

## Capturing Astrology in Statistical Tests

By Penny Seator

If you ask the right question, you are likely to get the right answer, however ignorant you might be of advanced statistics. And if you ask the wrong question, then all the advanced statistics and all the computer facilities in the world will not help you to get the right answer.

— Hans J. Eysenck<sup>1</sup>

In recent decades numerous statistical tests of astrological factors have failed to produce significant positive results. Some studies, however, show positive results. The Gauquelin studies that establish the “Mars effect” stand among tests of astrological factors as an unshakably sound confirmation of correlations between the location of planets in astrological charts and earthly occurrences.

Some statistical researchers and analysts take the patchy history of tests of astrological factors to establish that astrology’s basic premise—that celestial configurations pervasively and profoundly influence or mirror life on Earth in accord with astrology’s theory, method, principles and rules—is false. Practitioners of celestial arts take the less than satisfactory results of statistical tests to demonstrate that something is wrong with statistical test results. A way to reconcile these two views has been available for almost four centuries, and remains readily available now.

Tests of astrological factors that rely on the categorical meanings of planets and signs, undetermined by the configuration of planets and signs within the houses of the astrological chart, seek meaning where no meaning lies. These tests proceed with complete disregard of a sound theory of astrological signification and determination, and in complete disregard of sound astrological method.

Jean-Baptiste Morin de Villefranche, 17<sup>th</sup> century French astrologer, mathematician, natural philosopher and physician, authored a 26-volume treatise on astrology, *Astrologia Gallica*, published posthumously in 1661. In *Astrologia Gallica*, Morin set forth an astrological system that is used here to exemplify astrology. Morin’s statement of astrological theory is an exceptionally useful guide in efforts to understand astrological signification and determination. Morin revealed astrology’s methodological foundations and demonstrated astrology as it enables prediction. Morin’s theory and method illuminate the fundamental flaw in statistical tests that purport to test astrology.

For the ability to reliably predict, astrologers rely on a comprehensive method of determination that incorporates stable principles and rules used in a structured approach that rests on astrological theory. In order to test astrology, statistical tests—which are tests of prediction—must test astrology as it enables astrologers to predict. Statistical

tests that ignore the very things about astrology that enable prediction do not test astrology. Tests that respect astrology's theory and method, and respect principles and rules that astrological method comprises and astrological theory sanctions, might resolve the apparent impasse between practitioners' perception that astrology works and the view taken by some researchers and analysts that results of several decades of statistical tests show that astrology is false.

Whether or not properly designed statistical tests can capture astrology, tests designed without regard to the manner in which a system of astrology determines the significations of astrological symbols will fail.

A second, and closely related though distinguishable, fatal flaw in the design of statistical tests of that purport to test astrology lies in the utter disregard of astrological systems. Studies that attempt to test astrology have sought the significance of one or more astrological factors taken in isolation from a system of astrology in which the tested factors function to enable astrologers to make demonstrably sound and reliable predictions. When astrological factors are separated from the system that gives them value, meaning and a job to perform, they cannot do their work. Failed statistical studies of astrological factors establish that astrological factors aggregated and used in a manner that does not enable reliable prediction do not enable reliable prediction.

Tests of astrological factors use frequentist statistical methods to investigate questions that, viewed in light of Morin's theory and in light of demonstrations of his method, fail to capture astrology. Consideration of the analogy that Eysenck and Nias drew in 1984 between astrological factors and factors that affect body weight reveals misguided assumptions that underlie the design of failed statistical tests of astrological factors. That analogy is considered here and is rejected.

It may be, as discussed below, that the correlations some tests find between celestial configurations and earthly events become apparent because the tests use parts of a reliable method of determination. The results of statistical tests join with Morin's well-reasoned astrological theory and well-demonstrated method to suggest requirements that a statistical test must meet in order to test astrology. A statement is offered below in a form that, if testable with statistical methods, might be used to test astrology.

In astrology, prediction is distinguished from forecasting. When an astrologer predicts, she states what may be expected in a lifetime. When an astrologer forecasts, she states times when predicted events are likely to occur. In accord with his teacher, Zoltan Mason, and in the tradition of Morin, Robert Corre explains that prediction answers the question, "What may I expect in this lifetime?" Forecasting answers the question, "When may I expect it?"<sup>2</sup> Forecasting is prediction timed. An astrologer predicts every time she uses an astrological chart to make a statement about a person or the person's world.<sup>3</sup> To predict from an astrological chart is to use the chart to reveal information not otherwise known.

## I. Morin's Astrological Theory and Method

In *Astrologia Gallica*, Morin offered a theory and method of astrology that he set within a system of cosmology and natural philosophy. Morin's astrological method is founded on his theory of astrological determination and signification. In Morin's theory, planets are universal signifiers that mean nothing until their meanings are determined in accord with a sound method of determination. In his method, the houses of the chart determine astrological meaning and effect. A brief discussion of Morin's method and a look at his theory follow.<sup>4</sup>

Morin referred to the placement of a planet in the Sky as (in translation) the planet's "celestial state" or "zodiacal state." He referred to a planet's placement in the houses of the chart as (in translation) the planet's "terrestrial state" or "local determinations." In Morin's system, the meaning of a planet as it is placed in an astrological chart depends on the planet's nature, celestial state and local determinations. A planet's nature is found in the full set of the planet's categorical meanings and includes whether the planet is a natural benefic or a natural malefic.

