

CONVENTIONAL VALUES OF THE HELLENISTIC GREEKS: THE EVIDENCE FROM ASTROLOGY

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Although the manual on the interpretation of dreams composed by Artemidorus of Daldis has been mined by several scholars as a source for popular beliefs,¹ little use has been made in this respect of the several astrological treatises that survive from classical antiquity.² As evidence for conventional values in the Hellenistic period, the astrological handbooks are of particular utility, since the vogue for such treatises began only after the conquests of Alexander had brought the Greeks into more systematic contact with practices in the East.³ Earlier, there may have been a vague belief in the efficacy of the planets on human fortune, but nothing like the rigorous science represented in the manuals. The association of birth signs with specific consequences or prescriptions was thus a Hellenistic phenomenon in the Greek-speaking world, and is likely to have been relatively uncontaminated by earlier social expectations and assumptions.

The Greek handbooks may, to be sure, betray some influence of Eastern lore in the assignment of character types and other consequences to celestial patterns, but the world that they portray is in general congruent with contemporary Greek practices and institutions rather than with those of archaic Greece or Babylonia. There is, of course, the danger that treatises composed in the late antique period will reflect beliefs, popular or otherwise, of their own epoch rather than Hellenistic values proper, and the process of sorting out the residue of Hellenistic materials from later strata might have been next to impossible. By good fortune, however, there is now available a version of all five books of the *Carmen astrologicum* by Dorotheus of Sidon, which was composed around the year 50 in the first century AD, comfortably within the geographic and temporal limits for the Hellenistic period adopted by the editors of the present volume.

The poem of Dorotheus survives in an Arabic translation based on a third-century AD Pahlavi version; the Arabic text has recently been edited and provided with a literal translation into English by David Pingree (1976). Pingree has also

collected in an appendix all the Greek fragments of the poem as well as Latin citations and testimonia. A comparison of these materials with the Arabic makes it clear that the surviving version is broadly faithful to the original.⁴ Thus, it can generally be relied on to reflect Hellenistic values with reasonable fidelity.⁵ It also corresponds closely enough, in the materials that concern us, to astrological texts composed slightly later, for example the *Tetrabiblos* of Claudius Ptolemaeus and the *Anthologiae* of Vettius Valens, both dating to the second century AD, as well as to the Latin *Astronomica* of Manilius, which is more or less contemporary with Dorotheus' poem.⁶ Even though, as Pingree writes, "Dorotheus asserts that he drew his teachings from Babylonian and Egyptian sources, it is nevertheless obvious that he owes all his teachings to the learning of the so-called Hellenistic epoch, and not to earlier learning".⁷ Occasional interpolations of later materials, for example two insertions ascribed to Vettius Valens, are easily isolated.

In comparison with Ptolemy's handbook, not to say Manilius' versified treatise, Dorotheus' poem has a further virtue for the discovery of popular values and beliefs. Ancient astrology was conceived of as a science, and its theorists developed complex and highly precise rules and measurements by which to draw inferences from the stars concerning the human condition. Such calculations take up a great deal of space in the more technical treatises such as those of Ptolemy and Manilius.⁸ Dorotheus, however, writes in a highly practical vein. His object is to provide instructions to the novice astrologer (the book is addressed to his son) on how to take readings and offer predictions to the individuals and families who consulted (and presumably paid) the professionals. Dorotheus is interested precisely in what one is to tell the petitioner: "If you find Mars in quartile to the Sun on the left side, then say that his father will die before his mother so that she will become a widow" (1.15.2).⁹ Thus, his book is all the more useful as a guide to what people of his time wanted to know: their anxieties and hopes for the future, what counted as success or failure, the rôles in life they might expect to occupy, the comportment they regarded as admirable or the reverse, the actions they commended, the personalities or characters they held in contempt.

There is no reason, moreover, to think that these expectations were characteristic only of the highest strata in Hellenistic society. Dorotheus provides responses concerning the possibilities and dangers that confront slaves as well as free people, women as well as men, the poor and the rich alike. His text thus appears to be a broad compendium of popular Hellenistic values, fears and aspirations. Indeed, in the very limits of the subjects he sees fit to comment on one may gain insight into the central preoccupations of people in his time.¹⁰

One of Dorotheus' basic principles in the interpretation of heavenly signs is

metaphor or analogy. Thus, Sagittarius implies disease among horses, Leo among lions, etc. (1.1.6). Venus tends to involve matters of love, Jupiter of power, while Mercury suggests trickery, intelligence, and speech.¹¹ Dorotheus exploits an interpretive grid or rather grids, with possibilities of multiple intersections among the celestial symbols.¹² This method has consequences for the nature of Dorotheus' prognostications: some signs automatically predict good luck, for example, while others predict bad. Thus, that Dorotheus, in his treatment of runaway slaves in Book 5, anticipates a fair degree of success for the fugitives does not necessarily mean that he is sympathetic toward their plight. But an overview of the kinds of questions Dorotheus treats may serve as a map of the immediate concerns of those who consulted astrologers.

