

## “WILL MY CHILD HAVE A BIG NOSE?”:

Uncertainty, authority and narrative in katarchic astrology

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With his genius for memorable simplifications, Pierre Bourdieu liked to distinguish between two types of anticipation of the future, between that of the Kabyle peasant, apparently secure in his mythico-ritual *habitus*, and that of the capitalist world, habituated to – victim of – the management of purely symbolic information.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, we have the intuitive *prévoyance* of the Kabyle peasant, who estimates his family's needs for the coming year, setting aside a customary amount of seed-grain for planting, and treating everything above this as 'superfluity' to be expended for the sake of social and moral capital; and on the other, *prévision*, the calculation of the uncertain futurities of capitalist economies, which know no such limitations or regularities, and are forced to submit to the implacable demands of profit. Whereas the Algerian peasant's future is concrete, “virtuellement enfermé dans le présent”, that of the modern world, based upon monetarisation, is distant, multifarious and abstract.<sup>2</sup>

Bourdieu's contrast between Tradition and Capital now looks decidedly quaint, if not Romantic; but if, for the sake of argument, we posit these as poles of a notional continuum of anticipations of the future, where would we place the futures envisaged by the divinatory systems of antiquity? It seems obvious that these cannot be treated as a single category, that no one could now even entertain

1 BOURDIEU 1963; 1972/2000 377–85 (Annexé: “Pratiques économiques et dispositions temporelles”).

Abbreviations:

CCAG = *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* (Brussels 1898–1953)

SEG = *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*

Ep. Chron = *Ἐπειρωτικά Χρονικά*

SVF = H. von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*. 4 vols. (Leipzig 1903–05; 1924; repr. Stuttgart 1964)

I am grateful to my colleague Veit Rosenberger for allowing me to contribute to the volume even though I was unable to attend the conference. This text was presented as a Werkstattbericht to the KFG ‘Religiöse Individualisierung in historischer Perspektive’ on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2013; I thank the Fellows of the Max-Weber-Kolleg who were present for their comments. The images were made by my son Henry Heitmann-Gordon, partly on the basis of those in HÜBNER 2003.

2 “... un futur médiat et abstrait, le calcul rationnel devant suppléer au défaut d'intuition du processus dans son ensemble” BOURDIEU 1972/2000, 380; cf. the helpful exposition by COSTEY 2004 §15.

the idea of writing *L'histoire de la divination dans l'Antiquité*, let alone completing it.<sup>3</sup> The modern study of ancient divination has fragmented into diverse specialisms, such that the sole synthesis of which we seem to be capable is the specious promise of the *Sammelband*.<sup>4</sup> The only means of bringing these various specialisms together is the development of higher-level research-questions, such as the issue of individualisation that gives rise to the present volume. Another such question might be the attempt to categorise the means available to agents of different statuses and social resources at different times to identify and cope with classificatory uncertainties, and the types of control they render possible or thinkable, in other words a vaguely 'transactional' project, which would subsequently focus on the sociality of such attempts at control.<sup>5</sup> My own focus here, however, is upon the essentially eberian issue of the rationalisation of methods of coping with uncertainty, and in particular the sense(s) in which astrology – or rather one aspect of astrology – can be seen as answering to wider social pressures towards developing more sophisticated, less arbitrary, more negotiable, ways of relating to uncertainty, future choices and possibilities.

The most relevant of Weber's ideas in this connection are those developed between 1911 and 1913 in 'Einleitung in die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen'.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most important point about Weber's conception of history, derived from his reading in the Chinese, Indian and Jewish traditions, is that rationalisation processes, notably in the religious context, are socially and historically differentiated – 'rationalisation' never denotes a uni-directional process, and all such processes are inescapably attended by varying intensities of irrationalism conditioned by social-political and psychological interests.<sup>7</sup> Rationalisation, particularly in religious contexts, can therefore mean many different things and manifest itself in quite different forms.<sup>8</sup> Weber identified two major processes, however: the project, carried forward by individual thinkers –

3 BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ 1879–82; cf. FLOWER 2008, 3: "...there has been [no] comprehensive and synthetic treatment of Greek divination as a whole since the nineteenth century".

4 JOHNSTON 2005.

5 WHYTE 2005, 262: "In a pragmatic and phenomenological view, subjects are trying to exert some degree of control, not necessarily as masters, but rather as helmsmen steering a course".

6 On the development of this text, see SCHLUCHTER 1985, 534–49. This is one of the essays translated into English by Gerth & Mills soon after World War II, but given the utterly misleading title "The social psychology of the world religions": GERTH & MILLS 1948, 267–301.

7 "Auch hier wurden die einzelnen großen Typen der rational methodischen Lebensführung vor allem durch diejenigen irrationalen, als schlechthin gegeben hingenommenen, Voraussetzungen charakterisiert, die sie in sich aufgenommen hatten. Welches diese waren, das gerade ist es nun, was in zum mindesten sehr starkem Maße rein historisch und sozial bestimmt wurde durch die Eigenart, d.h. aber hier: die äußere, sozial, und die innere, psychologisch, bedingte Interessenlage derjenigen Schichten, welche Träger der betreffenden Lebensmethodik in der entscheidenden Zeit ihrer Prägung waren": WEBER 1920/2012, 303.

8 "Denn es ist hier vorweg noch einmal daran zu erinnern: daß *Rationalismus* etwas sehr Verschiedenes bedeuten kann": WEBER 1920/2012, 313. On Weber's doubts about whether western rationality was the only valid type, see SCHMIDT-GLINTZER 1988, 64f.

primitive and not-so-primitive intellectuals – of applying increasingly precise and abstract principles to a given area of reality, religion being conceived as such an aspect of reality; and the attempt to attain a clearly-defined end by means of a progressively precise calculation of appropriate means.<sup>9</sup> Closely connected to the latter conception is the notion of *Planmäßigkeit*, the application of systematisation and ordered procedures to specific areas of human experience. Despite its modern reputation as pure irrationalism, it seems clear to me that ancient astrology represented a form of *Planmäßigkeit*, the systematic application of explicit ideas, based upon a rationalised account of the cosmos, to the uncertainties of human experience, and thus counts in a Weberian sense as a rationalised and rationalising knowledge-practice. Admittedly it hinged upon two arbitrary claims, but, as I point out below, Bourdieu's notion of the *champ*, which confines agents in its own invisible stakes, is perfectly adequate to account for the inability of principals and practitioners to look 'from the outside'.<sup>10</sup> Within the range of ancient forms of divination, therefore, it represents the most significant example of the application of explicit calculation of appropriate means to the area of human uncertainty.

In my view, Classical forms of divination and oracles in particular offered a very limited form of uncertainty-control, with virtually no attempt at rationalisation. I say 'very limited' because responses of this type failed to provide any of the three major forms of rationalised control of uncertainty: an ordering in the form of narrative or story-telling; an explicit mechanism for weighing instabilities against desired outcomes; the juxtaposition of an element of chance against a matrix of recognised and formalised possibilities.<sup>11</sup>

It is noticeable that at Dodona, for example, although the institution of written questions (and, evidently, answers) represents a degree of formalised procedure, no effort whatever was made to explain or justify the divine answers. There was no attempt to impose order upon the sequence past-present-future by creating narratives, and there was certainly no explicit account of degrees of uncertainty. In fact almost all this type of work was thrust onto the principals, who had themselves to define the type of uncertainty and create the matrix of possibilities. Thus we find questions about the relative advantage of courses of action for those in a position to choose between a pair of named (or implicit) options: "Will I be better off living in the country or staying where I am?"; "Will it be better for me to work with Dio[t]imos in Megara [or not]?"<sup>12</sup> A few, though posed in the usual binary form, seek to resolve questions of brute fact, e.g.: "Did Thôpiôn steal the money

9 WEBER 1920/2012, 313f.

10 Bourdieu 2003, 140: "Chaque champ, comme l'ordre pascalien, enferme ainsi les agents dans ses enjeux propres qui, à partir d'un autre point de vue, c'est-à-dire du point de vue d'un autre jeu, deviennent invisibles ou du moins insignifiants ou même illusoires".

11 I am therefore not wholly in agreement with the argument of BELAYCHE 2007, that the 'theological oracles' of II<sup>p</sup> represent no sharp break with earlier oracular practice.

12 Resp.: SEG 43: 339 (480–460<sup>ca</sup>) = LHÔTE 2010, no. 54; SEG 24:454b (IV–III<sup>p</sup>) = LHÔTE 2010, no. 86; SEG 15:386 (early V<sup>p</sup>) = LHÔTE 2010, no. 67.

[or not]?"<sup>13</sup> Still fewer – and these seem to refer to the divine world, where the god might be presumed to have precise knowledge – are open-ended, in the sense that they seek to elicit a choice from a pool of unstated possibilities, e.g. "To which of the gods must he pray so as to achieve what he has in mind?"<sup>14</sup> In other words, in the great majority of cases, the oracle is asked to state a preference for one of two explicit or implicit alternatives posed by the consultant.<sup>15</sup> As Esther Eidinow has suggested, we can suggest two motivations here: to confirm a decision already more or less decided upon; and to lay the responsibility for settling upon one among several options onto an external authority.<sup>16</sup> In either case, the real work is done by the client. The divination-system itself claims no special technical abilities. the situation is slightly, but not essentially, different in the case of the seer.

### 1. Cosmology, literacy and rationalisation in the Hellenistic period

If we disregard the rather limited but real efforts of the Classical period to produce rationalisations of the relation between the divine and human worlds, primarily in the direction of the ethicisation of deity, it seems that the really effective push towards rationalisation of uncertainty only appeared in the mid- to late fourth century and the Hellenistic period and the emergence of new forms of political organisation and new types of élite-formation. At the level of public cult, we can view the emergence of various forms of Tyche, calibrated to a hierarchy of political being, as a new type of rationalised socio-political narrative consciously projecting a sense of continuity from the immemorial past into the future.<sup>17</sup> As regards the critical field of rationalised knowledge-practices, the emergence of a leisured literate class encouraged the massive extension of articulate exposition of emergent technical specialisms, from warfare to architecture, from physics to herbals, literatures almost entirely lost except for crumbs preserved in, say, Pliny's *Historia naturalis* or the *Méchanikê syntaxis* of Philo of Byzantium.<sup>18</sup> This process of *Diskursivierung* in turn produced not merely new conceptual discriminations and distinctions but also innumerable coinages of new words and extensions of existing meanings.<sup>19</sup> All of these discourses represent a major effort to limit the pressure of the unknown, the uncertain, the irrational. How do you put up buildings that do not fall down? What is the best remedy for a sprained ankle?

13 *Ep. Chron.* 1935, 259 no. 32 (un-dated) = LHÔTE 2010, no. 119.

14 *SEG* 15:386 (early V<sup>o</sup>) = LHÔTE 2010, no. 67.

15 EIDINOW 2007 132–34.

16 *Ibid.* 137f.

17 e.g. SFAMENI GASPARRO 1997.

18 VEGETTI 1984; FRENCH & GREENAWAY 1986; KULLMANN, ALTHOFF & ALPERS 1998; BARTON 1994a; CITRONI MARCHETTI 2011.

19 Technical language/lexis: RADICI COLACE & CACCAMO CALTABIANO 1991; SCONOCCHIO & TONETTO 1993 and 1997; RADICI COLACE 1997 On Pliny's zoological terminology, note CAPPONI 1991.

How do you best limit the irrationalities of the law-court? The spread of public literacy associated with epigraphic culture also encouraged the development in the Hellenistic period of oracular modes, such as the *Homeromanteion*, the use of the text of Homer as a means of divination, that employed written matrices.<sup>20</sup> Such devices in turn suggested the appropriateness of an 'epigraphic' view of the future, as something laid out and potentially readable, like an inscription, by contrast to the earlier notion of *moira*, which was relatively flexible.<sup>21</sup> Symptomatic here is the formalisation of the art of reading dreams, the antecedents of books such as Artemidorus' *Oneirokritikon*, which could tell you confidently what it portended to dream of a crucifixion or the collapse of the sky;<sup>22</sup> or the collection of portents derived from trees by an author using the name of Aristander of Telmessos, Alexander's *mantis*, which much impressed Pliny the Elder.<sup>23</sup>

Most Hellenistic philosophers allowed that Fate was inexorable and granted it some limited place in their cosmological schemes.<sup>24</sup> All these systems in turn were heavily indebted to the rationalisation of the cosmos as a (benignly-ordered) geocentric system developed by Eudoxus of Cnidus and Callippus of Cyzicus in the mid-fourth century BCE (IV<sup>o</sup>), and progressively refined thereafter.<sup>25</sup> With the impetus provided by the Babylonian calculation of solar, lunar and planetary positions, standardised in *ephemerides* (handy tables), the concept of the fixed zodiac, and primitive 'horoscopes' based on the day, month and year of birth, all of them schemes and techniques mediated into Greek in Seleucid Babylonia, the various modes and techniques of Greek horoscopal astrology were created – that is 'emerged', since all relevant names are pseudonyms such as 'Zoroaster', 'Hermes', 'Nechepso', 'Petosiris', even '*hierogrammateis*' (i.e. senior Egyptian temple-priests) – no doubt in Alexandria, during the later third and second centuries BCE.<sup>26</sup> This intense pseudonymous/anonymous labour produced what is today

20 Cf. ROSENBERGER 2001, 42f., who rightly urges that such oracular forms emerged in the late Hellenistic period. The fullest extant example of a *Homeromanteion* is set out in *PLond.* 121, of which alternative papyrus fragments are known: MALTOMINI 1995.

