

## **The Importance of Determining Sect**

*By Doug Noblehorse*

It never ceases to amaze me that no matter how many astrological techniques you know, there's always more to learn. That, coupled with the fact that the deeper you dig into your chart the more you find to examine and ponder, keeps anyone who studies astrology busy for the rest of his life. That brings me to the subject of sect, an astrological doctrine that comes down to us from the Hellenistic era of astrology. Because it is largely unknown by modern astrologers (except in its role in determining the Lot of Fortune, as well as many other Lots), I superficially assumed that sect was simply a division of the classical planets (which exclude Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, Chiron and the asteroids) into two camps - a division that I really didn't know how to use.

Looking more closely at the issue, I discovered a colorful tapestry of planetary interaction that provides an excellent starting point for reading a chart. Most importantly, a particular chart's sect determines how you interpret the chart - by emphasizing either the Sun or the Moon.

At its simplest, a particular chart's sect, either diurnal or nocturnal, is defined by whether or not the Sun is above or below the horizon. If the Sun is above the horizon (a day birth), then the chart is a diurnal chart and emphasizes the status of the Sun, Jupiter and Saturn. If the Sun is below the horizon (a night chart), then the chart is nocturnal, and the main emphasis falls on the conditions of the Moon, Venus and Mars. In effect, sect determines which group of planets is in control of the chart, and which group plays more of an advisory role.

Looking at the two groups, you need to remember the Greek attribution of qualities to the planets. The Sun is hot and dry, and so is diurnal. The Moon is cold and wet, and so is nocturnal. Jupiter and Venus follow respectively. Arriving at Mars, which is hot and dry, and Saturn, which is cold and dry, you might wonder then why Mars is nocturnal and Saturn diurnal. Mars and Saturn are malefics, and were placed in the sect opposite their intrinsic nature in an effort to moderate their effects. Hellenistic astrologers felt that the day would warm up Saturn's somewhat cold nature, while the night would go a long ways towards controlling Mars' fiery tendencies. And that leaves Mercury, which takes on sect depending on its position relative to the Sun, and perhaps by its aspects to other planets.

So, if you were born in the daytime, you begin your chart interpretation with the Sun, Jupiter and Saturn as the main players, with the Moon, Venus and Mars standing more on the sidelines. On a fundamental level, the diurnal planets in your diurnal chart have the upper hand. And the opposite is true if you were born at night - the nocturnal planets in your nocturnal chart have the upper hand. This does not mean that they are more effective in their expression - only that they usually call the shots for good or ill, with the opposite sect planets acting as moderating or braking influences.

So far, this a pretty black and white definition of planetary sect influences - and if that's all there were to it, I would naturally be somewhat suspicious of the effectiveness of this doctrine. We've all been exposed to new and/or old astrological ideas that upon further reflection seem too simple to be useful. Sect, however, like other rich astrological techniques, is much more complex in its consideration and application to a specific chart. Building on the sect definition of the chart as diurnal or nocturnal, one must also consider each planet's placement by hemisphere as defined by the Ascendant/Descendant axis - and also each planet's placement by sign. The upper hemisphere in a diurnal chart (as defined by the Sun above the horizon) is diurnal, whereas the lower hemisphere is nocturnal. In a nocturnal chart (with the Sun below the horizon), the upper hemisphere is nocturnal and the lower hemisphere diurnal.

So, planets above the horizon in a diurnal chart are "placed" diurnally, even if they may be nocturnal planets. Below the horizon, they are nocturnal by placement. For example, Saturn may be below the horizon - and so is a diurnal planet in a diurnal chart "placed" nocturnally. This would interfere with Saturn's expression a bit more than if Saturn were above the horizon in this chart. Conversely, the Moon in this chart might be above the horizon, and so it is a nocturnal planet in a diurnal chart "placed" diurnally. This would further inhibit this particular Moon's expression - already diminished by being out of sect.

Add to that you must also consider the sign each planet is in - with masculine signs (Aries, Gemini, Leo, Libra, Sagittarius, Aquarius) being diurnal, and feminine signs (Taurus, Cancer, Virgo, Scorpio, Capricorn, Pisces) being nocturnal. This colors each planet even further. So you have four considerations - the sect of the chart, the natural sect of the planet, the sect of the planet's hemisphere (or house) placement and the sect of the planet's sign placement. When all four sects agree, the planet is considered to be in hayz - a very positive, powerful condition. For example, the Sun in Aries in the 10th house (which naturally, is a daytime chart) is in hayz, because it's a diurnal planet in a diurnal chart, placed in a diurnal house in a masculine, and therefore diurnal sign.

