

# the Tradition

journal of western predictive astrology



Number 4  
2010

[www.thetraditionjournal.com](http://www.thetraditionjournal.com)



## Editorial

Welcome to this edition of *The Tradition* journal. It is the fourth and, for the time being, the last in its present form. As regular readers will know, the editorial team has had to find time to produce the journal in amongst the myriad other tasks pressing for attention. The lateness of this edition is because the latter had to be given priority.

We have begun to publish both the journal and the text for *The Tradition Library* as e-books. Our intention is that these publications will be accessible to as many readers as possible and while they are 'on the move'.

*The Library* will continue to be updated and expanded and we would like to hear from those who have a text they consider suitable for inclusion.

We will continue to ask for donations, by way of *The Library*, for animal welfare and rescue. We are pleased to have been able to assist a number of smaller organisations on your behalf. We are currently considering one or two more charitable associations to which we might donate.

As this is the last in this series of *The Tradition*, we have included, within the cover price, a transcription of William Lilly's *Life and Times*. But it's more than just a transcription, it is taken from the autograph manuscript and is filled with comments, explanations and biographical information of some of those mentioned within the text. As an added extra, where birth data could be found it is included in an appendix, as are some of the nativities. This substantial work centred on this fascinating man has been lying on Sue Ward's desk for over 10 years! Finally, it sees the light of day.

We would like to extend warm thanks to all of our contributors, particularly Peter Stockinger who has been of such great assistance and support. But we would also like to thank you, the reader, for your kind support and generosity. We are sure that, if they could, all the animals you have helped would thank you as well.

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## The role of dispositors of planets in signs

by Martien Hermes

### Ad Fundum

Let me first start with a personal observation. I think a very important development is going on in traditional astrology at this moment. This development was initiated by Project Hindsight and, after its demise, was continued by Robert Schmidt. It is the rediscovery of Hellenistic astrology and its principles.

I find that –as a traditional astrologer – I have been working my way backwards through history. When I first started doing traditional astrology, around 1994, it was by means of the scant sources then available, which were mainly renaissance sources: Lilly, Morinus, Dariot, those guys. After that I got acquainted with the medieval tradition of – principally – Bonatti through the work of Robert Zoller and the Latin translations of Project Hindsight. After

that I studied the early Arabic astrologers: Mâshâ'allâh, Abû Ma'shar, Abu Ali Al-Khayyat, Sahl Ibn Bishr, and found that they built their astrology on Hellenistic foundations. So it seemed natural to study Hellenistic astrology, because it was the starting point of western astrology. When studying something, getting acquainted with its foundations is – literally – fundamental.

Studying Hellenistic astrology however proved to be quite challenging. Why? Because not much has survived from these sources. Second: all this material is written in Greek. Very few people are fluent in ancient Greek. I therefore salute Robert Schmidt who has done truly groundbreaking and very interesting work with regards to recapturing the principles of Hellenistic astrology. It was also through his efforts that Hellenistic astrology was brought to light at all. It didn't exist 15 years ago!

It was Schmidt who made me aware of the issue I am addressing in this article.

## The mother language

For me there is one very important and convincing argument for studying Hellenistic astrology and its concepts. It made me aware that modern astrology – from medieval times onward – is heavily, almost fully, dependent on the Latin tradition. Greek is however the language in which the first western astrologers (ever) wrote about our art, for the very first time in history. So when we assume that horoscopic astrology was their invention, these texts are of the utmost importance in clarifying the tenets of this astrology, or getting a glimpse of its intentions.

Now, anyone who has ever tried to translate something into another language, knows how difficult it is to exactly or fully capture the meaning of a single word in another language. Let alone when it is very specific terminology, like astrological jargon is. Hence the saying: 'translating is betraying'. When one then realizes how many layers of translation there can be between the original astrological text and later copies, one needs must accept that a certain level of 'pollution' or misrepresentation of the original has probably occurred. This is another argument for the importance of studying the original material. It is a known fact that Greek texts were often translated to Persian, then to Arab (from Greek or Persian), then to Latin, and from thereon to all manner of modern languages. So there might have been perhaps five different layers of translations between the original and what you are reading today.

It is also established that quite a severe rewriting and censorship took place in the Latin translations from the Arabic sources. Where the Arabs seem to have been very careful to translate as close to the original as possible, such considerations do not seem to have bothered Latin translators. It seems they were scrutinized by clerical authorities as to what exactly they were introducing in the Latin Christian world, by means of all this heathen literature. This is not to say that medieval astrology is bogus, but that we have to treat these Latin texts with some circumspection. What is posited in them ought to be checked with the original source(s).

Listening to the tapes of Schmidt's workshops, recorded between 1998 and 2000, in which he discusses the principles of Hellenistic delineation, the fundamentals and (first) principles of our Art are expounded – although Schmidt says he has gained an even deeper level of understanding since these early expositions (hence his new series of intensives<sup>1</sup>). This excellent material made me aware that there has been either a sort of combining of terminology and concepts, or a complete loss of the original meaning and intent of certain principles, as well as a mixing of methods and techniques in medieval and later astrology. Some things were thrown together which perhaps weren't meant to be combined, some things were thrown out. This is possibly not a mistake of the Arabs or later Latin and renaissance astrologers, but could likely have occurred with the said transmission of the methods and techniques into Europe via the multiple translations. Lacunae in text reception had to be – or were – filled up with speculation about what was possibly implied by the principle authors. Things had to be contrived, were perhaps re-explained and new methods developed, and sometimes they were based on deviant interpretations of the original.

## Let's not go to war over this

I do not want to start a debate about how truthfully this or that later tradition has represented the Greek original, or how close a particular strand of astrology has stayed to the essence of what astrology is, or how much it has improved on Hellenistic astrology or any later tradition. I say this because this renovation is quite possibly a subject for strong dissention among traditionalists. For some this clarification of Greek astrological terminology flies in the face of what they have learned, or of what they have come to understand, or how they want to represent the tradition. For others, like me, it is a revelation, because it clarifies much of the sometimes muddled and muddied reception of quite complex astrological doctrine.

Studying this ground-laying Hellenistic material, is therefore a unique way of getting a glimpse of what was possibly the original meaning and intent of the several tools and techniques with which traditional astrologers have grown so familiar over the last few years.

In this article I will address a key issue, the role of a planet as a dispositor of planets in its sign, and Robert Schmidt was the first author to address this. We will find that a Hellenistic understanding of this will reverse our view on this issue<sup>2</sup>. And I have proof for the original Hellenistic concept, first in ancient delineation texts, second in chart examples.

## The problem

The problem is that nowadays the ruler of a sign is understood to be the *master* of a planet in its sign. There is some sort of authority implied, the visiting planet is depicted as being subject to the domicile-master of the sign. When we say that Mars rules Aries it implies that the planet is the lord *over* this sign. This is not the case.

Schmidt:

*Dignification is a matter of the relationships between the signs and planets, it is the sign that dignifies a planet. Rulership is of a completely different sort, it has to do with the relationship between the planets. A planet can administrate on behalf of a sign, and it can only have rulership over a planet that resides in a sign, because it has an administrative function for that sign, not because it rules over the sign! A planet can administrate or carry out the function of a sign, insofar it is related to that sign via dignity. The most common term for such a serving function is steward.*

This is what the online dictionary says about what a steward is:

- 1. a person who *manages* another's property or financial affairs; one who *administers* anything as the agent of another or others.**
- 2. a person who has *charge of the household of another*, buying or obtaining food, directing the servants, etc.**
- 3. an employee who has *charge of the table, wine, servants, etc., in a club, restaurant, or the like.***



4. a person *who attends to* the domestic concerns of persons on board a vessel, as in overseeing maids and waiters. 5. an employee on a ship, train, or bus who waits on and is *responsible for the comfort of* passengers, takes orders for or distributes food, etc.

(My accentuation.) This definition of what a steward is illustrates the role of the domicile master quite clearly, it is there to *serve* the visiting planet. Their relationship is one of guest and host, not master and servant.



## Guest-Host relationship

The most basic dignification is being Lord of a Domicile. The Greek term used for that role is: *oikodektor*, which is like the *steward*, the planet that accepts responsibility; it takes it upon itself to administer for the sign. This term only and exclusively used for this ruler of the domicile, according to Schmidt.

So it is important to keep in mind that the planets do not rule over signs, but a planet does have rulership over planets which are located in a sign. But this rulership needs to be understood as serving as a host, the steward, to the visiting planet. That is its responsibility and its function.

So whenever a planet enters a sign there is an ensemble of planets that start performing specific tasks on behalf of the visitor because they are in the service of that sign. Compare this with visiting a restaurant (the sign). As soon as you put one foot over the threshold, each member of the staff attend to their

respective duties, for you, the visitor. The headwaiter bids you welcome and shows you to your table. Another waiter then answers your every beck and call, and serves you your dinner, makes sure everything is okay. The cook cooks it for you, the waiter cleans up after you, someone does the dishes, etc. That is the function of the planets in charge of the house you visit, the restaurant, the sign they administer to.

So the best description for this relationship between visiting planet and planets having dignity there is the *guest-host relationship*.

## Oikeosis, familiarization

A sign in Hellenistic astrology is called a *zōion* but whenever dignification is addressed it is described as *oikeosis*: coming from *oikos*, which is dwelling, and *oikeao* is 'to domesticate something', 'to bring it in your household'. Schmidt calls this process *familiarization*. The signs 'adopt' the planet as it were, they take over and assume (some of) the characteristics of the visiting planet.

What is this familiarization? It is the sign that makes itself familiar to the planet in the sign, but it also makes the planet like itself. According to Schmidt it is the nature of signs, to familiarize themselves with planets that reside in those signs; they familiarize. Meaning, they become in some way like the planet that resides in that sign. They identify themselves with it, which is *oikeosis*, 'becoming at home with...'

## Historical familiarization: the table of essential dignities

Now, as a matter of fact there are two versions of this *familiarization*: a historical one and an actual one. The historical familiarization of signs and planets, which is over and done with, we now know as the table of essential dignities of the planets. We have fixed dispositors associated with each sign. Mars – the Ram, Venus – the Bull, etc. This assignment can also be understood as a familiarization process, but one that took place in the hypothetical beginning of the Cosmos, as represented by the Thema Mundi. Planets have modes of rulership and dignity in each sign. Therefore planets do have *authority* that is delegated or assigned to them by the signs, due to this historical process of familiarization. But it is *the authority to administer* on behalf of the sign they have familiarized themselves with.

So the planets have (long ago) been taken into the household of the signs and are delegated responsibility. This is what the table of essential dignity represents, the way the planets administer on behalf of a sign, each in a different mode. Each planet therefore has a special function on behalf of the sign, like the staff of the restaurant in our earlier example. Signs have adopted, assimilated, brought into their household, have familiarized themselves with the characteristics of the planets that are called their dignities.

But the signs have obtained the attributes of the planets that we call their dignities only in a secondary sense. These planetary characteristics are neither the first principle nor the defining principle of the signs, but they are the attributes the sign has due to the historical process of familiarization of the signs with these planets. They might be called the *accidental significations* of the signs due to the planets administering on behalf of them. The *essential significations* of the signs however, are the qualities and attributes they naturally have: their gender, quadruplicity, triplicity, their typical characteristics (mute / vocal; fertile / barren, etc.) their constellations, certain fixed stars and such. These cannot be explained as coming from or resulting from the dignities of planets in these signs. Signs are their own, they are authentic because they are not based on planets for anything, but because of what they receive as their due from fate / moira. Signs are therefore self-defined. They have their own identifying characteristics, their own first principles: gender, constellations, certain fixed stars, etc.

## **‘Familiarization-as-it-is-happening-now’**

This historical familiarization is different from the familiarization taking place when a planet resides in a sign in a birth chart, or when it is transiting through it. And so the other version of *oikeao* is the *familiarization-as-it-is-happening-now*, which is represented by the planets in your chart in their various signs, or planets transiting through them. So whenever a planet is in a sign, it is taken into *the household* of that sign. So the sign takes into its household certain characteristics of the planets that reside in them. But on the other hand, the planet residing there needs to familiarize himself with his sign-environment.