21 FLOWER 2008, 76f.

22 Crucifixion: Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 2.53.1; 4.49.2; sky: *ibid.* 4.58.2; cf. PRICE 1986; HAHN 1992; HARRIS-MCCOY 2012, 31–41 (the commentary however is extremely selective and more or less useless for any specific enquiry). Astrology later claimed to be able to intervene super-effectively in the same area, by providing fore-knowledge of any dream a client had had, e.g. 'Zoroaster', *περί ονείρων*, *CCAG* V 3 1910, 88–90, which begins: "If you are asked by someone to tell him what he has seen in a dream ...".

23 Pliny, *HN* 17, 243, with KAERST 1895; on the genuine Aristander, see NICE 2005; FLOWER 2008, 179–81.

24 On the peculiar Stoic theories of causation, see HANKINSON 1999a; on the problems raised by the Stoic concept of *εἰραμένη*, see *idem* 1999b, 526–37; BOBZIEN 1998, 44–58; FREDE 2003, 192–203.

25 DICKS 1970, 151–219 is still an excellent account; for the Hellenistic period, FURLEY 1999; CABALLERO 2004; on the Stoic contribution, SCHMID 2005, 175–83; on the role of Aratus, GEE 2013.

26 See briefly HOLDEN 2000, 1–20; BAKHOUCHE 2002, 5–22; SCHMID 2005, 183–202; BECK 2007, 12–19; on pre-Seleucid Babylonian techniques, see now ROCHBERG 2010.

known as the 'Hellenistic vulgate'.<sup>27</sup> The notion of an immutable futurity, what the IV<sup>p</sup> author Firmicus Maternus terms *fatalis necessitatis lex*, a fixed law of absolute necessity, was generally assumed by practitioners to be basic to the entire project of using the heavenly bodies – regarded as visible divinities whose predictable movements follow unchanging laws – as a reference-point for divination.<sup>28</sup> This was of course to pitch the claim to have found a means of rationalising uncertainty at the highest conceivable level, above all when it was a matter of the major art, that of genethliological astrology, the art of casting nativities for the entire life of an individual. The result, inevitably, was not merely a flight into complexity but an assiduous lack of interest in the theoretical underpinnings – a practitioner such as Vettius Valens in the High Empire could write an entire handbook of genethliacal astrology without once mentioning the problem of mediation, that is, how the stars affect human life.<sup>29</sup>

## 2. "Will my child have a big nose?": Negotiating with 'immutable futurity'

In practice, however, what clients usually wanted was a means of negotiating with the astrologers' Fate.<sup>30</sup> "From any individual point of view, the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes must be weighed against the perceived instability of the situation".<sup>31</sup> The astrologers compromised with this desire for control by developing a type of practice at odds with their theoretical view of the field, inasmuch as it used not the individual's nativity but the condition of the heavens at a significant moment – say, when an event (the subject of the enquiry) occurred, or when it became known, or simply when the question was posed – to predict very short-term outcomes within highly specific contexts, and thus offered an articulated means of deciding for or against a planned course or action, or, alternatively, to set up scenarios to allow the principal to take further measures. This type of practice, in Greek καταρχαί, 'beginnings', was later, in the mediaeval and early-modern period, known as horary, electional or judicial astrology.<sup>32</sup>

27 BARA 1989, 16.

28 Firmicus Maternus, *Math.* e.g. 1.7.3, 7.23, 8.1–3, 8.5, 9.2, 10.1 etc., cf. VOLK 2009, 58–126 on Manilius. For Ptolemy's arguments against Carneades in favour of astrological prognostication, albeit a weaker (stochastic) view than the standard one, see *Apotel.* 1.2–3 (p.5–22 Hübner) with the comments of TUCKER 1961 and FERRABOLI 1985 ad loc.

29 On the efforts of some astrological writers to reconcile necessity with freedom, above all with regard to the issue of responsibility for one's actions, see briefly BAKHOUCHE 2002, 124.

30 Notoriously, the Stoic definition of divination was *divinationem esse earum rerum praedictionem et praesensionem, quae essent fortuitae*, "the foretelling of events that come about by chance" (Cicero, *Div.* 2.13). However, 'chance' here means simply "a cause obscure to human understanding" (Alexander, *De fato* 172.12 Bruns = *SVF* 2, 965), cf. HANKINSON 1999b, 536.

31 STEFFEN, JENKINS & JESSEN 2005, 10.

32 That is, the art of discovering the most advantageous time to begin an action. I use the term to include 'interrogations' (*Anfragehoroskopie*), the art of predicting the results or outcome of an action, cf. HÜBNER 2003, 25.

We can obtain a preliminary insight into this practice by glancing at some sections of a medieval astrological manuscript in Florence, based upon Byzantine and Arabic sources, but including authentic ancient katarthic material, which records methods devised by earlier practitioners, transcribes a few late katarthic 'horoscopes', and includes a series of direct questions that illustrate the kind of day-to-day issues that such astrologers might be confronted by.<sup>33</sup> Parts of it are known to scholarship through the pioneering efforts of Franz Cumont, begun in the 1890s, to provide information in printed form regarding the holdings in major European libraries of materials in Greek relating to ancient astrology, the *Corpus Catalogorum Astrologorum Graecorum* (1898–1953).<sup>34</sup> One sequence offers the following questions:

Which charioteer will win? (fol. 52<sup>v</sup>; also 53)

Will my child have a big nose? (περὶ τοῦ εἰ ἔχει μέγαν ῥῖνα ὁ γεννηθείς, fol.

56) Will it have a squint? (fol. 56<sup>v</sup>) Will it live (or die)? (fol.57) Will it be a single birth or twins? (fol.58) Is the unborn child mine or from another? (fol.66) Will it rain? (fol.68)

When will the father of the child to be born die? (fol. 56)

Much later in the ms. (at fol. 193–313<sup>v</sup>) the scribe has copied out 'Palchus' book of *apotelesmatika*. The following is a translation of some of the contents:

fol. 199: what blessings and what harm will befall me?

fol. 200: rumours and news; §6 On *katarchai*

fol. 200 §7: using the Lot of Fortune to tell what someone is going to ask one; §8: another method, using the *horiokrator* of Helios and its "face"

fol. 203<sup>v</sup>: will the birth be human or a monster?

fol. 204<sup>v</sup>: is the questioner's preference (?) advantageous?

fol. 205<sup>v</sup>: will the child to be born be alive or dead?

fol. 206: if there arrives a report of someone's death

33 cod. Laurentianus, box 28, cod. 33, of 313 folio pages (XVI<sup>p</sup>), poorly copied from cod. Romanus Angelicanus 29 (1388 CE), as printed in *CCAG* I 1898, no.11 p.39ff. The ms. as a whole has never been published.

34 The importance of the Latin mss., and the Arabic transmission (cf. PINGREE 2001; BURNETT 2009), let alone the transmission to (Iran and) India that David Pingree likewise did much to illuminate (cf. HÜBNER 2006), was not then fully appreciated. The practice in *CCAG* was to transcribe in Part 1 of each volume the headings only of the various entries, which is the type of entry of which I translate a fragment here. Part 2, the 'Appendices', consisted of very selective transcriptions of entire entries or passages. Without going back to the mss., therefore, one cannot in the great majority of cases discover the actual content of the entry. Virtually none of this vast mass of material has ever been read except by the editors of *CCAG*; and none of its content is accessible except to those who are good at this difficult kind of Greek, which is full of obscure technical terms, exacerbated by the errors of transmission and scribal editing. A few complete runs of *CCAG* are still available from the international Classics bookshop, Pórtico Librerías, Zaragoza, Spain.

- fol. 206<sup>v</sup>: reading a sealed letter  
 fol. 208<sup>v</sup>: law-court  
 fol. 210<sup>v</sup>: thief-finder of Erasistratos  
 fol. 213<sup>v</sup>: method of Timaios 'son of Praxidos' (sic) relating to runaway slaves  
 fol. 215<sup>v</sup>: *katarchai* by Serapion  
 fol. 218<sup>v</sup>: finding something lost; also runaway slave  
 fol. 220: ... moving residence  
 fol. 221: *katarchê* – when Theodoros the Augustalis arrived in Alexandria  
 fol. 223: relationships with women, method of Serapion  
 fol. 223<sup>v</sup>: moving residence abroad; another, fol. 224.  
 fol. 224<sup>v</sup>: how long the first stay will be?  
 fol. 226: another method of finding out when the questioner will return  
 fol. 226<sup>v</sup>: Serapion's method of locating a runaway slave  
 fol. 227: meetings and sex, also by Serapion  
 fol. 228: multi-purpose  
 fol. 230: buying land and residing there  
 fol. 231: is a rumour true? What rumour is it?  
 fol. 230<sup>v</sup>: to journey or not? (x 2)  
 fol. 231<sup>v</sup>: if you are asked about a conditional (event) and you wish to know when it will happen  
 fol. 232: clothes  
 fol. 232<sup>v</sup>: if you are asked what am I holding in my hand?  
 fol. 234: if someone asks you where a person is staying, and you want to know whether everything is all right with them  
 fol. 235: making up φάρμακα  
 fol. 235<sup>v</sup>: *katarchê* of a voyage; question about a *katarchê* for fear of a voyage to Athens  
 fol. 236<sup>v</sup>: another, to Smyrna; also further query  
 ibid. slave-flight; war (missing in text); another, also missing; another, on stopping war (also lost)  
 fol. 238: sex; also oracles  
 fol. 241: giving of a letter (?sealed)  
 fol. 246<sup>v</sup>: sex  
 fol. 247: useful extracts from (the book of) Julianos of Laodicea on *Katarchai*  
 fol. 250: returning from abroad  
 fol. 256: going abroad  
 fol. 256<sup>v</sup>: dates for planting  
 fol. 260<sup>v</sup>: in which month will X die? fol.: 262 as well  
 fol. 261<sup>v</sup>: Dorotheus on *ekptosis* (either banishment or shipwreck)  
 fol. 262<sup>v</sup>: various excerpts

- fol. 263: *katarchê* of Leon, crowned at Antioch  
 fol. 265: ... profit... a birth (girl or boy) (?)  
 fol. 265<sup>v</sup>: friends and enemies; fol. 266, same  
 fol. 266: knowing the day someone will die; similar, f.266<sup>v</sup>; reputation, ibid.  
 fol. 268: death abroad; will there be a war?; prosperity or the opposite  
 fol. 268<sup>v</sup>: whether women will one day give birth or conceive; similar; knowing the intention of a questioner beforehand; similar  
 fol. 271<sup>v</sup>: will the subject of the question be brought to a conclusion?  
 fol. 272: another, concerning the question to be posed  
 fol. 273: will the questioner return from his stay abroad?  
 fol. 273<sup>v</sup>: political office  
 fol. 274<sup>v</sup>: going abroad  
 fol. 275: which of my parents will die first?

A list such as this obviously derives proximately from the topics the Byzantine scribe or copyist found worth selecting from the larger mass of materials available – there are moreover numerous slight errors, omissions of phrases, passages edited into incomprehensibility, all of which are the perceptible reminder of unremitting editorial work. Nevertheless it provides some idea of the kind of *katarchic* material the *CCAG* provide, and, indirectly, the sorts of competence the *katarchic* astrologer, or rather: the practitioner in his role as *katarchic* astrologer, was expected to dispose of.

To judge by the range of such issues, *katarchic* astrology must have been extremely important in practitioners' daily business,<sup>35</sup> yet such was the prestige of genethliacal astrology that of the extant full-length handbooks only that of Hephaestio of Thebes (fl. 415 CE) allocates considerable space to it, recycling material from Book 5 of Dorotheus of Sidon's hexametrical poem, which was written in Greek in the mid-first century CE (1<sup>p</sup>).<sup>36</sup> There can be little question that this relative neglect is due not to the lack of significance of *katarchic* astrology in daily life but to the social and intellectual interest focused on the relationship between genethliacal astrology, the imperial power and the struggle to control such knowledge by legal means.<sup>37</sup> *Ephemerides* (which tabulate lunar longitudes through the month), (sign-entry) almanacs and planetary templates and other tables could be used equally well for calculating *katarchai* as for nativities, and, in general, unless there is a heading γένεσις (nativity), there is no means of deciding what purpose a surviving papyrus horoscope served, since, as we can tell from explicitly *katarchic* horoscopes in the same manuscript and elsewhere, all provide

35 Cf. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ 2002, 237f.

36 On Dorotheus see W. & H.-G. GUNDEL 1966, 117–21; PINGREE 1976, vii–xvi. Hephaestio cites c.237 verses from Dorotheus in Book 5 alone. ENGELBRECHT 1887, who edited Bk 1 only, rather oddly claimed that the title of Hephaestio's work as a whole was περί καταρχῶν.