A planet's celestial state comprises its (1) sign placement, which includes the planet's essential dignities, (2) the nature and celestial state of its dispositor(s), (3) aspects with other planets, particularly with the planet's dispositor(s), considered by nature and celestial state and as delivered in a particular aspect form, and (4) various other factors that include planetary motion (direct or retrograde, fast or slow), whether the planet is combust the Sun, and whether it is oriental of the Sun or occidental of the Moon.

A planet's terrestrial state includes (1) its location in a house, (2) its house rulership, which includes the house(s) it rules, the house location of its dispositor(s) and the house location of any planets it disposes, (3) its aspects with other planets considered by house location and house rulership, and its aspects with house cusps, and (4) its influence on the house opposite the one in which it sits, which may be referred to as "reflection." Terrestrial state is reducible to the two basic forms of local determinations: location and rulership.

In *Astrologia Gallica's* Book 21, titled (in translation) *The Active Determinations of the Celestial Bodies and the Passive Determinations of the Sublunary World*,<sup>5</sup> Morin explained and demonstrated that planets are universal signifiers that refer generally to a whole category of things. A planet signifies without distinction all members of the category of sublunary things that it rules. A planet's universal significations—also referred to as categorical, natural or general significations—are its potential meanings.

Because a small number of planets signify the many sublunary things, each planet signifies a large category of things. By virtue of signifying by nature, and therefore potentially, everything in a category, a planet signifies by nature nothing in particular.

Without a means to determine a planet's actual meanings in a chart—that is, with use of undetermined symbols that mean, according to Morin's theory, nothing: no thing—astrology would not enable astrologers to sufficiently disaggregate a planet's actual from its potential significations in order to know which of a planet's many general meanings is at play in an astrological chart. A method of determination used in a structured approach is needed to enable astrologers to build an image of a person and of the contours of the life the chart represents. Astrological signification, therefore, depends on a method of determination that particularizes and actualizes planets' categorical and potential significations.

A planet's celestial state partly determines its meanings. Yet as Morin established, celestial state—and, therefore, time of birth—is inadequate to particularize astrological meanings and effects. At any given time celestial state is the same throughout the world. Even when a planet's celestial state is taken into account, the significations that arise from planetary nature and celestial state still apply generally to everyone on Earth at a given time and remain, therefore, undetermined and potential.

Morin referred to the Sun to explain the inadequacy of planetary nature and celestial state to determine a planet's meaning in a chart. Morin (in translation) wrote:

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... , but they do 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, or on the other hand, unfortunate and short-lived if the Sun were badly placed. 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; this is not only contrary to experience but would render meaningless the significance of the houses.<sup>6</sup>

Morin explained and demonstrated that the houses of the astrological chart—which represent Earth and earthlings—determine astrological meanings and effects. Morin made a strong statement of his theory of astrological signification. He wrote (in translation): “No planet can cause or indicate anything in the horoscope except according to these methods of determination.”<sup>7</sup> In Morin's theory and method, a planet signifies nothing in an astrological chart except as the universal significations that inhere in its nature and celestial state are determined by its placement within the astrological houses. Morin wrote (in translation):

[I]f Mercury, the general significator of the mind according to analogy, is found to be the particular significator of this same thing by position or rulership in the first house—which refers to the mental qualities as well as

to the whole general condition of the body and soul—the effect of Mercury on the mental qualities in such a case will be very strongly pronounced. Similarly, if Mercury has some relation to the Ascendant or its ruler by rulership or by aspect it will also have a stronger influence on the mental qualities. And the more such determinations it has the greater will its influence be on the mental qualities, *but if there are no such determinations Mercury will have no reference to the mental qualities; and the same is true for the other planets and houses.*<sup>8</sup>

Undetermined universal signifiers refer to a whole category of meanings. Universal signifiers stand ready to actualize their meanings on Earth as they are determined through the astrological houses. Undetermined astrological factors mean nothing. Instead they refer to a class of potential meanings from among which their actual meanings in a chart are drawn.

As the passage quoted above suggests, analogy plays a central role in Morin's theory and method. In Morin's system, analogies shared between a planet's nature and its local determinations, significantly aided by analogies to the planet's celestial state, actualize analogous significations. To trace meaning through a chart, an astrologer traces along lines of house location and rulership as those lines are activated by analogies among a planet's nature and its terrestrial state, as qualified by celestial state. Morin (in translation) wrote: "If it happens that...determinations through the houses refer to things to which the planet has an analogy, the resulting effect will take place with considerable certainty."<sup>9</sup>

The chart's angles are its principal determining points. The Ascendant is the point of primary import. The Ascendant's determinations include life, self-identity, temperament, mental characteristics, character, body and health. The Midheaven is the second most important point in the chart. Its determinations include the native's actions, destiny, career, public role and honors conferred. The remaining two angles, the Descendant—whose determinations include the domestic or business partner, the public and other people in general—and the Lower Heaven—whose determinations include ancestry, a parent and the parents, home, the past, the end of life and the grave—participate with the Ascendant and the Midheaven to define the quadrants of the chart and, with the intervening houses, to determine astrological influences to principal areas or affairs of life.

