

The Planetary Joys and the Origins of the Significations of the Houses and Triplicities

[Chris Brennan](#)

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the existence of a previously unknown scheme underlying the foundations of Hellenistic astrology. I will demonstrate how this scheme ties together a number of early astrological concepts, ultimately appearing to act as the motivation for some of the significations of the houses, as well as the rationale for the assignment of the four elements to the signs of the zodiac.¹

The Joys

Astrological texts written in the Mediterranean region between the 1st century BCE and the 7th century CE commonly refer to a scheme for associating each of the seven classical planets with one of the twelve “houses” or “places” (*topoi*). The house that each planet was associated with was said to be the place where it “rejoiced” or had its “joys.” For the purpose of this article I will refer to these assignments as the system of planetary joys.

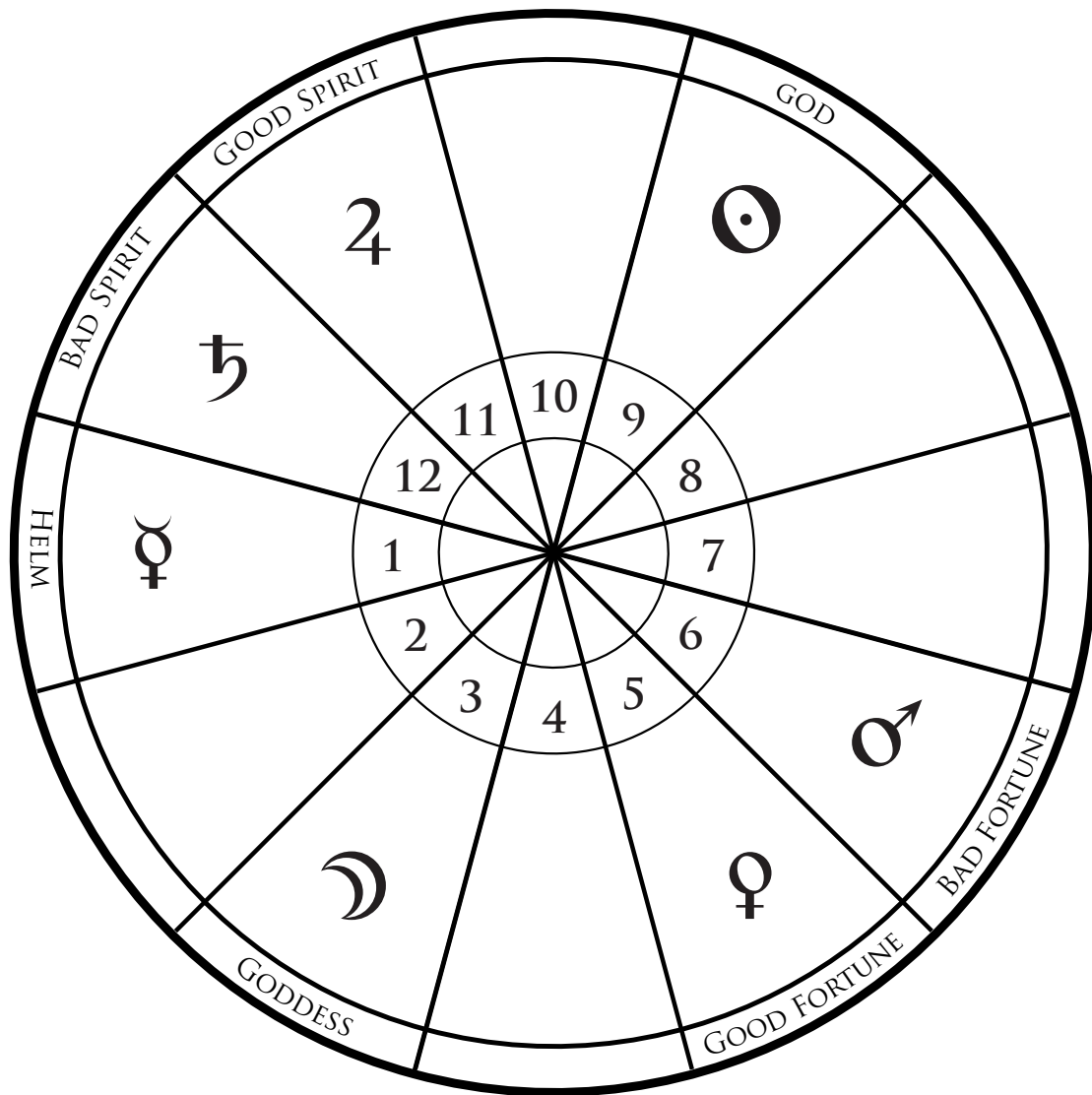
According to most authors,² the joys of the planets are as follows:

- The Sun has its joy in the 9th house.
- The Moon has its joy in the 3rd house.
- Jupiter has its joy in the 11th house.
- Venus has its joy in the 5th house.
- Mars has its joy in the 6th house.
- Saturn has its joy in the 12th house.
- Mercury has its joy in the 1st house.

¹ The discoveries presented in this paper were largely the result of a series of discussions between Chris Brennan and Benjamin Dykes that took place in April of 2012. The results of the discovery were first presented publicly in a lecture by Brennan titled *Hellenistic Astrology as the Study of Fate* at the United Astrology Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana on May 27, 2012. I would like to thank Charles Obert, Scott Silverman, Austin Coppock and Maria Mateus for the discussions we had after the initial discoveries. I would also like to recognize Robert Schmidt for his early suggestive comments about the triplicity lords and angular triads. *Katarche*: December 25, 2012, 2:38 PM, Denver, Colorado. (This article was originally published in the *International Society for Astrological Research Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 1, April 2013.)

² The primary sources for the joys are Paulus, *Introduction*, 24; Olympiodorus, *Commentary*, 23; Firmicus, *Mathesis*, 2, 15-19; Rhetorius, *Compendium*, 54. The only author who appears to follow a different scheme for the joys is Manilius, who will be discussed below.

DIAGRAM 1: THE JOYS OF THE PLANETS



The joys appear to have been the basis for a convention whereby names were given to some of the houses. Instead of referring to these houses by their number relative to the rising sign (e.g. “5th house”) they were instead sometimes referred to with a specific name.³ The common names for the houses associated with the joys in Hellenistic tradition are as follows:

- The 9th house is referred to as the “place of God” or simply “God” (*Theos*).
- The 3rd house is referred to as “Goddess” (*Thea*).
- The 11th house is called “Good Spirit” (*agathos daimōn*).
- The 5th house is called “Good Fortune” (*agathē tuchē*).
- The 6th house is called “Bad Fortune” (*kakē tuchē*).
- The 12th house is called “Bad Spirit” (*kakos daimōn*).
- The 1st house is called the “Helm” (*oiax*), as in the helm of a ship.

The remaining houses were also sometimes given names, although these are not directly related to the joys, since no planets rejoice in them:

- The 2nd house is referred to as the “Gate of Hades” (*Haidou pulē*).
- The 8th house is referred to as the “Idle” place (*argos*).
- The 10th house is referred to as the “Midheaven” (*mesouranēma*).
- The 7th house is referred to as the “setting” place (*dusis*).
- The 4th house is referred to as the “subterraneous” place (*hupogeion*).

The names for the 10th, 7th, and 4th houses are purely descriptive, in terms of the astronomical location of those three houses. However, the names for several of the other houses are not astronomical in nature, but instead they appear to be associated with the planet that is said to have its joy in each of those houses.

For example, the 9th house is said to be the house of God, and the 9th is the house where the Sun has his joy. Opposite to that is the 3rd house, which is called Goddess, and this is the house where the Moon has her joy. The two benefic planets, Venus and Jupiter, are associated with the two good houses, which are the house of Good Fortune and the house of Good Spirit, respectively. Conversely, the two malefic planets, Mars and Saturn, are associated with the two bad houses, which are the houses of “Bad Fortune” and “Bad Spirit,” respectively.

³ For the names of the houses see Firmicus, *Mathesis*, 2, 15-17; Paulus, *Introduction*, 24; Sextus, *Against the Professors*, V: 15-20; Valens, *Anthology*, 2, 16: 1.

This close association between the meaning of the names of certain houses and the astrological meaning of the planets that have their joys in the same places seems to imply a relationship between the two concepts. This connection can be confirmed by the 4th century astrologer Firmicus Maternus, who at one point in the introductory material of his *Mathesis* says that the 5th house “is called the Good Fortune, *because* it is the house of Venus.”⁴ Similarly, he says that the 6th is called Bad Fortune “...*because* it is the house of Mars.”⁵ Later in the same century the astrologer Paulus Alexandrinus called the 3rd the “house of the Moon,” the 5th “the house of Venus,” the 6th the “house of Mars,” and so on.⁶

Dating of the Joys

The connection between the joys and the names of the houses is important because it provides us with a crucial piece of information when trying to date the joys and determine how widespread their usage was in Hellenistic astrology.⁷ In order to do this we will assume that anytime the names of the houses are mentioned that the doctrine of the joys is implicitly referenced as well, since the two concepts appear to be intertwined.

The joys appear very early in what survives of the Hellenistic astrological tradition. The two earliest datable references are found in Thrasyllus and Manilius, two contemporaries who wrote their texts sometime around the first few decades of the 1st century CE.