37 FÖGEN 1993; SCHMID 2005. It is significant too that Ptolemy makes virtually no reference to *katarchic* astrology in *Apotel.*, evidently on the grounds that it was inadequately stochastic.

the same sort of 'anagraphic' information about the date, time, location of the planets in the zodiacal signs, and the Horoscope (the eastern horizon) as do natal horoscopes.<sup>38</sup> Another type of table, lists of the positive or negative qualities of days, which are often attached to later *ephemerides*, must mainly have been used for katarchic predictions.<sup>39</sup>

### 3. Some technical background

Before examining this type of astrological prediction more closely, I need to provide some very basic technical information for the benefit of those not familiar with ancient astrological practice. We may think of this form of divination in Bourdieu's terms as a *champ*, a practice characterised by the pursuit of a specific end suited to the investment made in it by those who possess the required aptitude.<sup>40</sup> Once one has interiorised the assumptions and point of view of such a *champ*, it is no longer possible to stand outside and adopt an external view-point: the *nomos*, the rules of the game, defines "le pensable et l'impensable, le prescrit et le proscriit ....; matrice de toutes les questions pertinentes, il ne peut produire les questions propres à le mettre en question".<sup>41</sup> The *champ* constructs its own form of reality, with its own rules and procedures, its own occlusions and self-evidences.<sup>42</sup>

The Hellenistic vulgate was founded on three claims: as visible divinities, the heavenly bodies have specific, knowable effects upon life on earth; the relevant bodies are the twelve signs of the Zodiac and the seven ancient 'planets'; the relation between zodiacal signs and planets can be represented in diagrammatic form and thus as a form of reading. Although the observations required to draw up a horoscope were recorded in the form of the long lists I have mentioned, *ephemerides*, (sign-entry) almanacs and planetary templates, the first of two crucial vulgate inventions was the diagram showing the signs of the Zodiac distributed around a circle.<sup>43</sup> This design was no doubt developed from a notional

38 The best examples are the *katarchai* preserved in cod. Laur. 28.33 fols. 105; 107; 112<sup>v</sup>, 113; 125 = CCAG I 1898, 100f., 102–04, 106–08, cod. Paris. 2506 fol. 21 = CCAG VIII 1 1929, 240, and cod. phil. gr. Vind. 108 f. 299 = CCAG VI 1906, 65 etc., edited and translated by NEUGEBAUER & VAN HOESSEN 1959 as nos. L 474–84. I discuss one of these below.

39 Cf. JONES 1999, 58. Astrologers seem to have used diagrammatic boards to help in their visualisation of the astronomic situation, cf. PACKMAN 1988; EVANS 2004, 4–14

40 BOURDIEU 2003, 25.

41 *ibid.* 140.

42 HÜBNER 2003, 23 employs the analogous notion of *Systemzwang*.

43 It must be stressed, however, that actual diagrams of this kind hardly occur in astrological papyri (NEUGEBAUER & VAN HOESSEN 1959, 163). The diagram at the end of POxy 235 is a rare exception, but its data simply do not fit any known date or year in the reign of Tiberius, invoked in the text; "... none of the basic astronomical data can inspire any confidence" (NEUGEBAUER & VAN HOESSEN 1959, 18f. on no. 15/22, with a sketch, reproduced by BARTON 1994b, 94 fig. 11. EVANS 2004, 11 fig. 4 illustrates a similar diagram, datable to 219 CE, from a house in Dura-Europos. The ubiquity of circular diagrams in modern study may therefore tell us more about our conceptual needs than the ancients', and it might be better to speak

diagram similar to that in Fig. 1, designed to demonstrate how the sun's course takes it through various recognised constellations, fixed by the Babylonians as twelve in number, which form the ecliptic.<sup>44</sup> Now, whereas in observation the sun takes different lengths of time to pass 'through' a given constellation in heaven, the invention of the circular diagram made it easy to think that each sign occupies the same number of degrees (30°; 30 x 12 = 360°). The notional circular diagram facilitated a further operationalisation of the underlying astronomy by suggesting a variety of ways that the different signs could be related 'geometrically' to one another (Fig. 2). In the case illustrated, the signs form four groups of three (the *trigona*, triangle), each of whose members could be thought to have a particular, or significant, relation with the other two, relations that shift according to the specific location of the signs at any given moment.<sup>45</sup>

The notional diagram (Fig. 3) assumes an observer facing south (at the top of the diagram), and thus with the eastern horizon to the left and the western to the right. North is behind the observer and thus invisible. These orientations, up is south, left is east, west is right, 'behind' or 'underneath' is north, are crucial to all horoscopic astrology, and katarchic astrology in particular. Eastern horizon (*hōroskopos*, *anatolē*, *Ascendant*; here **Hor.**), zenith (*mesouranēma*, *medium caelum*, *Midheaven*; here **MC**), western horizon (*dysis*, *dynōn*, *occusus*; here **Δ**) and the meridian underfoot (*hypogeion*; *imūm caelum*; here **IMC**) are the four cardinal points (κέντρα, *cardines*) of the circular diagram, from which all else depends.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, if the circular diagram is a sort of idealised stellar map, the seven ancient 'planets' can also be recorded on it, even though in reality they belong to three different types of heavenly body (a star, the true planets, the Moon), and have astronomically nothing whatever to do with the constellations, zodiacal or other. The planets, in relatively rapid movement, show "the beginnings of affairs", τὰς ἀρχὰς τῶν πραγμάτων, "what they are, and whether they are good or bad", ἀρχαί here referring to the general issue of when best to begin an enterprise.<sup>47</sup>

The second crucial invention of the Hellenistic vulgate was the dominant means of associating human life with the circular diagram of the zodiac, namely the *dodekatropos*, also known as the system of 'houses' (Gk: οἶκοι, Lat. *domus*

more neutrally of 'templates'. Another type of diagram, a square or rectangle variously subdivided into twelve, is also found in manuscripts, e.g. in the Arab Dorotheus 1,24, 30–32 Pingree, translated in PINGREE 1976, 184–188. See also the illustrations in BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ 1898, 285 figs. 33 and 33bis; NEUGEBAUER & VAN HOESSEN 1959, 163 fig. 24, and Fig. 10 here.

44 There are dozens of surviving zodiacal diagrams in all media, mainly in circular or oval form; see GUNDEL 1992.

45 On the 'aspects', i.e. angles of 60°, 90° or 120°, see BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ 1898, 165–179.

46 e.g. Manilius, *Astron.* 2, 788–840; Hephaestio, *Apotel.* 3,4,8. According to Ptolemy, **Hor.** and **MC** indicate τὰ πρῶτα, **Δ** and **IMC** τὰ ἔσχατα (*Apotel.* 4,5,14, p.315 Hübner). The same scheme can be found in the Arabic paraphrase of Dorotheus, A5.36.8–11 (p.307f. Pingree = 147 Gieseler Greenbaum). Nevertheless, many practical applications make use only of three, or even two, *kentra*.

47 Theophilus ap. CCAG XI 1 1932, 221 l.22.

*caeli*), 'places' (Gk. τόποι, Lat. *loci*), or 'temples' (*templa*).<sup>48</sup> In the full version of this scheme (see Fig. 4) six diameters were laid successively over the circle so as to create a grid of twelve segments; in modern discussions, these segments are numbered I to XII counting anti-clockwise and starting with the eastern horizon (**Hor.**, Ascendant).<sup>49</sup> Nominally the segments of the *dodekatropos* are distinct from the zodiacal signs, but they are often taken to be synonymous. The names given to each segment naturally differed between Greek and Latin (Figs. 5 and 6); in what follows I use either as seems appropriate. The *loci* **Hor.** (I) and **MC** (X), being considered dominant or primary, were sometimes termed τὰ πρακτικά κέντρα, in Latin *primae cardines*.<sup>50</sup> The four segments that could not aspect the **Hor.**, i.e. nos. II, VI, VIII and XII, were considered unfavourable or adverse, and bore correspondingly sinister names, such as κακή τύχη/*porta laboris* (VI) and τύχη καὶ θάνατος/*Typhonis sedes* (VIII). Those that could aspect, i.e. nos. III, V, IX and XI were by contrast deemed favourable.<sup>51</sup> This internal differentiation of the significance of the segments created yet another set of powers, sympathies and contrasts to combine with the relations between the zodiacal signs – here already one glimpses the enormous potential complexity of the system, and hence its flexibility in practical use. At the same time, it is rare in katarthic astrology for all twelve *loci* to be taken into consideration – the great majority of schemes make use only of the *kentra/cardines* (*loci* I, IV, VII and X).

The *dodekatropos* also afforded a further means of incorporating the 'planets' into the framework, since seven of the segments were assigned to these bodies. The commonest scheme is as follows (see again Fig. 4):

- I: Hermes/Mercury – ambivalent
- III: Selene/Luna – favourable
- V: Aphrodite/Venus – favourable
- VI: Ares/Mars – negative
- IX: Helios/Sol – favourable
- XI: Zeus/Jupiter – favourable
- XII: Kronos/Saturnus – negative.<sup>52</sup>

If the 'planets' happened to be in their 'proper' segment at the significant moment chosen for a decision, they were considered to possess particular weight. By

48 BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ 1898, 280–288; the modern standard work is HÜBNER 1995. There were in fact several such systems, e.g. the *athla* or *sortes* described at length by Manilius, *Astron.* 3.43–159, apparently indifferent to his preceding account of the *dodekatropos* (2.856–2.967); another variant was the *oktatropos*, which only includes houses I–VIII; see below.

49 The scheme of the *kentra/cardines* bisects the four segments (I, X, VII and IV) that are imposed on them.

50 Hephaestio, *Apotel.* 2.18.37 (Greek); Firm. Mat., *Math.* 7.19.1 (Latin). On πρακτικός in this sense ('active', 'effectual'), cf. 'Heliodorus', *Comm. in Paul. Alex.* p.83 l.13; 100 l.22 Boer etc. Most schemes prioritise **MC**, with reference to the sun's power at mid-day; others the **Hor.**

51 Two of these (III and IX) are segments that precede a *kentron* (*apoklimata*), the two others (V and XI) 'following' segments (*epanaphora*). Each pair is in diametral aspect.

52 HÜBNER 2003, 19f.

assigning planets to each of the four 'aspecting' segments, and thereby guaranteeing their beneficent character, the influence of negative planets could be limited to one diametral pair (*loci* VI and XII, Ares and Kronos), while the ambivalence of the planet Hermes/Mercury at **Hor.** allowed the practitioner the freedom to weave a suitably complex story by taking account of the various other forces at work, above all the location and state of the two luminaries, the sun and the moon, as well as the character of the zodiacal sign at **Hor.**, all of which, as we shall see, often turn out to be decisive factors in the play of competing considerations.

#### 4. Getting down to katarthic forecasting

Until a decade ago, it was virtually impossible to obtain an overview of the methods of katarthic astrology: no one was interested in it, and even Auguste Bouché-Leclercq only devoted three very general chapters of his great handbook to it, including one on medical prognostication.<sup>53</sup> In 2003, however, Wolfgang Hübner published a fundamental study of the multifarious schemes that underlie the surviving katarthic materials,<sup>54</sup> mainly in the Arabic Dorotheus and Hephaestio Bk III, but extending to numerous shorter passages in the *CCAG*,<sup>55</sup> Vettius Valens, and even the *Yavanajātaka*, an ultimately Greek text versified into Sanskrit by Sphujidhvaja.<sup>56</sup>

The fragments of 'Nechepso' and 'Petosiris', the fanciful Egyptian founders of horoscopal astrology, do not refer to katarthic schemes.<sup>57</sup> Apart from the shadowy Protagoras of Nicaea,<sup>58</sup> the first practitioner to have made a name for himself in this branch was an otherwise unknown Timaeus, generally dated to I<sup>a</sup>.<sup>59</sup> It seems likely that the demand that stimulated the production of methods and

53 BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ 1898, 458–542.

54 HÜBNER 2003, cf. HÜBNER 2002a. It must be said, however, that for all its merits the book is not easy to use – partly of course because of the sheer complexity of the material; in particular, it is difficult to work back to the main text from the numerous diagrams (275–335), which are essential to comprehension; and there is no subject index.

55 See n. 34 above.

56 The verse *Yavanajātaka* (dated to the third quarter of III<sup>a</sup>) is however heavily spliced with Indian astrological lore; see PINGREE 1978, 3–6.

57 See RIESS (1894); briefly on 'Nechepso', HÜBNER 2000.

58 W. & H.-G. GUNDEL 1966, 106 dated Protagoras to the first half of III<sup>a</sup>; PINGREE 1978, 438f. thought he should be dated shortly before Hephaestio. HÜBNER 2003, 27 is wisely non-committal, though elsewhere he seems to accept an early date.