This is the nature of the signs; they appropriate, they take onto themselves the nature of the planets that reside in them.



## Familiarization, things you are at home with...

*Oikos* = domicile, defines a kind of space of familiarization, a spatiality, not as physical distance, but as in something that is familiar (which is something close by) or something that is unfamiliar (something you perceive as distant). This is something familiar to astrologers, we know for instance that the Moon by nature is very familiar, whilst Saturn is by nature quite unfamiliar. We can also talk of things, people, events that you are familiar with, or not. This can also be applied to specific topics in the chart, what is familiar to you, what is alien? What are the things you are (un)familiar with? What is near to you or what is far away from you. It is also applicable to signs: Capricorn and Aquarius are familiar with Saturn, Mars with Aries and Scorpio.

Schmidt uses the following example in his exposition of this issue<sup>3</sup>. Suppose Saturn is in Aries or Scorpio, the domicile of Mars. Aries has adopted/ assimilated the characteristics of Mars and so has a certain environment that is familiar to Mars. This environment is not necessarily familiar to Saturn. Saturn is likened to residing in a dwelling where there are events and objects that Saturn is either familiar with or unfamiliar with, that are either familiar to Saturn or unfamiliar to Saturn. And Saturn has to make use of the objects and events in its environment, and has to try to adapt or manage these events that it is surrounded by.

The environment that Saturn is in, is already prepared, (pre)formed and has the characteristics of the domicile ruler Mars. So Saturn is surrounded by this martial environment, as he is a visitor in this dwelling, in this *oikos*; Saturn now has to:

- Cope with the events, persons and objects of this Mars-nature.
- Make use of the events, persons and objects of this Mars-nature.
- Familiarize himself with the events, persons and objects of this Mars-nature.
- Find a way to cope with the events, persons and objects of this Mars-nature.
- Try to handle the events, persons and objects of this Mars-nature.

To help describe this we need to ask ourselves: is it familiar or unfamiliar?

## Proof #1, early delineation texts

I had understood what Schmidt put forward with this familiarization concept, forgot about it but was reminded of it again much later when I was reading the *Liber Hermetis* on the delineation of planets in the several dignities of other planets.

Please read with me in the **Liber Hermetis**<sup>4</sup>:

*When Saturn is in sect in the house of the Moon, or face or degree, he becomes depraved, unless the full Moon is configured with him; it induces cold diseases of the mother. But it makes the natives neither daring nor rash, travelling with difficulty, being harmed often, rheumatics; it signifies destruction of the patrimony, and separation from the parents, and diseases of the secret places for them, and the injury of the mother, and bodily suffering, either humidities or vexations, and mothers fleeing to the gods on account of the torments made in them.*

**Dorotheus** has the following to say about this<sup>5</sup>:

*If Saturn is in the Moon's house, then he will destroy his mother's property and rob it in her lifetime, and his mother will be sick, and her limbs will complain of the cold and the black bile and the harsh pain until she shall make a vow for herself to a house of worship.*

**Abu 'Ali Al-Khayyat**:<sup>6</sup>

*If you find this same [planet] in the domicile of the Moon, do not doubt that it signifies infirmity for the native and many maladies for his mother; also, it will destroy his mother's estate during her lifetime.*

Isn't that interesting? One of the main topics addressed here is the mother. Saturn itself is not mentioned at all, but it is quite clear that it is Saturn that is 'doing' things with what the Moon provides as material for Saturn to work with. The Moon serves as the host for Saturn, and it is up to Saturn to do something with the Moon-'stuff'.

We also see that both Dorotheus and Abu 'Ali Al-Khayyat sort of excerpt the delineation the Liber Hermetis gives, but leave out some of the general significations of the Moon proper: her rulership over body and limbs in general of the native, not just his mother's as these authors would have it. Liber Hermetis also adduces to the Moon as ruling the natives life in general and some of her universal topics (...*neither daring nor rash, travelling with difficulty, being harmed often, rheumatics; it signifies destruction of the patrimony, and separation from the parents...*).

Quite an eye-opener. It also illustrates the principle that it is the sect condition of the visiting planet that determines how able the guest is to give a benefic or malefic turn to the end result. If one likens the visiting planet to a potter, and the domicile ruler as providing the clay, then these delineation texts strongly suggest that it is the ability and skill of the potter that determines the outcome. But one can easily introduce other considerations as well.

I urge the reader to read up on these authors, the use of the guest-host concept is quite clarifying.

Here's a modern take on Saturn in Cancer which I randomly plucked from the internet:

*Saturn in Cancer tests you for empathy and the value of responsibility—with the hard and unyielding teacher Saturn in the sentimental and vulnerable sign Cancer. An emotional wound experienced as a child may cause you to be fearful and rigid in your feelings, or to be frozen at an earlier stage of development or experience. You may thus fear being too close to others, and withdraw and build a self-protective barrier around yourself, like the crab. No matter how kind and well disposed you may be, this withdrawal can make it all but impossible to put yourself in anyone else's shoes. Understanding your early childhood experiences: finding, loving and taking care of that frightened child within yourself, can go a long way to healing these wounds.*



Although this author clearly has an all too familiar modern bent on the idea of what the Moon represents in a chart, the delineation is actually quite in conformity with the guest-host concept. Albeit that the reason *why* it works like this is lost upon many a contemporary astrologer. It is the guest-host relationship that explains it, not the idea that Saturn is somehow acting upon Cancer-stuff, which is understood as being some sort of goal for Saturn, and what not.

Another example.



## **Liber Hermetis:**

*Saturn being in sect in the house of Mercury, or the face or the degree, signifies those conscious of hidden secrets, but in manners active publicans, acquisitive of their own interests, great men self motivated, and happily having a constant life, and those always increased to greater things, conscious of secret books and celestial things, but idle with respect to behaviour, and constant towards superiors.*

*But if he is not in sect, it denotes stutterers, deaf people, those who are mute, malevolent men. Many, indeed, when the planet is evilly configured, are*

*deprived of their voice; [and it denotes] those always thinking about the perverse things which are in their souls, not showing, but having, the behaviours of wild beasts, always bearing ill will, and being fraudulent against all men, or they become conscious of bad things, either highwaymen or homicides, or those conscious of magic, knowing divine secrets, and the things which are in mystic books. However, it is not expedient for them to treat of those things, because they always fall into great dangers, many times indeed they receive evil for good; they become malevolent in their behaviour, [and it denotes] those who endure both chains and detentions, and are held in sacred places, and they recite or expound fables, or by the vexations of daemons they perform operations, they are also in adversities and in labours. But if Saturn or Mars are configurated with Mercury, it causes worse evils and they become fixed, of bad life and of violent death.*

## **Dorotheus:**

*If Saturn is in Mercury's house, he will be secretive and will love silence except that he will be reasonable, learned in the secrets of books, and injury will come to him for this reason, and his tongue will not be distinct or clear.*

## **Abu 'Ali Al-Khayyat:**

*And when this same [planet] is in a domicile of Mercury, it signifies that the native will be thrifty and that he will preserve and investigate the different branches of learning and the secrets in hidden books, on which account he will suffer harm. And he will have an impediment and slowness of the tongue. He will have a very bad mental attitude, and men will hate him and say that he has done things that he hasn't done.*

What this again illustrates is that it is the planet in the sign that is actually working with/upon the material supplied by the domicile ruler of the sign.

## **Comparing delineations**

It is also very interesting to compare and contrast the delineations of two planets when in each others dignities. Here's one example.

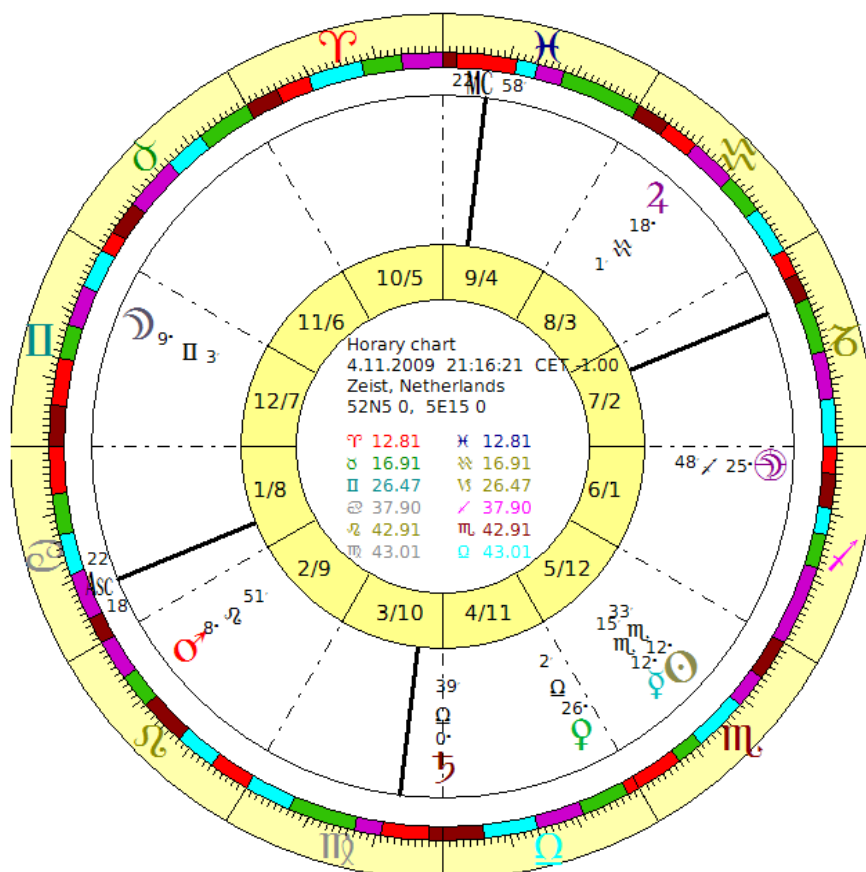
## **Dorotheus:**

*If Jupiter is in Mercury's house, he will be one of those who stand up in probity in cities or [he will be] a calculator for everything, [and] he will stand healthy in [his] reasoning, and he will be praised for this, and [men] will resort to him.*



*If Mercury is in Jupiter's house or term, he will possess dignity, [be] an orator, or control the affairs of kings or nobles, or instruct the people in words and arguments and judgments, and he will always be about the business of metropolises or kings.*

## Proof #2, charts



First we see some changes in the format of this horary chart. I use Hellenistic whole sign houses, which here gives a difference between what is the 4th and the 10th place/house. The MC-IC axis falls in Pisces-Virgo, but the 4th and 10th place/house are Aries and Libra. This doesn't make a difference as these houses do not affect judgment of this chart as presented here.

Second, I do not use the Moon principally as a co-significator for the querent, but I use the Moon *always* as the significator of what is the matter at hand, the *situation-as-it-is-in-progress*, as it is happening/going on and developing. So whether or not the moon is (also) a significator for any party that might be involved in the question – as it is here, Moon rules the querent – she is *always* important as being the matter asked about, irrespective of other considerations.

It is of course quite natural that the Moon was regarded as co-significator of the querent (which I don't believe is accurately stated), because whenever the ruler of the querent is unpromising, the matter as such – as indicated by the Moon – might be promising and perfect the matter, even if querent's ruler does not. Some things simply perfect themselves, with or without interference.

This approach makes it interesting to see what planet is the dispositor of the Moon, as this is the material with which the Moon – the situation as it is unfolding – is trying to fabricate something, and does it with the material its host provides (if it can).

Third, none of these horary considerations come from Hellenistic sources. As far as we now, no horary astrology existed until the Arab period.

This chart was for the question: "Is it wise to move our daughter to another institute? Would that be helpful? Will she object to and resist moving?"