Books 1-4 focus on natal signs, while Book 5 concerns the signs under which an activity is undertaken (5.1). Books on commencements or *katarkhai* are not usual among surviving astrological treatises, and Dorotheus' is the earliest exemplar.¹³ I shall review summarily the major categories, as I perceive them, in this last book before examining in greater detail materials from Books 1 and 2. Book 5, then, begins with questions concerning *Property*, including building a house (6) or demolishing one (7); renting property (8); buying and selling (9) in general and more specifically the buying of land (10), slaves (11),¹⁴ and animals (12); the freeing of slaves (13); and, as a codicil, it would seem, chapters on asking for favours (14) and writing a letter (15).

Next comes the subject of *Marriage* (16). The fate of the couple's property is a central concern (5.16.13). The nativities of both partners may indicate mutual love (5.16.28), and may do so also in the case of two men or two women who form a friendship (5.16.29); it is of interest that love in marriage is analogous to friendly relations among same-sex partners. Dorotheus further treats the separation of couples (17), and whether the return of the woman to her husband's house bodes well or ill. This is followed by a brief section (18) on extracting a child from a woman's womb, which appears to be an appendix to the chapters on marriage.

The third general subject is *Business*, beginning with partnerships (18), which is something of a sequel to the section on marriage. This is followed by a discussion of debt (20); travel, including departure from home (21) and return (22) — topics closely related to the issue of trade; propitious and unpropitious signs for building or buying a ship (23);¹⁵ "commencing to build a ship" (24); and launching it (25).¹⁶ A codicil to this section concerns the arrival of a letter (26).

Fourth is *Personal welfare*, beginning with "Bondage and chains" (27): "If a man is bound because of the anger of kings or the anger of a man against his

slaves, then look at the Moon at that hour" (5.27.1). The equivalence of the two structures of dependency — of an ordinary person upon a potentate and of a slave upon his master — is of interest, for it suggests that free people were in certain respects imagined to be as vulnerable to arbitrary treatment as slaves, an equation decidedly Hellenistic as opposed to attitudes characteristic of the classical democratic polis.¹⁷ Imprisonment leads naturally (cf. ch. 28) to the topic of sickness (29, 31).

The fifth subject is *Loss of property*, beginning with a chapter on prospects for property in general (32), followed by cases tried before a judge (33) — who wins, who loses, and especially the question of the honesty of the judge.¹⁸ A short chapter on exile (34) is perhaps a codicil to that on judgments. Theft (35) follows naturally upon judgments: a long chapter deals with whether stolen objects will be found, where they may be hidden, and who has received the stolen goods — the "fence" is an important figure in burglaries. There is a good deal on the condition and nature of the stolen property (5.35.44); I imagine that the latter theme served to test the astrologer's power, as in the prediction that it is "something worked in fire or in a kiln" (5.35.50).¹⁹ There is also a lengthy discussion of the nature of the thief: "If the indicator of the characteristic[s] of the thief is Jupiter, then the thief will be white, fat, great in his eyes", etc. (5.35.86); Saturn indicates a repulsive face, black colour, small eyes, pallor,²⁰ hairy limbs, etc. (5.35.87). This kind of thing was, I imagine, safe material for the astrologer, who could intrigue his audience with details of the thief's constitution such as higher joints "more ample than his lower" (5.35.100), "bluish-black eyes" (5.35.103), and one leg larger and longer than the other (5.35.106). Still under the theme of loss of property comes the runaway slave (36), a topic akin to that of theft (cf. 5.36.51). Signs indicate whether escape is habitual in the slave (5.36.6), the direction of his flight (5.36.8-15), the cause of his flight, and the likelihood of recapture: a certain combination of the Moon and Venus shows, e.g., that the runaway "will not be caught, and if he is caught and sent back to his master, then he will be content with him" (5.36.22). Various other fates are predicted for the refugee as well, for example, drowning, crucifixion, and burning alive (5.36.35, 42, 43).

Sixth and last is *Sickness and death*, beginning with the exorcism of haunting spirits (37), which is followed by the kindred subject of medicine, including topics such as diarrhoea (38), surgery or cupping (39), infections of the eyes (40), and general prognosis (41). The attention to digestion and eye problems suggests the importance of such disorders. Book 5 concludes with a penultimate chapter on wills (42), followed by a final discussion (43), rather oddly placed, on the times at which to buy and sell at a fair price.

Such are the commencements, and Dorotheus' treatment reflects certain primary concerns: bondage and illness, loss of property, trade and debt, adjudication of quarrels, marriage and death. People wanted to know their chances of survival and success in a world of risk but relative stability: business, establishment of a family, and medical treatment were the major undertakings that required consultation with an astrologer.

I turn now to the books on nativities, and more particularly to the first two books (Books 3 and 4 are rather more technical). Book 1 concerns the upbringing and condition of the native, that is, the person whose birth signs are read, and first of all Dorotheus discusses whether the native will have "a good upbringing" or none at all (1.7.1). "If the Moon is as I told you and is in its own triplicity and the benefics aspect the malefics from trine, he is not ruined but he is brought up in another house than his parents' because he is expelled and is brought up in the house of strangers, and sometimes he will be a slave and will be employed and will be miserable" (1.7.14). Exposure or expulsion of children is a major preoccupation.