Only a summary of Thrasyllus’ astrological treatise titled *Table (Pinax)* has survived into the present day.⁸ In the summary there is a section where Thrasyllus discusses the significations of the houses, and in it he refers to the 12th as “Bad Spirit,” the 6th as “Bad Fortune,” the 5th as “Good Fortune,” and the 11th as “Good Spirit” — these are precisely the rejoicing places of the malefics and benefics. When mentioning some of these house names, Thrasyllus cites another text attributed to Hermes Trismigistus. Since we know that Thrasyllus died in the year 36 CE, we must assume that the text he was drawing on that was ascribed to Hermes was written sometime earlier, probably in the 1st century BCE.⁹ Given the close connection between the names of the houses and joys, we must then assume that the doctrine of the planetary joys had already been introduced by sometime in the late 1st century BCE.

⁴ Firmicus, *Mathesis*, trans. Holden, 2, 21: 6. Emphasis added.

⁵ Firmicus, *Mathesis*, trans. Holden, 2, 21: 7. Emphasis added.

⁶ Paulus, *Introduction*, 24. Rhetorius makes similar statements in chapter 57 of his compendium.

⁷ For the purpose of this article “Hellenistic astrology” is defined as the type of astrology that originated in the Mediterranean sometime around the 1st century BCE, and then was practiced until approximately the 7th century CE.

⁸ For the summary of Thrasyllus’ *Table* see *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* (henceforth *CCAG*), Vol. 8, Part 3, ed. Petrus Boudreaux, Lamertin, Brussels, 1912, pp. 99-101.

⁹ For the dating of Thrasyllus see Pingree, *Yavanajataka*, Vol. 2, p. 444.

After Thrasyllus, nearly every Hellenistic astrologer whose work has survived mentioned the joys in some form or another, either by referring to them directly, or by referring to them indirectly by invoking the names of the houses associated with the joys.¹⁰

Manilius is the only ancient author who described an alternate scheme for the joys, where Venus rejoices in the 10th rather than the 5th, and Saturn in the 4th rather than the 12th.¹¹ Unfortunately, since Manilius' text is the only one which contains this alternate scheme, it is unclear whether his arrangement represents a genuine variant tradition, an error in the textual transmission, or an idiosyncratic addition of his own. Both the arguments for and against viewing Manilius' variant as legitimate have been made by different scholars in the past two decades.¹²

Basic Patterns in the Joys

Of the many patterns in the arrangement of the joys, there are two that stand out at first glance. The first is related to the Hellenistic doctrine of sect.

According to this doctrine, the planets are divided into two "factions" or "sects" (*haireisis*). There is a daytime or diurnal sect that is led by the Sun, and a nighttime or nocturnal sect that is led by the Moon. The classical planets are then divided evenly between the two sects, with each sect receiving a benefic and malefic. Jupiter and Saturn join the Sun as diurnal planets, while Venus and Mars join the Moon as nocturnal planets. Mercury is said to be neutral, capable of joining the diurnal sect when he is a morning star or the nocturnal sect when he is an evening star.¹³

One pattern that is immediately evident in the arrangement of the joys is that the three diurnal planets are grouped together in the upper hemisphere of the chart above the earth, while the nocturnal planets are grouped together in the bottom half of the chart below the earth. This appears to be tied into a separate sect-related doctrine where the diurnal planets are said to rejoice when they are above the earth by day and below earth by night, whereas conversely the nocturnal planets are said to rejoice when they

¹⁰ The chief sources for direct references to the joys are Paulus, *Introduction*, 24; Olympiodorus, *Commentary*, 23; Firmicus, *Mathesis*, 2, 15-19; Rhetorius, *Compendium*, 54. There are some scattered references to the joys in Valens, *Anthology*, 2, 5-16, and Dorotheus twice refers to the 3rd house as the place of the joy of the Moon in *Carmen*, 1, 5: 3 & 1, 10: 28. For indirect references to the joys via the names of the houses associated with them see Sextus, *Against the Professors*, V: 15-20, Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, 3, 11; 4, 6; 4, 7; Hephaistio, *Apotelesmatika*, 1, 12; *Michigan Papyrus*, Col. ix: 12-19.

¹¹ Manilius, *Astronomica*, 2: 918-938.

¹² Deborah Houlding argued in favor of viewing Manilius' variant as genuine in her 1998 book *The Houses: Temples of the Sky*, largely based on his antiquity as a source (p. 35ff). On the other hand, Robert Schmidt dismissed Manilius' treatment of the houses as "sketchy" and "aberrant" within the context of the rest of the Hellenistic tradition, and challenged Houlding's argument by citing Thrasyllus as being a more reliable source. See Schmidt, *Facets of Fate*, p. 126, fn. 11.

¹³ Cf. Porphyry, *Introduction*, 4.

are below the earth by day and above the earth by night.¹⁴ Mercury, which is capable of joining either the diurnal or nocturnal sect, has his joy in the 1st house, which is one of only two houses where a planet could be on either side of the horizon and still be in the same house (due to the use of whole sign houses in the Hellenistic tradition).¹⁵

In addition to this pattern related to sect, it is also notable that the luminaries, benefics, and Mercury all rejoice in one of the so-called “good houses” that are configured to the rising sign through one of the classical aspects (i.e. conjunction, sextile, square, trine, opposition), while the two malefics rejoice in two of the “bad houses” which are not configured to the rising sign.¹⁶

These patterns are somewhat straightforward because they are predicated on basic concepts, although recently I discovered a few additional patterns which connect the joys to numerous other concepts in Hellenistic astrology. These will be discussed below.

Mystery Surrounding the Elements and the Signs

For the past 20 years there has been something of a mystery surrounding how the four classical elements came to be assigned to the specific signs of the zodiac that they are associated with in the Medieval and Modern traditions of astrology. The standard scheme since late antiquity is as follows:

Aries, Leo, Sagittarius	Fire
Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn	Earth
Gemini, Libra, Aquarius	Air
Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces	Water

In their 1993 translation of Book I of Vettius Valens’ *Anthology*, Robert Schmidt and Robert Hand pointed out that Valens is the earliest Hellenistic author to mention these now-familiar associations between the four elements and the signs of the zodiac.¹⁷ For example, Valens says that Aries is fiery, Taurus is earthy, Gemini is airy, Cancer is watery, and so on. He does so in a way that makes it seem as if he is he was getting the associations from an earlier source, though, since Valens appears to take the associations for granted, as if they were common knowledge in his time.¹⁸ Schmidt points out that elsewhere in the *Anthology* Valens tends to let the reader know when he is innovating, which implies that it was not Valens himself who introduced this element-sign relationship.¹⁹

¹⁴ Valens, *Anthology*, 3, 5.

¹⁵ See Hand, *Signs as Houses (Places) in Ancient Astrology*.

¹⁶ Firmicus points this out within the context of the names of the houses in *Mathesis*, 2, 18-19.

¹⁷ Valens, *Anthology*, Book 1, trans. Schmidt, ed. Hand, p. 8, fn. 1.

¹⁸ Particularly see the discussion in Valens, *Anthology*, 4, 4.

¹⁹ Schmidt, *Definitions and Foundations*, p. 94.

Earlier sources such as Thrasyllus, Manilius, and Dorotheus do not mention the same scheme where the elements are assigned to the signs of the zodiac,²⁰ although they do group the signs into sets of three or “triplicities,” and they associate each triplicity with a specific set of planetary rulers. These are the triplicity or trigon lords, which are usually arranged in the following way:²¹

TABLE 2
TRIPPLICITY LORDS

	Day	Night	Cooperating
♈ ♉ ♊	☉	♃	♅
♋ ♌ ♍	♀	♄	♁
♎ ♏ ♐	♃	♆	♃
♑ ♒ ♓	♀	♁	♄

Thus, while many astrologers did group the signs into four triplicities, and did associate each one with a set of planetary rulers, they did not all associate these signs with particular elements. Instead they associated the triplicities and their rulers with the four winds, which are connected with the four cardinal directions, north, south, east and west.²² Thus, the connection between the triplicities and the four elements was not always taken for granted in the same way that it is today.

Ptolemy, who was an older contemporary of Valens, did not associate the elements with the triplicities either, and even after Valens’ time the element-triplicity scheme is only mentioned infrequently by a few other Hellenistic authors. Rhetorius definitely mentions the scheme in his compendium, which was written towards the very end of the Hellenistic tradition in the 6th or 7th century CE.²³ Firmicus Maternus also seems to have mentioned the elements in connection with the signs in his 4th century text, although the evidence is somewhat scanty, since large parts of the section of the *Mathesis* where he would have discussed the topic are missing.²⁴ Other well-known Hellenistic astrologers such as

²⁰ Although there are a few instances where Dorotheus mentions water or earth as being a property of some of the signs (e.g. *Carmen* 5, 10: 2; 5, 23: 2-3; 5, 24: 4-6), he appears to be using a different system from the one that would later become common. This alternate system, which has to do with the images associated with the constellations, was also mentioned in other authors such as Manetho (e.g. *Apotelesmatika*, 5: 149-158; 6: 419-422) and Olympiodorus (e.g. *Commentary*, 38, p. 136: 1-5).