The daughter of the querent lives in a home, under some guidance as she has a learning disorder and is socially challenged. Since she moved there, she's been going from crises to crises. The parents were of the opinion that this was due to a lack of sufficient guidance and supervision, because it was a home with low level guidance. In a previous setting the daughter had been living in a group where there was 24/7 guidance. Here it was far less. Moving her to a setting with more guidance might prove to be the solution to the ongoing problems. But as the daughter was in a phase of conflict and contention with everybody and everyone, the parents wanted to know if moving her was a good option, or would rather make problems worse. Hence the questions, which arose after an intensive meeting with all persons involved in the life of this child in the institute.

I won't fully analyze this chart, but want to illustrate how neatly the Moon and her dispositor Mercury make sense of the situation at hand, and this irrespective of the fact that the Moon rules the querent by being ruler of the 1<sup>st</sup> house.

The Moon is in the 12<sup>th</sup> sign, and this in itself is quite appropriate for the situation. The child is institutionalized (12<sup>th</sup> house) and the parents are considering moving her elsewhere, to another institute, or another setting in the same institute.

The Moon's dispositor is Mercury, which is located in the 5<sup>th</sup> sign, indicating the child. So, the Moon is at work in the 12<sup>th</sup>, fabricating something with

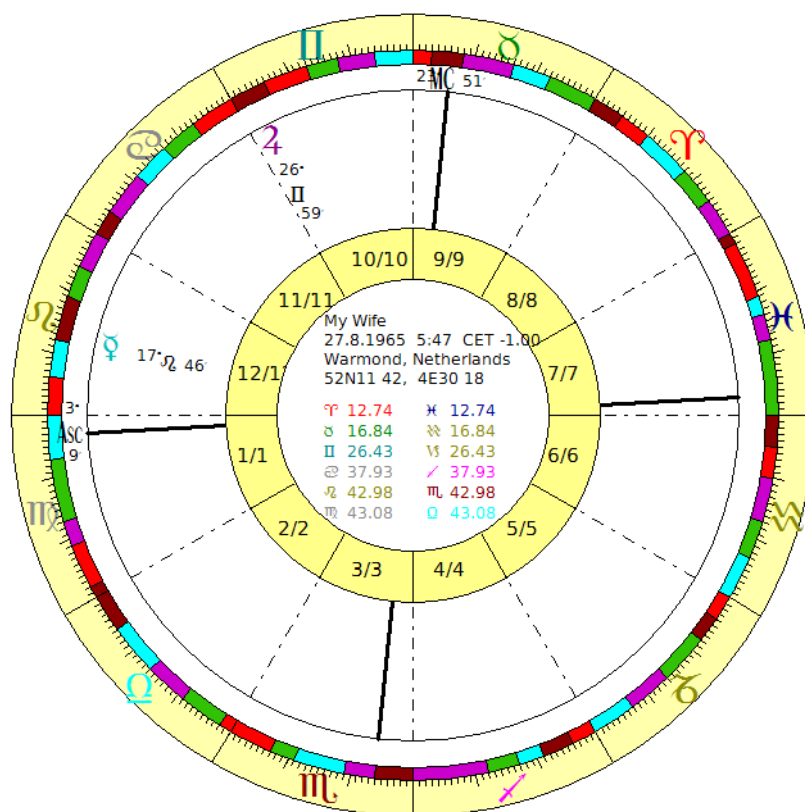
Mercury-in-the-fifth-material, the child. One of the major problems in the whole situation with the child is *communication and interaction* (Mercury), both in the situation (the institute) where the child now lives (Moon at work with Mercury-‘stuff’ in the 12<sup>th</sup>), and as a possible solution of the problems by moving her elsewhere (moving is Moon).

So what exactly is this material the Moon has to work with, out of which she is trying to create something in this (horary) situation? Mercury in the 5<sup>th</sup> is under the beams, so it is hidden from sight, and as such indicative of the problems. The child sort of ‘hides’ in her room and barely engages in activities.

Mercury is also separating from Mars, its ruler, by square configuration. This is Mercury’s second affliction. Please note that the material Mercury has to work with, supplied by its dispositor Mars (which is of course the significator of the child) is: aggression, anger, the urge to separate and sever. This was identified as the key problem of communication; the child could not/did not engage in constructive arguments and conflicts with the people whom her arguments concern, and keeps avoiding having to engage them. Instead she goes into hiding (Mercury adhering to the Sun), by pretending nothing’s the matter, avoiding the people and the issues, but the conflicts escalate and turmoil results. Leaving other considerations aside, I think we can see that the guest-host concept is quite revealing when analyzing this chart.

## Fallacy?

There is one issue that stands out as a possible fallacy in the recent revival of traditional astrology, although I admit it is quite a subtle issue. It is this. I read a delineation concerning Venus in Pisces that read: “*The outlet for this Venusian energy can be found in the placement of Jupiter in the 9th House...*” In view of what’s been said here, this should probably read as: “*The **inlet** for this Venusian energy can be found in the placement of Jupiter in the 9th House...*”. Or stated otherwise: Venus is the outlet for Jupiter, as it is Venus in Pisces that is working with material provided by Jupiter, coming from the 9<sup>th</sup>, not the other way around.



My wife is perhaps a good example of how this works. She has Mercury in the 12<sup>th</sup>, but Jupiter in Gemini in the 10<sup>th</sup>. My wife started working as a teacher in an institution for (mildly) mentally disabled persons, and was very good at it. She only switched jobs twice in her longstanding career, but always worked with these pupils. At the moment she is no longer teaching but managing a school and teachers in the same field: the mentally and physically disabled.

I always took it for granted that it was the location of the ruler of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mercury in the 12<sup>th</sup> that explained all of this, and of course, it fits quite perfectly, it really seems to be the *outlet* for 10<sup>th</sup> house activities. But what about the fact that when the ruler of the 10<sup>th</sup> is in the 12<sup>th</sup> it might easily indicate *not* having a job, or not being able to create stability in your work? How do we explain the fact that all of this is so exceptionally well and fortunate in her life? Again Jupiter in the 10<sup>th</sup> for some might be sufficient reason for this, but I maintain that it is the guest-host principle that explains this rather elegantly.

It is Jupiter in the 10<sup>th</sup> that is working with Mercury-material. Where? In the 10<sup>th</sup>. Jupiter is working with what? With 12<sup>th</sup> house stuff. So we have a Jupiterian outlet for Mercury-stuff, coming out of the 12<sup>th</sup> and going towards the 10<sup>th</sup> house. So, my wife was teaching (Jupiter in 10<sup>th</sup>) disabled and handicapped children (Mercury in 12<sup>th</sup>).

Jupiter in the 10<sup>th</sup> is very strong, albeit it in Exile. She is very good at what she does, she has a natural instinct for connecting with these pupils, and instructing others how to cope with teaching them, when the result of teaching them seems slow and unrewarding.

Again we see, as in the cited delineation texts, that the guest-host principle is quite a fruitful way of looking at the role of dispositors.

I think our delineations gain much clarity once this principle is used to (re) formulate them.



## Martien Hermes

Martien Hermes (22.3.1959) started studying astrology in 1983.

He has taught classes since 1985. In his early studies he was thoroughly Modern, devoted to Jung and Jungian astrology, counselling, but this changed when learning about Project Hindsight and reading the Traditional texts.

In 1998 he founded *Anima Astrologiae*, a magazine devoted to Traditional astrology in the Netherlands and Belgium. He has written about 23 booklets on a (wide) range of astrological subjects, the last 13 on Traditional astrology.

He published the first Dutch book in 300 years on Traditional astrology *Astrologie als ambacht, klassieke uurhoekastrologie* (Synthese 2007), devoted to the somewhat deviant method of delineating horary charts as taught in Mâshâ'allâh's *On Reception*.

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### Endnotes:

1- Project Hindsight: <http://www.projecthindsight.com/>

2 - My sources are: 1) Robert H. Schmidt. Discourse on Method: An overview of HELLENISTIC ASTROLOGY, with LOST LORE & SECRET KEYS. October 30 – November 3, 1998, Cumberland MD. A Project Hindsight Intensive. 2) Robert H. Schmidt. Preliminary Natal Analysis & Universal Techniques

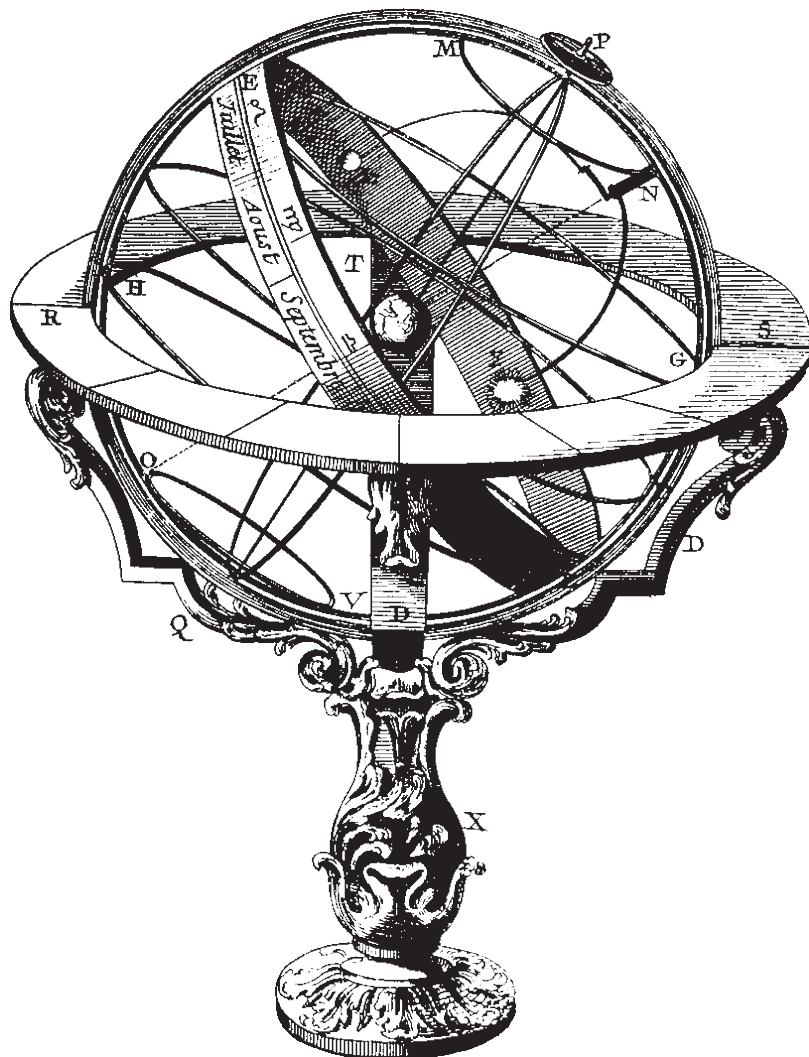
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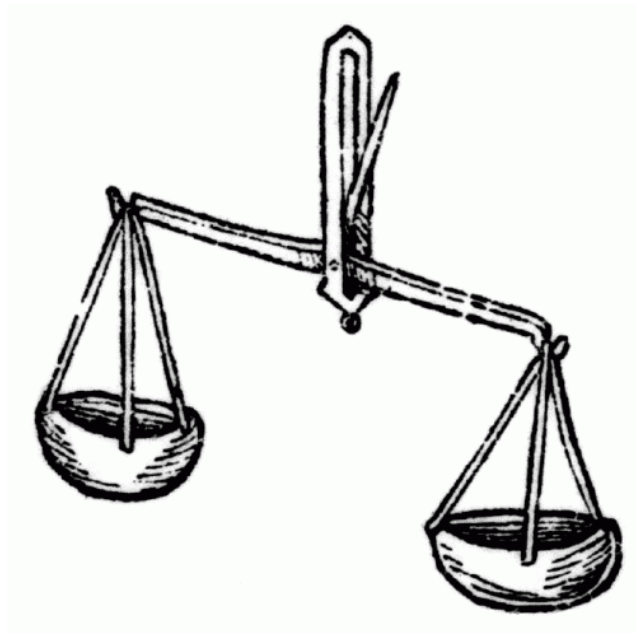
3 - Robert H. Schmidt. Preliminary Natal Analysis & Universal Techniques if the Hermetic Tradition. Recorded June 25 – 28 1999, Cumberland MD. Part 1 of Project Hindsight's "Einstein Intensives" Tape 6B.