Signs also indicate social status, in particular whether the native is a slave or free (1.10): "If you find the Moon when the nativity is nocturnal in the seventh or fourth sign in the aspect of the malefics, judge for him destitution and slavery and difficulty in livelihood" (1.10.14). Other signs predict slavery (1.10.19, 20, 27, 29, etc.); still others promise manumission (1.10.26, 34, 39, etc.) or freedom throughout life (1.10.30). Another chapter (11) is devoted to "how many will own the native if he is a slave".

Inheritance is a major concern (1.12.17-20), and thus the condition of the parents is relevant: certain signs indicate that "all the property of his father and his mother will be squandered" (1.12.31); the father may also "desire his expulsion and his ousting from the house" (1.12.34). Thus, specific chapters are dedicated to the lots of the father and mother (13-14); status and property are the main topics (e.g., 1.14.7), as well as the parents' divorce (1.14.8-16). Another section concerns the death of the parents (15); yet another, inheritance of their property (16) — both the father's and the mother's.

There follow chapters on the number of children the mother will bear before and after the native (17), the number of brothers (18), their fortunes (19), the love or enmity between them (20), and related matters such as whether some brothers are in fact sons of concubines (1.21.9). Other signs indicate absence of brothers, or that those who are born "will not survive or will be enemies" (1.21.31); but "If you find the lot of fortune and the lot of brothers together, then he will benefit from his brothers and, if they die, he will inherit their properties" (1.21.36).

In family affairs, the question of property is always present, and in the following chapters (22-27), Dorotheus turns naturally to the topic of the native's fortune, which includes his wealth, health, and property. A few sample charts illustrate fortunes such as being "praised with the praise of kings and nobles and wealthy men" (1.24.7), great eminence and wealth (1.24.11), poverty (1.24.13-14), slavery (1.24.19), recognition from "nobles and mighty people" (1.26.23), high station or the reverse (1.26.24, 25), loss of property (1.26.27, 31, 33), etc. Status and property are closely related: "If you find Saturn with the Moon in one of the cardines, then, even if he is the son of a king, it indicates his fall from fortune and property" (1.27.1; cf. 1.27.16). Wealth and patronage are connected (1.27.17-18); enmities are dangerous, especially within the family (1.27.37-40).

The second book of Dorotheus treats marriage and children. A bad sign indicates that one "will never marry" or will have a "marriage with slave girls or whores or old women who are disgraced or those young in years, or he is a leaser of whores; we have seen someone in [a nativity] like this who leased his wife, and he was disgraced in this" (2.1.3; cf. 2.16.11, 2.18.7). The shameful behaviour of the wife is a cause of considerable consternation: "If you find Venus cadent [and] Mars and Jupiter aspecting it by day while the lords of its triplicity are in midheaven, then they indicate that the wife will be a whore, well known in the mouths of the majority of men, because Jupiter indicates fame in the city, but this [native] will attain disgrace from its [Venus'] badness" (2.1.7). Contrariwise, "If Jupiter is with Venus, then predict that he will have intercourse with a praiseworthy woman" (2.1.11); other signs indicate that the wife will be of low class, a foreigner or pauper, or else a singer or dancer (2.1.14-15). A woman's lot may predict "women who will marry [several] men in succession and will play the whore with men" (2.3.3), or else that she will marry a relative (2.3.4); if she is a slave, the same sign indicates that she will marry her master (2.3.5).

One may be tempted to see here an anxiety over the chastity of wives comparable to that in modern Mediterranean communities as described by various anthropologists and sometimes projected back to Greek and Roman society.²¹ But I am not convinced that Dorotheus' account reveals a society predicated on shame and honour in domestic life based on the reputation of female relations. For example, Dorotheus notes: "If Venus is with Mercury and Mars, then this indicates that he will be one who will have no stability in marriage, but he will rejoice in this woman one time, in that woman another time. If with this they are in midheaven and Venus is in midheaven while Mars and Mercury aspect [it], then this native will be one of those men who befriend women. If he is one [for] whom

[the planets] aspecting Venus are eastern, then this will occur publicly" (2.3.15-17). Dorotheus in the next sentence returns to the woman's debauchery. There seems to be an equivalence here between men's and women's sexual behaviour. The perspective remains that of the man, but the issue is not so much shameful conduct in and of itself as its effect on marriage and the household; corrupt behaviour on the part of either spouse puts the condition and reputation of the house at risk.

Not marrying at all is thus equivalent to marriage with a bad woman: neither leads to a sound estate and inheritance. So too, marriage with a slave or stranger bodes ill, quite independently of the character of the woman. Consider the following: "If Venus is in the cardine under the earth, it indicates the death of the native's woman and of his child ... If the cardine under the earth is a tropical sign, especially Cancer or Capricorn, then this is bad and worse because the native will be desirous of intercourse with disgraced women or whores in public, and debt will always come upon him because of this" (2.4.11-12). Women's infidelity is coupled with barrenness as twin consequences of a single celestial pattern (2.4.14). Marriage with widows is a problem because they may be past childbearing (2.4.15). Signs that indicate marriage to a sister or near relative involve the prospect of children as well (2.4.17-18). The estate and inheritance are always central to Dorotheus' concerns.