Morin set out to glean from the history and practice of Western astrology what he saw as the fundamentals of the Western tradition. He sought to systematize astrology with a comprehensive and principled method of determination and with stable rules. Morin tied astrological method, principles and rules into a well-articulated system of astrological theory, cosmology and natural philosophy. Used in a structured approach that organizes chart analysis and properly prioritizes and weights astrological factors, the method Morin bequeathed his successors enables astrologers to make reliable predictions

from astrological charts.

## **II. Usual Approach to Statistical Tests of Astrological Factors**

Statistical tests that purport to test astrology usually study one or more universal significators to see whether those significators correlate statistically with a defined personality trait, event or other earthly occurrence. Such tests investigate whether a significant positive correlation exists between the universal signifier and the earthly occurrence.

According to Morin's theory, astrology's universal significators are symbols of cosmic categories that operate in the sublunary world along lines that terrestrial state determines. Universal significators do not in themselves presage earthly occurrences and will not be found to correlate with them. Rather, universal significators function in a method of astrology in accord with astrological theory, principles and rules. Studies that disregard astrological theory, method and rules attempt to test one or more factors lifted from a system of astrology in which the factors function to enable astrologers to predict. They test the meaning of factors that, according to astrological theory and method, mean nothing.

The design of studies that purport to test astrology follows the approach that Eysenck and Nias<sup>10</sup> assumed would enable researchers to test astrology. Eysenck and Nias assumed that if an astrological factor is a factor among others that astrologers use to judge charts, then frequentist statistical methods can detect its separate effect. They analogized the connection between astrological factors and earthly occurrences to the connection between diet and body weight. Even without taking into account other relevant factors such as genetics, exercise, age and health, in a large sample, they argued, "we should certainly expect to see indications that fat people tended to be well fed and starving people tended to be thin. If astrology is true, it must pass that kind of test."<sup>11</sup>

The correlation between diet and body weight is not analogous to the correlation between astrological charts and lives. Genetics, exercise, age, health and diet relate neither to each other nor to body weight as astrological factors relate to each other and to life. Factors that affect body weight can be heaped together or separated for test without concern for how they affect each other or how their interrelationships affect body weight. If the question is whether any one or more of the five listed factors correlates with body weight, it is safe to disregard their interrelationships. A test of the relationship of any one or more of those five factors to body weight needs to concern itself only with whether any one or more of the factors correlates with weight.

Astrological principles are not analogous to a collection or selection of factors that affect body weight. A meaningful test of astrology must take into account, in accord with theory and method, interrelationships among relevant astrological factors and those factors' interrelated relationships with life.

A system may be defined as: “An organized or connected group of objects. A set or assemblage of things connected, associated, or interdependent, so as to form a complex unity; a whole composed of parts in orderly arrangement according to some scheme or plan.”<sup>12</sup> The English word “system” derives from the Latin *systema*, “a musical interval” or, in medieval or modern Latin, “the universe.” The Latin word is adopted from the Greek that translates as “organized whole, government, constitution, musical interval.” The Greek word is a combination of *syn*, “together,” and the root of the Greek verb that translates as “to set up.”

A system is that which is set up together. A system either stands together or it falls apart. Diet and other factors that affect body weight are not elements of a system that is set up together as an organized whole that falls apart when one or more factors are considered without regard for their place and function in the system. Whatever a person’s genetics, exercise, age and health, diet affects body weight in such a way that in a large sample eating more will correlate with more weight and eating less will correlate with less weight. In contrast, apart from the system in which they function, astrological factors do not function astrologically.

The system of which an astrological factor is a part is a symbolic system. Neither body weight nor diet functions primarily, if at all, as an element of a symbolic system, nor do elements of symbolic systems function like diet or body weight functions. A symbolic system does not relate to that to which it correlates in a manner analogous to the manner in which diet relates to body weight or body weight to diet. We can investigate diet and other factors that affect body weight without the need to engage theoretical or methodological issues like those we must engage to comprehend and assess a complex symbolic system such as astrology.

Consider arithmetic as a complex symbolic system. Imagine that we set out to understand the nature, significance and function of the number 3. Imagine that we cull from all the numbers around us a very large random sample of occurrences of 3. As we investigate occurrences of 3, we do not consider 3’s place in relationship to other digits in multi-digit numbers in which it occurs or to the multi-digit number itself. No properties of multi-digit or fractional numbers in which 3 occurs matter except that they contain 3. We make no distinction between the 3’s that occur alone as a single digit and the 3’s that occur in multi-digit numbers, in positive or negative numbers, as whole numbers or as numerators or denominators in fractions or as holders of decimal places. We are indifferent to whether the number in which 3 occurs is a real or imaginary number, or a rational or irrational one. When we see 35,738, all that matters to us is that we have seen 3 occur twice. We treat any 3 that occurs in 35,738, or 365, 653, -3, -3003, 1/3, 3/4, -763.303, 3.1416 or in any other number as simply another occurrence of 3. We pull 3’s from anywhere and everywhere and thereby seek to find patterns in the occurrence of 3. In that way, we seek to understand what 3 means and whether arithmetic works. Meaningful results are unlikely.