4 - Hermes. Liber Hermetis, Part II. Translated by Robert Zoller. Edited by Robert Hand. Project Hindsight. Chapter XXXJJ. On the Signs in Which the Planets are Located.

5 - Sidon, Dorotheus van. Carmen Astrologicum. Vertaald door David Pingree (1976). Astrology Classics Publishers (2005). Chapter 33. On the arrival of the planets, one of them in the house of another.

6 - Abu 'Ali Al-Khayyat: The judgment of Nativities. American Federation of Astrologers. Translated by James H. Holden, M.A., (1988). Chapt. 39. Saturn in Its Own Domicile and in Those of the Other Planets in Diurnal and Nocturnal Nativities.





## Fit to be Judged: The Necessity of the Considerations Before Judgement

**by Christopher Magnus**

A distinctive feature of traditional horary is its willingness to be told “no”. This is how it should be, of course, since more often than not, “no” is the answer that life actually gives us. Yet, for traditional horary, this attitude goes deeper than a principled realism towards events outside the consultation. It applies in principle to the consultation as well. In traditional astrology, the possibility of annulment becomes a structural part of the art’s own capacity for self-regulation. For horary, in particular, this means the chart may deny not only the matter in question but also, sometimes, the question itself.

Experience proves that we must differentiate between questions that can – or ought – to be answered and those that cannot or ought not to be. Having dealt with many queries, the practiced horary astrologer knows that certain charts have an integrity and symbolic coherence that inspire conviction. Judgement



may not come easily, and we might not be right; but with such a chart it is clear that the answer to the propounded question is in there somewhere. On the other hand, there are the charts that we entertain with much time and energy, only to realize – perhaps too late – that all ways in are barred.

A horary chart that permits the question as propounded is described in the tradition as *radical*, from the Latin *radix* or “root” – an important derivation, which we will consider later on. In *Christian Astrology*, William Lilly does not develop a systematic theory of radicality. Instead, he tells us simply that the radical chart is “capable of judgment”, “fit to be judged” or “safe to judge.”<sup>1</sup> Conversely, then, the non-radical chart must be one that is unfit and unsafe: a chart either unsusceptible of judgement or dangerous to judge. The trick is how to spot the difference at the beginning of the process instead of halfway through, or later. This is very important. Horary is generally concerned with urgent matters. There is no time to waste, and a wrong answer can be disastrous.

## Establishing radicality: the Considerations before Judgement

To this end, the horary tradition has developed a more or less complete set of tests – or, perhaps better, queries – that help us decide if we ought to read the chart. Much as a trained gardener can tell if the plant is healthy long before it bears fruit, the skillful astrologer can see the marks of radicality – of a rooted and fruitful question – from the beginning. Following Lilly, these marks are commonly called “Considerations before Judgment”.

In the first part of *Christian Astrology*, Lilly lists eleven considerations that “give warning” to the astrologer.<sup>2</sup> Lilly explicitly offers only the first consideration as a test of radicality – agreement between the Ascendant lord and the ruler of the planetary hour. A further five considerations are generally cautionary, with the possibility of mitigation: early degrees on the Ascendant, late degrees on the Ascendant, Moon in late degrees or the *via combusta*, Moon Void of Course, and afflictions to the 7<sup>th</sup> house ruler. Lilly then recommends four more considerations from “The Arabians” – Saturn in the 1<sup>st</sup> house, Saturn in the 7<sup>th</sup> house, Ascendant ruler combust, or the 7<sup>th</sup> ruler unfortunate. Almost as an afterthought, Lilly counsels us to defer judgement (actually, defer the *question*) when benefic and malefic testimonies are in equal balance – an indication that at least some questions can be asked twice.

Lilly suggests many reasons that a horary chart might fall short of the mark. The querent might be insincere, confused, or irreverent. The question might



be inopportune, rude or irrelevant. Nor must we forget the astrologer, who can damage the query by carelessness or simply not be up to the task at hand.

The querent and astrologer must also both be prayerfully disposed – in right relationship to the heavens – for the chart ultimately to be radical. Although Lilly does not mention this principle in his discussion of the Considerations, he insists upon it in his introductory letter “To the Student in Astrology”: “the more holy thou art, and more neer to God, the purer Judgment thou shalt give”.<sup>3</sup> Sincere mindfulness of divine Providence helps to bring about an alignment between the querent, the querent’s awareness of what really matters in the moment, the astrologer, the heavens, and Heaven itself. This alignment is the necessary precondition for asking the right question at the right moment (i.e., the consultation) so that a radical figure can be taken. No wonder deep radicality is so rare!<sup>4</sup>

## Objections to the Considerations

When you have a shiny new hammer, everything looks like a nail. Unfortunately, traditional horary astrologers have gained a reputation for using the Considerations with a similar ham-fisted zeal. Since the quite recent rediscovery of *Christian Astrology*, the Considerations have morphed first into the more rigorous-sounding “cautions” – which still communicates a necessary gravitas – and finally into “strictures”: tests that simply nullify the chart, no questions asked. This has garnered traditional horary the reputation, not just of being an astrology that *can* say no, but for being an astrology that relishes it.<sup>5</sup>

Some interpreters of Lilly (and the greater Tradition) have reacted against this rigor by marginalizing the Considerations to one degree or another. We see this, for example, in Maurice McCann’s essay, “Lilly says... A Reference Guide to the Considerations Before Judgement.”<sup>6</sup> His express thesis is that Lilly neither calls the Considerations “strictures” (correct) nor clings to them slavishly. According to McCann, there are simply too many charts in *Christian Astrology* that would fail a strict construction of the Considerations (e.g., planetary hour agreement, the most contested of the Considerations). Instead, he argues – initially at least – that in actual practice, Lilly appropriates the Considerations only as preliminary queries meant to foster more careful judgement.

But this is not where McCann’s discussion actually leads. He fails to deliver on the promise to show us how Lilly actually applied the Considerations. Instead, he organizes his evidence toward the inference that in practice Lilly *ignored* the Considerations, or at least minimized them to the point of

irrelevance. It seems that, for McCann, the Considerations are no barrier to judgement because they have no actual bearing on it at all.<sup>7</sup>

The rejection of the Considerations reaches its most extreme formulation in John Frawley. According to Frawley, astrologers once worked for the king, whose displeasure at bad news or error could be fatal to the hapless. The Considerations before Judgement, he says, were contrived as a “diplomatic way of fending off unwelcome questions” that might put the astrologer at risk. Astrologers who are actually so foolish as to use them “have their own translation of that famous Hermetic dictum, running ‘As above, as every now and again so below’. Every chart can be judged. Astrology does not stop working.”<sup>8</sup>

Yet, Frawley himself is inconsistent on how thoroughly the “below” actually corresponds to the “above”. For instance, in his discussion of problems with timing in the chart, Frawley concedes that occasionally the chart just seems to be a bit off, not so much as to make one doubt the sky, but enough to remind us that we live – as the old philosophy well knew – in the sublunary world, where things tend to slip.<sup>9</sup> If a chart factor like timing can be off, why not the chart itself?

Furthermore, Frawley’s image of timid astrologers of yore at the service of merciless kings is mostly a fable (sources, please, Mr. Frawley!). Even if the more or less canonical list of Considerations had been put together as an elaborate medieval ruse, the idea that they started out that way is flat out wrong. Some version of them has been in use from the very beginning, and nearly every traditional source has them. The use of Considerations is also too widely disseminated both historically and geographically to have such a limited purpose as Frawley would have us believe.

Sue Ward, *valde contra* McCann, makes the case that Lilly demonstrably turned to the Considerations in his day to day practice, even if he adapted them or judged the chart in spite of them.<sup>10</sup> We find them too in the front matter of the horary treatises of Bonatti,<sup>11</sup> Sahl,<sup>12</sup> and Masha’allah.<sup>13</sup> Dorotheus, although not concerned with chart validity per se, does consider the quality of the Ascendant and the Moon as a general, preliminary measure of good or ill fortune in the figure.<sup>14</sup> This is a “consideration before judgement,” even if it did not make it into *Christian Astrology*.

Even in the *Prasna Marga* of the Jyotish horary tradition a recognizable cluster of preliminary considerations belongs to an extensive ceremonial dharma and omenology. For example, it is important that a harmony exist between

the Planetary Day Ruler and the *nadi* of the astrologer's breath at the time of consultation.<sup>15</sup> This is the yoga of the renunciate sage and soothsayer, far from the political intrigues of the Middle Ages as Frawley imagines them. The global horary tradition agrees that radicality can be consistently tested and verified. Everyone cares about it. So must we.

## Radicality a concern of all astrology



We do not have to dig very deep to realize that every branch of traditional astrology also has its own set of “considerations before judgement”. Traditional mundane astrology does not simply cast the vernal ingress chart and rush headlong into it. It first takes into account the nature of the sign ascending. The Ascendant's modality reveals the general vigour and applicability – or weakness and insufficiency – of the chart for the months ahead.

Classical natal astrology, too, is exceptionally cautious in its initial dealings with the chart of a newborn. It would be both pointless and even shameful to judge the chart of a child who will not live. The crux of the natal method is to identify the *hyleg*, or *life-giver*, – a planet or point fortified enough to make the life viable. If there is a *hyleg*, then the chart may be read and prediction made. If not, then the chart cannot be judged, no matter how dynamic the signification.

Like horary, these branches of astrology exhibit a concern for radicality, each in their own way. Each approaches the chart cautiously, taking time to ascertain if it has a basic integrity, without which the matter at hand cannot take root, much less prosper. Working charts will be marked with signs of rootedness, the capacity of the matter at hand come to life and grow – *viz.* the importance of the hyleg, or life-giver.<sup>16</sup> Problem charts will be like the seed that “fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.”<sup>17</sup>

This, I think, is what radicality means: that a chart is viable because it is rooted deeply enough in reality for the matter at hand to develop, for better or worse. So, the birth chart is – or more exactly, describes – the *radix*, the rootedness of the native’s life.<sup>18</sup> The horary chart is *radical* if the question asked of the astrologer is sufficiently rooted *in* the native’s life. Obviously, a trick question or a vague one would fail this test.

What distinguishes the radical horary chart from other kinds is not so much that it deals with questions, which are uncertain matters; at the birth of a child, a great deal is uncertain. It is rather that horary operates simultaneously on two registers with two distinct foci: (1) the matter at hand, and (2) the question itself. The question must be in alignment with what is really important in the client’s affairs. In the Tradition, therefore, the earnest preparation before querying the astrologer is meant to insure not merely that the question is asked at the right time, but that the right question is asked in the first place.<sup>19</sup>

If the horary chart is radical, it demonstrably befits the question and describes where matters stand at the moment. If the chart is not radical, it does not “fit” the matter at hand.<sup>20</sup> Instead, it may appear to require another question altogether to make sense – and this may be helpful to the querent in itself, if we can guide him in the right direction. Or it might testify to deceit, confusion or unpreparedness in the querent, information surely helpful to the astrologer. It seems that in horary, determining radicality is actually more complex than in natal or mundane astrology – one argument, perhaps, that it is not the least or simplest branch of the Tradition.

## In summary

The Considerations are a salutary reminder that no one – not the querent and certainly not the astrologer – knows everything. The astrologer cannot really know the mind of the querent, who is so often a mystery to himself. Nor can

the astrologer ever be entirely sure that he is fit to take the question – which always involves grasping its essence –, much less judging the chart at hand.

Only God knows our weakness, or how the querent's perplexity, and so his questions, are actually rooted in the important matters of his life. It is God's knowledge of the rootedness – the *radicality* – of these matters that we seek when we consider the heavens that God has made. *Quod est inferius est sicut verum quod est superius.*



## Christopher Magnus

Christopher Magnus is an astrologer and published religious scholar living in the Greater New York City area.