Marriage with relatives leads to the possibility of intercourse in prohibited or suspicious degrees, as with a man's own daughter or older sister or maternal aunt (2.4.20); from this Dorotheus passes easily to a man's marriage with "a woman in whom he will take pleasure, but, however that is, the loss of his property will come upon him because of the woman, but if the native is female, then the woman is a Lesbian" (2.4.21).²² The question of a woman's sexual comportment, which responds to the position of Venus and other combinations of planets and stars, is simply one more factor in a successful marriage, along with longevity of the spouses, production of children, status of the partners, wantonness or multiple marriages of the husband, etc., all relating to the stability of the family rather than centering on the question of honour as such. Dorotheus follows this discussion with a chapter on the number of times a man or woman will marry (5): "If you find Venus cadent from midheaven, say [that there is] little constancy toward women in men, and say similarly in the woman with respect to their husbands if you find Mars in the seventh" (2.5.3); so too, death of a man's women is associated with a lack of constancy in the man, and a related sign indicates "for women the death of their husbands" (2.6.6-7). The symmetry is apparent (cf. also 2.5.12, 15).

The section on marriage concludes with a treatment of homoeroticism (7). "If Venus is in the house of Mercury and Mercury is in a bad place, then the native will not love women, but his pleasure will be in boys" (2.7.2). Comparably, "If Venus is in the cardine of the West in opposition and the Moon is in the ascendent, then, if the native is female, it indicates that she will be a Lesbian, desirous of women, and if the native is a male, he will be desirous of males" (2.7.6). The parallelism between the sexes is striking. Now, as is well known, Greek homoeroticism was asymmetrical: the distinction between the active and receptive partners was qualitative.²³ Dorotheus reflects this attitude as well: under certain signs involving Venus and Saturn, "the native will be effeminate [and] will be one of those in whom one does [something] like what one does in women" (2.7.9); Venus may also indicate that "the native will be effeminate, weak in his joints and strength, and one will do in him the act of women" (2.7.10; cf. 2.26.15). Again, certain signs indicate of a woman that "she will be a Lesbian", while the corresponding conjunction in a masculine sign indicates for males that "they will not do to women as they ought to" (2.7.12). Finally, certain combinations indicate that "the woman will be notorious for adultery" (2.7.15); there follows immediately: "If you find, in the nativity of females, the two luminaries in masculine signs and Venus in a masculine sign, in the cardines, then this native, if it is a female, is one of those [women] who do in women the act of men" (2.7.16; cf. 2.26.15). The chapter concludes with a further sign indicating that women "will have much intercourse with men and a great number of men will have intercourse with them" (2.7.17).

Women's eroticism is thus analogous to that of men in being asymmetrical: the dominant female who adopts the part of the male corresponds to the male who assumes the rôle of a woman in intercourse. Lesbians in the male rôle are further associated, by juxtaposition, with a hyperactive sexuality. I am not sure of the extent to which pre-Hellenistic sources analogize sexual relations between women to the asymmetrical model of masculine pederasty: to my mind, the poems of Sappho, for example, do not indicate a necessary difference in rôle between lover and beloved.²⁴ Here, however, the parallelism is clear: males and females are alike in that a desire for one of the same sex is associated with a reversal of customary gender rôles.

The handbook of Dorotheus may also shed light on a question that has excited considerable controversy recently in the area of ancient sexuality. While some scholars have argued that the ancient Greeks did not regard sexual preference as a fixed characteristic constitutive of a person's identity — these are the so-called

constructionists — others have maintained that catamites, at all events, and the tribad or dominant female were recognized as distinct types or natures; they were not perceived simply as optional styles of behaviour, like a preference for meat versus fish, for example.²⁵ On the surface of it, at least, the idea that sexual preference is indicated by the stars at a person's nativity would seem to suggest that homoeroticism, and in particular the rôles of catamite and tribad, are innate and inalterable. Dorotheus' text may thus be seen as support for the anti-constructionist interpretation of sexual codes in classical antiquity. Dorotheus, we may note, is consistent with Manilius (e.g. 5.140-56) and Claudius Ptolemy (3.14.171-73; 4.5.188) in this respect.²⁶

But perhaps the issue is not so neatly resolved. Indeed, the problem may lead to questions that lie at the very heart of the practice of astrology and the view of life on which it rests. For, as we have seen, the planets and constellations indicate not just sexual style but also such matters as wealth and poverty, number of children, success in marriage or business, health and sickness, slavery or freedom, one's profession, personal continence, traits of character — a whole range of consequences, most of which we would not necessarily classify as aspects of a person's identity or inborn characteristics that mark one's inner nature. It is we — or at all events I — who have raised the issue of identity in connection with sexuality, as opposed to the other traits or properties treated by Dorotheus. After all, homoerotic behaviour is discussed by Dorotheus as a codicil to his treatment of marriage, representing, it would appear, the case in which marriage will not be contracted (and, consequently, in which there will be no children or heirs); it does not seem to be a subject of special interest to Dorotheus in its own right.

When the heavens indicate that a man will be prosperous and then lose his wealth, in the kind of complex story that Dorotheus sometimes spins from his celestial observations, it does not obviously mean that wealth or poverty are attributes of the individual. All that can be said is that the stars indicate how things will turn out. So too, they indicate that certain people will turn out to have conventional sexual preferences while others will be different. Dorotheus informs us, of course, that a man who plays the rôle of a woman in sex is a type worth noting, just as it is of interest — vital interest, indeed — whether a person will turn out to be free or enslaved. Astrology does not fix natures as slave or free, fertile or childless, active or passive in sex; it tells what will occur and what people will do.