59 Timaeus wrote an entire book devoted to runaway slaves and thieves, a section of which I cite below: Abū Ma'shar ap. *CCAG* I 1898, 97–99, cf. cod. Angel. 29 fol. 102 = *CCAG* V 1 1904, 29 ('Palchus'); cf. W. & H.-G. GUNDEL 1966, 111f.; HÜBNER 2002b; 2003, 21 and 27. I ignore here the problem posed by the name Πραξίδου, 'corrected' by W. Kroll to Πραξιδίκου. It has been claimed that the ultimate (Greek) basis of the *Yavanajātaka* is to be dated as early as the second half of II<sup>a</sup>; however that may be, its references to katarthic schemes (§77) are invariably general, and unconnected with specific questions or problems, cf. HÜBNER 2003, 28f.

schemes came from clients aware of the claims made for (genethliacal) astrology and wanting immediate, practical advice on projected undertakings. On the other hand, the effort made by Dorotheus of Sidon to turn the schemes of katarthic astrology into verse at the time of Nero, and thereby to elevate them to a rank comparable to genethliacal astrology in the eyes of the leisure class of readers, can be taken as an index of current sophistication and of public awareness.<sup>60</sup>

It seems that the earliest methods employed only the movement/phases of the Moon in relation to the zodiacal sign under which the project would fall. The simplest models based on *kenra/cardines* use only two, **Hor.** and **Δ**.<sup>61</sup> The next stage was the construction of a notional southern hemisphere, with **Hor.** at the eastern horizon, and **Δ** at the western, and the observer in the centre of the diameter. This scheme provided three *kenra/cardines* for prognosis; a simple example is Iulianus of Laodicea's model for forecasting outcomes: τὰς ἀρχάς at **Hor.**, τὰ μέσα at **MC**, τὰ τέλη at **Δ**, i.e. beginning, middle and end, an appropriation into astrological terms of an ancient folk-scheme notionally following the daily course of the sun.<sup>62</sup> Such a scheme allowed the practitioner to combine information from three, or four, complex sources of information (i.e. zodiacal signs + lunar state<sup>63</sup> + sun + other planets) in relation to a single project.

The completion of the circle, with the construction of the notion 'northern hemisphere' came later. Since this scheme incorporated all four cardinal directions, it could be instrumentalised directly, say in relation to runaway slaves: "If the Moon is at **Hor.** or in one of the following signs, it means the runaway has gone east; if at **MC**, he has gone [south]; if at **Δ**, he has gone west; if at **IMC**, he has gone [north]".<sup>64</sup> Usually, however, it is deployed in a more complex manner to add to the range of considerations on which a prognosis could be made, as in Dorotheus' scheme of human life (Fig. 7), in which "the hidden parts of the body", but also "foundations [of houses], choices of residence (?) and business affairs" (καὶ θεμέλια καὶ κτίσεις καὶ ἀγοράς) fall under **IMC**.<sup>65</sup> This fourth *kenron/cardo* always remained optional, but it permitted a further increment of

60 HÜBNER 2003, 245 thinks that the system was fully developed at latest by I<sup>o</sup>; Dorotheus for example uses more abstract applications than (the few known) earlier practitioners.

61 e.g. Rhetorius' scheme for life (ap. CCAG VIII 4, 1922, 123 ll.2f.), which differentiates only between νεότης (**Hor.**) and γῆρας (**Δ**), between 'youth' and 'old' age: Hübner 2003, 116f., 300 fig. no.13b. This may be from Antiochus of Athens. Another example is the scheme for war in the Greek (Byzantine) tr. of Māšā'allāh, which takes into consideration only the enquirer and the enemy: HÜBNER 2003, 222f., 330 fig. no.37a/2.

62 CCAG IV 1903 p.104 ll.24f.; HÜBNER 2003, 87–89 with 289 fig. no.10b. Iulianus offers another scheme based on a divinatory folk-model immediately afterwards (l.26f.): past at **Hor.**, present at **MC**, future at **Δ**.

63 This means primarily phase and the ascending or descending node.

64 Hephaestio, *Apotel.* 3.47.61, where north and south have been falsely exchanged; cf. HÜBNER 2003, 38f. with 282 fig. no. 1b/3.

65 Dorotheus G4.1.45 p.382 ll.3–6, cf. CCAG II (1900) p.197 ll.30–33; Hübner 2003, 92, 292 fig. 12a/1. At least the 'hidden parts' of the body and the 'foundation-laying' are metonymically connected to **IMC**.

complexity for those practitioners who required a more sophisticated scheme for their prognoses, for example in the case of marriage (the bridegroom, the bride, the path of life, the dowry and the outcome); purchases, as seen from the point of view of the seller or, alternatively, of the buyer; or the case of borrowing and leasing or letting.<sup>66</sup> An additional form of complexity was to crowd each *kenron/cardo* with a list of different considerations. Firmicus Maternus, for example, lists *parentes*, *patrimonium*, *substantia*, *fundamenta*, *mobilia et quidquid ad latentes et repositas patrimonii pertinet facultates* under **IMC**, each to be considered separately; and gives an even more varied list under **MC**: *vita*, *spiritus*, *actus omnes*, *patria*, *domicilium*, *totaque conversatio*, *artes et quidquid nobis artium suffragio confertur*; *animi vitia*.<sup>67</sup>

The imposition onto the system of *kenra/cardines* of the *dodekatropos* and its variants, such as the *athla* or *sortes*, permitted still further complexity. An example of the use of the *dodekatropos* is Hephaestio's scheme for a prognosis regarding a banquet (Fig. 8), which, though incomplete in its surviving form, in all likelihood originally assigned twelve aspects of a meal round the *loci*.<sup>68</sup> The scheme is explicitly based on the *kenra*, though in the end result they are practically ignored. The master of the house was at **Hor.** = I,<sup>69</sup> the furniture and equipment at III, the guests at V, wine at VI, the wine-cups at **Δ** = VII, the butcher/carver of the meat at IX, the organiser, the servants and the head cook at **MC** = X. More or less every component of such an event, including the master's wife (at XII, or possibly V) and the room or (in the case of an open-air event) the site (at IV) could be separately addressed, greatly increasing the detail and sophistication of any prognosis. An example of the *oktatropos* is Thrasyllus' distribution of eight categories relating to human life between *loci* I and VIII, where ζωή, life, is set at **Hor.** = I, γονεῖς, parents, at **IMC** = IV, and γυνή, wife, at **Δ** = VII (Fig. 9). The aim here was evidently to make the topics coincide as much as possible with the traditional associations of the *loci* (cf. Figs. 5 and 6); thus 'livelihood' is at II, parents = 'origins, source' at IV, children at V ('good fortune'), injuries at VI κακὴ τύχη/*porta laboris* (VI), death at VIII (τύχη καὶ θάνατος, *sedes Typhonis*).<sup>70</sup> By similar means, quasi-narratives of relatively complex events such as a journey could be constructed. Thus Hephaestio combines the southern *kenra* **Hor.**, **MC**, **Δ** with *loci* I, XII, XI, X, IX VIII, VII to

66 Respectively: Dorotheus ap. Hephaestio, *Apotel.* 3.9.1 = Dorotheus A5.16.1, cf. HÜBNER 2003, 313 fig. no.24; seller: Hephaestio, *Apotel.* 3.16.2, cf. HÜBNER 2003, 157; 310 fig. 20a; buyer: Dorotheus A5.9.6, cf. HÜBNER 2003, 158f.; 310 fig. no. 20b; borrowing: Dorotheus A5.20.1f.; Hephaestio, *Apotel.* 3.28.1f.; HÜBNER 2003, 161–63; 311 fig. no. 22.

67 Firmicus Maternus, *Math.* 2.19.5 and 11, cf. HÜBNER 2003, 296 fig. no.12b4 (using his Latin summary of the passages).

68 Hephaestio, *Apotel.* 3.36.2–3, with HÜBNER 2003, 151–56, 309 fig. 191. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ 2000 and 2002, 238–243 has argued that the original scheme was somewhat different and offers an alternative version.

69 I take it that τοῦ δεῖπνου τὴν ἀρχὴν refers to the master or host not to the idea of 'beginning'.

70 Thrasyllus ap. CCAG VIII 3 1912, 101 ll.3–9, cf. HÜBNER 2003, 109f.; 297 fig. no. 12c/1. A similar scheme based on the *oktatropos* is given by Antiochus of Athens, *ibid.* p.117 ll.22–27.

provide a prognostication for each stage of a day's journey, whether by land or sea.<sup>71</sup> Very complicated schemes could be composed regarding the building and navigation of a ship,<sup>72</sup> and still more so of truly complex events such as warfare and battles.<sup>73</sup>

The notional scheme of simple → complex is just that: notional, for the degree of articulation of any project depended more upon the ingenuity and competence of the practitioner on the one hand, and the status, concern and pocket of the principal on the other. 'Articulability' is not a constant. At any rate from I<sup>a</sup>, very simple schemes were being applied alongside very complicated ones, no doubt even by the same practitioner. It is also likely that the schemes found in the hand-books have a model character, and were intended to be applied *mutatis mutandis* to a variety of actual projects. Hübner discerned a long-term tendency to shift from the private sphere to the public, visible particularly in the Indian *Yavanajātaka* (III<sup>p</sup>) and Theophilus of Edessa in the Byzantine period (VIII<sup>p</sup>).<sup>74</sup> The main significance of Hübner's work, however, is to demonstrate the existence of a widespread, highly adaptable method in katarthic astrology, a method that appropriated certain features of genethliacal astrology for making short-term prognoses. This reliance upon a larger knowledge-practice provided a fall-back authority for individual katarthic forecasts; yet the relation was loose enough to permit a high degree of adaptability to presenting circumstances. The wider context is always the implicit competition with other modes of contingent prognosis. 'Emergent discrimination' was the katarthic practitioner's chosen means of acquiring authority in this contested field.

### 5. Where do the uncertainties lie?

On the basis of the adaptation of Dorotheus' poem by Hephaestio in *Apotel*. Bk III, supplemented by the material to be found in al-Tabarī's version of Dorotheus, we can draw up a list of roughly twenty fields in which katarthic practitioners claimed to offer advice composed on the basis of the scheme of *kentra/cardines* together with the *dodekatropos* and its variants.<sup>75</sup>

71 Hephaestio, *Apotel*. 3.30.35, as emended by HÜBNER 2003, 73f.; 287 fig. no. 8. The enumeration of stages 3–6 has fallen out.

72 PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ 2007 with drawings of the zodiacal signs governing the parts of a galley (his fig. 3, 223) and a merchant-vessel (fig. 4, 229); cf. KOMOROWSKA 2001. MONTERO HERRERO 2010 neglects navigational astrology almost entirely.

73 Warfare: Theophilus of Edessa ap. CCAG XI 1 1932, 213 1.7–214 1.21 = BIDEZ & CUMONT 1938, 2: 231–33 (based on a comparison of five mss.); see further HÜBNER 2003, 228–35; cf. 332 fig. no. 37d/2; battle: Iulianus = ?Theophilus, ap. CCAG V 1 1904, 183 1.26–184 1.3, with HÜBNER 2003, 235–37; 333 fig. no. 38.

74 HÜBNER 2003, 245.

75 MacMullen 1990, 224, drawing, like Lynn Thorndike before him, on handbooks of genethliacal astrology, particularly Firmicus Maternus, emphasises the "profit to be found in the 'empiricism' of astrological treatises, against the distortion of our other sources". We can agree, at any rate, that genethliacal astrology too had a good grasp of the peripeteias of

These can be listed as follows:<sup>76</sup>

|                          |                           |                                  |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. House-building/buying | 8. Making a will          | 15. Marriage                     |
| 2. Purchases             | 9. Worship & sacrifice    | 16. Pregnancy                    |
| 3. Ships & shipping      | 10. Inviting guests       | 17. Theft                        |
| 4. Journeys              | 11. Rent, tenancy         | 18. Runaway slaves               |
| 5. Past, present, future | 12. Borrowing and lending | 19. Manumissions                 |
| 6. Course of life        | 13. Court-cases           | 20. Schooling/<br>apprenticeship |
| 7. Illness               | 14. Imprisonment          |                                  |

It will at once be clear that the implied principal is the male head of a prosperous household, involved in business affairs and the social intercourse appropriate to his decurial station, and frequently faced with the need to make decisions regarding business, investments, legal threats, appropriate sacrifice, the disposal of members of his family (in the ancient sense), care for the continuity of the house-hold into the next generation,<sup>77</sup> and not least his own personal welfare. Questions of the kind we find in later Arabic katarthic astrology, such as Sahl's entry: A question if a slave, free from one [master], will serve another, or: Whether the present master would be better for the slave, or a future one, do not occur here.<sup>78</sup> We may take it that this type of person, with recurrent topical enquiries, formed the ideal or normative client of the katarthic astrologer, who may also have drawn up a genethliacal horoscope for such a person.<sup>79</sup> Some of the fields, such as those at the bottom of the left-hand column, indeed abut the usual topics of genethliacal horoscopes. To this extent, katarthic astrology confirmed that heaven has a special interest in the prosperous just as it told its public what it needed to worry about.<sup>80</sup>

ancient life.

