's system and gives his schedule of in-person classes and lectures in the U.S. and abroad.
2. *Influence* (from the Latin *influxus*, "emanation from the stars") is: "The supposed flowing or streaming from the stars or heavens of an ethereal fluid acting upon ... character and destiny ... and affecting sublunary things generally." *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, CD-ROM, 2002 (hereinafter *OED*). *Influence* is used in this essay for the most part without the duplicative *celestial* preceding it.
3. *Nature* is essence expressed in action; essence (from the Latin *esse*, "to be") is what makes a thing what it is. The influence a planet has by nature is the influence it has by virtue of being itself.
4. *Analogy* is "correspondence ... of one thing to another ... resemblance of things with regard to some circumstances or effects" (*OED*).
5. A planet's nature and universal signification is also seen, for example, in the Sun's solar influence, Saturn's saturnine influence, and Jupiter's jovial influence.
6. J. B. Morin, *Astrologia Gallica*, Book 21: *The Active Determinations of the Celestial Bodies and the Passive Determinations of the Sublunary World*, trans. Richard S. Baldwin, American Federation of Astrologers, 1974, §1, ch. 3, p. 13 (hereinafter "Book 21"). English translations of several books of *Astrologia Gallica* are currently available; James Herschel Holden's translations of other books are in progress or forthcoming.
7. Book 21, §1, ch. 3, p. 12.
8. When used here without qualification, the word *placement* comprises all the factors that condition and determine a planet in a horoscope. These factors include house location, sign occupation, aspects, and all other elements of celestial and terrestrial state. I've adopted this usage from a similar definition

that Hart deFouw gives in his Jyotisha classes in order to standardize astrological terminology. It facilitates communication to distinguish placement from less comprehensive factors that are included within it, particularly sign occupation and house location.

9. The planetary state that modern Western astrologers call *detriment* Morin (in translation) calls by its traditional name, *exile*. An exiled planet is strong, not weak. It is, however, ill at ease in enforced absence far from home in a place incompatible with its nature. The planet's performance depends largely on the placement of its dispositor, ruler in the foreign land where the exiled planet finds itself.

10. *OED* (ellipses omitted).

11. Morin recognizes a planet's influence on the opposite house, an influence here called "reflection." This influence gives the weakest form of local determination. I omit it and antiscia, for the most part, from this introductory discussion.

12. Morin distinguishes a planet's elemental nature from its influential nature. This discussion is of influential nature.

13. Natural benefics have analogies with sublunary things that are humanly desirable and contribute to a satisfying and ethical life; natural malefics have analogies with things that are generally undesirable and tend to undermine the creation of a satisfying, ethical life.

14. Morin distinguishes a planet's intrinsic and extrinsic strength. He measures a planet's intrinsic strength, which is inherent in its nature, by the radius of its ascribed orb of influence. Extrinsic strength, which is under discussion here, arises from a planet's conditioning by state.

15. A peregrine planet, one that is neither in high honor nor in dishonor, may have a beneficial influence when disposed by a benefic.

16. Book 21, §2, ch. 2, p. 45.

17. As Robert Corre explains in his Forum on Astrology classes, the luminaries (particularly in relationship to each other and to the Ascendant), the 5th (house of love given to others), and the 9th (house of philosophy and belief) also contribute to the formation of personality.

18. In the cosmology that Morin embraced, the five true planets orbit the Sun; the Sun (with planets in attendance) and the Moon orbit the Earth. With this cosmology, Morin sought to account for measurable astronomical phenomena and simultaneously affirm geocentric church doctrine.

19. Book 21, §1, ch. 4, p. 16.

20. The 3rd house also gives a determination to skill and artistry.

21. As the term is used here, a planet's final dispositor is the dispositor of its dispositor.

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## AN OUTLINE OF MORIN'S METHOD OF DETERMINATION

### Signs and Planets:

- Are universal signifiers: they refer to all members of a category of sublunary things.
- Are determined - limited or directed - to the affairs of the houses they influence.
- Form a reliable basis for astrological judgment only when combined with particularizing determinations.
- Mutually determine each other and act as (cooperative or uncooperative) partners.

- Send their influence, transmitted through the planets, to Earth in accord with nature, state, and determinations through the actualizing operation of analogy.

### Houses:

- Represent Earth and earthlings, and delineate earthly life.
- Receive and determine the influences of signs and planets.
- Enable the astrologer to make concrete assessments that speak with specificity of life and apply to a particular person.
- Show, especially through the Ascendant, the native's orientation to life.
- Show, especially through the Ascendant, who receives and determines the influences of planets and signs.
- Show, especially through the Midheaven, the native's actions and destiny.

### Houses, Signs, and Planets:

- Interact in specified ways with cosmology.
- Demonstrate the dynamic of cosmic influence on earthly life as determined by human action.

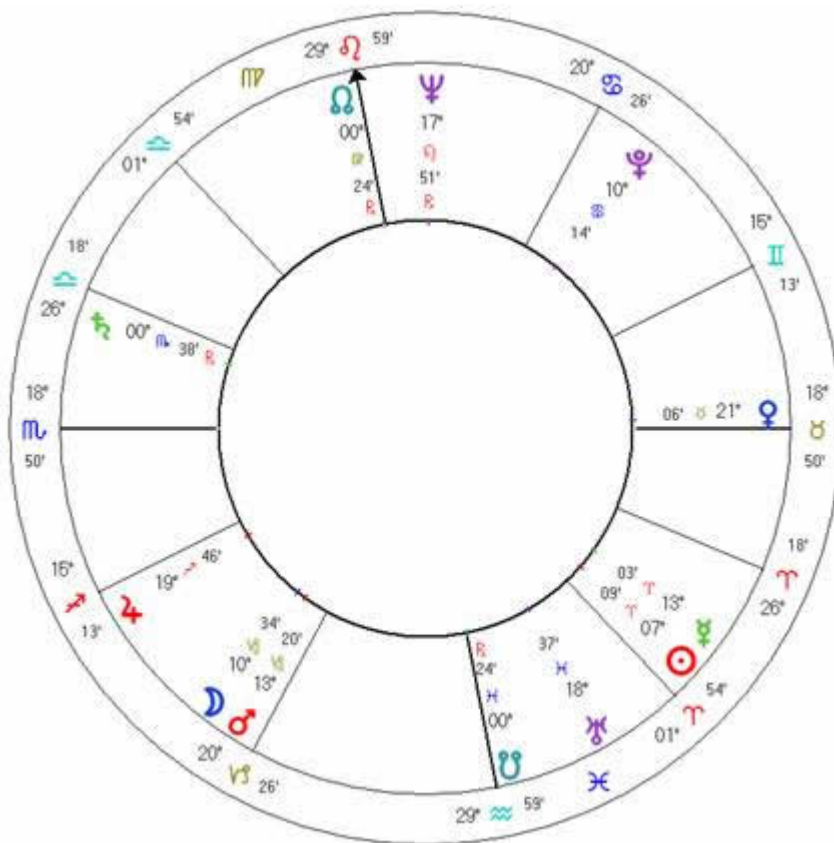


CHART CAPTION:

**Sarah Vaughan**

*Regiomontanus houses, Mean Node*