²¹ Valens, *Anthology*, 2, 1; Dorotheus, *Carmen Astrologicum*, 1, 1; Rhetorius, *Compendium*, 9.

²² For Pingree’s discussion of the different directions associated with the winds and the triplicities by different astrologers, see *Yavanajataka*, Vol. 2, pp. 223-227. See also Ptolemy’s discussion of the winds in *Tetrabiblos*, 1, 11.

²³ Rhetorius, *Compendium*, Ch. 3.

²⁴ We are missing most of the descriptions of the signs in the extant manuscripts of Firmicus, although in the fragments that remain he says that Aries is fiery (*ignitum*) and Pisces is watery (*aquosum*). Firmicus, *Mathesis*, 2, 10.

Porphry, Hephaistio, and Paulus are silent on the matter, although one would expect them to mention the elemental attributions in their introductory texts if they were aware of or endorsed them.²⁵

From this we can conclude that the triplicities do not necessarily have to be associated with the four elements, but they could be. Their association may represent a later addition, or perhaps something which not all astrologers agreed on. The latter seems more likely, since in the case of Valens and Ptolemy we see one astrologer using the associations, while his contemporary who lived in the same time period and the same location, did not.

With respect to the widespread adoption of the element-triplicity scheme in subsequent centuries, we know that Rhetorius drew on Valens and cited him several times in his *Compendium*, possibly making Valens the source of Rhetorius' application of the four elements to the triplicities.²⁶ Pingree has demonstrated that Rhetorius' compendium was available to astrologers such as Masha'allah in the early Medieval tradition.²⁷ This may have been the route through which the practice of assigning the four elements to the triplicities was transmitted to the Medieval tradition. On the other hand, Valens' *Anthology* was translated into the Middle Persian language of Pahlavi much earlier, perhaps around the 3rd or 4th century CE, and parts of it were passed on to Arabic writers independently of Rhetorius, so there may have been multiple entry points for the doctrine into the later tradition.²⁸ Whatever the source, after the 8th century the assignment of the four elements to the signs of the zodiac became commonplace in astrological texts in the West.

Joys Associated With Angular Triads

The initial starting point for the discovery that I'm about to present was an observation that Robert Schmidt made in early 2008, that the planetary joys are in fact the trigon lords grouped around the so-called angular triads.²⁹

Schmidt coined the phrase "angular triads" in order to describe a common convention that was used in the Hellenistic tradition whereby the houses are grouped into four sets of three, with each centered

²⁵ I am unsure of whether the references to the element-triplicity scheme in Teucer of Babylon's treatment of the signs of the zodiac (CCAG 7, pp. 194-213) are genuine because of the potential for interpolations from Rhetorius. Holden flags this material as having interpolations from Ptolemy in the preface of his translation. See Rhetorius, *Compendium*, trans. Holden, p. 165.

²⁶ In Holden's edition of Rhetorius' *Compendium* Valens is cited in chapters 13, 64, and 97.

²⁷ See Pingree, *From Alexandria to Baghdad to Byzantium*.

²⁸ Pingree, *From Astral Omens to Astrology*, p. 47ff.

²⁹ Private communication, January 2008.

around one of the four angles or pivots (*kentra*).³⁰ Each angular triad consists of one angular whole sign house, flanked by two additional whole sign houses on either side of it. The two flanking houses consist of one cadent whole sign house that is moving away from the angle, otherwise known as a declining house (*apoklima*), and one succedent house that is moving towards the angle, otherwise known as a post-ascension (*epanaphora*).

When the joys are viewed within the context of the angular triads, we see that they fall into place according to the triplicity lords (see **Diagram 2**). The Sun and Jupiter, which are the two principal rulers of the triplicity that consists of Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius, are in two of the houses that comprise the angular triad around the 10th house. Saturn and Mercury, which are the two primary rulers of the triplicity that consists of Gemini, Libra and Aquarius, are in two of the houses which comprise the angular triad around the 1st house. Next we find the Moon and Venus, which are the rulers of the triplicity that consists of Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn, in two of the houses that comprise the angular triad around the 4th house. Finally, the last planet that is left over is Mars, which is one of the primary rulers of the triplicity that consists of Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces, and we find it in one of the houses that comprise the angular triad around the 7th house.

We may be able to find some textual support for this connection between the joys and the angular triads in the work of the 2nd century skeptic Sextus Empiricus. Note Sextus' decision to list the names of the places according to the angular triads in his brief overview of astrology:

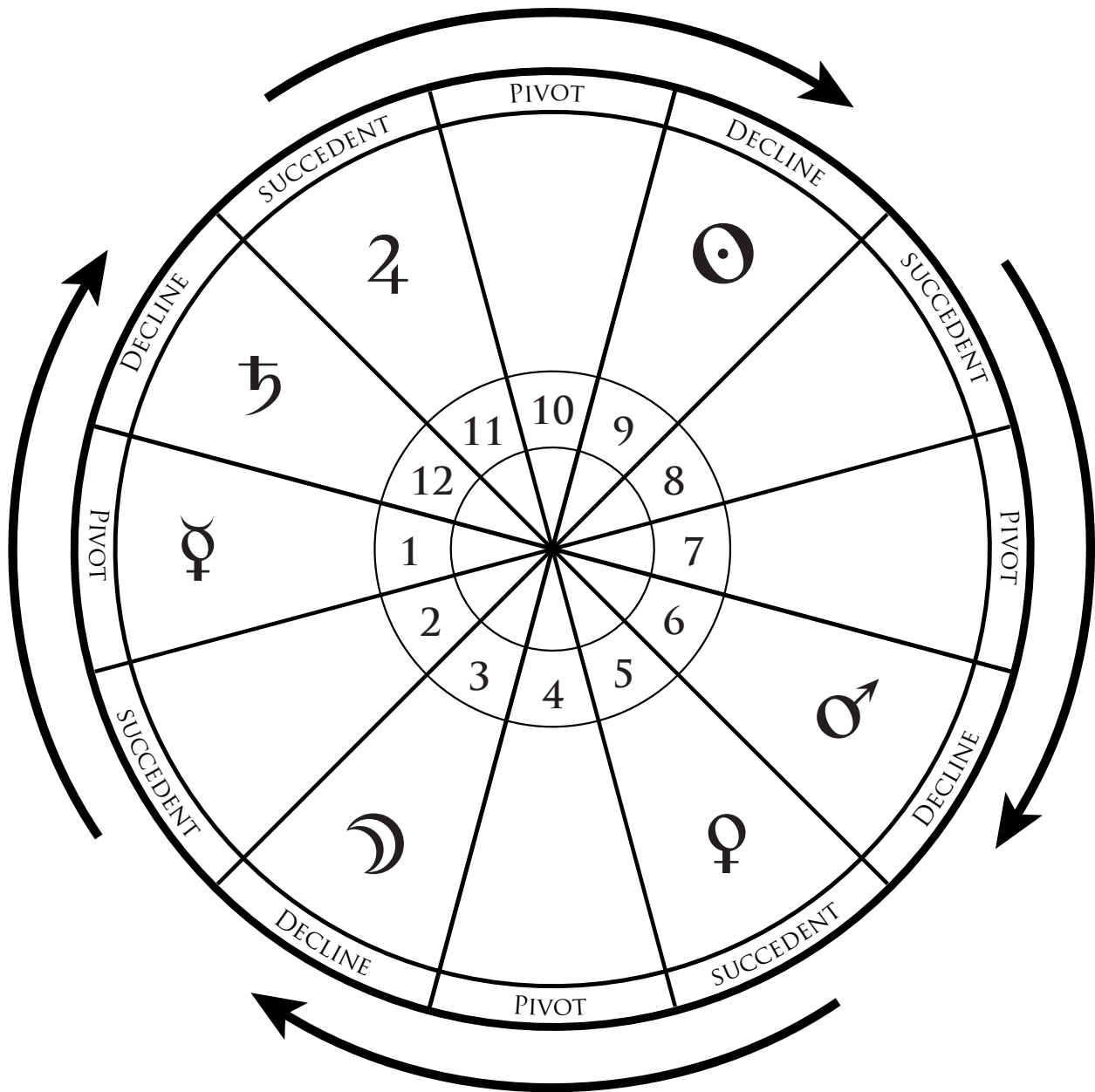
Or, to speak more concisely, the “decline” of the Sign of the “Hour-marker” is called the “Bad Spirit,” and its “post-ascension” “ineffective”; similarly the decline of the “Midheaven” is “God,” and its post-ascension “Good Spirit”; and in the same way the decline of the “anti-midheaven” is “Goddess,” and its post-ascension “Good Fortune”; likewise the decline of the “Descendant” is “Bad Fortune,” and its post-ascension “Idle.”³¹

In this passage Sextus demonstrates that the houses were sometimes grouped according to the so-called angular triads, and it is suggestive that he also chose to refer to the houses by the names associated with the joys when he did this. This is probably not an accident, but instead may imply that this was based on a commonly-known relationship between the joys and the angular triads in the 2nd century CE.