76 The division into columns has no significance except to save space. This scheme, based on HÜBNER 2003, represents a re-ordered and simplified list of topics with respect to the source material. For the sake of comparison, I give a full list of the topics treated by Hephaestio in Appendix 1. In view of the interference of other material in the Arabic Dorotheus – it can be shown, for example, that in relation to pregnancy the later Arabic version by al-Qasrānī includes additional material on e.g. the sex of the child, twins, the mother's health, or, as may be, death: FROMMHOLD 2004, 24 n.86 – I prefer only to list the topics as given by Hephaestio, though his order differs considerably from that of al-Tabarī's Arabic version, as one can see from the comparison set out by PINGREE 1973, 1: x–xi.

77 On the highly developed concern with pregnancy and birth in ancient astrology, see FROMMHOLD 2004, though she is not concerned with katarthic forecasts (the 'Petosiris rule' regarding the relation between conception and birth, for example, is only of importance for genethliacal astrology).

78 Sahl (Zahel), *On questions* 6.5 and 6, p.91 Dykes.

79 On the similarity of the topics covered in the Arabic tradition, e.g. the 'Forty Chapters' of Al Kindī, see BURNETT 1993.

80 On the way divinatory systems may shape and influence anxieties, cf. WHYTE 2005, 253f.

At the same time, the 'katarchic range', covering the socially-recognised uncertainties inherent in the activities inescapably bound up with such a status, implied another kind of offer, equally appropriate to that status, namely intelligent negotiation with a range of possibilities, which it was the role of the practitioner to set out in such a manner that the principal could accede to the merits of the arguments. It is not that such principals hurried off, like Theophrastus' superstitious man, to consult a diviner if a weasel crossed their path or a mouse gnawed the meal-sack; for these principals that was indeed just superstition.<sup>81</sup> Uncertainty is inescapable but requires to be managed. What they needed was a means of objectifying, naming, discriminating, uncertainties alongside a method of putting the risks involved into a relatively formal hierarchy of acceptability. Ultimately, the kentric schemes served to underwrite the non-arbitrariness of advice given on the basis of a complex set of data. This was precisely what traditional institutionalised oracles lacked: they had no means of showing they appreciated the complexity of projects and situations. At the same time, the diffusion of such schemes focused attention precisely on these types of 'appropriate' uncertainty, and not upon, say, meteorological forecasting, or the manufacture of clothing, or the length of life of a mud-brick dwelling or a ceramic pot. The schemes are thus part of an implied agreement between practitioner and principal over what matters to a man of substance. The practitioner provided a set of narrative projections that the principal could employ in constructing his own 'conjectural narratives', on the basis of which he made his final decision – *for better or worse*.

So far, the rules of the *champ*. Katarchic astrology promoted itself as a more rational and calculative alternative to other modes of divination, formal and informal; it knew where the uncertainties were located; it could enumerate a battery of different kinds of risks involved in a given project; it could lay out a set of calculable scenarios of the type anticipated. Its futures were always conditional: if this is the case ..., then that will happen/it means X or Y. But in practice no decision would have been made solely on the basis of what such an astrologer predicted, or at any rate that would only have been so in a retrospective memory of such a consultation, the narrative simplifying the experience by linking event and prediction: "And it happened just as the astrologer said it would" (or contrariwise, negatively).<sup>82</sup> The main social context of decision-making was always inside the (extended) family: astrological predictions provided material – essentially narrative material – for these discussions, which could be deployed and manipulated in defence of any relevant position. Insofar as katarchic astrology contributed to the process of individualisation, it did so by further encouraging the externalisation and rationalisation of uncertainties connected with future projects within the social group that anyway, through its wealth and social status, had the

81 Theophrastus, *Charact.* 16.3 and 6 (= 28 Jebb).

82 The astrologers' own representation of the position was different, as we shall see.

greatest number of options and choices open to it, which are the essential basis for individualisation.<sup>83</sup>

## 6. The view from the other side

There are a very small number of surviving accounts, transmitted from Late Antique sources by unknown processes into the *potpourri* typical of mediaeval astrological manuscripts, which give us some inkling of the self-representation of their katarchic practice by working astrologers, and which I assume they set out *in some form* for their important principals, as justifications for the advice they gave (the ability to *give an account* being essential to any notion of rationalisation). One of these surviving accounts relates to a vessel that had set out from Alexandria for Smyrna in 479 CE, and weeks later had still not arrived. An astrologer was consulted. Eventually however the vessel did reach Smyrna; and at some later point the practitioner wrote, for purposes unknown to us, possibly as a model for instruction to pupils, or to defend himself in some dispute,<sup>84</sup> the following account of why he had given the prediction he had: <sup>85</sup>

§1. Another inquiry in Smyrna regarding fear about a ship; for it was expected long before to arrive from Alexandria and had not arrived.

§2. Year of Diocletian 195, Epiphi (XI) 20, 3<sup>rd</sup> hour of the day, Saturday. Sun Cancer 19°, moon Scorpio 16°, Saturn Virgo 16°, Mars Virgo 18°, Jupiter Aquarius 8°, Venus Gemini 6°, Mercury Leo 4°, retrograde, Horoscopus (= *Hor.*) Virgo 2°, Midheaven (= *MC*) Taurus 26°, Ascending node Aries 11°, {conjunction Cancer 11°}, Lot of Fortune Sagittarius 29°.

§3. Taking the Ruler of the day (and of the first hour) and the Ruler of the (3<sup>rd</sup>) hour – Saturn and Mars – and again having observed Saturn and Mars to be in the Horoscopus (Virgo) and the moon moving towards Saturn, hence I said that the ship had met with a great storm, but that it was saved because Venus (in Gemini) in Midheaven and Moon (in Scorpio) were in aspect to Jupiter (in Aquarius) and the moon's (position on the) seventh day was moving away from Jupiter and its dodekatemoron was also moving away from Jupiter.

§4. The problem of the Katarche concerned a ship of which there was no news: – Observe that the lot of Fortune was in Sagittarius, with which Argo rises; and furthermore the Ruler (Jupiter) of it (i.e. Argo) was in a very watery sign (Aquarius). Having observed that the Horoscopus was in a bicorporal sign (Virgo) {and that the Ruler of the Horoscopus (Mercury) was retrograde, and the Ruler of Midheaven (Taurus), Venus, was in a bicorporal sign, Gemini} and the Ruler (Jupiter) of the (Lot of) Fortune (in Sagittarius) was in a bicorporal sign and (the planet) which receives the Ruler of the of the Lot of Fortune was in a bicorporal sign {and the house Ruler of the moon (Mars) was in a bicorporal sign (Virgo)}, I said that they would change from ship to ship. And because Virgo was a winged sign and

83 Cf. GORDON 2012, 91–93.

84 Cf. KELLEY 2008 on the debate over astrology in early Christian Syria, as represented by ps.-Clementine *Recognitions* 10, 7–12. She believes the passage is directed at Bardesanes, or rather the tradition represented by the name.

85 CCAG I 1898, 103f. [ed. F. Cumont], cf. VI 1906, 14 (the text is not reprinted there but the ms. is the source of some additions to Cumont's text, marked by { }, as read by Neugebauer and van Hoesen) = NEUGEBAUER & VAN HOESSEN 1959, 144–146 no. L479. I reproduce their translation with slight alterations. It begins "Another enquiry ..." because the editor/copyist of the ms. has just copied out a shorter response regarding a ship from Athens datable to July 16, 474 CE (p.103 = NEUGEBAUER & VAN HOESSEN 1959, 143 no. L475). The date of the response about the ship at Smyrna is July 14, 479 CE, time: 09.00 hours.

also Sagittarius I said they were bringing some feathered things with them. And because the moon was (in the house of Mars (Scorpio)) I said that they were bringing medical implements with them. And because the moon was in the house of Mars (Scorpio) and terms of Mercury, I said they were probably bringing books and papyrus with them and some bronze objects because of Scorpio. Having noted that Asclepius [= Ophiuchus] was rising with the moon (in Scorpio) I said that they were bringing medical implements with them.

§5. And (as to) when it ought to come, I said the moon would be in Aquarius (or Pisces; in Aquarius because of its (the moon's position on the) seventh day and because the Lot of Fortune (in Sagittarius) was moving towards Jupiter (in Aquarius); in Pisces because of its motion towards its own house Ruler. And they arrived on the eighth day (the moon being) in Aquarius) and being asked they spoke about the delay and said that there was an upheaval at sea, and, as the sea parted, the (handle of the) steering-oar, [αὐχὴν] struck a rock and was broken and they were greatly driven by the storm. Having reached a harbour, they transferred the cargo to another ship on which they came, bringing, indeed, ostrich feathers and plain papyrus, because Mercury was retrograde, and cooking implements, because of Scorpio, and a shipload of medical supplies, because of Asclepius and Hygieia.

This retrospective account raises a number of points about the methods and self-image of a katararchic astrologer, which in turn have implications for the relation between client and expert.<sup>86</sup> Given the uncertainty attending all katararchic prognosis, it is imperative for the practitioner to demonstrate his authority throughout. He therefore begins by drawing up a list of basic or 'anagraphic' data in conformity with the late-antique rules governing literary horoscopes. These required the year, the month in a local or regional calendar, the day of the week, the hour, the 'planets' in the order Sun, Moon, Saturn, Mars, Jupiter, Venus and Mercury,<sup>87</sup> followed by **Hor.** and **MC**,<sup>88</sup> the ascending lunar node, the conjunction or opposition and the Lot of Fortune (see Fig. 10). Generally speaking, papyrus horoscopes contain less information of this kind (they never mention the ascending lunar node, for example, and rarely the Lot of Fortune) and they organise the information differently.<sup>89</sup> In what Neugebauer and van Hoesen call 'literary horoscopes', however, the amount of information tends to increase as time goes on.<sup>90</sup> Yet some of this basic data is often, as here, redundant: the degrees

86 Such an explanatory text bears some indirect relation to so-called de-luxe or elaborated horoscopes, which demonstrate how much technical information a practitioner could assemble if paid enough. For the documentary examples from Oxyrhynchus, see *P.Oxy* 4276–85 = ALEXANDER 1999, 282–90, cf. 4245 (258f.); others: BACCANI 1992, 46. Yet, as one can see plainly from the most elaborate of all, P.Lond. 130 = NEUGEBAUER & VAN HOESSEN 1959, 21–28 no.81, this wealth of information only concerns the 'anagraphic' section.

87 This horoscope is one of only two at this period where Mars is out of place, of only four where the same is true of Jupiter.

88 The text seems to betray some uncertainty about the **MC**: in the anagraphic information, it is stated to be at Taurus 26°. But, as one can see from Fig. 10, Gemini ought already to be at **MC**, and in §3.1.4 Venus in Gemini is indeed said to be at **MC**. This suggests some internal revision of the piece, which one might anyway suspect. NEUGEBAUER & VAN HOESSEN 1959, 145f. do not comment, and indeed calculate Taurus 26° as correct for Byzantium. The difference is of course only a few degrees.

89 Cf. BACCANI 1992, 39f.

90 There are more than 120 cases of literary horoscopes in which **Hor** is considered to belong to the anagraphic information. Only four of the 120 horoscopes in Vettius Valens (II<sup>a</sup>) add **MC**, but virtually all late-antique examples do so. The proportion of references to the Lot of Fortune increases from one third in Vettius Valens to one half in late-antique examples. The

within the signs, for example, which could simply be read off the planetary tables, and the lunar node, though assuring a nice exactitude, play no role in the answer itself.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, the katararchic system based on the kentra has virtually disappeared, only **Hor.** and **MC** surviving, and even then they play a part only in the initial analysis (§3).

In order to construct his justificatory narrative, the expert adduces as much 'collateral' material as he can squeeze out of the basic horoscope by making extensive use of the schemes and links offered by the hand-books, which he does with great panache – another aspect of his demonstration of authority.<sup>92</sup> He thus takes the chronocrators of the day and the (equinoctial) hour *on which he was consulted*, without bothering about whether this date had anything to do with the events in question – the date of the interrogation was taken as sufficient. These happen both to be maleficent signs (Saturn and Mars). Their negative effect is increased considerably by the fact that the same signs are together at **Hor**. This alone would be bad news, but our practitioner reinforces the point by noting that the moon, though still in Scorpio, is 'approaching' Saturn – another negative. Now none of this has anything directly to do with shipping – constellations such as Altar/Bōmos/Ara, which had, are not mentioned here.<sup>93</sup> Implicit contextual knowledge must therefore be adduced: ships often get wrecked, and that is a very common reason for them failing to reach their destination. Storms are the commonest reason for ships to be wrecked. The combination of negative forces might well have induced the astrologer to say, 'I'm sorry, it's sunk'. But that would not be much of a narrative. At this point, though, the kentra-system can be brought momentarily to bear: Venus, a beneficent planet, is in Gemini, a masculine bicorporal sign, at **MC** – conflict creates narrative. All the same, this is a mere straw in the wind, and needs support; but all our expert can find is a (very tenuous) link to beneficent Jupiter in a watery sign (Aquarius) via the moon in aspect (although Scorpio is generally a negative/harmful sign). I think it would be fair to say that these beneficent features do not count for much, and that the maleficents should by rights have won out. But who would be satisfied with that? Only the fish.