In 1999, he earned his doctorate in theology at Oxford University, specializing in patristic biblical interpretation, in particular that of the Alexandrian School. He took up an earnest study of astrology in 2006, after his first, astonishing brush with the wonder that is horary. His principal teachers have been Robert Corre, Meira Epstein and Carol Jepson, and he is working to complete Sue Ward's horary diploma course. He is especially interested in engaging the conversation between traditional astrology and theology, convinced that it can be a mutually enriching one.

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### Endnotes:

1 - *Christian Astrology*, pp. 121-2.

2 - *Christian Astrology*, pp. 121-3

3 - *Christian Astrology*, xxxi. Bonatti, following Sahl and Masha'allah, even more emphatically links radicality to prayerful, inward preparation. See Guido Bonatti's 1st and 2nd Considerations in "Treatise 5 – 146 Considerations", *Book of Astronomy: Volume One*, trans. Ben Dykes (Cazimi Press, 2007) pp. 264-5.

4 - I cannot help but think of the ancient astrologer's gnomon. The gnomon is not merely a measuring device. It is really the astrologer's wand – and her *canon* or straight edge –, which signifies the world axis, establishes alignment between heaven and earth, and calls down fire from heaven.

5 - A now retired certification exam for a major astrological guild asks this question: "An astrologer has calculated a horary chart concerning a promotion at work. The chart has Jupiter exactly conjunct the Ascendant at 1° Aries. According to the classical rules which of the following is most appropriate: (a) Rejoice and break out the champagne; (b) Since it is worthless, crumple up the chart and dispose of it properly; (c) Start looking in the newspaper's "help wanted" section: this aspect is a sure indication of being fired; (d) Judgment would depend on the Moon." The answer they're looking for is, of course,



“b”. It’s a playful question. But this is a general knowledge exam, and it reflects the commonplace that traditional horary is largely negative, unreflective and schoolmarmish. (Their answer, by the way, could conceivably be wrong. If the job application were tentative, and Jupiter the highly dignified Lord of the 10<sup>th</sup> House, we might decide to break out the champagne after all!)

6 - Reprinted with permission by Sue Ward, in Lesson 11 of *The Traditional Horary Course: Diploma Studies*, pp. 1-20.

7 - “It now seems that every horary can be judged”; “Students of horary have been mislead (*sic*) for far too long having been taught that the rules cannot be broken”, in McCann, “Lilly Says...”, p. 20.

8 - John Frawley, *The Horary Textbook* (Apprentice Books, 2005) p. 141.

9 - “If the planets send us an angel, it takes a while for him to find us amid the fogs of this world of generation and corruption. Our gross corporeity resists the instant response that the chart might suggest”, from “How to beat time,” *The Astrologer’s Apprentice* (issue 20) p. 29.

10 - See her concluding remarks in “An Introduction to the Astrology of William Lilly” (2003), available at <http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/~sueward/articles/astrologyof%20lilly.htm>. Ms. Ward argues that convincing chart descriptiveness is Lilly’s fundamental index of radicality, even if he does not list it among the canonical Considerations before Judgement. In fact, a Consideration operating within a descriptive chart can actually confirm radicality instead of denying it – late degrees on the Ascendant, for instance, possibly describing a querent in his late 20s (*Christian Astrology*, p. 122). As a corollary, we ought to take this particular case (re: late degrees) as an illustration of the importance of chart descriptiveness rather than as a single, peculiar exception to the rule.

11 - “Treatise 6 – Questions” (Part 1, ch. 1), *Book of Astronomy*, pp. 352-3.

12 - *On Questions*, §1.1 in *Works of Sahl and Mâsha’allah*, trans. Ben Dykes (Cazimi Press, 2008) pp. 67-8.

13 - *On Hidden Things*, §1 (“How the astrologer can go astray”) in *Works of Sahl and Mâsha’allah*, trans. Ben Dykes (Cazimi Press, 2008) pp. 426 et passim.

14 - See Book 5, ch. 1-5 in *Carmen Astrologicum*, trans. David Pingree (Astrology Classics Publishers, 2005) pp. 102-7.

15 - An intriguing analogue to the Arabo-European concern with Planetary Hour agreement. See Chapter 2, stanzas 29 & 31, *Prasna Marga: Part One*, trans. Bangalore Venkata Raman (Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1991) pp. 51-2.

16 - It is worth noting that John Frawley no longer uses the hyleg in natal delineation, arguing that it is a pagan intrusion into the authentic astrology of the monotheistic West: “The modern world has no monopoly of nonsense, any more than the ancient world has of wisdom. An example of this, I have recently realised, is the idea of hyleg, anareta, and alchohoden that plays so large a part in traditional natal astrology. It is an irrelevant add-on. That it was added on a long time ago does not mean it belongs.” See “What is the Tradition in Astrology?,” available online at (<http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=86935797885&topic=10061>).

17 - Mark 4:3-9

18 - I agree with Ben Dykes’ position that a radical chart is more than merely one that can become a *radix* or basis for deriving other charts for the purpose of predicting, like solar revolutions. The chart is radical because the matter at hand – the life, the question, the presenting situation – is real and can therefore be the basis of the actual future contingents about which prediction is made. A chart is a *radix* only by analogy. See his “Introduction” in Guido Bonatti, *Book of Astronomy*, lxxi-lxxix.

19 - Christopher Warnock takes the position that 0 degrees on the Ascendant can mean hat “the querent has not asked the root question”. See <http://renaissance-astrology.blogspot.com/2009/01/considerations-before-judgement-0.html>. This is a hypothesis worth testing.

20 - In practice, this point of view is correct. Nevertheless, we do see through a glass darkly. In reality, it is not so much that the chart fails to fit the question but rather that the question fails to conform to the intelligibility of the heavens, shown forth in the scheme of the chart.



## Between Science and Superstition

### The Astrology of Comets

by Peter Stockinger

*While dreadful comets glaring from afar,  
Forewarn'd the horrors of the Theban war<sup>1</sup>*

Homer wrote these lines in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. This is probably the first time in written history that somebody mentions a comet in connection with a future conflict. It is only unfortunate that we cannot prove that this prediction was based on astrological information and therefore have to class it as superstition.

Nearly 900 years later Pliny the Elder, who was born in ca. 23 AD, discussed comets in his *Natural History* with a view similar to that of Homer, stating:

*That fearful star which overthrows the powers of the earth, showed its terrible locks and thus caused the war between Caesar and Pompey.*

The advent of Christianity in Europe did not change peoples' beliefs in the reality of the impact comets could have on the destiny of mankind. The only difference to the pagan way of thinking was that Christians thought it to be God's approval or wrath that was expressed through the appearance of a comet. John of Damascus, for example, suggested that comets were special

creations of God. This view was soon to be challenged by scholars who had access to classical Greek and Arabic sources like Ptolemy or Aristotle, which were becoming available in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century, although it has to be noted that even the great Aristotle did not provide a source or give an explanation for his opinions on comets. Although Ptolemy did not elaborate on the subject of comets too much in his writings, Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon, amongst others, followed his teachings that comets:

*produce the effects, peculiar to Mars and to Mercury – wars, hot weather, disturbed conditions, and the accompaniments of these.*<sup>2</sup>

Roger Bacon wrote about the comet of 1264:

*Since the Nature of Mars is fiery, whose nature is to increase jaundice, and consequently to excite men to anger, discord, and wars, therefore it happens that that comet portended angry passion, human discord, and wars, as learned astronomers teach us.*<sup>3</sup>

Another important theory about the origins of comets, which was repeatedly published in Magnus' and Bacon's writings, was drawn from the books of Abu Ma'shar. In his *Book of Conjunctions*, Abu Mas'har developed the theory that the occurrences of conjunctions between the planets Saturn, Jupiter and Mars, also known as Great Conjunctions, would generate comets. Albertus Magnus quoted him directly, stating that a conjunction of Mars and Jupiter would:

*generate not only coruscations and running fires in the air, but also pestilential winds, corrupt air, and the horrors of the plague.*<sup>4</sup>

Roger Bacon added to it that revolutions of the superior planets would be responsible for floods, earthquakes, pestilence, severe famine, comets and fiery meteors.

Abu Mas'har, who was also known as Albumasar in the West, was a Persian astrologer, mathematician, astronomer and Islamic philosopher who lived between 787 and 886. Two of his astrological works are of particular interest in the context of this article. The first one is the already mentioned *Book of Conjunctions* (*Kitab al -quiranat*). It was translated into Latin by John of Seville in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and this translation was printed by Erhard Ratold at Augsburg in 1489. The second one is the *Book of Revolutions of the World-years* (*Kitab tahawil sini al-'alam*), which was translated into Latin by John of Seville under the title of *Flores*. This work was first published by Erhard Ratold at Augsburg in 1488, 1489 and 1495.<sup>5</sup>



John of Seville's translations were tremendously popular amongst Western astrologers, as we will see throughout this article. Guido Bonatti drew heavily on them in his famous *Book of Astronomy*, which was written 700 years ago and first published in print by Ratold in Augusta in 1491. It seems to be a compilation of at least sixteen works on astrology, which probably built the core of Latin translations available at the time.<sup>6</sup> Bonatti uses Abu Mas'har's and Ptolemy's<sup>7</sup> work as source material for his chapters on comets. He methodically lists the significations of comets in the twelve zodiacal signs and gives a description of the nine different types of comets. To give an example, he says about a comet's appearance in Leo:

*And if one of the comets were to appear there, it signifies an infestation of wolves, and impediment to men from them; and a case of vermin in the grain, and the destruction of houses and substances. And if its appearance were in the part of the east, its work will be faster. And if it were in the parts of the west, its work will be slower.*<sup>8</sup>

It is hard to underestimate the impact the publishing efforts of Ratold and other early pioneers of the printing industry had on the 16<sup>th</sup> century astrologers in Europe. With many of the astrological standard works of Hellenistic and Arabic astrology becoming available in Latin, astrologers not only began to publish textbooks but as well pamphlets and flyers with imminent prognostications based on these publications.

One of these early astrological writers was Johannes Virdung von Hassfurt, who lived in Germany between ca. 1463 and 1535. In 1503 Virdung published a *Practica* in German, dealing with the effects of a conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter and Mars in Cancer and the appearance of a comet.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore he compared the "varying views of Albumasar, Haly, Messahala, Ptolemy" and others, which shows the amount of source material available to him. In 1506, 1531 and 1532 he published pamphlets, prognosticating the effects the comets of these years would have on the population and the world in general.

In his pamphlet about the comet of 1506, he writes:

*In which part of the sky the comet appeared: [they] said that the comet appeared beneath the first two wheels of the chariot, which the Latins call Ursa Major, which is the Great Bear. It has stretched out its beard or tail up to the last wheels of the same chariot.[...] Firstly there was a conjunction of Jupiter and Mars in Virgo, which (as Albumasar says in his viii book of his great conjunction in the first chapter) has not a little to do with the birth of this comet and, according to*

*my opinion given in my Practica of the year M.CCCCC.vi. it is as well proved by the solar eclipse of this year, which was on the xx. day of the Hay-moon, in the seventh degree of Leo into which many planets were coming in the state of darkness.<sup>10</sup>*

Johannes Schoener, who, like Virdung von Hassfurt, published a pamphlet concerned with the comet of 1531 and its future effect on the world, provides us with his sources:

*The teacher Albumasar shows in his Floribus that this comet is a hindrance and a nuisance to humans and wolves and the worms in the grain. It indicates the destruction of houses and substances and goods and if the comet appeared in the occident, it means that these problems will occur slowly.*

*Hali Abenragel says in his last book, chapter 41, if a comet is seen in Leo, it means that a king will die and that his enemies will be pleased, and that one will be moving out of Babylon (do I spot the Turks) against the king, and will cause him much harm.*

*Leopold of Austria says that a comet of the nature of Mercury indicates death and war, and if it would be ignited in the sign of Leo, it means war amongst the kings at the end of the year after its ignition. [...]*

*Albumasar says in his 5th book of the conjunction of the outer planets in the 7th chapter, that if a comet first appears in the sign of Leo, it indicates war between kings, particularly the kings of Babylon (as I explained above), and pains in the belly.<sup>11</sup>*

In 1568 Nicholas Rensberger published his astrological textbook, *Astronomia Teutsch* in German. Almost 80 years before William Lilly made history by publishing his *Christian Astrology* in English, Rensberger had already broke with the longstanding tradition to write scholarly works in Latin alone, and so made his text available to a number of German astrologers who did not understand Latin. In his *Astronomia Teutsch*, he included a detailed chapter on comets, drawing extensively on Abu Mas'har.