³⁰ Schmidt coined the phrase as early as 2006. One of his earliest uses of it in print was in Schmidt and Black, *Peak Times and Patterns in the Life of Dane Rudhyar*, p. 40. He discussed the angular triads more recently in *Definitions and Foundations*, p. 11. For the translation of *kentron* as “pivot” see Schmidt, *Definitions and Foundations*, p. 281f.

³¹ Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors*, V: 18-20, trans. Burry, slightly modified so that the terminology for the houses is consistent with the conventions used in this paper.

DIAGRAM 2: JOYS AND ANGULAR TRIADS



Connecting the Joys and Triplicity Lords to the Four Elements

The first discovery that I made with respect to the joys, and the primary one that I would like to demonstrate in this paper, is that the arrangement of the joys around the angular triads actually provides the manner through which the signs of the zodiac came to be associated with the four elements.

My observation is as follows: the joys are arranged so that the Sun and Jupiter, which are the two planets that later came to be the principal rulers of the fire triplicity, are at the top of the diagram, clustered around the angular triad associated with the Midheaven or 10th house (see **Diagram 3**). The Moon and Venus, which are the two planets that later came to be the principal rulers of the earth triplicity, are at the bottom of the diagram, grouped around the angular triad connected with the “subterraneous” house. Saturn and Mercury, the two planets that came to be the primary rulers of the air triplicity, are positioned over on the left side of the diagram, in the angular triad associated with the Ascendant or rising sign. The last remaining planet, Mars, which came to be one of the primary rulers of the water triplicity, is over on the right side of the chart, in one of the houses that comprise the angular triad that is centered on the descendant or setting house.

The result of this arrangement is that the planets associated with the element of fire are at the top of the chart, the planets associated with earth are at the very bottom, the air planets are on the left, and the water planet is on the right.

This scheme is arranged in a way that imitates or replicates Aristotle’s doctrine of natural place. According to Aristotle,³² each element has a natural tendency to move either upwards or downwards, either towards the center of the cosmos or away from the center of the cosmos, with the Earth at the center. Fire rises up to the highest region, while earth moves down to the lowest region. Air rises upwards and settles in a position just below fire, while water settles down and rests on top of earth. The hierarchy of elemental layers is therefore:

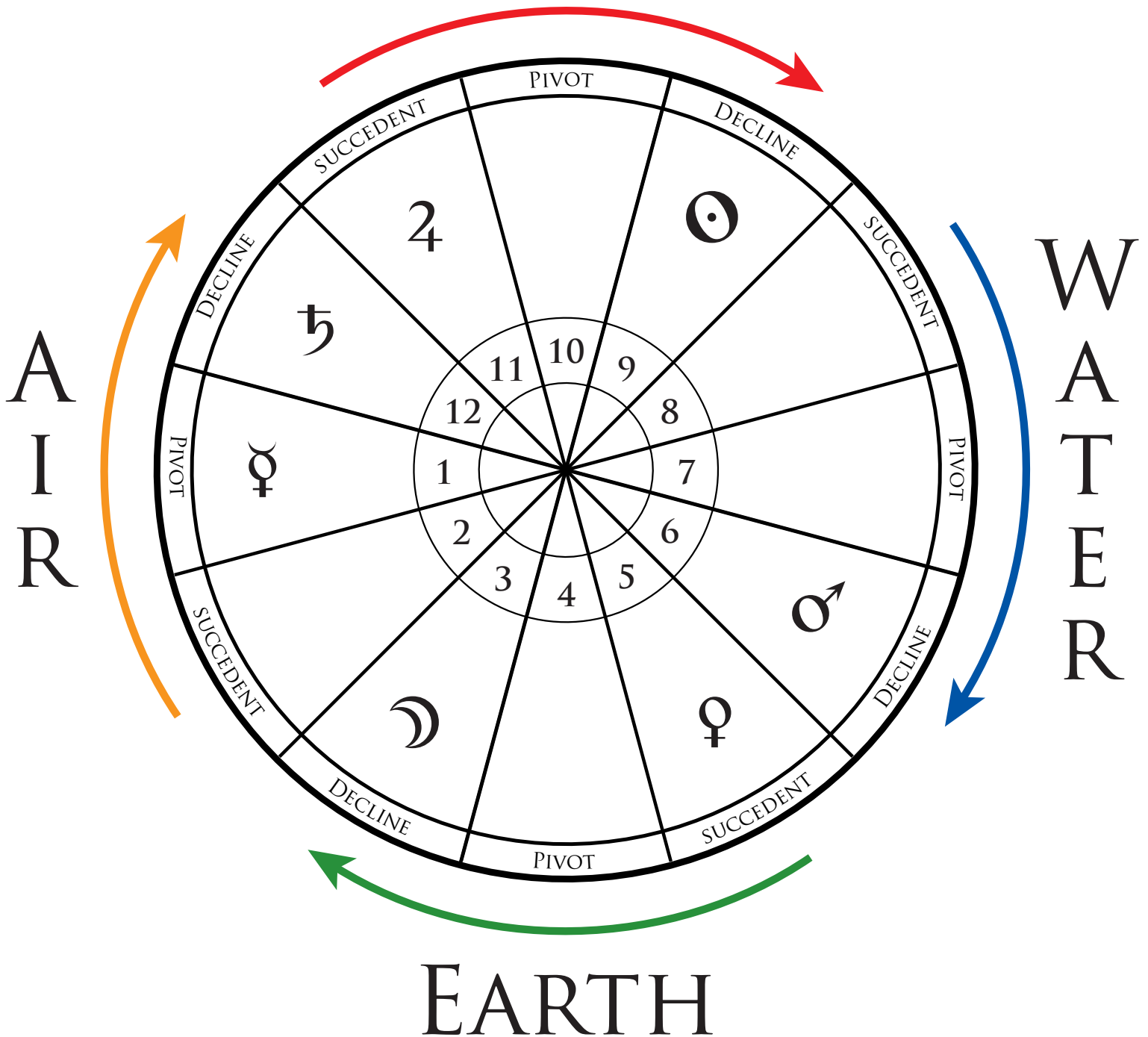
1. Fire
2. Air
3. Water
4. Earth

This ordering of the elements in terms of the positions they were thought to hold in the cosmos was later taken up by the Stoic and Hermetic philosophical schools, and so it would have been very

³² Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption*, 1: 2-3.

DIAGRAM 3: JOYS, TRIADS & ELEMENTS

FIRE



widespread and familiar during the Hellenistic period.³³ The arrangement itself appears to be very deliberate, and the creator of the joys scheme seems to have had the doctrine of natural place in mind when assigning the elements to the different angular triads.

When viewed in this context, the arrangement of the joys represents a depiction of the doctrine of natural place with the planets themselves representing each of the four elements in their proper place in the cosmos. The two planets associated with fire are at the very top of the cosmos, clustered around the house that is called “midheaven” (*mesouranēma*). The two planets associated with earth are at the very bottom of the cosmos, clustered around the house that is called “subterraneous” (*hupogeion*). The two planets associated with air are placed near the 1st house, which Thrasyllus calls “the Ascension” (*anaphora*) and the Ascendant (*anatellon*),³⁴ because planets rise over the horizon at the Ascendant and then move upwards towards the Midheaven. The placement of the air planets here is clever because it creates a situation where air is symbolically being pushed upwards, towards the element of fire. Conversely, Mars (the planet associated with water) is located near the 7th house, called the “setting” (*dusis*) place, because planets in this sector of the chart set and move downwards towards the subterraneous house. The placement of the element of water here makes it so that water is being pushed downwards, towards the element of earth. The end result is that fire and earth form the upper and lower extremes, while air and water have middling positions, but the diurnal rotation pushes air upwards towards fire and water downwards towards earth.

If we take this arrangement as deliberate, which it would be hard not to, then it provides an original basis for the application of the four elements to the signs of the zodiac. Presumably the signs themselves were already grouped into triplicities and associated with certain planetary rulers, but it was this scheme which allowed the triplicities to be associated with each of the four elements.

Adoption vs. Lack of Adoption of the Elemental Scheme

The assignment of the four elements to the triplicities was already known to Valens in the mid-2nd century CE. One would assume that it was probably known to Ptolemy as well, since both men lived in Egypt around the same time period, and may have drawn on similar sources.³⁵ This raises the question of why Ptolemy would choose not to adopt the element-triplicity scheme if he did know about it.

³³ For the Stoic adoption of this elemental hierarchy, see the report by Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 7: 137. For the Hermetic tradition, see the cosmogony in *Corpus Hermeticum*, 1: 4 (p. 1 in Copenhaver, *Hermetica*), where fire and air are said to move upwards and water and earth downwards. Copenhaver (*Hermetica*, p. 98) interprets the language in this passage as having been influenced by the Stoic treatment of the elements.

³⁴ *Definitions and Foundations*, trans. Schmidt, p. 343. Firmicus refers to the Ascendant as *ortus*, which means “rising.” *Mathesis*, 2, 15: 1.

³⁵ For example, Hephaistio (*Apotelesmatika*, 2, 22: 8) said that Ptolemy drew on Petosiris for his treatment of the topic of children, and Valens frequently cites and sometimes quotes Petosiris on a variety of topics.