The narrative continues into §4, where a great deal more more extraneous information is brought in. A circuitous argument – the Lot of Fortune is in Sagittarius (admittedly in its penultimate degree, usually a sign of fading influence) which happens to rise at the same time as (i.e. is the *paranatellôn* of) the constellation Argo – allows our expert to bring in a constellation that is at any

ascending node and the preceding conjunction or opposition are also characteristic of the late period. See NEUGEBAUER & VAN HOESSEN 1959, 164f.

91 With the one exception of the moon at Scorpio 16° being in the term of Mercury (see below).

92 ALEXANDER 1999 10f. gives a list of the most important, all of which we must suppose were stored, with many of their ramifications, in the memory of any competent practitioner.

93 Saturn however might be considered a 'wet' sign: BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ 1898, 96. Ptolemy, *Apotel.* 4.8.5 (p.331f. Hübner) sets out the conditions under which Saturn and Mars may cause shipwrecks – but none of his conditions here obtain.

rate directly connected to shipping.<sup>94</sup> Now Ptolemy says that the influence of the bright stars in Argo is like that of Saturn and Jupiter, which means it could be negative or positive;<sup>95</sup> but our practitioner ignores Saturn by claiming that Jupiter, the diurnal Ruler of Sagittarius, is also that of Argo. But so what? – we already knew the *katarchê* is about a missing ship. Emphasising Jupiter's link to the constellation would amount to the claim that all ships are equally protected. He then overdetermines the notion of bicorporality by finding five cases, again by dint of tenuous arguments, and uses metonymy to read 'bicorporality' as signifying 'two ships'. What could that mean? Well, the crew must have trans-shipped from one to the other. The point of the elaborate over-determination – in other cases, we shall see, he needs no such elaborate evidence to draw a rather spectacular conclusion – is to render the idea of changing ships inescapable. Yet in itself bicorporality could be evoked in many different directions. The over-determination conceals what is in fact a mere guess (assuming we take any of the account to be 'true').

The narrative then turns to the cargo. So far Virgo (*Hor.*) has only served as a case of bicorporality. Now it becomes interesting as one of the signs connected to winged creatures with feathers – Ptolemy mentions Virgo, Sagittarius, Cygnus, Aquila in this connection: although only two of these constellations 'are' birds, Virgo is represented with wings, and Sagittarius' arrow-shaft has feathers.<sup>96</sup> But Virgo in connection with Mars and Saturn might have evoked a much more sinister set of associations, with prisons and torture, deformity and delusions.<sup>97</sup> As for books and papyrus, if the moon was at Scorpio 16°, it was in the 'terms' (ὅρια) of Mercury, i.e. between Scorpio 12° and 19° according to the Egyptian system; and Mercury causes people to be scribes, business-men, and "in general, those who perform their functions by means of documents (ἀπὸ γραμμάτων)" – such people need papyrus and codices.<sup>98</sup> Mars alone would be associated with iron-working and the use of fire; but in association with Mercury with the making of sculptures and the modelling of religious and human figur(in)es, i.e. fine metal-work, though I can find no associations specifically with bronze.<sup>99</sup> These two planets together are also associated with medicine and surgery; but our expert prefers to demonstrate his erudition, and his use of the *ephemerides*, by appealing

94 Apart from being itself (half a) ship, those born at its rising become sea-captains: Manil., *Astr.* 5,32–56; Firm. Mat., *Math.* 8,27,12.

95 Ptolemy, *Apotel.* 1,9,23 (p.41 Hübner).

96 *ibid.* 2,8,8 (p.132 Hübner). Ptolemy is here talking of the influence of these constellations on birds, mainly for the table, but also on fish. The ship might therefore have been carrying chickens or ducks.

97 e.g. Vett. Val., *Anth.* 1,3,29f. (p.15 Pingree).

98 For the Egyptian system of Terms, see BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ 1898, 207; ALEXANDER 1999, 1: 351 Appdx. L no.1.

99 Mercury: Ptolemy, *Apotel.* 4,4,3 (p.293 Hübner). Nor can I find associations between Scorpio and bronze (cooking) implements, which our expert repeats in §5.

to the heliacal rising of the constellation Ophiuchus, another *paranatellôn* of Scorpio, associated since Eratosthenes with the catasterism of Asklepios.<sup>100</sup>

Even from such a limited commentary it is clear that no *katarchê* had to take the form it did: as in the case of oneiromancy, all such accounts, though of course motivated, were heavily under-determined. On the one hand, as I have pointed out above in relation to Bourdieu's notion of *champ*, the astrologer himself could not stand outside his practice in the way the historian must.<sup>101</sup> On the other, the sheer number of schemes and associations developed in the 'Hellenistic vulgate' to link the signs of the zodiac with the planets, the multiple connotations and associations of the luminaries, the other planets, the zodiacal signs and the *paranatellonta*, the opportunities for extensive metaphoric/metonymic leaps from the anagraphic information, all of these gave the practitioner great freedom in the process of constructing the narrative coherence thought desirable and/or attainable. The process of framing the account so that the events proceed as 'naturally' as possible from the astrological information adduced is also quite unmistakable,<sup>102</sup> as is the note of triumph at the end when the ship turns out indeed to be carrying ostrich feathers, papyrus and medical supplies.<sup>103</sup> These are the points at which authority is most palpably asserted.

There can thus be little doubt that the initial prognostic statement would have differed quite considerably both in detail and indeed in its emphases from what we have in ms. Laur. box 28, cod. 23 fol. 112<sup>v</sup> §59 = CCAG I (1898) p.103f. On the other hand, the text provides ample evidence not merely of the degree of specialist knowledge and narrative fluency required of a competent *katarchic astrologer* but also of the difficulty of knowing how much of the raw material available to a quick mind ought to count as relevant and why. For this reason, I suppose that there must always have been a negotiation between practitioner and principal over the preferred narrative(s) to be agreed upon. Both must therefore be considered as 'intentional subjects' in the sense used by the American pragmatists in the early twentieth century, each side working towards a scenario that is in some sense agreed or common.<sup>104</sup> In that case, we may assume that beneath the surface of such negotiations regarding decisions to act or not to act there was always a conflict, open or implicit, between client and practitioner over the details of the narrative finally offered, which in turn played a significant role in the hypothetical

100 Eratosthenes, *epit.* 6; Hyginus, *Astr.* 2,14 etc., set out in ROBERT (1878) 68–71; cf. LE BOEUFFLE 1977, 198. The only text that also mentions Hygieia, invoked in §5, is the late-antique Latin *Hermetica* p.65,18 Gundel: *Ophiuchus et Aesculapius et Sanitas* ...

101 In *Méditations pascaliennes*, Bourdieu develops the notion of *illusio* for the practitioner's total investment ("investissement primordial") in a given field of action, a commitment that provides a sense of control (BOURDIEU 2003, 139–141, 196f., cf. 129).

102 On the significance of framing in conceptualising problems, see e.g. KAHNEMAN 2011, 363–374.

103 I take it that these items must have been what the principal was expecting. The ostrich feathers seem to be an early example of the trade from Alexandria later conducted by Jewish merchants, cf. STEIN 2008, ch. 2.

104 Cf. WHYTE 2005, 249f.

intra-familial discussions. In these discussions, this narrative alone represented the discourse of the champ and its world of assumptions and inferences. Within the family, the crucial site of decision, no one operated out of the corner marked *illusio*.

### 7. The struggle for 'interpretative dominance'

Alongside the scheme based on the four *kentra*, there were other systems of diagnosis available to practitioners. Since we have only the extracts devoted to specific topics preserved in the *CCAG*, it is difficult to tell how they were integrated into, or, more generally, related to, the *kentra*-method. What survives is the type of text preserved in ms. Laur. box 28, cod. 23 under such names as Erasistratus, Timaeus and Serapion, all of which happen to concern either theft or the related topic of runaway slaves.<sup>105</sup> It may be that these are the remnants of simpler methods of katarctic divination, based mainly on the signs occupied at the critical moment by the moon and the rising of specific planets, but, if so, efforts were clearly made to integrate such methods into the *kentra*-system, even if their precise relation is not always clear.

The following extract from the text on thefts by Erasistratus illustrates this process of adaptation:<sup>106</sup>

(7.) You must also take the risings (of the planets) and ages into account:

Morning rising means (the thieves are) children; (rising) within 15° of the Sun means old age; the first station and evening rise, middle age; the second station and setting, the stage of life after middle age.

So bringing together everything to do with risings – you will discover the precise condition and age (of the thief) thus:

If the morning rising of Saturn happens to be in the *locus* of the thief [i.e.  $\Delta = VII$ ], (it means) they are neither boys or old men but in the prime of life

If the evening rising of Mercury (happens to be in the *locus* of the thief [i.e.  $\Delta$ ], it means) they are young men or boys

(If the) evening rising of Venus (happens to be in the *locus* of the thief [i.e.  $\Delta$ ], it means) they are girls

(If) Mercury is (observed by) the setting <of the Sun>, (it means) they are middle-aged <men>

(If) Venus is (observed by) the setting <of the Sun>, (it means) they are middle-aged women

(If) the eastern (planets) are setting, they indicate (the thieves are) young men

(If) the eastern (planets) are at the heliacal setting, say the thieves, whether male or female, are elderly

(8.) Losses mainly occur when the Moon or Mercury are maleficent, so:

If the maleficent planets at rising are in aspect to the Moon, but the beneficent ones are setting, the lost object will not be found

Likewise, if the beneficent planets and Mercury at rising are in aspect to the Moon, but the maleficent ones are setting, the lost object will be found

105 In the extract cited above: fol. 210<sup>v</sup>: 'thief-finder of Erasistratos'; fol. 213<sup>v</sup>: 'method of Timaios relating to runaway slaves'; fol. 215<sup>v</sup>: 'katarchai by Serapion'; fol. 226<sup>v</sup>: 'Serapion's method of locating a run-away slave'.

106 Title: *περί ἀπωλείας πράγματος κατὰ Ἐρασίστρατον*: εὑρεῖν τὸν κλέπτοντα καὶ τὸ ἀπολλυμένον καὶ ποῦ κεῖται, ap. *CCAG* I 1898, 96f. I am grateful to R.L. Beck (Toronto) for help with tricky passages, here and in the next extract, though even so I cannot claim to have understood the meaning at every point.

If both luminaries are above the horizon and in their proper positions, (they indicate) discovery

If Saturn aspects (the sign at) *Hor.* and the Moon, say that the theft has been accomplished by craft and secrecy

If Jupiter aspects (the sign at) *Hor.* and the Moon, say that somebody apparently trustworthy, a free person, has concealed (the object) and that the theft has been effected through the assumption that they were free

If Mars aspects (the sign at) *Hor.* and the Moon, (say that the theft has been effected by) digging through a wall and (using) a false key or breaking open doors or bending the key or use of violence

If Venus aspects (the sign at) *Hor.* and the Moon, (say that the theft has been effected because) of a girl/prostitute or because of a love affair with a woman

If Mercury aspects (the sign at) *Hor.* and the Moon, (say that the theft is due) entirely to wickedness or villainy

(9.) So as to be able to declare where the object was taken from, proceed as follows:

Let (the sign at) *Hor.* be the starting-point, the Moon indicates the place the object was stolen from

If the Moon is (in the sign at) *Hor.*, the object lost was lying openly visible

If instead the Sun aspects the Moon, where the *MC* is close, it signifies the (object) was hanging up

If Mars aspects the Moon, (it means that) the object has been lost from a locked place

If the Moon is setting, (it means that) the object was kept in an elevated place

If (the Moon is) at *IMC*, (it means that the object was kept) in an underground cellar

If (the Moon) is setting, and aspects the *locus* of the thief (i.e.  $\Delta = VII$ ), say that the thief has been betrayed.

The use of the simple conditional (protasis) + apodosis in the indicative is characteristic of instructional texts such as Babylonian or Etruscan collections of the meanings of meteorological signs connected with thunder or lightning, or the Babylonian texts on bowl-divination.<sup>107</sup> Instructions such as this, directed exclusively to the practitioner, might be taken to indicate that principals expected the practitioner provide them with astonishingly precise information about past events and/or predictions about future ones. This would fit with a traditional trope about the marvellous abilities of μάγοι and μάντιες to peer through the veil. A better explanation however is that such precision should rather be seen from the supply side as a means of stocking up the practitioner's arsenal in his negotiation with principals over the preferred narrative.