Following the discussion of marriage (the text notes the transition explicitly

at this point, thus subsuming the treatment of sexuality under marriage) comes, naturally enough, the matter of children (8-13). It is good to have many children: "If Saturn is with it [*sc.* the sign of few children], then it indicates that he will be sterile or will have few children or will be grieved with an intense grief on account of [his] children" (2.10.11; cf. 2.10.16). Parents are evidently interested as well in the number of male and female children they will have (2.12.1-3, 2.13.1-4), but there is no great stress on this topic, which is handled parenthetically in the discussion of numbers of children generally. Death and expulsion of children are both treated as examples of misfortune (2.12.4, 2.13.4). Adoption may compensate for the loss of children (2.14.2).

The rest of Book 2 deals with the effects of planets in various positions, and so constitutes a miscellany of predictions, e.g. support from kings and nobility (2.14.7) or service in the courts of kings (2.14.12), and leadership, whether of men, in business, in commerce, or of armies (2.14.14). Mars aspecting Venus from trine indicates horsemanship and love of women, apparently regarded as two forms of mounting (2.14.18). There is also discussion of sickliness (2.15.4) and loss of inherited property (2.15.5) — these two misfortunes are often associated (e.g. 2.15.6, 12, 13, 23, 29; 2.18.2, 2.19.3, etc.); generosity (2.15.20); effeminacy or, alternatively, marriage with "slave girls or disgraced women" or debauchery among whores (2.15.25) — note again the connection between sexual license and the rôle of the catamite; greed (2.15.28); skill in crafts (2.15.33); shamelessness (2.15.37); stammering (2.16.12); self-reliance (2.16.20); stewardship for kings (2.18.1); leader of the community or city, or position of judge (2.19.1); learning in law or a position as secretary for potentates (2.19.8); death of brothers (2.21.5); career as teacher (2.27.6), under Mercury, of course, or as magician or thief (2.27.10), or overseer for kings (2.29.3; cf. 2.30.2); intercourse with one's brothers' wives or one's mother or, for women, with mothers' or sisters' husbands (2.33.10); love of wine and a swollen liver (4.1.71); poor hearing (4.1.73); eye problems (4.1.91, 111); suicide (4.1.164); being a midget (4.1.135). An unusual number of predictions involve being bitten by lions (2.16.5, 16; 2.22.5; 4.1.68; 4.1.150-51, etc.), generally as a consequence of Leo's influence.

The world of Dorotheus may be indicated in part by what it excludes: there is little of civic life, apart from the possibility of being a judge or finding oneself involved in a court process; most often, political advancement takes the form of being intimate with kings or grandees.²⁷ No predictions in the Arabic version deal with a military career, whether in a royal army or as a mercenary; however, Dorotheus himself certainly treated the subject of soldiering (Appendix II D [p. 432] in Pingree's edition), perhaps at some length — a salutary reminder of

our faulty knowledge of the original. Nothing of athletics or the arts here: the one mention of poetry as an occupation concerns a debauched man who evidently composes seductive lyrics (2.19.27). Little too about natural disasters such as storms and floods that might do damage to agriculture; the contrast with the treatise on prognostication from thunderbolts attributed to Nigidius Figulus in the first century BC is in this respect striking.²⁸ Life revolves rather around inheritance, marriage, children, business (especially connected with seafaring), wealth and poverty. Concerns rarely extend beyond the nuclear family to more distant kin, fellow citizens, or friends (but see Appendix II E, F [pp. 432-34] in Pingree's edition for indications that friendship may have played a larger rôle in Dorotheus' original text); everything centres upon the patrimonial estate. Marriage is a mutual matter, and sexual excess or romantic involvement play little part except for their potential effect on the stability of the household; the emphasis is on constancy rather than on the "true love" that is so pervasive a preoccupation in modern horoscopes (and in Hellenistic literature, for example Apollonius of Rhodes and Theocritus). Trade or commerce may take one far from home, but the hope is to return again to the familial domain as soon as possible.

One vignette, more detailed than most in Dorotheus but indicative of the values he represents, runs: "If Mars aspects Mercury from opposition, then he will have little shame [but will be] a master of lies and books or bewitchment and injury, and his livelihood will be from this, and he will have little property, but his wife will be good, and he will not cease being surety and giving guarantees for it, but he will run away from the discharge of [his] trust, and he will submit it to the judges and to argument, and fear will come to him and dread of [his] superiors, and he will depart for places in a land other than his own, especially if Mercury is in Saturn's term or in its own term and house" (2.16.25).

The relative absence of interest in farming or stock-breeding suggests that Dorotheus may have had in mind primarily an urban audience for his astrological poem. In light of the importance Dorotheus accords to travel and shipping, one might be tempted to associate his composition more particularly with the area of Sidon, from which Dorotheus himself hailed, and the perennial involvement of the Phoenicians with commerce and the sea.²⁹ Such finely tuned inferences from the work as we have it are risky, however. Dorotheus' poem will have respected not only the actual interests of his contemporaries but also literary conventions and the tastes of a cultivated public, although its substantial influence on later handbooks may indicate that in its choice of topics it held appeal for a more general audience too.