One potential answer is that Ptolemy may have deliberately chosen not to use the element-triplicity scheme because it would have caused a conceptual issue for him in the arrangement of the signs of the zodiac. Ptolemy had an inclination toward Aristotelian philosophical and cosmological doctrines in his astrology. One of Aristotle's most well-known doctrines is the association of each of the four elements with four contrasting qualities: hot, cold, wet, and dry. In Aristotle's system fire is primarily hot, and it is opposed to water which is primarily cold. Conversely, earth is primarily dry, and it is opposed to air which is primarily moist.³⁶

Aristotle's entire approach to the elements is predicated on the notion that these are contrasting qualities that sit on opposite sides of a spectrum, and that "the elements all involve a contrariety in their mutual relations because their distinctive qualities are contrary."³⁷ The element-triplicity scheme that appears to be derived from the joys is problematic from an Aristotelian perspective because it makes it so that the fire signs are literally opposite to the air signs in the zodiac, and the earth signs are literally opposite to the water signs. If the zodiacal assignments were to follow the Aristotelian scheme then the fire signs should be opposite to the water signs in the zodiac, and the air signs should be opposite to the earth signs. Instead, the element-triplicity scheme that first appears in Valens follows a model that was advocated by a rival philosophical school, the Stoics. In the Stoic system air is conceptualized as cold, and it is opposite to fire which is hot, while water is said to be moist, and it is opposite to earth which is dry. This matches the arrangement of the signs according to the element-triplicity model derived from the joys, and in fact the Stoic model of the qualities is explicitly ascribed to the elements by Valens, who described air as being cold and water as being moist.³⁸

To the extent that Ptolemy tended to predicate much of his astrological model on Aristotelian cosmological doctrines, he may not have wanted to adopt the elemental scheme employed by Valens, even if he knew about it, because such a scheme contradicts one of the basic doctrines of Aristotelian cosmology. Later astrologers who either followed Ptolemy or followed Aristotle's approach to the elements also would not have wanted to adopt the scheme for similar reasons, which may explain the small number of astrologers who appear to have adopted it in the latter part of the Hellenistic tradition.

Rationale for the Order of the Triplicity Lords

After this initial discovery about the joys and the element-triplicity scheme, Dykes and I began searching to see if there were other doctrines embedded in the arrangement. A subsequent discovery seems to explain the order in which the trigon lords are usually assigned.

³⁶ Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption*, 2, 1-10.

³⁷ Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption*, 2, 4, 331a 14-16, ed. Barnes, p. 541.

³⁸ Valens, *Anthology*, 4, 4: 20-31.

In the Hellenistic tradition the triplicity lords were used for a number of things. One particular application was to use them in order to divide a native's life into two parts. The first part of the life was ruled by the first triplicity lord, and the second part of the life was ruled by the second triplicity lord.³⁹ The third triplicity lord was said to cooperate with the first and second lord throughout the course of the life.⁴⁰ Again, the scheme is as follows:

TABLE 2
TRIPPLICITY LORDS

	Day	Night	Cooperating
♄ ♃ ♀	☉	♃	♄
♁ ♀ ♃	♀	♁	♁♂
♁ ♃ ♀	♄	♀	♃
♁ ♀ ♃	♀	♁♂	♁

Valens provides a somewhat weak attempt at an explanation for the assignment of the planets to certain elements, although otherwise no explanation for the ordering of the assignment of the triplicity lords is given.⁴¹ That is to say, no rationale is given for why the Sun is the primary ruler of the fire triplicity by day and Jupiter is the secondary ruler, or why the Moon is the primary ruler of the earth triplicity by night and Venus is the second ruler, and so on. Only Ptolemy attempts to explain the order of the assignment of the triplicity lords, although his logic does not fully explain the schemes used by Dorotheus and Valens.⁴²

When the Joys are viewed within the context of the angular triads, a pattern emerges. In both the fire triplicity lords and the air triplicity lords the principal ruler by day falls in the cadent or declining house, and then the secondary ruler falls in one of the subsequent houses within the same angular triad, moving in counterclockwise order (see **Diagram 4**). This ordering matches the triplicity lord assignments where, for example, the Sun comes first by day in the fire triplicity and Jupiter comes second, or where in the air triplicity Saturn comes first by day and Mercury comes second.

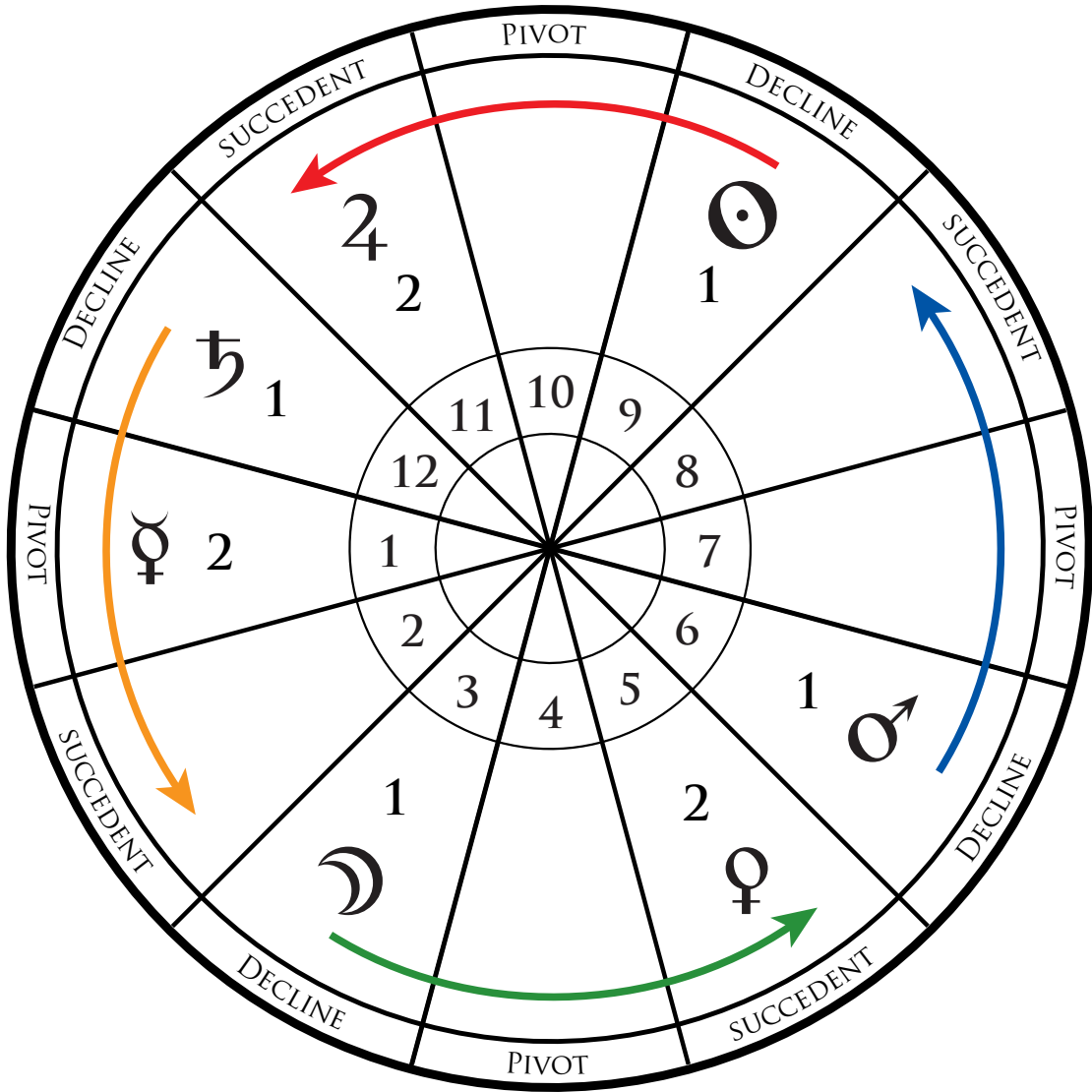
³⁹ See Valens, *Anthology*, 2, 1-2; Dorotheus, *Carmen*, 1, 22.

⁴⁰ In the Medieval tradition this arrangement changed so that the life was divided into thirds that were each ruled by one of the three trigon lords; astrologers in the Hellenistic tradition appear to be consistent in only dividing the life into two parts.

⁴¹ Valens, *Anthology*, 2, 1.

⁴² Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, 1, 19.

DIAGRAM 4: TRIPPLICITY LORD SEQUENCE



Part of the rationale here is that the cadent houses were conceptualized as being the first in the sequence of the three houses that make up the angular triads, because the sign of the zodiac that each coincides with was recently at the angle itself, and is now moving or declining away from it due to the diurnal rotation. The cadent house is then followed by the angular house itself, and then last by the succedent or post-ascensional house. So the sequence is always: 1) cadent house → 2) angular house → 3) succedent house. The order of the assignment of the trigon lords to the different parts of the life appears to be predicated on the place that the trigon lord occupies in the sequence of the angular triads.

This pattern also holds true for the earth and water triplicity lords, except that the nocturnal rulers are depicted first in the cadent houses, since these triplicity lords are all below the horizon in the chart, which is conceptualized as being nocturnal. Accordingly, the pattern follows the nocturnal sequence of the triplicity lords. Within this scheme, the Moon is in the cadent house, and so it becomes the primary ruler of the earth triplicity by night, and then Venus follows after it in the succedent house, so it becomes the secondary triplicity lord of earth by night. Mars is the last remaining planet, and it is placed in the cadent 6th house, and so accordingly it becomes the principal ruler of the water triplicity by night.