The argument looks like this. Viewed as a list, these significations acquire a certain coherence – one can usually glimpse to metaphoric or metonymic logic, e.g. (in §9) taking the moon as your indicator, you can say, if the moon is at the eastern horizon, i.e. visible, the stolen object was likewise visible; if the moon is at *IMC*, the object was likewise underground, i.e. in a cellar. Linking the moon to other planets provides further precision. Such inferences are individually under-determined (i.e. arbitrary); they have coherence only as part of a set. But the principal or enquirer is not granted access to the set, and is only allowed to know the individual statement in the past, present or future indicative: "the object was taken from a locked cupboard", "the lost object will not be found". Although the *kentron*-system permitted a quite complex sub-division of events under different aspects, it did require a great deal of work, as in the case of the Smyrna enquiry, to

107 Etruscan: TURFA 2006 – Greek text and Eng. tr. only; EADEM 2012; bowl-divination: PETTINATO 1966.

convert the anagraphic information into a meaning narrative. Texts such as Erasistratus' helped out here by providing ready-made, fixed equivalents analogous to those offered by dice-oracles, with the exception that these challenged the principal directly to exercise his or her interpretative abilities. The practitioner was thus able to combine off-the-peg assertions about the significance of a particular set of astronomical phenomena with personal interpretations – that is, he could allow the former to guide him in the choice between the large numbers of alternatives that the more general hand-books offered him.

We can understand the practitioner's need for coherent and plausible narratives in terms of Harrison White's insistence on the role of stories in establishing 'control régimes'.<sup>108</sup> On this view, stories are always in (implicit) contention with other possible stories. Such stories, which are a fundamental mode of social competition, mobilise implicit sets of values, which are the true source of the tensions between the participant actors. The more coherent the story, and the more precise the details it contains, the greater the practitioner's chance of persuading the principal to adopt it as his preferred narrative. Very precise details are thus a major persuasive resource in the establishment of a power régime based on a particular set of values. "Story-lines survive in a matrix of contending control projects".<sup>109</sup>

The availability of ready-made lists of significances to combine with other, more personal, conclusions was thus more or less indispensable to katararchic astrologers in negotiations with principals over plausible stories. They provided speed with specificity. Nevertheless there were implicit constraints upon the play of the imagination here. Every competent practitioner would have been in a position to judge for himself the plausibility of, say Erasistratus' equivalents, on the basis of his own extreme familiarity with the specific properties ascribed to individual planets and zodiacal signs. At the same time, one may wonder whether the major stimulus to these constructions was not an imaginative grasp of the subjective plight of the principal, the content of his worries, and his desire for knowledge sufficient to authorise action – of almost any sort. A good example is Timaeus on runaway slaves.<sup>110</sup>

If Jupiter is in conjunction with the Moon, (or) if it is (in the) ascendant [*Hor.*] (sign), (or) if it is in (the sign at) MC, the runaway has carried off silver-plate and chased-silver vessels and will succeed in getting away

If Jupiter is in conjunction with the Sun, (the runaway) has taken much more

If Venus and the Sun are in the same sign, (the thief) has taken images of the saints, and articles of gold, silver and bronze

108 WHITE 2008, 27–31, 38.

109 WHITE 2008, 188.

110 Timaeus, *περὶ δραπέτων καὶ κλεπτῶν*, ap. CCAG I 1898, 97–99, likewise from cod. Laur. 28, 33 fol. 102 (see also n.51 above). The reference to statues of saints, and specific linguistic (esp. lexical) features, suggest that this is a 'living' text, last revised at a relatively late date. On the plight of runaway slaves, see KUDLIEN 1988. Despite his title, MONTERO HERRERO 1995 does not even mention katararchic astrology, no doubt on the grounds that astrology does not fall under his conception of 'adivinación'.

If Jupiter and Mercury aspect one another from the right, he has escaped with quite a lot of stuff but will be quickly caught

If the Sun and Mercury aspect one another from the right, he will be taken within 3 and 11 days, on the information of witnesses

If Saturn is in the MC sign, or the IMC or Δ, the thief will be apprehended red-handed – they will be in physically bad shape and be betrayed by women

If Venus aspects the Moon from the left, or through the MC, a free woman in the know will betray him

If Mars is in the same positions, it will have the same effect as Saturn; the thief will have received numerous scars and wounds on the face and legs

If a quadruped sign is at *Hor.*, or MC, or has the Moon at a distance from the five planets, (the thief) will be taken on the road

If it aspects from the right, he will (be taken by) bribing a neighbour or one of his fellows

If Venus, Jupiter or the Sun (aspect from the right), a relative – son or father or brother – will connive with him and he will escape

If Jupiter is in Ares, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo Virgo, Scorpius <or> Pisces, the fugitive will be found in a temple area; and especially if Venus aspects from the right, they will be overpowered and handed over in such an area

If Saturn is in conjunction with the Moon, he will be discovered in a marshy area.

## 8. Conclusion

Modern histories of western astrology present themselves as cultural and intellectual histories, of religious debate, concepts of rationality, competing institutions, forms of distinction.<sup>111</sup> Such concerns have helped (somewhat) to remove astrology from its reputation as a haunt for Fachidioten. My concern here is somewhat different, namely to suggest the potential significance of katararchic astrology both in developing models for types of individualisation in the context of ancient religious practices and in raising the issue of managing uncertainty in the context of lived ancient religion.

It is obvious that the ancient world had no concept of risk as understood in the idea of a risk-society, utility theory, or even in the more nuanced form of prospect theory.<sup>112</sup> Granted that appreciation of its types and sub-types is a cultural variable,<sup>113</sup> however, uncertainty is a permanent human condition, since we are all necessarily oriented towards the future in many different ways and have to use such means as are available to manage it. No less than the Enlightenment, the ancient world could produce devastating critiques of astrology, both in its premises and its execution.<sup>114</sup> As I have said, Ptolemy evidently considered katararchic astrology still less defensible than genethliacal. On the other hand, the individual facing the need to make choices regarding specific alternatives in situations of marked uncertainty – the uncertainty-marking being itself part of the frame – saw in katararchic astrology not a set of intellectual propositions but precisely one possible means of managing uncertainty, a means that combined a high-prestige cosmological model with the production of negotiable project-nar-

111 E.g. CAREY 1992; VON STUCKRAD 2003; cf. GORDON 2013.

112 For prospect theory and criticism of the limitations of utility theory, see KAHNEMAN 2011.

Though gambling was widespread among ancient élites, they could do nothing with risk.

113 DOUGLAS & WILDAVSKY 1983, 29–48.

114 On the two sides of the debate, see LONG 1982; on Sextus Empiricus: SPINELLI 2002.

ratives. To my mind, it did not matter that many – most, all even – such prognoses were ‘objectively’ disconfirmed. The point lay in the production of usable stories.

Appendix 1: The topics of katarthic astrology according to Hephaestio of Thebes.<sup>115</sup>

An asterisk denotes a section of major importance (i.e. at least two Teubner pages); two denote extreme fascination.

1. III.7: On laying foundations, building a house
2. III.8: (When to chance) swearing a (false) oath
3. III.9: On marrying\*
4. III.10: Sexual intercourse
5. III.11: Separation of married couple (i.e. the wife leaves her husband's house)
6. III.12: Late abortion of the foetus
7. III.13: Induced miscarriage/abortion
8. III.14: Agricultural decisions
9. III.15: Digging wells and cisterns
10. III.16: Purchases of different kinds\*
11. III.17: Building a ship
12. III.18: Buying horses
13. III.19: Purchasing livestock
14. III.20: Coming into the presence of a powerful official or prince
15. III.21: Manumissions
16. III.22: Giving games and spectacles
17. III.23: Propitious occasions and ~ dreams
18. III.24: Ancient Egyptian method to work out when dreams are truthful using the lunar cycle
19. III.25: Asking for grace and favour
20. III.26: Making any kind of choice or agreement
21. III.27: Writing letters, and judging the veracity of their contents
22. III.28: Making loans
23. III.29: Checking the creditworthiness of someone who wants you to stand surety
24. III.30: Going on a long journey\*
25. III.31: The patient\*

<sup>115</sup> Excluding the technical discussion relating to techniques, the zodiacal signs, and the malign effects of the moon. My titles are often not direct translations of the ms. titles but seek to convey the content (e.g. the ms. title of no. 2 is πῶς δεῖ ὀρκίζειν, whereas the actual content stresses the periods when one can swear a false oath with impunity. The title of no. 6 is περὶ διαφορᾶς κυομένου, On ‘delay’ of the foetus, but I think διαφορὰ here must have a different sense, not entered in LSJ but deducible from διαφάω 4, ‘tear in pieces’, i.e. a surgical intervention to remove a well-grown foetus from the womb, cf. Dorotheus A5,18 p.276 Pingree: “A pregnant woman, if her child will die in her belly”).

26. III.32: Surgical interventions
  27. III.33: Illnesses (simply cites 7¼ lines of Dorotheus [5,37,2–8, p.418f. Pingree])
  28. III.34: Purges
  29. III.35: On first using new possessions, such as clothes
  30. III.36: Giving a banquet
  31. III.37: Court-cases, winning and losing
  32. III.38: Another method\*
  33. III.39: Exile; exposure of infants
  34. III.40: Imprisonment\*
  35. III.41: Course of life; property
  36. III.42: Lost property and its recovery\*
  37. III.43: Identifying what has been lost\*
  38. III.44: Identifying the thief\*
  39. III.45: Indentikit of the thief\*
  40. III.46: How was the object lost?
  41. III.47: Runaway slaves\*\*
- Appendix (i.e. omitted by Hephaestio from Bk III but known to have been discussed by Dorotheus):
42. Obstetric matters
  43. Wills\*
  44. Schooling/learning

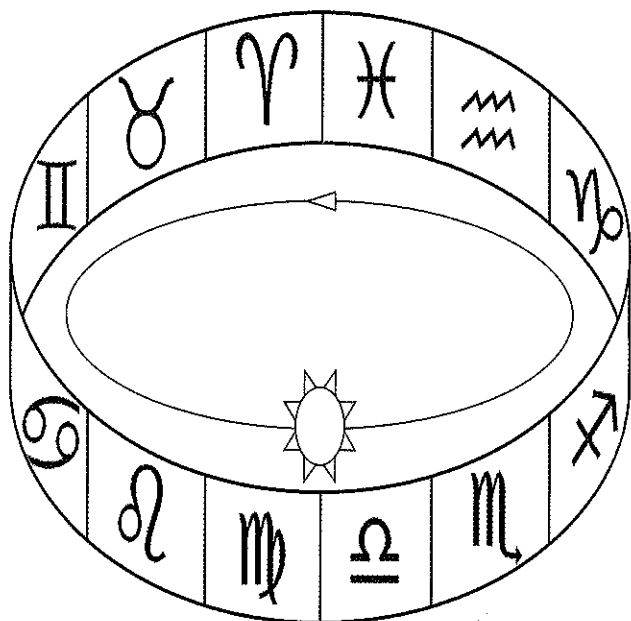


Fig. 1: Schematic representation of the ecliptic (the sun's course 'through' the twelve signs of the zodiac).

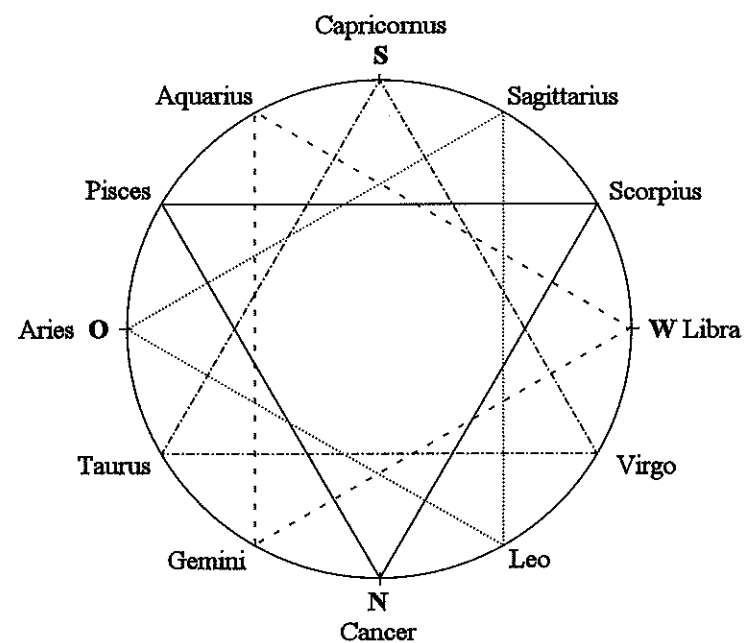


Fig. 2: Interrelations between the signs of the zodiac, here the 'aspecting' signs of the *trigona*.