The nature of the astrological art is no doubt in part responsible for the patterns

that Dorotheus elicits from the heavens, as we have seen: planets have their particular associations, and in various combinations augur well or ill. Nevertheless, the overall themes, and the focus on private or familial life generally, seem characteristic of Hellenistic concerns, like those reflected by New Comedy, for example, in contrast to the topics of civic governance or war and peace broached by Aristophanes.³⁰ In dream manuals and other accounts of the interpretation of dreams, too, it appears that Hellenistic and later sources tended to dwell on domestic prospects, as opposed to examples of dream interpretations dating back to the time of the classical city-state in which there is a wider preoccupation with the values and activities of the community.³¹ Such materials do not in themselves indicate that there was a decline in political commitment in the Hellenistic world. Rather, they suggest that new literary forms, such as astrological manuals, and the practices they subtended entered into the construction of a readership and clientele defined in part by a set of interests centred on personal life and fortunes. Astrology was the locus of a discourse that intersected with others, private and public, in Hellenistic Greece. It is of course important to determine which strata and segments of Greek society were engaged most actively with such procedures. Although the literary level and themes of Dorotheus' handbook suggest an educated, municipal, and perhaps commercially minded audience, however, it is hazardous to infer from the text the social profile of his constituency.

There remains the question of what a belief in astrology itself signifies for the values of Hellenistic Greeks. What does it mean for ordinary people to consult professional interpreters of horoscopes in the hopes of learning something of their future? What does it mean to believe that so much of what occurs in a lifetime is predetermined by the pattern of the planets and constellations? It would be easy, but also facile, to associate the Hellenistic interest in astrology with the rôle of magic, mystery religions, and the almost divine power of kings and princes — remote, inscrutable, implacable — over local life, and thus to take astrology as a symptom of insecurity and powerlessness in the face of forces beyond individual control.³² A preoccupation with prognostication may arise under very various conditions, as the recent vogue of fortune-telling, astrology, and related practices in the United States and elsewhere indicates. What is more, a good case can be made that astrology reflected an interest in scientific precision rather than a need for reassuring superstition, and in this respect was a symptom of social confidence rather than the reverse.³³ Astrology refined and rendered mathematically rigorous rough prognostic techniques such as the reading of livers and omens, and had something of the appeal of, say, scientific weather forecasting today.³⁴

Apart from the desire to know the future, however, the conviction that the events of one's life are determined by impersonal configurations in the heavens, rather than by human effort or desert, suggests a vision of the world that is based more on the blind action of fortune than on individual responsibility and reward of merit.³⁵ Such a view accords with the emphasis on *tuchê* that is to be found in Hellenistic documents, including inscriptions: more and more, chance is elevated to the position of a major deity.³⁶ The subordination of ethics and character to destiny is reflected, perhaps, in the collocation of personal traits such as generosity or greed with afflictions such as sickness or death, whether of oneself or of near relatives, in the predictions: how one behaves is as much a matter of fate as what happens to one in the world.³⁷ The contrast that is so clear in the Hellenistic philosophical schools between what is *par' hêmin* or *eph' hêmin*, that is, in one's own power, and what is beyond one's control appears to be suspended or abolished in the astrological tradition.³⁸ All is equally written in the stars — even our personal strengths and weaknesses; the most we can do is to be prepared for events when they arrive. In implying that only this minimal control is granted us over our destinies, the astrologers would seem to be at one with the dream interpreters, for it was a commonplace that the only advantage to be derived from prognostic dreams was a capacity to endure with tranquillity what will befall one.³⁹

The Stoics too, of course, believed in the efficacy of the stars over human affairs, or rather in the interdependency of all of nature, celestial and terrestrial.⁴⁰ Anna Maria Ioppolo observes that “no Stoic could accept a strict predetermination of human destiny by means of the stars, because this would have meant the abolition of moral responsibility”.⁴¹ But perhaps, despite their emphasis on virtue, the rôle of individual control and responsibility had in fact contracted in Stoic belief to a very small domain of ethical freedom that resided more in understanding the interrelations among the totality of things than in effecting changes in one's own circumstances.

Or else the power of the stars was understood to be, in the end, obscure and contingent, susceptible to alteration for hidden reasons.⁴² Astrology might thus be compatible with an abiding conviction in the virtue of hard work, decent behaviour, and love for one's family. These values are everywhere in evidence in Dorotheus' text as the substratum of his prognoses, the standard against which consequences are judged to be good or bad. The model life, if the stars permit it, is one of a stable marriage, abundance of children, good relations within and outside the family, and material prosperity — in a word, a conventional life, with just the right degree of deference to ideals of justice and moderation to permit

a comfortable sense that prosperity, if one enjoys it, is one's due, while adversity, should it happen, is a thing beyond our control, to be endured as the will of heaven.