*If a comet is seen in Leo, it shows quarrels, war and errors happening amongst kings and one will overcome the other at the end of the year. Much blood will be spilt at this time. In the oriental part a mighty, powerful person will die and people will convulse in pain and illnesses and pains of the belly; and many dogs and wolves will go mad and will die. And if it is seen towards the orient and the Sun is in Leo as well, it will create great damage and pains of the water on occidental earth. And if it is seen towards the occident it creates great illness*

*and many days of disease in the parts of the earth towards midnight; and there will be much damage amongst the biting wolves and the mad dogs.*<sup>12</sup>

One of the main reasons for the huge impact the appearance of comets had on the population was their unpredictability. Nobody knew, where and when the next blazing star was going to appear and for how long it was going to stay. By its nature, this unpredictability of appearance made it, of course, impossible to include them in the tables of the pamphlets written at the beginning of each year to serve for the whole of the year to come. Therefore it was of crucial importance to astrologers to have as many informants as possible, who would immediately report any sightings back to them, insuring that they could base their predictions on these sightings and publish their findings as soon as possible. Throughout his astrological career William Lilly was deeply interested in comets and we can find bits of information scattered throughout the body of his work. Already in his first almanac, *Merlinus Anglicus Junior*, published in 1644, he mentions the comet of 1618. His *England's Prophetical Merline*, published as well in 1644, contains two charts and an ephemeris table for the appearance of the 1618 comet, tracing it up to the year 1645. In the *Merlini Anglici ephemeris* for 1649, he tells the reader, that the “comet of 1618 would leave us now”. Lilly uses data provided by a plethora of informants he was in contact with, as he writes for example:

*The Astrological judgement [of the comet of 1618] which succeeds, I frame according to the observation of Longomontanus, from the time of the full Moon succeeding the comet. And I do conceive as it was 28 days observed by my Author, and also by Doctor Bainebridge, [...]*<sup>13</sup>

More than 30 years later, right at the end of his career, Lilly's fascination with comets was still unbroken. In his *Merlini Anglici Ephemeris* for 1678, he provides us with an intriguing insight into his knowledge and life-long experience in the fields of astrology and astronomy.<sup>14</sup>

*As often as any comet or blazing star appears in the world, we may assuredly pronounce to the inhabitants of the earth much sorrow and affliction, such as many battles and sharp conflicts both by sea and on land, unusual storms and tempests, unnatural barrenness of the earth, corrupted and infectious air, whence the death of cattle also, a plague or famine all tending to the mortality and destruction of humanity.*

*Eclipses and lesser conjunctions of the planets do not produce such universal effects as those of the great conjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter, of comets, new*

*stars, etc., because although their events may be considerable, they appear variously in different places and their effects are not so durable but pass away again in a shorter time. So, by how much a planet is more ponderous and slow of motion, the more powerful the impression it leaves. It is most observable that when first a comet appears and not long after that any considerable eclipse or conjunction of the two malevolent planets (as now first a comet appears in Taurus, then a conjunction of Saturn and Mars in Gemini, and lastly an eminent and famous eclipse of the Moon (almost total) in the place of the comet), we say that person or kingdom or country whose principle hylegiacal places consent or agree thereto, then that person kingdom or country in a short time after usually suffer much damage and affliction in one kind or other, sometimes by disturbance in their own dominions and sometimes by foreigners or other casual disasters.*<sup>15</sup>

Another quote from his *Merlini Anglici ephemeris* for 1678 shows that Lilly was truly one of the last astrologers whose world view was rooted in the tradition of the Renaissance magi, subscribing to the principles of Hermeticism:

*We rather incline to the judgement of Paracelsus [as opposed to Aristotle], who was a greater Naturalist than Aristotle, and maintains that a comet proceeds from no natural cause, but its beginning and continuance is performed by angels and spirits, and that it portends usually some new or sudden mutations approaching which may prove very prejudicial to those regions or countries where it is visible. The spirits well knowing what accidents shall come to pass do form a star or comet and give it what figure or shape they please and cause its motion through the air that people might behold it and thence draw a signification of its events – sometimes the death or deposition of princes, ruin or destruction of empires, kingdoms, states and governments, the plague, famine, war, earthquakes, violent storms, prodigious tempests, etc.*<sup>16</sup>

In 1705 Edmond Halley published his *Synopsis Astronomia Cometicæ*, stating that the comet sightings of 1456, 1531, 1607 and 1682 related to the same comet, which would later become known as Halley's Comet. In 1758 his theory was proved to be correct at the return of the comet, as predicted by Halley in 1705.

With the advent of the predictability of the path and return time of Halley's Comet, the number of the astrological predictions of the effects of comets declined rapidly and in Ebenezer Sibly's *Illustration of the Celestial Science of Astrology*, part 3, published in 1784, one can find a whole chapter on comets, including Halley's Table of the Elements of Comets, but there is not a single line of astrological prediction concerning comets to be found.

## Peter Stockinger

Peter Stockinger was born in Austria in 1964. He began to study astrology and related topics at an early age. From 1989 he practised Modern astrology and Cosmobiology in Vienna. In 1998 he moved to North Wales in the United Kingdom where he discovered Traditional astrology. Today he practises natal, horary and electional astrology in a purely Traditional way and specialises in work with planetary gemstones. His readings are available in English and German.

He is particularly interested in the history of astrology and the integration of astrology into the magical arts. At the moment he is working on a book on the astrological use of planetary gemstones.

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### Endnotes:

- 1 - Homer: Illiad, iv 434, ca. 800 BC, translation Pope
- 2 - Ptolemy, Claudius: Tetrabiblos, trans. Robbins, Cambridge, 1980, 2.9
- 3 - Bacon, Roger: Opus Majus, p400
- 4 - Magnus, Albertus: De Meteoris, 1.3.11
- 5 - See Pingree, David: Abu Mas'har, in Complete Dictionary of Scientific Biography, vol. 9, Detroit 2008, p32-39.
- 6 - For a discussion of Bonatti's sources, see: Bonatti, Guido, Book of Astronomy, trans. Benjamin Dykes, Cazimi Press, Minnesota, 2007, introduction.
- 7 - Dr. Dykes claims that, according to Thorndyke, Bonatti is not referring to Ptolemy, but a pseudo-Ptolemy, who wrote a list of nine types of comets. Book of Astronomy, volume II, fn394.
- 8 - Book of Astronomy, vol II, p980.
- 9 - Virdung, Johann: Practica Deutsch, Strassburg, 1503.
- 10 - Virdung, Johann: Auslegung und erclerung der wunderbarlichen kunftige erschrockliche ding die uns der Stern mit dem schwantz, den man Comet nennt... Nürnberg, 1506
- 11 - Schoener, Johannes: Conjectur odder abnemliche auslegung Johannis Schoeners vber den[n] Cometen, Nürnberg, 1531.
- 12 - Rensberger: Astronomia Teutsch, Augsburg, 1659.
- 13 - Lilly, Willam: England's Propheticall Merline, London, 1644, p34.
- 14 - I am indebted to Sue Ward who generously granted me access to her modernised and edited extracts of William Lilly's work on comets.
- 15 - Ward, Sue: extracts from: Lilly, William: England's Propheticall Merline, London, 1678, modernised and edited.
- 16 - Ibid.



*for posterity:*



From Rensberger's *Astronomia Teutsch*:

Of the meaning of tail stars,  
which are called comets;  
and their meaning when they appear in  
the signs of heaven.

**Transcribed and translated by Peter Stockinger**

If a comet may be seen in the fiery triplicity, which is in Aries, Leo and Sagittarius, it means the death of great masters and it kindles evil in evil, disdainful people and there will be the coming of great shame and fear into the realm of Christendom. There will be a great drought in Turkey and there will be a lot of pain in their eyes. There will be a great heat in summer and there will be a great redness which will be seen in the sky. Butzahan the wise from India said if a comet is spotted in this triplicity, he indicates a great drought on the earth, and a lot of damage will be done and a lack of the water, and there will be a lot of quarrel in the castles and palaces, and there will be a lack of safeguarding them and it might happen that the king may lose them altogether.

If a comet may be seen in the earth signs, Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn, it means a great shortage of bread and the earth will be dry. And many people will become ill because of dry days of illness of scurf and scabies and many of the cows and oxen and other animals will die. And human order and law and common decency will be disturbed. And there will be a lack of the usage of ore and iron and copper and there will be a lack in care for the earth like tilling or planting of trees. Butzahan said if a comet would appear in this triplicity, it creates shame and times of drought and this mainly if it is seen in the occident.

And if a comet may be seen in the signs of air, which are Gemini, Libra and Aquarius, it indicates that the air will be dry and wispy and it will burn the trees because it is a time of great dryness and draught; and many birds will die and people will suffer a destruction of the air and children will die. There will be many wandering stars and a lot of thunder will be in the air and houses will fall and people will die underneath them because the houses will kill the people. There will be strong winds and some kings will die in the occident. There will be a lack of honey and silk and wool and all moist things. There will be a drought and a dryness of the soil as well as the herbs and roots. Butzahan says: If a comet is seen in this triplicity, it means that the castles and the strongholds and the shelters will have arguments and blood will flow and there will be damage and cold and hail and some future things.

And if a comet appears in the watery signs, which are Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces, it indicates that there will be a lot of rain destroying houses, people will die and it will be an unfortunate year. There will be a great loss and blood will be spilt on the ground. There will be many disputes at sea and on the beaches and people will become doubtful in their beliefs. There will be murmuring between them and between the genders and there will be unpleasantness amongst the people who keep up the laws of the righteous and the wise. There will also be a war and there will be much poverty and fear and many people will die. Butzahan the wise from India said: If a comet is seen in this triplicity it indicates that many ships will be in a hostile situation and they will lose people because many evil things will happen. And if it rises against the orient it indicates the death of members of the aristocracy; and if it is seen in the angles, the events will grow stronger and more harmful. If it is in the descendant, it will be weaker and smaller.

Albumasar says in his book of the conjunctions: if a comet is seen in the sign of Aries, it creates a mental illness in the king of the same climate. It will bring about a dispute, errors and quarrels between the kings of the mentioned place.

This will be seen in the Christian part of the world and there will be much fear. Much blood will be spilt in the places which are ruled by Aries, like Persia and similar places. The king of Christendom will suffer much harm and there will be much shame in his country. The Turks will have many problems and a time of drought and barrenness. They will suffer from illnesses of the eyes and the sheep and other little animals will die; and there will be death and discord amongst the mighty rulers and amongst the nobles and many despicable and evil people will rise. Much gold and silver and iron ore will be discovered and the summer will be very hot. If it is [seen] by the oriental part, it indicates quarrels between the kings of that part of the world, as in Persia, and that most of the villages of that part of the world will fall under the rule of the king of Babylonia. And if it is so that it is seen by the occidental part, it shows that the powerful people and the mighty will suffer sadness and annoyance from the kings and there will be a dispute amongst some from the occident; and it will rain much and the waters will overflow.