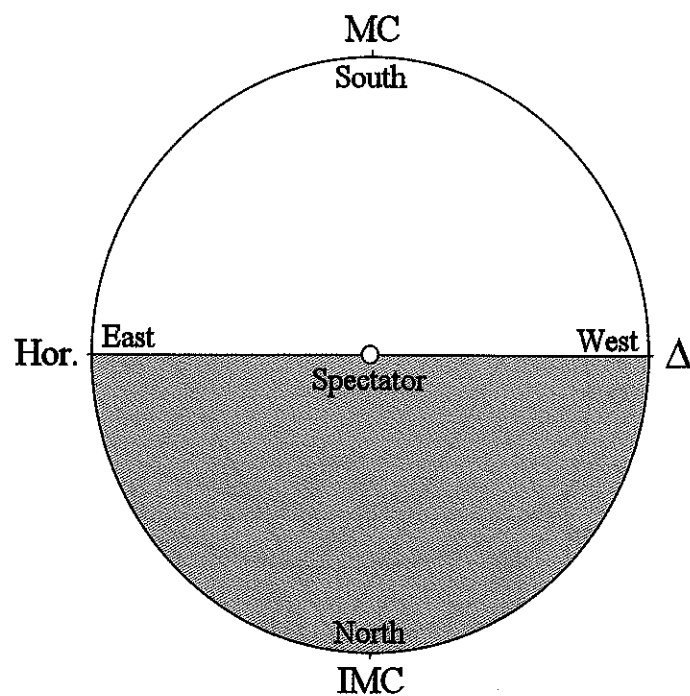


Fig. 3: The system of *kentra*, marking the position of the hypothetical viewer in the centre, facing south.

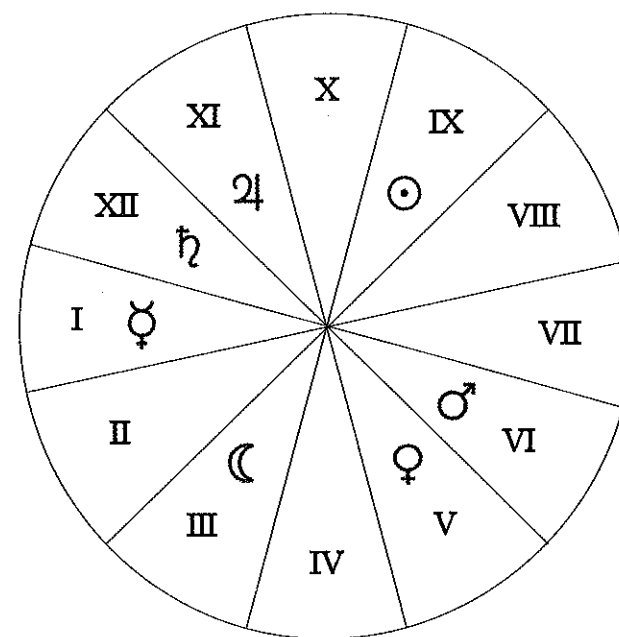


Fig. 4: The scheme of the *dodekatropos* overlying the *kentra*. The seven 'planets' are shown in the locations where they were deemed to have their greatest effects.

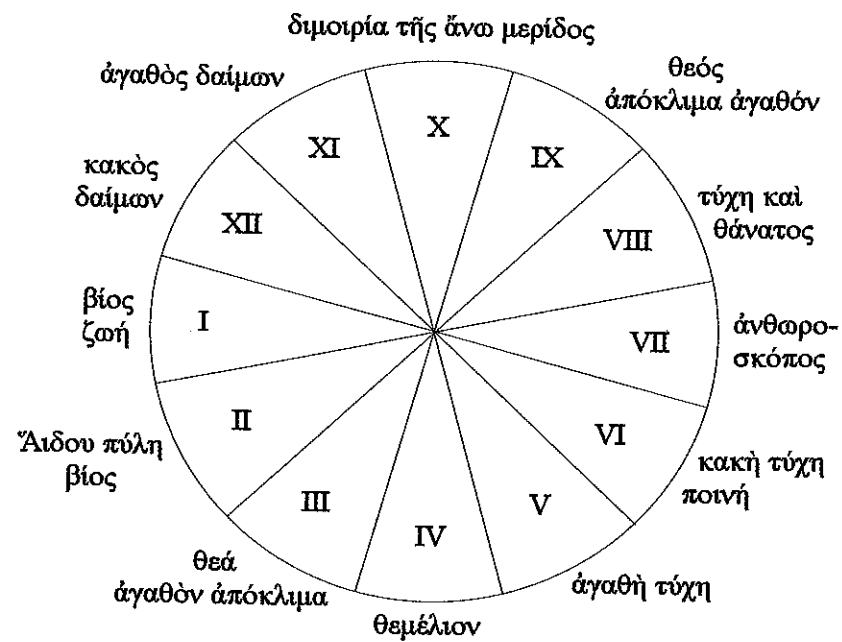


Fig. 5: The Greek names of the twelve *loci* of the *dodekatropos*.

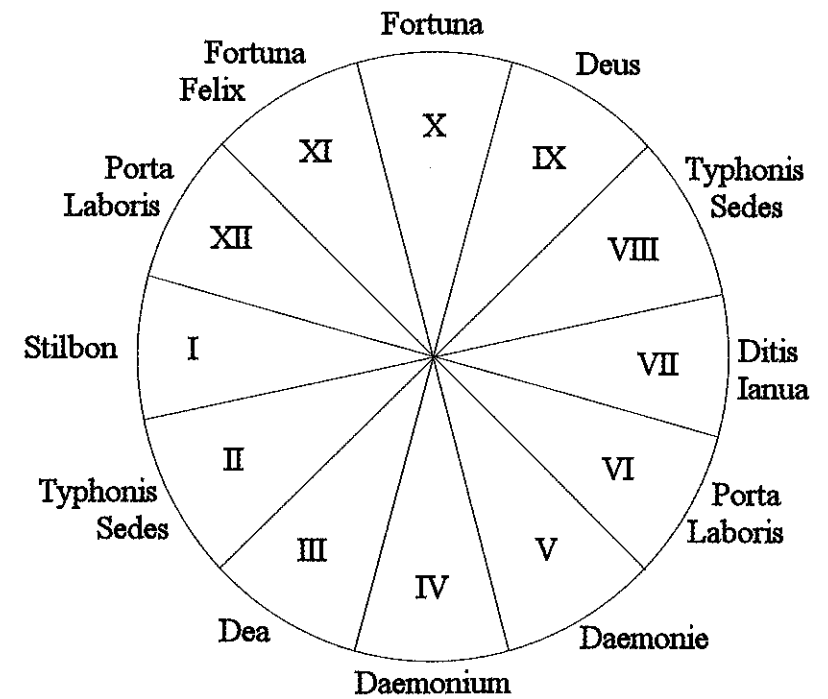


Fig. 6: The Latin names of the twelve *loci* of the *dodekatropos*.

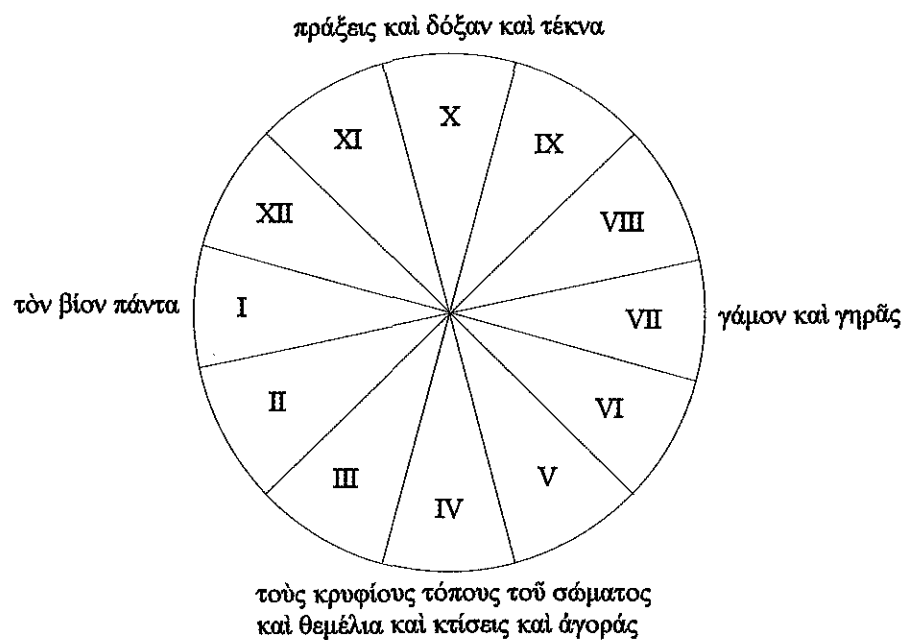


Fig. 7: Dorotheus' scheme of human life.

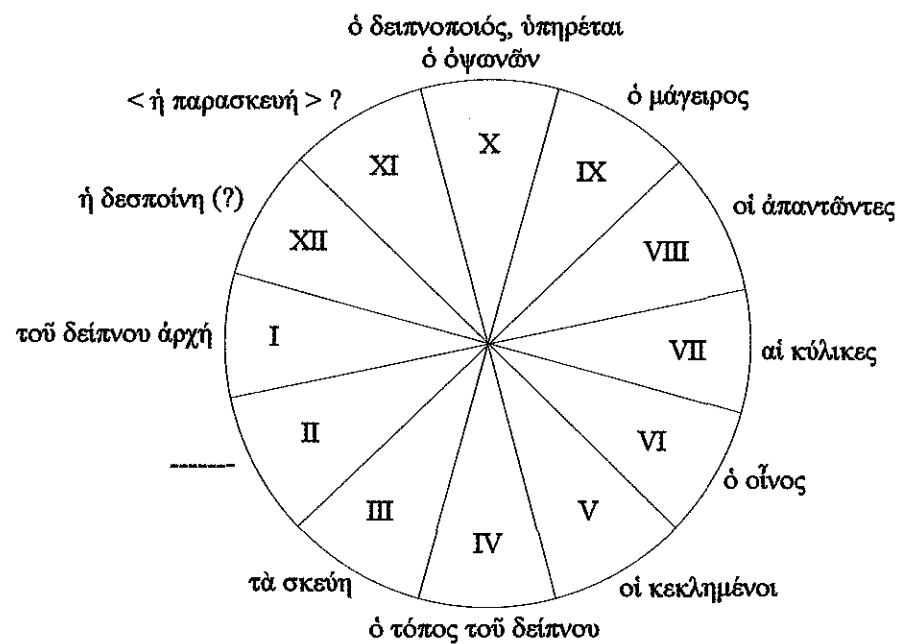


Fig. 8: Hephaestio's scheme for a banquet.

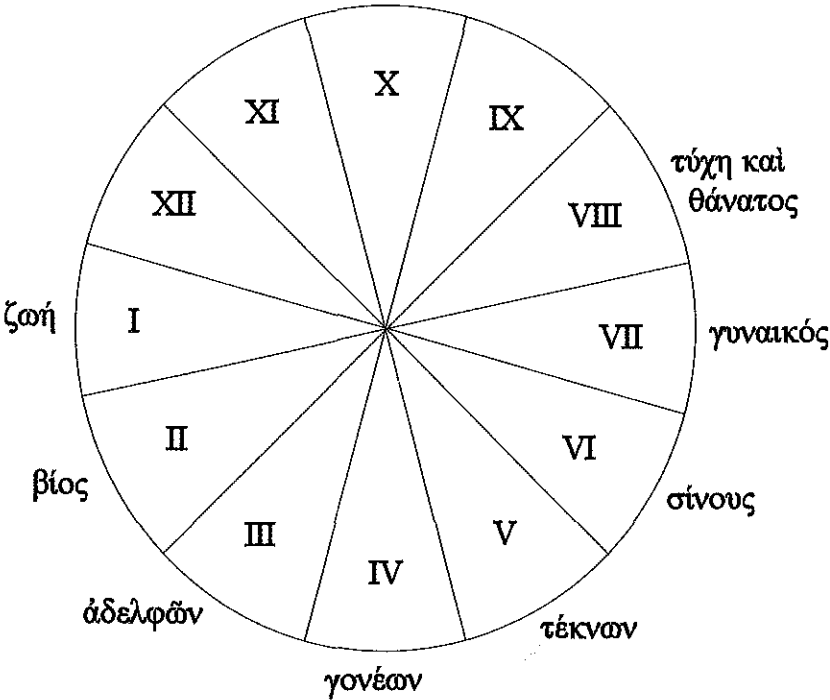


Fig. 9: Thrasyllus' version of the *oktatropos* for human life.

|                              |                                      |                         |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Cancer<br>Sun                | Gemini<br>Venus                      | Taurus<br>MC            |
| Leo<br>Mercury               |                                      | Aries<br>Ascending Node |
| Virgo<br>Hor<br>Saturn, Mars |                                      | Pisces Δ                |
| Libra                        | Sagittarius<br>Lot of Fortune<br>IMC | Aquarius<br>Jupiter     |
| Scorpio<br>Moon              |                                      | Capricorn               |

Fig. 10: Chart of some of the 'anagraphic' information recorded for the query about the 'ship at Smyrna' (479 CE).

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