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Notes

1. E.g. Foucault 1984, 16-50; Price 1986; Winkler 1989a; MacAlister 1995. Bowersock 1994, 77-98 (esp. 80-87) has faulted Foucault, Winkler and MacAlister for taking the dreams reported by Artemidorus as typical rather than extraordinary and pertaining to an élite genre of predictive interpretation. As a witness to conventional values, however, the content of the dreams is of less interest than the content of the predictions, and it is to this latter category that the interpretations in the astrological writers correspond.
2. Exceptions are MacMullen 1971; Liviabella Furiani 1978; cf. also Tester 1987, 79-81; Barton 1994, 30.
3. See Cumont 1912, 30-32; Neugebauer 1962, 102-3; Long 1982, 166; Tester 1987, 19; Martin (this volume) init.; Gordon (this volume) section 2 init. Montanari Caldini 1973 notes that the Latin translation attributed to Germanicus (1st century AD) of Aratus' poem on the constellations (ca. 280 BC) introduces astrological motifs absent in the original.
4. Tester 1978, 434-35; but the caution of Saliba 1978, 110 is well taken: "the spirit of the text rather than the letter is what is preserved in the final product", i.e. the Arabic version that survives. My own sense is that our text of Dorotheus is closer to the prose paraphrases in Hephaestio (5th century) than to the actual verses of Dorotheus' poem that he quotes now and again in the course of his exposition. But when did the paraphrase tradition begin? David Pingree has indicated in a personal communication to me (25 January 1995) his belief that "the prose paraphrases in Hephaestio are his own"; on the basis of additional researches now in progress, however, he is persuaded that "the Pahlavi version antedated Hephaestio by at least a century and a half; but the Arabic version of it *to some extent* may have been influenced by later Greek authors who studied Dorotheus and explained and expanded much of his poetry. All of this, however, still requires a lot of work to sustain or disprove". Ole Thomsen suggested to me (oral communication) that the prose summaries or *diêgêseis* of Callimachus' poems (e.g. the *Iambi*) are perhaps analogous to the paraphrases of Dorotheus' poem, which, like the poems of Callimachus, is written in a learned Alexandrian style; cf. also Stegemann 1942, 336-37 on the transmission of the prose paraphrases.
5. Cf. Tester 1978, 437.
6. Dorotheus' poem had a great influence on later treatises; cf. Hübner 1988.
7. Pingree 1976, xi.
8. Cf. MacMullen 1971, 105.
9. Cf. Tester 1987, 168. An addressee is a standard element in classical didactic poetry and may serve various narrative functions (see Clay, Mitsis and Schiesaro 1994); cf. also Barton 1994, 82-83 on the initiatory rhetoric associated with astrological treatises. It is best not to forget that Dorotheus' original composition was in the tradition of elevated Alexandrian verse, and may not have been intended to serve in the first instance as a practical guide, any more than Aratus' *Phainomena* was designed primarily as a handbook for sailors or

- Nicander's poem on snake-bites as a medical text; cf. Stegemann 1942, 346-47 on the language and style of Dorotheus' poem. Some Alexandrian writers, however, e.g. Eratosthenes, evidently did employ poetry as a vehicle for serious scientific treatises (Blomqvist 1992, 56).
10. The contrast, for example, with the themes emphasized by Firmicus Maternus is noticeable; for the latter, see the summary in MacMullen 1971, 111-16. Barton 1994, 93 and Gordon (this volume) section 3 suggest that catarchic astrology, dealing with the appropriate days on which to commence an activity, may have been especially accessible to a poor clientele, while geneathlic astrology was for the rich only.
 11. Cf. 5.30 for explicit associations between Venus and marriage, Mercury and trade, Mars and war, Jupiter and kings.
 12. See Gordon (this volume) section 2 for an indication of the complex and sometimes purely ornamental methods of calculation generated by the astrological writers; on the "grammar" of quasi-scientific interpretive systems, see Martin (this volume).
 13. Cf. Tester 1987, 89.
 14. For example: "If the Moon is in Aries, it indicates that this slave will be a runaway and will not get used to [his] station and will be incompatible with his master" (5.11.1), whereas "If the Moon is in Taurus, then the slave which is bought will be a worker, patient, strong, obedient, sticking to the work of a slave with his whole self, a humble man" (5.11.2). While it is clear that Dorotheus sees in docile slaves good fortune for the petitioner, he does not moralize. The condition of freedom or slavery is labile and it may happen that a slave is the one to consult the astrologer.
 15. This is best done "in a sign whose nature is moist, one of the watery signs" (5.23.2).
 16. For example: "If the Moon is in Gemini [in] eight degrees of it, then it indicates that what is in this ship will reach [its destination] and there will be profit from it, but lingering and slowness will occur in its return and its departure" (5.25.3).
 17. One may also note that arbitrary anger rather than wrong-doing is the cause of imprisonment.
 18. For example: "If Saturn is in the cardine, midheaven, it indicates that, because of their injustice in judging, shame and misery and loathing will reach the judges" (5.33.9). With other signs, "the defendent will be deprived of his wish by injustice and false testimony" (5.33.13; cf. 5.33.20 on bribes and favouritism, as well as 5.33.22-23 on the judge's sympathy for the defendent). Dorotheus looks also to the possibility of reconciliation, and to causes of arguments among family members — as always, restricted to parents, spouses, children and siblings (5.33.35-41).
 19. Cf. Lucian *Alexander* 21; Hippolytus *Haer.* 4.28.1-2, 4.34 with commentary in Ganschinietz 1913, 31-33, 38-40, 43-45; I am grateful to Richard Gordon for providing me with these references.
 20. I presume that white and black in these examples refer to hair colour.
 21. See for example, Cohen 1991, 54-69; contra, in the case of Rome, Treggiari 1991, 313, who ascribes the development of the double standard characteristic of a shame-and-honour culture to Moslem influence.
 22. Cf. 2.26.19, where effeminacy in a man is associated with marrying a whore.
 23. Cf. Housman 1903, 393 n.1: "Between *philopaidia* and *philogunia* the Romans saw no incongruity at all, but they did see incongruity between *to paskhein* and *to dran*"; Winkler 1989b, 70: "The calculus of correctness operated not on the sameness/difference of the genders but on the dominance/submission of the persons involved"; Halperin 1990, 30: "sex in classical Athens ... effectively divides, classifies, and distributes its participants into distinct and radically opposed categories".