Conversely, the Moon in Scorpio in the 11th house would also be in hayz - but only if the native were born at night, with the Sun below the horizon. The other extreme is when a planet is completely out of sect - a condition called *ex conditione*, a term coined by Robert Hand because there are no surviving ancient texts that mention this particular kind of planetary sect. Usually, planets have a mix of sect conditions, which increase or decrease their effectiveness.

Some miscellaneous points are in order here. Arab astrologers considered Mars (a nocturnal planet) to be more effective in masculine/diurnal signs, which violates the internal logic of sect doctrine. This may have been due to translation errors, as astrological lore had passed from Greek to Latin to Persian to Arabic along the way. Also, Mercury's sect is largely determined by whether it is oriental (rising before the Sun - a morning star) or occidental (rising after the Sun - an evening star). Venus' sect condition is also modified by its oriental/occidental status. Finally, a waxing Moon was

considered more diurnal in nature, with a waning Moon more nocturnal in nature. The Moon's first major aspect to another planet colors its expression - with a waxing Moon better when firstly aspecting the Sun, Jupiter or Saturn, and a waning Moon better when firstly aspecting Venus or Mars.

When first considering a chart then, one must pay attention to determining sect conditions - as this will tell you which planets are more important, which are less important, and how they interact. On a fundamental level, day births are much more Sun-oriented, whereas night births are Moon-oriented. Astrologers considering sect conditions are therefore restoring a balance between Solar and Lunar astrological influence that has been largely missing since the Arabic period of astrological development - especially so in our modern times dominated by Sun Sign astrology. After all, it is perhaps no cosmic accident that from our perspective the visual disk of the Full Moon almost exactly matches the visual disk of the Sun!

### **Example Chart Delineation: Paul Lynde**

One of television's funniest comedians and actors, Paul Lynde was known for his sarcastic wit and self-deprecating humor, although he could at times be quite bitter in his observations. A heart attack brought on by substance abuse caused his death. Paul Lynde's chart is of the diurnal sect, with the Sun being above the horizon in the 11th house. Therefore, his Sun, Jupiter and Saturn will play influential roles in his chart, with the Moon, Venus and Mars being of lesser importance.

#### *Diurnal Sun in Gemini in the 11th House*

Lynde's Sun is in hayz, making it very powerful in its influence. It's above the horizon, in the 11th house, and is in Gemini, a diurnal sign. The Sun is also the Lord of the Ascendant, which is in Leo. Closely aspecting his Midheaven, Lynde's Sun as Lord of the Ascendant clearly shows his profession involving acting. Lynde's Sun is also sextile his Neptune in the 1st, which adds to the emphasis on acting. The Sun's placement in Gemini reveals Lynde's emphasis on verbal expression - Lynde is known for his comedic domination of the television game show *Hollywood Squares* during the 1970s, as well as for his voicing of several animated cartoon characters and for his distinctive vocal expression. His sometimes sarcastic style is shown by a whole-sign square to an 8th house Mars in Pisces. His sarcasm was often turned against himself through self deprecation.

Even though his Sun is powerful, it still ties to Mars, not only through the square, but also through Mars being the Bound (also known as Term - I use Egyptian Bounds) Lord of the Sun. The bitterness of his later years could also be shown by Mars being out of sect, as well as being out of sect by placement. Although in a nocturnal sign (Pisces), Mars' intrinsic nature doesn't do well in Pisces, and so was probably harder for Lynde to consciously control. This is also signified by Mars' 8th house placement, the 8th being a difficult house for the individual's consciousness, as shown by the 8th's quincunx relationship with the Ascendant.



Modern planets, in my opinion, often signify psychological vortexes in the chart, and Uranus' tight conjunction with Mars only adds to the instability. Lynde's Sun in hayz certainly allowed him to profit from his Martian sarcasm in his career, but as he grew older Uranus' destabilizing influence prompted Lynde to cross the line into bitter and caustic observations that some found uncomfortable and unwarranted.