If a comet is seen in Taurus, it indicates quarrels and falls; this will occur in the Christian part of the world. There will be many illnesses and days of sickness in the towns and villages which are under the rulership of Taurus. There will be a lack of bread and the other countries will have plenty and there will be quarrels in the villages which are under the rulership of this sign. It will come to harm from its enemies who will point out each other's injustice; and there will be dry days of sickness in people, like scurf and scabies, and death will come amongst the cows; and there will be a lack of ore and building and in turning over the soil, and in trees, and the corn will be destroyed and will be spoilt in the climate or in the town. And if the comet appears in the orient, it shows that the king of the climate will be frightened by his enemies and the air will be destroyed and broken; and it will take a long time and in the summertime diseases and days of sickness will grow and a mighty death will come amongst the cattle. And if it is towards the occident, it will rain a lot.

If a comet is seen in Gemini it shows that the king of Christendom shall suffer from sadness and mighty quarrels will arise with the king of Egypt and it will come to death. The one who is right will rule in Egypt and death will come over the land ruled by Gemini. There will be many days of sickness and the air will be destroyed; and children will hunger and die; and pregnant women and women whose womb is heavy will die. And the birds will die and it will be very hot and hot winds will blow. Grass and trees will burn and there will be thunder and lightning. And if the comet is seen in the orient, it means that the kings will be stabbed to death. Important people will be driven out of their



places and will suffer from pestilence which is the boil; and the air will be broken in the orient. And if it is seen in the occident it shows a change of the path and a robbing of the places which are under the rulership of Gemini and there will be much rain and flowing of waters.

If a comet is seen in Cancer, it creates quarrelling, death and war and many good people die; and blood will be spilt and fields will be damaged and destroyed where people live. There will be much rain and a shortage of fish and there will be war in the parts ruled by the sign of Cancer. There will be resistance in some kingdoms and [they] will have a new king, who will die. And if it is seen in the orient it shows that people will start to think and they will be obedient towards their King and there will be an increase in the cost of living, more so at the beginning of the year than at the end. And if it is seen in the occident, it indicates war amongst kings and peace afterwards.

If a comet is seen in Leo, it shows quarrels, war and errors happening amongst kings and one will overcome the other at the end of the year. Much blood will be spilt in this time. In the oriental part a mighty, powerful person will die and people will convulse in pain and illnesses and pains of the belly; and many dogs and wolves will go mad and will die. And if it is seen towards the orient and the Sun is in Leo as well, it will create great damage and pains of the water on occidental earth. And if it is seen towards the occident it creates great illness and many days of disease in the parts of the earth towards midnight; and there will be much damage amongst the biting wolves and the mad dogs.

If a comet is seen in Virgo, it shows good news for kings who are under the rulership of Virgo: and his people; and the kings will do their people injustice [?] and the women who are in labour and who are pregnant will die. And will it [be seen] towards the orient it shows many deaths amongst the people of this continent whose Lord is Virgo and one will hate the other. And if it is seen towards the occident it shows death coming over people who are ruled by this sign and lots of fruit will be growing. Butzahan said that if a comet is seen in Virgo, it means that the enemies will rule over and dominate the king and the people will have illnesses in their lowest limbs and the pregnant ones will die.

If a comet is seen in Libra, it shows the mighty power of the king's heart in the climate which is under the lord of this sign; and he will do many things wrong and be angry. Some of the occidental kings and rulers of the land will die, as well as mighty lords and nobility; and much blood will be spilt. Many people will die and it will rain only a little and there will be strong winds. The flowing rivers will dry out and fruit will be destroyed on the trees and

it will be a hard time for the sellers. And if it appears towards the orient it indicates that a lot of damage will be done to kings of Babylon and the air will be destroyed and the horses and camels will flee. There will be arguments amongst the Christians and they will be fighting each other and they will be damaged by the country of Syria. And if it is [seen] towards the occident it means that the kings of this place will die and kill their nearest friends and fathers. And the servants will be disobedient towards their masters and much fruit will grow.

If a comet will be in Scorpio, it indicates much pain which will manifest in people's kidneys and bladders and their private parts and kings will hate each other and women's birth rate will be poorly. And it indicates much rain which is harmful and the air will be thick and dark and there will be much ice and frost and hailstones; and there will be damage to the trees and fish will be expensive and there will be a lack of water and running water. And if it is seen towards the orient it shows that the [people] of Babylon will have peace and few days of illness and few people will die. This will last 100 years and much damage will be done by wolves and mad dogs.

If a comet will be seen in the sign of Sagittarius, it shows that the king wants to keep the peace and collect many treasures of gold and silver and will cast out many people and will talk to the ones who [are] high and mighty and will nearly do them injustice; and there will be much dryness of the part of the earth ruled by Sagittarius and the air will be destroyed and a king's son will die, as well as some of his mighty dynasty. And the horses will become thin in many towns and countries and it will be very hot in summer and there will be a lack of dates. And if it will be seen towards the orient it shows a strong and great illness which will afflict the kings, and one of them will die. There will be an illness, lasting for three months, and afterwards many people will die; and there will be much killing and fright and there will be much bread and much fruit on the trees. And if it is seen towards the occident it creates much thinking and much useless, foolish thinking and much voluptuousness caused by dreams and women will die.

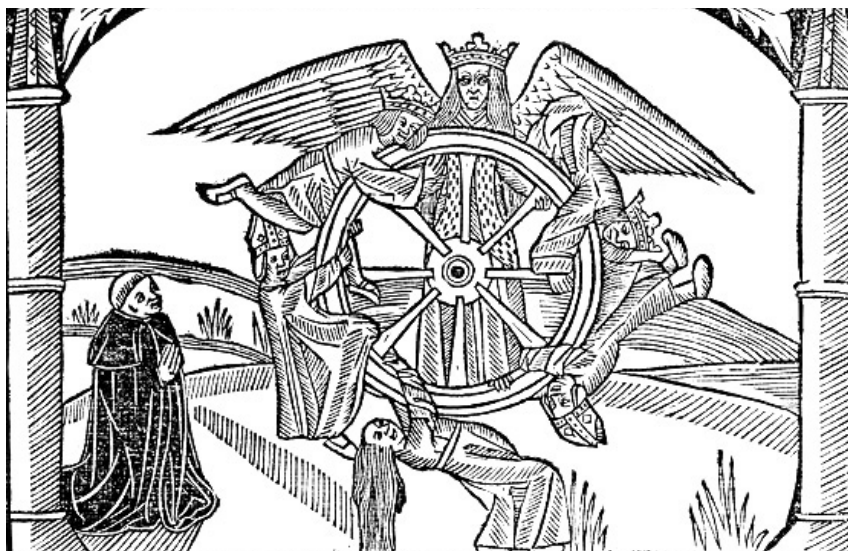
If a comet is seen in Capricorn, it shows arguments and errors amongst kings and there will be much damage for the ones of the occident under their king. In this same climate and towards noon there will be war, fear and many storms. There will be doubts and madness and melancholy, mostly amongst the ones who live in castles: there will be much murder and the paths and the streets will be destroyed; and the people will break and violate the law and

nearly all the good and honest people will die; and there will be much snow and hail and ice on the ground and the fruit of the trees will be destroyed, most of all saffron. And if the comet is seen towards the orient it shows that the enemies will rise against some kings and that he will suffer and die. And the same will elevate one to be king, who will be a great master and there will be much snow and rain and the vine branches will not be harmed. And if it is seen towards the occident there will be much rain and it will be a fruitful year.

If a comet is seen in Aquarius, it shows that some kings will die in the occident and one will rise up and will ask for the empire and there will be war amongst the nobles for said reason and many people will die and there will be arguments in the occident which will last a long time; and the air will be thick and dark with streaks and lightning and because of the destruction of the air many people will die. And there will be a lack of birds and fishes and bread. And if it is appearing towards the orient it shows many thunderstorms to come and that the weapons of the king are kept safe and that they will frighten many times.

If a comet is seen in the sign of Pisces, it shows the death of high and mighty people in the land of Ethiopia, which is the land of the black people, and in the land of Egypt, and many useful people will die and many mighty and great people will die and it will radiate in the world and the kings will give out of the towns from sheer wantonness and they will burn them and will rob and kill the people and the clerics will fight amongst each other and the people will be very poor and unfortunate and prevented [?] and sad; and the fish will die and there will be a lack of water. And if it is seen towards the orient it shows great problems amongst the judges and amongst the mighty lords and amongst the king's servants and they will be subservient and will take part of their earnings by force; and arguments and wrongdoings will rise up against the orient in different parts of the climates. And the people will be very afraid and there will be much rain. And if it is seen towards the occident it indicates much thinking in people and the air will be destroyed and many people will die, mostly in the occident. Poverty and sadness will be great and this will last for three years and the people will suffer much pain and damage and there will be much fish, water and birds. Most of the explanations can be found in the chapters of the part [of the book] of the signs in which the comet can be seen.





## Incarnation – Reincarnation

by Sue Ward

*Some personal speculations on how astrology explains incarnation.*

Various systems have been put forward to calculate the time of conception from the time of birth and, where the time of conception was known, the time of birth from that conception. These systems are usually described as techniques of chart rectification; whilst I do not dispute that, I consider the older systems to be more than that. We are used to placing all emphasis on the moment of birth, when a life is brought into the light of human existence and is no longer a life in potential. The heavens decree the shape and expression of that life, that individual, through the time, date and place of a birth. So why the interest in the moment of conception? Does the moment of conception have something that the birth moment does not? It is the moment which witnesses the creation of a single cell, human life in potential, and repeats microcosmically the single cell source of all creation.

As an astrologer who has specialised in Traditional horary astrology, I am used to focusing on single events. From this perspective, we see the birth as an event brought about by conception, and there's nothing new or complicated about that. But what does the moment of conception tell us? Superficially it tells us that an ovum has been fertilised and, all things being equal, will produce a life. But what of the two people involved in this transaction? The

male and female connection – and this remains the case regardless of modern interventions or of single sex relationships – the male sperm must fertilise the female ovum. (Modern science tells us that it can produce a human embryo without this process, but the original organic material came from somewhere.)

In conception we see the result of one physical mass donating his physicality to that of she who receives it. That combination of two will produce a third life which will partake of the nature of those two physical masses. That single event in the lives of the two begins the process of the identity of the resulting life. Astrology accepts that physicality at least is passed on by the parents and we see this even when the likeness is not direct, for example, the child may resemble one of his grandparents far more than his parents. In Traditional astrological terms this translates into temperament which is the complement of physicality: one goes with the other and is unchangeable (modifiable, but unchangeable). The temperament describes, through the humours, the individual mixture of the primary qualities of heat, cold, moisture and dryness common to all of Creation. These primary qualities describe that mixture in physical terms, whilst the humours describe them in temperamental terms. It is that part of us which decrees how we will address life and its myriad events and circumstances. Thus conception brings about another physical mass and the temperament associated with that; this is so in the single cell embryonic result of conception (whether in duplicate ova or the split ovum) and does not imply consciousness or awareness. Thus heredity is implied (because the prime material is generated by the parents) and becomes apparent following birth. Thus, the temperamental combination of any individual is as dependent upon the parents as is his or her physical combination.

So, if the moment of conception were known, a physical and temperamental description might be drawn from that moment distinct from the impression made by the moment of birth on that physical and temperamental mass. The temperament explains how we approach each of life's events and can explain why certain things happen in certain ways; to a degree the temperament predicts our destiny. Thus knowing the moment of conception potentially puts that moment under the control of the parents and therefore, to some degree, the child's destiny, too. The importance of this is obvious, but will become more obvious and more important when the circumstances of conception are considered. The moment of birth not only provides descriptions of the native's character, but it also shows the events which will shape that character. The events of which I write are outside the native's control. Even an adult cannot control the loss of a parent through death or marital breakdown much less an



infant, and the character is developing throughout infancy and childhood. Lifestyle, upbringing, education, location and many of life's experiences, all of which having an impact on the character, are dependent upon the adults closely associated with the child. The manner in which the child deals with these experiences is dictated by the temperament inherited from its forebears.