24. See Konstan 1995, 58; Greene 1994, 54 maintains that in Sappho fragment 94 each woman "is to be both lover and beloved, active participants in a reciprocity of desire — both of them active, desiring subjects". Lardinois 1994, 79 argues forcefully (against Parker 1993) that "Sappho talked about young, adolescent women in her poetry", and suggests that Sappho was "an instructor of young women's choruses" (80). Even if her addressees were young, it is not clear to me that in Sappho's poetry (or indeed in fifth-century Athenian literature) the opposition between dominant and passive female in a homoerotic relationship was perceived as parallel to male pederasty.
25. On constructionism, see Halperin 1990; Sinfield 1994, 14-19; opposed: Richlin 1993; Boswell 1990.
26. It is curious that the only texts (apart from the *Glossaria*) cited by LSJ for the word *tribas* are astrological: Manetho, Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, and Vettius Valens. Incidentally, LSJ's gloss on *hetairistria* in Plato's *Symposium* 191E "= *tribas*" thus seems particularly tendentious, especially in light of the fact that Aristophanes' allegory draws no distinction in function between the two halves of the original female (or, for that matter, of the original male).
27. Contrast the importance of the imperial court in the astrological treatise of Vettius Valens.
28. Cf. Swoboda 1964, 30-35; Liuzzi 1983, 84-87; for Nigidius' methods in adapting Etruscan lore, see Weinstock 1950, 48.
29. Stegemann 1942, 332 suggests that Dorotheus may in fact have come from Syria; cf. Stegemann 1940, 14-15.
30. Cf. Konstan 1995, 4. The restricted themes of Menandrian comedy may, however, be understood as an artistic choice rather than a historical limitation (Zagagi 1995, 95), and one must be wary of inferring from such sources a general disengagement from civic politics throughout the Hellenistic world.
31. See MacAlister 1996, "Introduction".
32. Discussion in Tester 1987, 17; Gordon (this volume) init. Gordon (this volume) section 3 notes that more curse tablets seem datable to the late fourth century BC than to any other period.
33. Cf. Neugebauer 1962, 171: "Compared with the background of religion, magic and mysticism, the fundamental doctrines of astrology are pure science". Barton 1994, 15-17 argues that the inclusion of astrology alongside medicine as a branch of knowledge in antiquity destabilizes the polarity between science and pseudoscience; she is thus sceptical of the search for precursors to modern scientific practices and discourses, and invites attention rather to the question of how forms of knowledge achieve authority in a given social context. Cf. also Martin (this volume) init. on the absence of a structured opposition between "natural" and "supernatural" in the classical understanding of *phusis*.
34. On the conception of prognostication as a *tekhnê* in the classical period, see, for example, [Aeschylus] *Prometheus Bound* 484-99; Gordon (this volume) section 3 suggests that catarchic astrology is rational insofar as it helps the petitioner to make a decision in otherwise uncertain conditions.
35. Richard L. Gordon has remarked (oral communication) that nativities may indeed suggest necessity, but *katarkhai* on the contrary offer the freedom to choose an auspicious occasion for a commencement; Gordon sees the two practices as distinct in their social character.
36. See the discussion by Sfameni Gasparro (this volume).
37. See, e.g., 1.21.27-28; cf. Cicero *De divinatione* 2.89 on the mixture of habits, mind, body, action, fortune and experience in astrological predictions; Long 1982, 177.
38. Cf. Ioppolo 1984, 91: "All the efforts of the Stoics were thus addressed to distinguishing physical from moral determinism, as their astrological doctrine also confirms".

39. Cf. Achilles Tatius 1.3.2-4: "Often the celestial powers delight to whisper to us at night about what the future holds — not that we may contrive a defence to forestall it (for no one can rise above fate) but that we may bear it more lightly when it comes" (trans. Winkler 1989c, 178); Artemidorus *Onirocritica* 1.2.
40. But see Long 1982, 167-72 for the view that classical Stoicism may have had little interest in astrology per se as a means of divination.
41. Ioppolo 1984, 89; she adds: "It is thus clear that when we speak of astrology in ancient Stoicism, we are referring to a weak sense, if we mean by this the fact that the Stoics regarded the stars only as signs and not as causes of human destiny"; cf. Denyer 1985 on the Stoic interpretation of divination as a form of communication or signs rather than natural science.
42. See Claudius Ptolemy's defence of astrology in *Tetrabiblos* 1.1-3; Long 1982, 181-83; Barton 1994, 69; cf. Barton 1994, 79 and Gordon (this volume) section 2 fin. on the flexibility of astrological procedures, which offer the practitioner a wide range of choices.

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