Lecture 2

• Introduction to Modern Astrology continued
• Then ancient astrology: Babylonian and Greek horoscopes
• First recap from last week
• Zodiacal signs and planets
• Astrological vocabulary, grammar and rhetoric
Zodiacal Signs
Each Planet Represents A Person’s Different Parts

- Sun  [Personal: Mind, Body and Emotions]
- Moon
- Mercury
- Venus
- Mars
- Jupiter [Societal: School, Family, etc]
- Saturn
- Uranus [Deep psychological and/or spiritual]
- Neptune
- Pluto
Planets ‘rule’ Signs
[Astrological Dignities]

- Sun rules Leo
- Moon rules Cancer
- Mercury rules Gemini and Virgo
- Venus rules Taurus and Libra
- Mars rules Aries and Scorpio
- Jupiter rules Pisces and Sagittarius
- Saturn rules Aquarius and Capricorn
- Uranus co-rules Aquarius
- Neptune co-rules Pisces
- Pluto co-rules Scorpio
How to make an horoscope

• Easiest, with a computer!
• In the past, with reference works, including ephemerides and various tables
• [I’ll show pictures of some in due course]
• With or without an astrolabe
• [Ditto!]
• We’ll take the easy way out in this course
Practical Astrology:
Four Canonical Types

- Revolutions or General Astrology (including Great Conjunctions); as we will see in a moment.
- Nativities (natal astrology; birthcharts); as we will see soon after
- Interrogations
- Elections (including talismans)
- The borderland between astrology and magic
- Along with historical astrology and medical astrology
- We will explore most of these in this course
Crucial Factors for an Interpretation

- Planets in signs in houses
- Ascendant/Rising sign
- Midheaven
- The 12 houses
- Planetary aspects: the significant angular relationships between the planets
- Planetary dignities (including planetary rulerships or domiciles, exaltation, triplicity, etc)
Nativities—Birth Horoscopes

• Shall we explore nativities?
• Do I have any volunteers?
• Two fundamental moments in astrology:
  • [1] Erecting/constructing the horoscope
  • [2] Interpreting it
• In interpreting a nativity there are also two fundamental moments:
  • [1] The natal configuration
  • [2] Transits
• Examples (show how astro.com works)
Ancient Astrology

• Babylonian and Greek horoscopes today
• We’ll look at the much more colorful situation in Rome next Monday
Ancient Mesopotamia
Babylonian Astrology (Foundations)

• Writing (Cuneiform, ca. 3000 BCE)
• Mathematics (sexagesimal, base 60 system; degrees/hours, minutes, seconds as now)
• Our sources come from two diverse periods: [1] 1800-1600 BCE (Hammurabi), and [2] 300-0 BCE (Seleucid; Hellenistic); clay tablets
• Astronomy (observational and predictive)
• Astrology: From omen texts for the king
• To personal astrology (Nativity omens; “Babylonian horoscopes”)
• Foundations for Greek mathematical astronomy (Hipparchus, Ptolemy)
Ca. 500 BC

- Fundamental shifts in:
  - [1] Celestial divination from
  - Omens for king and country (celestial and terrestrial)
  - To: Individual predictions (nativity omens and “horoscopes”)
  - Institutional shift from Palace to Temple within the context of political changes
  - Ecliptic (sun’s path)/360° Zodiac
  - Sidereal (constellations) vs. Tropical (zodiacal signs); precession of the equinoxes
  - Based on recorded observations for 1500 years
  - So, mathematical/arithmetical but not geometrical, unlike in Greek astronomy
  - Mathematizing period relationships
  - Fundamental for Greek astronomy
  - Apex: Ptolemy’s *Almagest* (2\textsuperscript{nd} century CE)
The Babylonian World-View

• Their gods used the stars and planets as well as all other phenomena in nature, from weather, earthquakes, etc. to liver patterns to communicate about their actions in the world.

• Signs; the gods were the only causes (another fundamental theme).

• Omen catalogues

• Enuma Anu Enlil ca. 700 BC (p. 66)

• With many celestial omens (p. 68)

• If/then (with much interest in lunar eclipses)

• These mainly concerned the king and the country

• Examples of omens to illustrate the shift from king and country to individuals (nativity omens) (p. 118)
Very Different

• Than what we will find in 13th century Catholic Europe, as we will see in a few weeks
• With Thomas Aquinas’s account of how the one monotheistic God used the planets to control his providential governance of the world and of man
• Astrology’s cosmological and theological neutrality (as we will see)
• Geocentric/heliocentric
• Catholic/Protestant (complexity), Islamic/Jewish, Babylonian, Greek and Roman paganism
Babylonian Horoscopes

- Date range: 410 B.C.-69 B.C. (about 30)
- No temporal overlap with the extant Greek horoscopes, as we will see
- Oldest in 61 BC (a coronation horoscope)
- The data inscribed on the horoscopes
- That the term horoscope is somewhat of a misnomer
- From nativity omens to horoscopes
- Just data, no interpretations
- Examples (2, 9, 14)
Greek Horoscopes: A Taste

- Properly so-called because they actually have horoscopes, namely, rising signs or ascendants
- Two types:
  - [1] Documentary (mainly from papyrus)
    - 60 or so from 61 BC – 478 AD
  - [2] Literary, mainly from Vettius Valens’s *Anthologies*, who wrote ca. 150-70 AD; empirical; real horoscopes
- A contemporary of Ptolemy, whose *Tetrabiblos* we will discuss next week
- 130 or so before 190 AD
- 20 after AD 380, with the latest in 621 AD, but that was actually constructed in 775 AD; the last real one was for 516 AD
- Also mostly data with few interpretations
- Examples: Documentary: 3 BC, 81 AD, 320, 345, 478
- Literary: L71 BC (Balbillus, Nero’s astrologer), L76, L78, L412 (Proclus), L440, 474-5, 478-9, L621 (last)
Very Basic Bibliography

• ___, *The Heavenly Writing: Divination, Horoscopy, and Astronomy in Mesopotamian Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004
• And for a good basic introduction to modern astrology:
• *Parker’s Astrology* by Derek and Julia Parker in many editions.
Next Week

- Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos* for astrological theory and practice (and very minimally for its scientific foundations)
- And astrology in the Roman Empire, where it first really took hold in the West, in its social and political dimensions
- See you next Monday!