Interestingly, this arrangement may also explain part of the rationale for the assignment of the third or participating triplicity lord as well. It is notable that in every instance the cooperating triplicity lord happens to be the next closest planet in the diagram among planets of the same sect. For example, the Sun and Jupiter are the main triplicity lords for fire, and Saturn is the cooperating lord because he is the next closest planet to them. Saturn and Mercury are the main triplicity lords for air, and Jupiter is the cooperating lord because he is the next closest planet to them. The Moon and Venus are the primary triplicity lords for earth, and Mars is the cooperating lord because he is the next closest planet to one of them. Finally, Mars and Venus are the main lords for water, and the Moon is the cooperating lord because she is the next closest planet.

This discovery about the connection between the joys and the order of the triplicity lords is important because it appears to provide a more consistent theoretical rationale for the assignment of the triplicity lords—particularly the cooperating lords—than other rationales presented so far, such as the one offered by Ptolemy.⁴³ Robert Hand noted in his treatment of the assignment of the triplicity lords that it was unclear how some of the cooperating lords were assigned, and it seems that the joys can help to clarify that issue, although in the process it raises an interesting question of whether the joys or the triplicity lords came first.⁴⁴

⁴³ Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, 1, 19.

⁴⁴ Hand, *Night & Day: Planetary Sect in Astrology*, p. 28.

Configurations

The creator of the scheme surrounding the joys appears to have been familiar with a number of other basic astrological concepts, and it can be demonstrated that those concepts were taken into account in the formulation of the scheme.

One concept that is evident in the joys diagram is the doctrine of aspects or configurations, and there are some interesting patterns in the arrangement of the joys when viewed from this perspective.

The diagram is arranged so that both of the luminaries are configured to their sect-mates (see **Diagram 5**). For example, the Sun is configured by sextile to Jupiter and by square to Saturn, while the Moon is configured by sextile to Venus and square to Mars. This apparent desire to make the planets configured to their sect mates is probably one of the reasons why the planets occupy the houses they do according to the joys. For example, if the Sun had his joy in the 10th while Jupiter still had his joy in the 11th, then the Sun would not be configured to Jupiter, but instead the two would be in aversion to each other. Therefore, there appears to be a sort of conceptual necessity to put the planets in the houses they occupy in order to ensure that these configurations are present.

Additionally, the author of the joys scheme also seems to have had some general notion of the nature or quality of the aspects already, as it is arranged so that the two luminaries are configured by sextile to both of the benefics, and by square to both of the malefics. This is in agreement with the general convention that the sextile is a more easy or favorable aspect, while the square is more difficult or unfavorable.⁴⁵ It is often thought that the qualities of the aspects were partially derived from the configuration of the planets in the *Thema Mundi*, as outlined by Firmicus Maternus,⁴⁶ although the joys may provide an alternate or overlapping rationale for the reason why sextiles came to be seen as positive and squares came to be seen as negative.

Clarification of a Conceptual Issue Involving Sect

There is also an additional concept embedded in the joys which appears to clarify a long-standing issue related to the concept of sect.

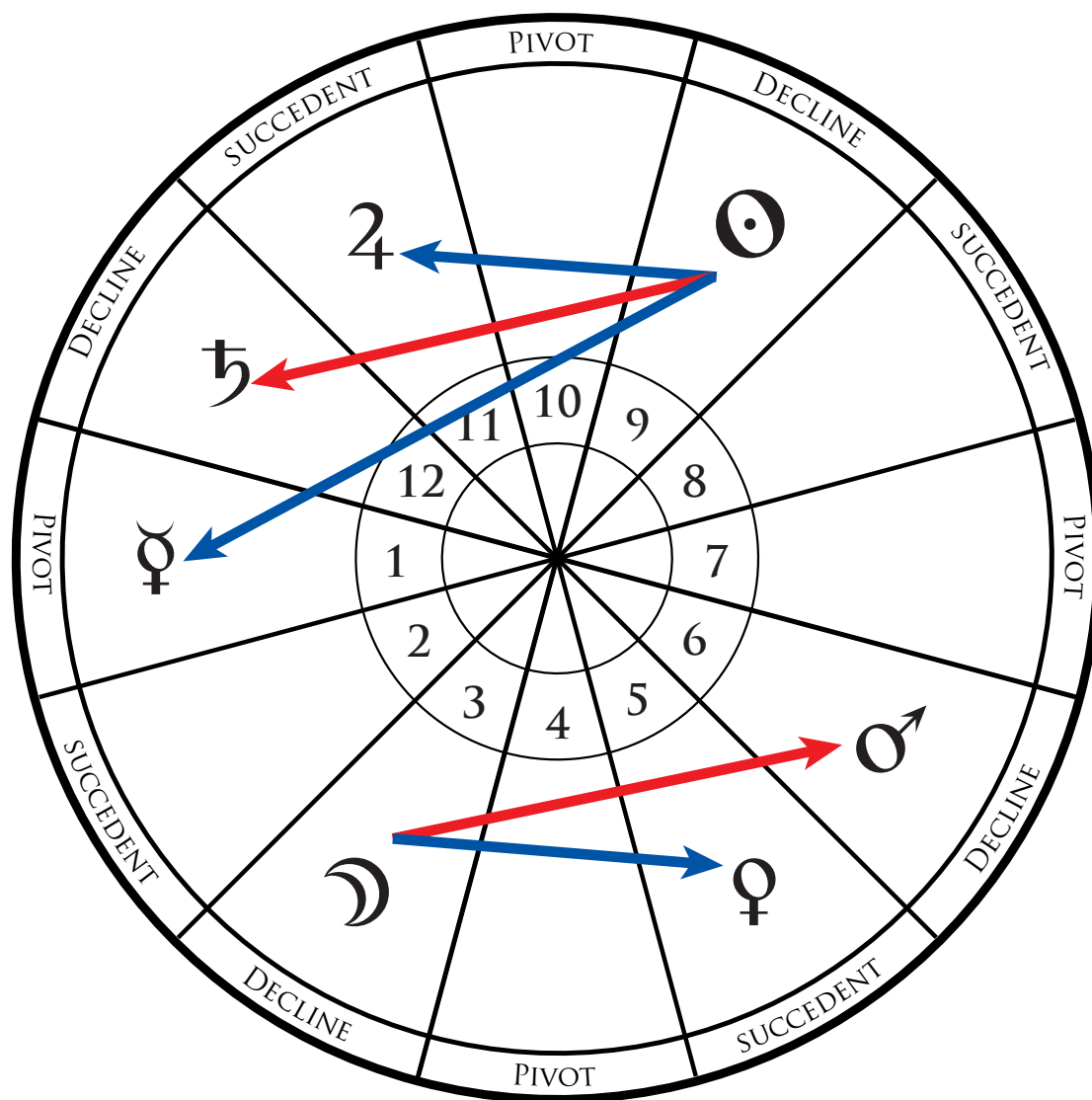
In the first book of the *Tetrabiblos* Ptolemy attempts to explain sect within the context of his unique naturalistic rationale, where the planets mean different things in astrology due to their ability to produce varying levels of heat and moisture.⁴⁷ Ptolemy attempts to explain the assignment of Saturn to

⁴⁵ Porphyry, *Introduction*, 8.

⁴⁶ Firmicus, *Mathesis*, 3, 2: 1-7.

⁴⁷ Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, 1, 7.

DIAGRAM 5: SECT-MATE CONFIGURATIONS



the diurnal sect by saying that since Saturn is naturally cold, it is made more moderate when warmed up by the heat of the Sun in a day chart, and therefore becomes more positive or constructive functionally. Similarly, Ptolemy says that Mars is assigned to the nocturnal sect because Mars is naturally dry, and therefore when placed in a night chart is moistened and thus becomes better tempered. In Ptolemy's model it is the fact that the malefics are *excessively* cold or dry which leads to them being malefic, whereas that which is moderate or temperate is conceptualized as benefic.⁴⁸

The problem with Ptolemy's rationale is that it implies that Saturn is not *inherently* diurnal, but instead that it is simply made more benefic *functionally* when placed in a day chart. Similarly, Mars does not have any *inherent* affinity with the nocturnal sect, but is *functionally* more benefic in a night chart. In this way Ptolemy's rationale for sect does not really explain how the planets came to be assigned to the sect that they are associated with, nor does it explain how Saturn can in any way be said to be *inherently* inclined towards the diurnal sect or Mars to the nocturnal sect. Instead, the only thing that Ptolemy's rationale explains is how the malefics could be interpreted as if they were *functionally* more positive or negative in a chart within the broader context of Ptolemy's naturalistic rationale for astrology.