Such an approach to the study of the number 3 is analogous to tests of isolated and undetermined astrological factors. Astrology's symbolic and systematic nature makes its factors more like the elements of arithmetic than like the amount of food a person eats. Before the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the West, astrologers held the chair of mathematics in major universities and were known as *mathematici*.<sup>13</sup> That title reflects astrology's symbolic and systematic nature, the highly integrated nature of systems of astrology and the interdependent nature of the system's elements.

Consider language, a familiar symbolic system. Bob Newhart imagined an experiment to see whether an infinite number of monkeys typing on an infinite number of typewriters for enough time would type all the great books.<sup>14</sup> When one imagined monkey typed: "To be or not to be, that is the gazorninplat," its performance, though it had performed remarkably well, fell short of the real thing. Even though the monkey almost got it, the failure in one part rendered the whole meaningless. Such are symbolic systems.

Astrology is different from a set of factors that affect body weight in another relevant way. Morin stated and followed in practice the implications of an analogy that Placidus used to explain astrological influence: As "the same Sun by its own heat hardens mud and liquefies wax"<sup>15</sup> so an astrological influence may produce one effect in one subject and another effect in another. Morin (in translation) wrote: "[T]hrough the same essential quality a planet causes one result in a metal, another in a plant, and another in an animal or a human; moreover, it causes different things in different [people] as well as in the same individual."<sup>16</sup>

In contrast, in the case of diet and body weight, eating more correlates generally with greater body weight without regard to the person on whom the influence of eating more falls. In a large sample of subjects eating more will be found to correlate with greater body weight and eating less will correlate with less weight. In contrast, an astrological configuration—the Primary Direction of Mars to the Ascendant, for example—will display different results that depend upon the person or other subject on whom the influence falls. The Direction of Mars to the Ascendant, moreover, will combine according to method, principle and rule with other influences to form a complex image of the matter under consideration.

If it could be established that astrology's symbolic systems function like a collection of factors that affect body weight, the onus to establish that sameness lies with those who rely on it. As it is, Eysenck's and Nias' analogy stands as a bare assertion made in disregard of the theory, method, principles and rules of astrology, without benefit of argument, justification or proof, without consideration of how astrology actually works and in disregard of systems of astrology whose fundamentals Morin explicated almost four centuries ago.

Eysenck's and Nias' assertion from analogy fails. The assumptions that would support the analogy strip astrology of much of what makes it the wonderful cosmos- and life-mirroring system that it is. The analogy would strip astrology of that which enables astrologers to make reliable predictions. The assumptions that would support the analogy underlie what has become the customary design of statistical research that purports to test astrology.

Studies of astrological factors are often cast as a search for a significant positive correlation between an earthly thing and a defined "astrological signature." The astrological signatures that statistical tests study are almost invariably universal signifiers taken apart from a method of determination with its attendant principles and rules. According to Morin's theory and in his method, universal signifiers mean *nothing* in a chart until their meanings are determined in accord with a sound method of determination. According to Morin's theory, therefore, studies of astrological signatures that are universal signifiers undetermined by the houses of a chart should produce null results. They usually do.

Morin's theory and his comments on the misuse of astrology's universal signifiers reveal with great clarity the fundamental flaw in statistical studies that purport to test astrology. As a universal signifier, a planet refers to a whole category of potential meanings. A planet's actual meanings and effects are realized when they are determined by the planet's placement in the houses of a chart. Tests that focus on planets' undetermined universal signifiers seek meaning where no actual meaning is found.

Astrology, like the cosmos it reflects, is structured. To reflect cosmos' unity and order, astrology is systematic. So that astrology forms the basis of reliable knowledge—*scientia*, science—astrologers found their practice on a comprehensive method of determination that is set within astrological theory, cosmology and natural philosophy. To enable reliable prediction, astrologers rely on a method's prioritized and stable foundational principles and governing rules, and use them consistently in a structured approach.

### **III. Some Successful Tests of Astrological Factors**

It may be that statistical tests of astrological factors that obtain significant positive results do so because they incorporate into their test designs basic elements of a method of determination like that Morin described and demonstrated. Studies, including the extensive work of the Gauquelins, that focus on planets that are located near the chart's angles—particularly the principal angles, Ascendant and Midheaven—have found significant positive correlations between angular planets and earthly occurrences. The angles, and especially the principal angles, are primary determining points in Morin's system. A brief look at a few statistical tests of astrological factors that show significant positive results follows.