*Diurnal Jupiter in Aquarius in the 7th House/ Diurnal Saturn in Scorpio in the 4th House*

Jupiter is also in hayz, being a diurnal planet in a diurnal chart, placed diurnally by house and by sign. Furthermore, it's in a whole-sign trine to the Sun, and so supports the Sun quite well. However, Jupiter cannot help the Sun in its connections to and/ or problems with Mars, as Jupiter cannot see Mars - they are in a disjunct whole-sign aspect (adjacent signs). Furthermore, Jupiter's domicile lord, his trigon (triplicity) lord, and his bound lord are all Saturn, which Jupiter squares by sign. Therefore, Jupiter's support for the Sun is distracted by Jupiter's problems with Saturn, which is out of sect by placement and by sign - and is retrograde to boot. Although Lynde had Jupiter in the 7th house of marriage - which initially might lead you to look favorably at his relationship prospects, the connections to a debilitated Saturn show the denial of marriage/committed relationship that Lynde experienced.

Saturn, as the co-sectarian to the Sun, is in quincunx to the Sun, and so unable to moderate or stabilize the Sun's problems with Mars - who also happens to be the domicile ruler of Saturn. This chart is a good example of how an out-of-sect planet, in this case Mars, can interfere with even a hayz placement - by dominating the stabilizing influence of Saturn and ignoring the positive influences offered by Jupiter. Of the diurnal planets, the Sun is the strongest (showing Lynde's success and fame), with Jupiter supportive but distracted, and Saturn somewhat troublesome in nature.

*Nocturnal Moon in Cancer in the 12th House and Mercury*

Lynde's Moon, despite being in its own domicile Cancer, is quite weakened by being a nocturnal planet in a diurnal chart, placed diurnally. As a waxing Moon, it is somewhat diurnal in coloring, and so would be better off making a first aspect to a diurnal planet. However, its first aspect is a trine to nocturnal Mars. This makes it a bit more dysfunctional.

To make matters worse, it's in the 12<sup>th</sup> house, which is disjunct the Ascendant. Modern astrology might note an out-of-sign conjunction to the Ascendant, but Hellenistic astrology distinctly rules out this possibility. There is no connection between the Cancer Moon and the Leo Ascendant. As a result, Lynde's Moon, despite its dignity from being in Cancer, offers no real help to the chart. This does not mean that the Moon is completely powerless in the chart, but it suggests that Lynde had trouble consciously expressing the more positive qualities of a Moon in Cancer. Interestingly, Lynde was known among his friends for being an excellent chef - certainly a positive expression of the Cancer Moon. However, this reputation is not well known by the public at large, hidden as it is by the 12<sup>th</sup> house.

Mercury is occidental and in Cancer, and so is primarily nocturnal. However, like the Moon, it is in the 12th house, and so is largely silent, despite being the domicile ruler of the Sun in Gemini.

#### *Nocturnal Mars in Pisces in the 8th House*

Mars has largely been discussed above, but Paul Lynde's death is certainly shown by the placement of Mars. Lynde died from a heart attack brought on by substance abuse. Mars is in Pisces (substance abuse) in the 8th house (from the Leo/Heart Ascendant/Body) of death, squaring the Sun, domicile ruler of the Ascendant. Additionally, Neptune, symbolizing a vortex of possible addictive impulses supporting substance abuse is found in the 1<sup>st</sup> house.

#### *Nocturnal Venus in Taurus in the 10th House*

Venus is a nocturnal planet in a diurnal chart, placed diurnally by house, nocturnally by sign. This is a real mix of sect influences, but Venus' presence in an angular house helps bolster its influence. Like the Moon, it is in its own domicile, Taurus. It neither helps nor hinders the Sun, as it is disjunct to Gemini from Taurus. Being in the 10th house, Venus' strongest influence seems to be in moderating the public perception of Lynde's more sarcastic persona. Lynde still enjoys a mostly favorable image in public memory and perception, even more than 20 years after his death. Obviously, not everyone enjoyed Paul Lynde's humor, but overall his comedic legacy is largely assured, despite controversy in his life and death.

Of the nocturnal planets, Venus is the most supportive (protecting Lynde's public reputation and legacy), Mars the most troublesome (crossing the line from sarcastic wit to bitterness), and the Moon most ineffective.

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