This serious conceptual issue in Ptolemy's argument seems to imply that his explanation was not the original rationale for the assignment of the planets to each of the two sects. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that other authors such as Porphyry present an alternate rationale to explain sect, which has to do with the frequency with which the planets rise and set under the beams of the Sun.⁴⁹ According to this view, Jupiter and Saturn are assigned to the diurnal sect because they set under the beams of the Sun somewhat infrequently, while Venus and Mars spend relatively more time obscured by the beams of the Sun. Thus, as a result of their astronomical behavior, Jupiter and Saturn have more to do with visibility and light, while Venus and Mars have more to do with hiddenness and darkness. This alternate rationale seems to do a better job of explaining how each of the planets could be associated with their respective sects inherently rather than just functionally, and therefore may represent something closer to the original rationale for the sect assignments.

During the course of our discussions Dykes noted an additional rationale that appears to be embedded within the planetary joys scheme. The arrangement of the planets according to the joys is partially predicated on the diurnal revolution, since the houses themselves are based on this cycle in which the planets rise, culminate, set, and then anti-culminate each day. When the joys are viewed within this context, there seems to be a progression where the diurnal planets are moving from the Ascendant up to the 9th house, whereas the nocturnal planets are moving from the Descendant down to the 3rd house. This seems to symbolically convey some sort of progression, where each of the planets of the respective

⁴⁸ Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, 1, 5.

⁴⁹ Porphyry, *Introduction*, 4.

sects is becoming more and more diurnal or nocturnal, depending on what side of the horizon the planet is on (see **Diagram 6**).

On the diurnal side of the horizon, the progression starts with Saturn, which seems to be the least diurnal of the three planets which comprise the diurnal sect. Next in order is Jupiter, which represents a progression towards a more diurnal state. The next and final step is the Sun, at which point the progression is complete, as we have reached what is easily the most “diurnal” planet in the chart – the very embodiment of day itself.

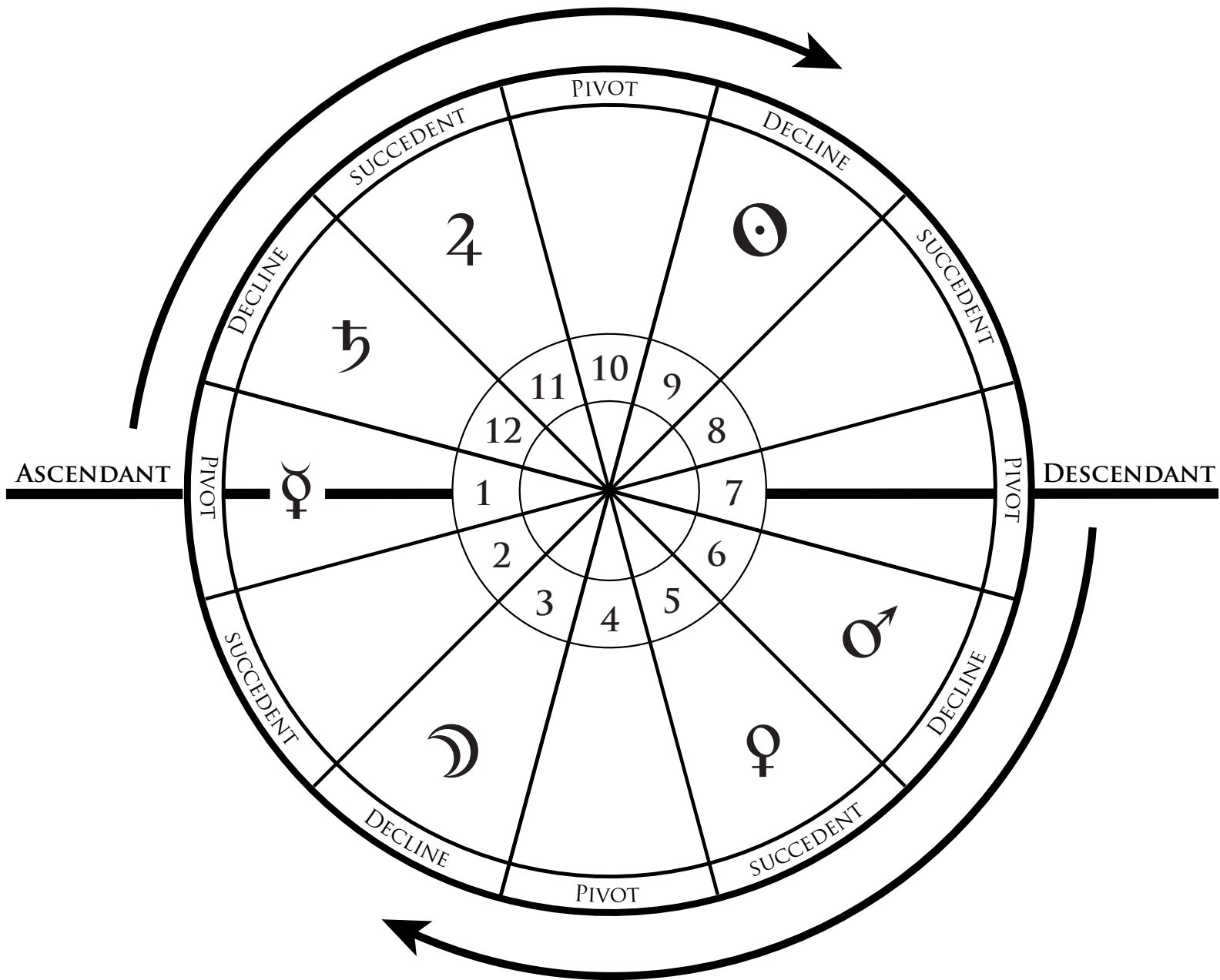
On the other side of the horizon, the nocturnal side, we start with Mars, who like Saturn seems to be somewhat out of place in terms of the quality of the planet compared to its other sect-mates. Next in order is Venus, who is arguably more nocturnal than Mars, and thus represents a progression towards a more nocturnal state. Finally we get to the Moon, who is the most nocturnal planet in the chart, and the sequence is complete.

Both the diurnal progression and the nocturnal progression of planets could almost seem to represent some sort of a process of purification, in which the planets move from being least like their respective sect to most like their respective sect. What is interesting about this perspective is that it may actually explain the conceptual problem with the malefics that Ptolemy attempted to deal with somewhat unsatisfactorily within the context of his model. When the malefics are looked at within the context of the joys and the diurnal rotation, something that stands out is that they are the two planets of their respective sects which changed hemispheres the most recently.

If Saturn is located in the 12th house then this would mean that he only recently moved through the 1st house and crossed over the degree of the Ascendant, thus moving from the nocturnal half of the chart below the horizon to the diurnal side of the chart above the horizon. If we were to use Ptolemy’s naturalistic rationale then we might say that Saturn is the planet that most recently moved from the cold, dark, nocturnal hemisphere under the earth to the hot, bright, diurnal hemisphere above the earth. In that sense it could definitely be said to be diurnal, since it is firmly on the daytime side of the chart. However, it is the least diurnal of the three diurnal planets, since it has only recently “changed sides,” so to speak, by joining the daytime planets in the diurnal hemisphere.

The same argument holds true for Mars. If Mars is located in the 6th house, then it would be a nocturnal planet which recently changed hemispheres, having recently moved from being above the horizon to being below the horizon once it reached the degree of the descendant in the 7th house. Again, to use Ptolemy’s naturalistic rationale for the sake of argument, we could say that symbolically Mars is firmly in the nocturnal camp since he is under the earth; however, since he only recently moved

DIAGRAM 6: SECT PROGRESSION



from the hot, bright, diurnal side of the cosmos to the cold, dark, nocturnal side, he is still in the process of becoming more nocturnal, and many of the diurnal qualities are still prominent in him.

I acknowledge that the level of symbolic thinking that this requires combined with the lack of explicit textual support may make it difficult for this argument about the origins of sect to be validated or accepted as entirely plausible. However, I feel that this arrangement is far too suggestive to be a mere coincidence, especially since it solves a clear conceptual problem with sect that even Ptolemy couldn't entirely resolve in the 2nd century.

The Origins of the Houses

One of the major differences between the Hellenistic and earlier Mesopotamian astrological traditions is the apparent introduction of the concept of the twelve houses. There is, as of yet, no clear evidence of the existence or use of the houses in the earlier Mesopotamian astrological tradition. The houses do appear in the earliest sources of the Hellenistic tradition, however. This seems to imply that either the houses were developed in the late Mesopotamian tradition and we simply don't have evidence of this development, or that the houses were introduced sometime very early on in the Hellenistic tradition.

In 2010, Dorian Greenbaum and Micah Ross argued that the use of the Ascendant, Midheaven, and subsequently the rest of the houses in the Hellenistic tradition were originally motivated in part by the use of the decans in the earlier Egyptian tradition.⁵⁰ Ultimately they make a compelling case for the development of the usage of the four angular houses, although their argument does not explain where the significations of the other 8 houses derive from. This is a gap that I believe can be filled in part by the joys.

In the Hellenistic tradition there appears to have been a text on the twelve houses in circulation that was ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus, since we have several references and allusions to it in later authors. For instance, in the 1st century Thrasyllus cited Hermes as a source for the house significations in his *Table*. Also in the 1st century, Dorotheus began his discussion of the significations of the houses by announcing that they came from “the honored [and] praiseworthy by three natures, Hermes, the King of Egypt.”⁵¹ In the 6th or 7th century Rhetorius mentioned in passing that “Hermes” deliberately designated the 12th house as having to do with the topic of childbirth.⁵² Firmicus Maternus drew on a house delineation text similar to the one used by Rhetorius, though in his own parallel passage on the

⁵⁰ Greenbaum and Ross, *The Role of Egypt in the Development of the Horoscope*. Similar but less comprehensive arguments about the decans acting as the motivation for the development of the houses have been made by other scholars. See Pingree, *Yavanajataka*, vol. 2, p. 219; Tester, *A History of Western Astrology*, pp. 25-26; and Schmidt in the preface to his translation of book 3 of Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, pp. viii-ix.