In his preface to *The Tenacious Mars Effect*,<sup>17</sup> a work that provides an overview of the Gauquelin studies and comments on the Gauquelin Mars effect, Irving focused on the fundamental importance of planets located in the angles of a chart. In another setting, Irving reported positive results in a study and a preliminary study of an angular Moon.<sup>18</sup> He identified angularity as “where the money is”<sup>19</sup> and urged astrologers and researchers to look for payoff in the angles. Irving’s focus on the Moon’s angularity, like the Gauquelins’ focus on angular planets, introduced into the research design fundamental elements of a method based on local determinations.

Roberts<sup>20</sup> considered the finding of the Gauquelin studies that angular planets have a measurable positive correlation with the careers of eminent professionals. He suggested that the birth charts of eminent professionals are often dominated by key angular planets, a characteristic that is less likely to appear in the birth charts of those whose professional attainments are more ordinary. In Morin’s system, strong, key angular planets in a birth chart have a dominant influence on the native and the life. Such planetary placements indicate strength and motivation, and signify eminence under conditions specified in Morin’s method. Roberts’ analysis is consistent with Morin’s theory.

Fuzeau-Braesch<sup>21</sup> found in a study of twins that birth time was statistically significant to account for differences in family members’ descriptions of the twins as “expansive” or “reserved” in response to a questionnaire. The study focused on the Ascendant, the principal determining point in the astrological chart

Hill and Thompson<sup>22</sup> garnered significant positive results in a study of whether natural redheads were more likely than others to be born with Mars located within 30 degrees of the Ascendant. The study focused on the principal determining point in the chart and incorporated the important principle of analogy. As the ruler by domicile of the archetypal Aries Ascendant, Mars bears an analogy to the Ascendant. Mars and the Ascendant also bear analogies to the native’s head. In Morin’s system, analogies between a planet’s natural significations and its terrestrial state powerfully actualize analogous astrological effects. The archetypal analogical relationships among Mars, the Ascendant and the head, and the test design tied to the chart’s principal angle, appear to account for the significant positive results of the Hill and Thompson study of the Mars-redhead link.

The Gauquelin studies themselves provide evidence in support of Morin’s theory. The analogy between Mars and the Ascendant noted above may account for the particularly strong effect that the Gauquelin studies found for Mars near the Ascendant as compared to the other planets studied. Similarly, it may be that the Gauquelin findings of a particularly strong effect for Mars connected to the Midheaven in the birth charts of eminent athletes is related to Mars’ analogical relationship to the Midheaven. Mars bears analogy to the Midheaven as the ruler by exaltation of Capricorn, the sign that occupies the Midheaven in the archetypal Aries rising astrological chart. Eminence reinforces the analogical relationship between Mars and the Midheaven: Mars is exalted on the

archetypal Midheaven, and both exaltation and the Midheaven bear an analogy to eminence. The Midheaven is the point of Sun's culmination and so a point of great heat. Mars is hot.

Nolle<sup>23</sup> found that Mars conjunct the Ascendant or Midheaven within a five-degree orb showed a significant relationship to notable athletes, consistent with the Gauquelin Mars effect. Again, the element of angularity is central to the study design, and the analogies between Mars and the Ascendant and Midheaven operate. The relatively tight orb of conjunction to the Ascendant and Midheaven reinforces the analogy to eminence: Exactitude confers intensity,<sup>24</sup> intensity tends to confer strength and strength associates positively with eminence.

According to Morin's theory of astrological signification and determination, no planet can cause or signify anything in a chart except in accord with a sound and comprehensive method of determination. The significant positive results obtained in studies of astrological factors that incorporate elements of a comprehensive method of astrological determination tied to the angles of the chart suggests that Morin's theory of astrological signification is correct and his method of determination sound. The theory that Morin demonstrated with use of his method, and the positive results obtained in studies that focalize the chart's principal angles, call out for tests of systems of astrology from which astrologers reliably predict.

#### **IV. How Astrology Might Be Captured for Test**

In *Astrologia Gallica*, Morin set forth at length his theory and method of astrological determination and laid out the principles and rules according to which the method that derives from the theory is applied. It is unnecessary to know all the specific rules that Morin stated in order to understand the fundamentals of the theory on which he based his method of determination. The details of Morin's entire system of method, principles and prioritized rules become essential in the application of the method to judge charts and predict from them. Comprehension of the entire system and its details also would be necessary for one who attempted to assess the system with statistical tests. What are germane for present purposes are the broader implications that Morin's theory and method have for statistical tests of astrology.

In Morin's method, the following assertion, taken without more, is not a true astrological statement: "The Primary Direction of Mars to the Ascendant presages a fatal or seriously injurious accident." Fatal and seriously injurious accidents occur under that Direction. Considered in itself, however, the Direction neither presages a fatal or seriously injurious accident nor affords sufficient support for its prediction or forecast. The statement stands without benefit of a method of determination and is suspended in isolation from an astrological system that functions to enable astrologers to predict. From Morin's point of view, it is absurd to suppose that a fatal or seriously injurious accident

will occur every time Mars is directed to a natal Ascendant. As Morin would note, such a supposition is contrary to observation.