The calculation of the temperament is based upon the nativity which, as already mentioned, postdates the creation of the temperament by the period of gestation. The result does give a reliable guide, but cannot be definitive; for that the moment of conception is required. And we see another possible reason for the importance of this moment. All of humanity has to deal with challenges and obstacles, but it is unsurprising that there might have been interest in equipping the child with the temperament best able to overcome them. An example of what I mean might help: the native receives a large sum of money, say from an inheritance which will be shown in the nativity. In very simple and general terms each of the temperament types would deal with that eventuality thus:

Choleric types would spend it;

Sanguine types would share it;

Melancholic types would hoard it;

Phlegmatic types would fear losing it.



These examples, of course, describe only one type at a time when in fact most of us are a mixture, but they help to explain what the temperament describes.

But let's not progress any further forward for the time being, rather moving backwards in time to those circumstances surrounding conception. I will follow the traditional route of the man and woman, but this is merely for convenience, the idea applies as well to other forms of conception and other types of sexual relationship. However, where conception does not derive from the combined physical masses of the parents, other questions are raised from my line of thought. But we should not make the mistake of thinking that these questions have not been raised in ancient times albeit from a different point of view.

The procreating man and woman are, of course, descendants of other procreating men and women; each pair springing from that single event of conception. But I am interested here in the fact of their meeting, one couple depending from another which depends from another and so on back in time through thousands of generations. Thousands of generations, each linked by the simple act of sexual intercourse and conception. Each linked by a commonality of physicality and temperament, and we know that because modern science and our own eyes tell us so. We are, of course, unable to trace these generations back very far, but it doesn't take much imagination to realise that they must descend ultimately from the original point of Creation (however you might want to consider that). At that point the original seed was sown, the essence of tomorrow's birth was formed – the baby cradled in its parents' arms today descends from that same essence, but by one route, or line of descent, out of many millions. The child's two parents (2) each have two parents (4) who each have two parents (8) who each have two parents (16) and so on. Through just these four generations the child is the sum of 30 different physical and temperamental masses. Through only seven generations the number rises to 254 over a period of about 175 years. So now consider the vastness and complexity of the combinations if we go back only 2000 years to the beginning of the Christian Era. It applies to every single living human being.

This is genealogy, family history; it might also be the ultimate in recycling – reincarnation. The reincarnation of a certain combination of physicality and temperament, modified a little each time, but remaining fundamentally the same. We know physicality has derived from an originating point, because we are all human beings. Thus from that we must extrapolate an originating temperament because they are inseparable (perhaps an interesting speculation, from a biblical perspective, would be the

temperaments of Adam and Eve). As astrologers we know this because the astrology of each of the procreating couple will have strong connections and because the resulting birth is an event in both their lives, and those of their existing family, all of which being connected with them and through them.

Of course, there are many questions remaining unanswered, but one or two examples might help. In the case of the adopted child, it is this lack of continuity which is most often seen as troublesome, but to varying degrees. Sometimes, the child is only mildly interested in its bloodline and only mildly disturbed by it; sometimes it becomes so serious that the adoption fails. The result will depend on the correspondence, in physical and temperamental terms, between the child and its adoptive parents. Twins have been a perennial problem for astrologers and a subject often used in general criticism of astrology itself. Where twins are born from two distinct ova, the originating physical mass is different in each case because each ovum and each sperm is not identical with the other. So, although born at around the same time and in the same place, the combinations of physicality and temperament will be different because the basic ingredients, decided at conception, are different. This raises the interesting point that every ovum and every sperm carries slightly different physical and temperamental characteristics.

Where twins are born from the same ovum, and from the same sperm, they are termed 'identical' and science generally considers this to be a random occurrence, not hereditary. They have been formed from the same physical mass and we would expect their lives to be experienced from the perspective of the same temperament. Yet, even though they are termed identical twins, there are always some differences if only slight. Still this is difficult to explain astrologically when the lives of such twins are reportedly very different (I have not made a study of this and others might be in a better position to judge). However, they are built of the same stuff and their line of descent is the same. Their approach to life will be similar and the events of their lives will be similar in nature if not in detail.

The temperament is decided at the time of conception and thus has nothing to do with external stimuli such as upbringing and provides the background of the portrait of the individual, but its colour range permeates everything else about us. The foreground detailing is obtained from the time of birth: our emotional and intellectual capacity and their expressions are found here. The resulting horoscope also delineates the temperament, but as said, my argument implies that such a delineation must be retrospective if the temperament is formed at

conception. And, if so, why are the remaining characteristics impressed at the time of birth and not before? Clearly there can be no definitive answer, but that it seems to occur is witnessed by a lack of similarity between babies of different parents born at the same time and in the same place; perhaps just at the same time. The major difference of physical and temperamental heredity remains.

I suggest that in the ideal circumstances sexual intercourse, especially for the purposes of reproduction, was intended (a strange expression I know, but born of my own beliefs) to replicate the Divine Creative Impulse. As such the circumstances under which it took place were to be carefully chosen, repeating the care with which the sexual partner was chosen. In this way, the resulting conception would be under optimal conditions offering the best possible opportunity to produce 'God's child'. This is the ideal and we are all aware of how very far from this most sexual encounters are, however this in itself can be explained by the troubled circumstances surrounding their own conception. It is a circular argument and one which can be challenged on a number of levels, even so it is perhaps a beginning. But when, in an effort to make sense of a problem, a person jokingly says "I must have done something terrible in a past life to deserve this.", there may be more truth in it than they think, although it may not be their past life causing the problem, but the lives of their parents or other forebears. And in a truly physical sense.

In *Tetrabiblos*, Ptolemy describes conception as the "source" and birth as the "beginning", thus the source of the new life and its beginning. The source does not arise independently; it arises from a very long line of others and is a continuation of that line. But I haven't yet mentioned the human soul, or the spiritual nature of humans, which I take for granted as existent. At what point does the soul take up occupation of the physical and temperamental source? Ptolemy implies that it is at the point of conception and this is certainly possible within my speculations. However, as inextricably linked as the moment of conception is with the moment of birth, so much so that the latter can accurately describe the life of the child – even before its circumstances of upbringing come into play – it must have some relevance. As the heavens impress or reflect the characteristics of the fully formed child, perhaps it is at this stage that the soul takes up residence, when the temporary and temporal 'home' is ready to accept it. The soul's existence is separate from the body and has no affect on its growth or development which is decided by the source material. However, the soul might well be influential in the growth and development of the other human faculties, but its presence before birth is logically unnecessary and superfluous.

I would contend that the soul reincarnates into the family line. This is not to say that such reincarnation is necessarily invariable, but the permutations involved are vast as are the numbers of mortal lives that any one soul could experience. Having said that, since we all devolve back ultimately to the same familial line, does it make any difference? I doubt it, especially as we all evolve into the same point. I cannot comment on the beliefs and assertions of Eastern religions in this regard, or indeed any religion, but I do believe that the reincarnation of the soul follows the rules of Creation which are based upon physical manifestation, mortal life and continuity. From this basis I suggest that the physical body is made for the soul, not by it and that incarnation is reincarnation – continuity.



## Sue Ward

Sue Ward is a student, teacher, researcher and lecturer in subjects relating to Traditional astrology with a particular interest in the work of William Lilly.

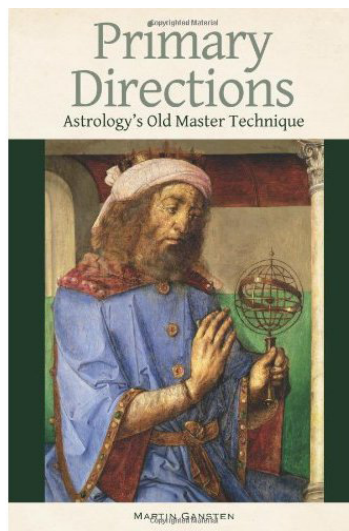
She has been in this obsessive condition for some 25 years and sometimes wishes that it would go away.

Further details of her work can be found at [www.sue-ward.co.uk](http://www.sue-ward.co.uk) and of her lighter side at [www.sue-ward.blogspot.com](http://www.sue-ward.blogspot.com).

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## book review



### Primary Directions

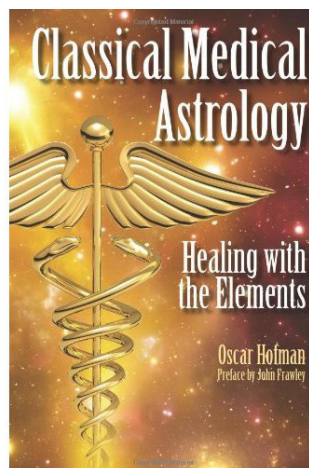
Martin Gansten, *Primary Directions, Astrology's Old Master Technique*, The Wessex Astrologer, Bournemouth 2009. ISBN: 978-1-902405-39-1

It is said that with the help of primary directions astrologers are capable of delivering the most accurate predictions possible. Although this technique was widely used by astrologers of the distant past, it seems that the inherent mathematical difficulties deterred many modern students wishing to integrate this technique into their practice. With the publication of *Primary Directions*, Martin Gansten claims to “explain the principles of primary directions in an accessible form, illustrating them by practical examples” (back cover).

The first three chapters of his book provide the reader with a general overview, a brief history of primary directions and the basic astronomical background needed to understand the information laid out in the chapters to follow. Gansten's book does not include prefabricated interpretations, as he states: “The correct interpretation of a direction rests on the understanding of each planet's nature and signification in the natal chart, including its house position, rulership, dignities and aspects” (p8).

He then continues with chapters on directing planets and aspects and the following chapter, called 'The Quest for Precision', holds, in my view, the key to the usefulness of primaries: "Contemporary astrologers interested in primary directions sometimes claim consistently to achieve hit dates corresponding to the actual week or day of an event. Such claims may sound impressive, but typically do not hold up under investigation" (p79). Therefore Gansten reckons that primaries must "be combined with other techniques".

These techniques, like profections, revolutions and secondary progressions are addressed in the following chapters. Furthermore the book includes chapters on modern innovations in the field of primaries, on the 'Hyleg and the Length of Life' and appendices concerned with the formulae for the calculation of primary directions and an overview of astrological software offering primary directions available at the time of publication. A glossary of terms and a bibliography complete the book.



## Classical Medical Astrology

Oscar Hofman, *Classical Medical Astrology, Healing with the Elements*, The Wessex Astrologer, Bournemouth 2009. ISBN: 978-1-902405-40-7

With the publication of his new book, Oscar Hofman claims to close a 300 year gap which has emerged since Blagrove, Culpeper and Saunders practiced their methods of healing at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and to bring Traditional medical astrology back to life.

The first part of the book reminds us of the basics of astrology and traditional medicine, the elements and the humours in the body. Everything, be it micro- or macrocosmic, is based on the four principles hot, cold, moist and



dry and a balance of these qualities, as well as the elements or humours, is most important for our wellbeing. Other important building blocks for the understanding of medical astrology, like the anatomical correspondences to the signs of the zodiac and the connections between planets and organs, are listed in detail.

‘Diagnosis and Treatment’ is the title of the second part and here Hofman explains how the horary chart can be used as a “reliable instrument for diagnosis and treatment”. He states that “all that is needed is a thorough understanding of astrology, of the functions of the humors and of the method of analysis itself” (p30). Essential and accidental dignities are introduced and Hofman provides us with his explanation of the term peregrine. He claims that a planet would be peregrine “when it has no dignity at all, positive or negative” (p34). This approach was not generally shared by practitioners like Lilly, Culpeper and others and, at least to my knowledge, Jean Baptiste Morin was the only astrologer who subscribed to this way of thinking. Hofman then continues to explain his method with the aid of specific practical examples and includes the relevant charts. Chapters on the healing method of Hildegard von Bingen and the healing with precious stones conclude this part.

In the last part of *Classical Medical Astrology*, Hofman explains the concept of medical elections for operations and the assessment of temperament. Again he provides examples from his own practice. Two appendices on fixed stars and blindness and body types together with a glossary complete this book.