According to Morin's theory, Mars signifies nothing in an astrological chart except as its terrestrial state, aided by celestial state, determines Mars to the expression of particular meanings and effects. The statement above about the Primary Direction of Mars to the Ascendant fails to move from the universal significations of Mars to a particularized understanding of the ways in which Mars is determined in a chart. According to Morin's theory, therefore, the statement that a Direction of Mars to the Ascendant generally presages a fatal or seriously injurious accident is false: Mars signifies and effects nothing in an astrological chart except as its significance and effect are determined in accord with a sound method of determination.

If Morin's theory is sound, a test of the statement that the Primary Direction of Mars to the Ascendant generally presages a fatal or seriously injurious accident should have null results. If it produced significant positive results, Morin's theory of astrological signification would be called into question, the statistical methods used would be subject to doubt or, as Morin himself noted, the result would have occurred by chance and should not be replicable:

And because it frequently does happen that these signifiers have a specific determination in accordance with their analogies, astrologers have deceived themselves by taking to be an invariable truth that which is really an accidental circumstance.<sup>25</sup>

In Morin's method, in order for the Primary Direction of Mars to the Ascendant to presage a fatal or seriously injurious accident, the following conditions must be met:

(1) *The birth chart must be determined to fatal or seriously injurious accident.* According to Morin's theory, to say that a birth chart is determined to fatal or seriously injurious accident is to say that a well-conducted application of Morin's method, principles and rules to the chart would lead a skilled astrologer to judge fatal or seriously injurious accident as an event likely to occur at some time in the life;

(2) *Mars and the Ascendant must be determined to fatal or seriously injurious accident in the birth chart.* In other words, upon application of Morin's method, principles and rules to an astrological chart, a skilled astrologer would judge that the placement of Mars determines it in such a manner that Mars is likely to effect a fatal or seriously injurious accident at some time in the life. The astrologer would need to conclude similarly that the Ascendant is determined in such a way that Mars' Direction to the Ascendant is likely at some time in the life to result in a fatal or seriously injurious accident. (In a sense, this condition as applied to the Ascendant is repetitive of requirement (1), above: If a birth chart is determined to accident that will seriously injure the native or end her life, the natal Ascendant will be so determined.)

(3) *Mars must influence the Ascendant in the birth chart.* In Morin's system, unless a planet already influences the Ascendant (or other relevant point) in the birth chart, no significant and effective event will occur as a result of the planet's direction to the Ascendant (or other point). This principle rests on a highly important and fundamental astrological principle: Nothing can be presaged through forecasting techniques that is not already promised in the birth chart. Unless a recognized relationship exists natively between a planet and the Ascendant (or other point), there is no promise – no potential – that a coming together of the planet with the Ascendant (or other point) in forecasting techniques will actualize an eventful result.

(4) *Forecast made with sound methods must concur to actualize a predicted effect.* In Morin's theory and in the use of his method, a fatal or seriously injurious accident can be reliably forecast only when (a) fatal or seriously injurious accident can be predicted from the birth chart using Morin's method, principles and rules and (b) the systematic application of sound forecasting techniques shows that a fatal or seriously injurious accident is likely to occur at a specific time (or times) in the life. It can happen that a birth chart is determined to fatal or seriously injurious accident, yet a fatal or seriously injurious accident does not occur in the life. The native can be predicted to escape fatal or seriously injurious accident when no forecasting technique shows that the potential for fatal or seriously injurious accident that the birth chart itself indicates will be actualized during the life. If, for example, the birth chart and the placement of all relevant factors are determined to fatal or seriously injurious accident at the age of 80 and no earlier time and the chart promises death at 64, then no fatal or seriously injurious accident will occur in the life. Considered in the context of forecasts, the birth chart shows potential occurrences; forecasting techniques show when and whether the potential of the birth chart will be actualized. In Morin's forecasting system, events are forecast when the birth chart, Primary Directions, Solar and Lunar revolutions (returns) and transits agree with the forecast event.

(5) *A sufficiently weighty confluence of relevant considerations must support the prediction.* An experienced astrologer will predict and forecast a fatal or seriously injurious accident only when multiple and adequately strong and decisive confluent indications agree, and when countervailing influences do not decisively interfere with the predicted and forecast event. An astrologer exercises experienced-based judgment developed over time with conscious practice and ongoing assessment of results. To predict or forecast, astrologers consider the significance and relative weights of multiple planetary placements that bear on the issue under consideration.

(6) *The context in which the chart operates must support the prediction.* The social, cultural and personal context in which an astrological chart operates importantly determines its meanings and operation. No matter how powerful the influences and determinations for athletic eminence and honor, an astrologer will not predict, for example, that a person who is imprisoned for life in a maximum security prison without

possibility of parole will win a gold medal in next year's Olympics. A *campesina* from an impoverished family in rural Honduras is unlikely to become the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, no matter how much financial success and business acumen the chart describes. Depending on circumstances and the chart's indications, she might become a successful entrepreneur in her *pueblo*, in the surrounding area or in Tegucigalpa. It would take something so extraordinary that it likely would be unique for circumstances to permit a move from rural Honduras to a place of great power in the international business world.

An astrological statement that could be tested by application of Morin's method is: "In a birth chart that is determined to fatal or seriously injurious accident (in defined ways), in which Mars influences the Ascendant (in defined ways) and in which Mars and the Ascendant are determined to fatal or seriously injurious accidents (in defined ways), a fatal or seriously injurious accident is likely to occur when Mars is directed to the Ascendant by Primary Direction if Solar revolutions, Lunar revolutions and transits (considered according to method and analyzed according to rule) concur."

Proper representation of astrology for statistical study requires an adequately complete and systematic treatment of astrological principles and of rule-based relationships among astrological factors understood in accord with astrological theory and method. Witness the complexity of the principle stated above concerning Mars, the Ascendant, Primary Directions and fatal or seriously injurious accidents. When unpacked, the parentheticals add greatly to the complexity of the principle and to its system-dependent nature. Yet, to statistically test astrology is to test astrology's predictive principles as they exist within an astrological system whose skillful application enables astrologers to reliably predict.

It may be that statistical methods are suited to test meaningfully and with reasonable accuracy the truth of a complex statement like that set out above. If so, the test would take the tester deeply into a system of astrology that rests on a comprehensive method of determination that is governed by stable principles and rules that are used in a structured approach.

## **V. Conclusion**

Statistical tests of astrological factors have not tested astrology. Instead, for the most part they have tested isolated, even if numerous and sometimes voluminous, astrological factors that Morin identified as universal signifiers. Studies fail to test astrology when they proceed without regard to a sound theory of astrological signification and determination, and in disregard of the particular system in which selected factors function, the place those factors hold in the system and the work they do there as tools to enable well-trained, experienced and skilled astrologers to make reliable predictions.

Tests that find that undetermined universal significators do not correlate significantly with earthly occurrences are consistent with Morin's theory. Results of tests of universal significators taken in disregard of their proper role and use in astrology, and ripped from the system in which they function, are foregone conclusions. Undetermined universal significators taken singly or heaped together in small or large groups without regard to system, theory, method, principles and rules are not astrology and do not enable reliable prediction.

A number of tests that have found significant positive correlations between astrological configurations and earthly occurrences, including the Gauquelin studies, have used parts of a comprehensive method of determination. Use of those parts may explain the positive results obtained. That possibility calls out for test.

Despite positive results in a number of studies, it may be that astrology cannot be captured in statistical tests. First, astrology is an art. An art well-practiced is practiced by a skilled, experienced, informed, conscious human being. The practice of the astrological art requires the skills of a person whose capacity to judge an astrological chart and to see it in a flash of insight and intuition in order to bring it to life are developed step-by-step in devoted study and practice. Astrology is an art that comes alive in its practice. In order to carry out a meaningful test of astrology's predictive capacity researchers must understand, and seek to recreate as far as possible in test circumstances, what it is that a well-informed and highly practiced astrologer does when he judges an astrological chart, predicts earthly occurrences and forecasts events.

Second, a human being brings a living, breathing intelligence to the astrological task that reflects, and therefore potentially comprehends, cosmos' living intelligence. Human intelligence tracks cosmos' intelligence and, therefore, can be developed so that it apprehends and represents experience measured in astrology's measures, measures that the operations of statistical and testing methods may or may not be able to approximate.

Third, it may be that statistical methods cannot test complex statements like that stated above in Section IV about the direction of Mars to the Ascendant and the occurrence of fatal or seriously injurious accidents. Attempts to test astrology, rather than some categorical and therefore potential meanings of isolated or unmethodically aggregated universal significators, might reveal whether statistical methods are adequate to test astrology.

Fourth, the conditions and requirements of statistical methods may distort or dismember astrology so that it escapes test. In practice, astrologers use information revealed from sources in addition to an astrological chart to contextualize the chart and connect it reliably to life. It is highly artificial to attempt to separate for the purpose of test astrologers' predictive skills and experience-based judgment from ability to trace and amplify known meanings. That separation, however, is required by statistical tests.

Fifth, the effects of astrological influence depend on the person or other subject on whom the influence falls. Sun hardens mud and melts wax. The effects of an influence as it falls on one person is different from its effects as it falls on another, and is different as it falls on the same person at different times. Statistical tests would need to be able to accommodate this reality in order to test astrology.

Sixth, astrology is not given or practiced so that astrology can be tested statistically. Astrology is given and practiced so that human beings may be informed with intelligent understanding of human life and cosmos. In misuse, tools tend to function poorly.

Astrology and its symbols represent cosmos. Cosmos is the manifest world; it is the physical or natural world. Traditionally, cosmos, which is order and harmonious beauty, is known to be living intelligence. Astrology reveals cosmic order. Astrology and its symbols are to cosmos and cosmology as modern physics and its symbols are to cosmos's corpus and study of the corpus of cosmos. Astrology is the symbolic system that most fundamentally and scientifically mirrors macrocosmos (the physical or natural world) and microcosmos (each earthly being). Astrology reveals *logos*, and is organized in accord with *logos*. Astrology enables human beings to glimpse the organizing intelligence that structures and animates cosmos and speaks through the stars. Statistical research that retains intact the particular predictive system it seeks to study, and respects the system's theory and method, may be up to the task of capturing astrology. Well-wrought tests might tell.

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[www.encirclinglight.com/astrological-prediction-statistical-tests](http://www.encirclinglight.com/astrological-prediction-statistical-tests); and 'Capturing Astrology in Statistical Tests', *The International Astrologer*, ISAR, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Aries Issue 2010), pp. 82-90.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Elwell, D., 'Scholars versus Scribblers,' Retrieved 4 September 2009 from the World Wide Web: [http://www.astrozero.co.uk/astroscience/elwell\\_2.htm](http://www.astrozero.co.uk/astroscience/elwell_2.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Corre, R. M. (November 23, 2001). 'Additional Resources: Choice Sayings on Astrology: Astrological Aphorisms.' Retrieved 19 May 2008 from the World Wide Web: <http://forumonastrology.com/newmain.html>

<sup>3</sup> The focus here is on natal astrology though the principles discussed apply to other branches of astrology.

<sup>4</sup> For a fuller introduction to Morin's method, see Seator, P. (2007). 'The Down to Earth Sky: An Introduction to Morin's Method of Determination.' *The Mountain Astrologer*, Vol. 20, pp. 49-61. Retrieved 19 May 2008 from the World Wide Web: [http://www.astro.com/astrology/in\\_morin\\_e.htm](http://www.astro.com/astrology/in_morin_e.htm) and [www.encirclinglight.com/down-to-earth-sky](http://www.encirclinglight.com/down-to-earth-sky)

<sup>5</sup> Morin de Villefranche, J.B. (2008). *Astrologia Gallica, Book XXI: The Active Determinations of the Celestial Bodies and the Passive Determinations of the Sublunary World*. Richard S. Baldwin (trans.). Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Astrologers, Inc. (Original work published 1661.) The 2008 edition of the translation of Book 21 omits the title Morin gave to the volume and substitutes for it another title: *The Morinus System of Horoscope Interpretation*.

<sup>6</sup> Morin, J.B., *Astrologia Gallica, Book XXI*, Section 1, ch 3, 'The description and refutation of an error frequently encountered in astrology,' p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Morin, J.B., *Astrologia Gallica, Book XXI*, Preface, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Morin, J.B., *Astrologia Gallica, Book XXI*, Section 1, ch. 3, pp. 21-22.

<sup>9</sup> Morin, J.B., *Astrologia Gallica, Book XXI*, Section I, ch. 3, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> Eysenck, H.J. and Nias, D.K.B. (1984). *Astrology: Science or Superstition?* Middlesex: Penguin.

<sup>11</sup> Eysenck, H.J. and Nias, D.K.B. *Astrology*, p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Dictionary definitions and etymological information are drawn from the *Oxford English Dictionary: Second Edition on CD-ROM*. (2004). Oxford University Press.

<sup>13</sup> See generally Campion, N. & Kollerstrom, N. (Spring/Summer 2003). *Galileo's Astrology*, special issue of *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 7, no. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Newhart, B. (1998). 'An infinite number of monkeys.' *The Button-Down Mind Strikes Back!* U.S.A.: Warner Brothers Records Inc. (Original work published 1960).

<sup>15</sup> Cited in Morin, J.B. (1994) *Astrologia Gallica, Book XXII: Directions*. James Herschel Holden (trans.), Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Astrologers. (Original work published 1661), p. 15 and translator's note 16.

<sup>16</sup> Morin, J.B., *Astrologia Gallica, Book XXI*, Section I, ch. 2, 'The formal or essential determination of the planets and the fixed stars,' p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Ertel, S. and Irving, K. (1996). *The Tenacious Mars Effect*. London: Urania.

<sup>18</sup> Irving, K. (2007). 'Willie Sutton's Rules of Research.' In NCGR, Inc., *Research Symposium Compendium*. New York: National Council for Geocosmic Research, pp. 19-21.

<sup>19</sup> Irving, K., 'Willie Sutton's Rules of Research,' p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Roberts, P., as cited in Harris, P. (2004). 'Astrology and Individuality in Chronic Pain Management.' *Correlation*, Vol. 22, pp. 5-23.

<sup>21</sup> Fuzeau-Braesch, S., as cited in Harris, P. (2004). 'Astrology and Individuality in Chronic Pain Management.' *Correlation*, Vol. 22, pp. 5-23.

<sup>22</sup> Hill, J.A. and Thompson, J. (Winter 1988-89). 'The Mars-Redhead Link: A Scientific Test of Astrology.' *NCGR Journal*, pp. 24-34.

<sup>23</sup> Nolle, R., as cited in Smit, R. (n.d.). 'Research Results (91 Abstracts): from *Correlation*, *APP*, *AinO*, and *Kosmos*.' Retrieved 19 May 2008 from the World Wide Web: <http://rudolfhsmit.nl/d-rese2.htm>, section 5, 'Houses.'

<sup>24</sup> The phrase "Exactitude confers intensity" is lifted directly from Robert Corre's teaching in his Forum on Astrology classes, [www.forumonastronomy.com](http://www.forumonastronomy.com)

<sup>25</sup> Morin, J.B., *Astrologia Gallica*, Book XXI, Section 1, ch. 3, p. 20.