⁵¹ Dorotheus, *Carmen*, 2, 20.

⁵² CCAG 8, Part 4, p. 131: 4-8.

12th house he refers more generally to certain “wise men” (*prudentissimi viri*) who associated that house with childbirth.⁵³ Again, Antiochus cites an earlier astrologer named Timaeus, who is himself said to have cited Hermes as the author of a specific scheme of advantageous (*chrēmatistikos*) houses.⁵⁴

All of these references seem to indicate that there was a very influential text on the houses that was written sometime in the early Hellenistic tradition, and that it was ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus. Since it is cited by Thrasyllus already in the early 1st century CE, this means that it must have been written sometime earlier, perhaps in the 1st century BCE. This would make it not only one of the most influential texts on the houses that we know of in the Hellenistic tradition, but would also make it one of the earliest texts that we know of on the houses.

To be sure, though, the Hermes text was not the only early text on the houses. There was another text in circulation very early on that was ascribed to Asclepius, and this text apparently outlined a unique set of significations for the first eight whole sign houses.⁵⁵ This system was called the *octatopos*, or eight-place system. The octatopos was attributed to Asclepius by the anonymous author of the Michigan Papyrus, and Asclepius is also mentioned by Valens as having contributed to the doctrine of the houses.⁵⁶ Schmidt has pointed out that many of the later treatments of the houses appear to represent a synthesis of the eight- and twelve-place systems.⁵⁷

It is interesting that in many of the historical chronologies that have survived from the Hellenistic tradition, Hermes is often listed as the earliest author, or as the founder of the astrological tradition.⁵⁸ While we might be inclined to dismiss this purely as mythology, the numerous references to a work on the houses by Hermes is perhaps enough to make us consider whether there really was an early text on the subject that contained the foundational principles of the doctrine. But what else could this text have said, and what was the original theoretical basis underlying the significations of the twelve houses?

⁵³ *Mathesis*, 3, 7: 24. In his translation of Rhetorius, Holden rightly points out that this indicates that Firmicus and Rhetorius were drawing on a common source for their delineations of the houses (Rhetorius, *Compendium*, trans. Holden, p. 47, n. 1).

⁵⁴ CCAG 8, part 3, p. 116: 3-12.

⁵⁵ That the *octatopos* only represents a sequence of the first eight whole sign houses rather than a division of the entire circle into eight sectors has been rightly pointed out by both Goold (Manilius, *Astronomica*, pp. lxi-lxii) and Schmidt (*Definitions and Foundations*, p. 308f).

⁵⁶ *Michigan Papyrus*, Col. ix: 20-27; Valens, *Anthology*, 9, 3: 5.

⁵⁷ Schmidt, *Kepler College Sourcebook*, p. 77.

⁵⁸ Firmicus, *Mathesis*, 3, 1: 1 & 4, proem: 5; Manilius, *Astronomica*, 1: 30-52; Anonymous of 379 in CCAG 5, part 1, p. 204: 13-22; also, see the anonymous papyrus fragment in CCAG 8, part 4, p. 95.

The Significations of the Houses

In the Hellenistic tradition, astrologers do not appear to have followed the modern convention of equating specific houses with certain signs of the zodiac and the rulers of those signs. For example, in modern astrology the 1st house is usually equated with the first sign of the zodiac, Aries, as well as the planet that rules that sign, Mars. The 2nd house is associated with the second sign, Taurus, and the ruler of that sign, Venus. Oftentimes, modern astrologers will borrow significations from the sign of the zodiac or the planet associated with that sign in order to talk about the meaning of a specific house. Despite how prevalent this practice is in modern times, there is no evidence that it was used as a method for determining the significations of the houses in the Hellenistic tradition.

Instead, the Hellenistic astrologers appear to have derived the significations of the houses from considerations such as the angularity of the house or its position within the scheme of the angular triads, the configuration to the rising sign or lack thereof, and the symbolic significance of the house in astronomical or visual terms. Some of the basic significations of the houses can be derived in this way. But there is a fourth, little-explored consideration: the planetary joys.

When the Hellenistic astrologers discussed the significations of the houses there often seems to be a connection between the significations of the houses and the joys of the planets. This is demonstrated particularly explicitly by Valens:

[The house of] God gives signs for the father; Goddess for the mother; Good Spirit for children; Good Fortune for marriage; Bad Spirit for suffering; Bad Fortune for injuries; Lot of Fortune and *Horoskopos* for life and living; [the Lot of] Spirit for mind; Midheaven for action; [the Lot of] Love for desire; [the Lot of] Necessity for enemies.⁵⁹

One of the realizations that I had during the course of this series of discoveries is that the systematic nature of the joys and the way that they tie together several other astrological concepts implies that the scheme was acting as some sort of foundational construct. This is similar to the way that the *Thema Mundi* appears to act as a sort of theoretical construct in order to explain the origins of the domicile rulerships, the natures of the aspects, and other concepts.⁶⁰ In point of fact, Firmicus Maternus explicitly says that earlier astrologers deliberately devised the *Thema Mundi* as a teaching tool in order to explain some of the basic concepts of astrology.⁶¹ If this is true, then it would not be surprising to find other deliberate arrangements or conceptual constructs embedded in the tradition as well.

⁵⁹ Valens, *Anthology*, 2, 16: 1, trans. Schmidt, ed. Hand, p. 18, slightly altered.

⁶⁰ Robert Schmidt has done the most work in this area. See Schmidt's treatment of the *Thema Mundi* in *Definitions and Foundations*, pp. 106-12. For an earlier treatment see Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque*, p. 182ff.

⁶¹ Firmicus, *Mathesis*, 3, 1-2.

One of the consequences of this discovery about the interconnectedness of the joys with several other concepts is that it implies that the meanings of the twelve houses were *not* determined first and then the joys assigned to those houses later, based on some sort of perceived affinity between the house and the planet. Rather, it was the reverse. I would argue that it seems more likely that the joys were developed first, as part of the elaborate construct that I've outlined in this paper, and then the significations of the houses were subsequently derived in part from the joys. This would explain why some of the houses were assigned the names that they were given, because the planets associated with those houses via the joys were playing a significant role in informing the meanings of the houses.

The observation that some of the significations of the houses were derived from the joys is not new, as Deborah Houlding already made this argument in her 1998 book on the houses.⁶² What is unique here is the point that the joys themselves are part of an elaborate systematic construct that originated very early on in the Hellenistic tradition, presumably from a single text, and that it may in fact represent a major part of the earliest rationale for assigning significations to some of the houses.

Deriving Significations from the Joys

When the houses are viewed within the context of the joys, the motivation underlying some of their significations becomes much clearer. In fact, the joys actually provide us with a theoretical rationale for generating the significations.

In generating the significations of the houses through the joys there seems to have been a heavy emphasis on a division of the chart into two hemispheres, with one hemisphere above the earth and one below the earth.

Everything above the horizon appears to be considered to be the realm of the Sun, which the author of the scheme seems to have associated with the spirit (*psuchē*). This is the reason why the 11th house is called the house of Good Spirit, and the 12th is called the house of Bad Spirit. Later astrologers such as Valens and Firmicus associated the Sun with the concept of spirit, which they said had to do with the soul and the mind or intellect.⁶³ Conversely, everything below the horizon was considered to be the realm of the Moon, which the author of the joys associated with the concept of fortune (*tuchē*). This is why the 5th house is called the house of Good Fortune, and the 6th is called the place of Bad Fortune. Valens associated fortune with the body and the physical incarnation of the native.⁶⁴

⁶² Houlding, *The Houses: Temples of the Sky*.

⁶³ Valens, *Anthology*, 4, 4: 1-2; Firmicus, *Mathesis*, 4, 18. Cf. Paulus, *Introduction*, 23.

⁶⁴ Valens, *Anthology*, 4, 4: 1-2. Cf. Paulus, *Introduction*, 23.

One of the potential implications of this division between a solar hemisphere at the top of the chart and a lunar hemisphere at the bottom of the chart is that everything in the top half of the chart has to do with the soul and things related to the mind, while everything in the bottom half of the chart has to do with the body and physical things. This may be part of some sort of Hermetic division between the spirit and the body. The consequence of this is that the specific significations that are attributed to the houses will then either pertain to the soul or to the body depending on what side of the horizon they are on.

This provides us with two underlying theoretical principles when generating significations from the specific houses in which a planet has its joy:

1. Is the house above or below the horizon? If it is above, then it will have to do with the soul. If it is below, then it will have to do with the body.
2. Is the planet associated with that house a benefic or malefic? If it is a benefic, then the house will indicate good things. If it is a malefic, then it will indicate bad things.

By taking these two principles into consideration we can explain some of the basic significations that came to be associated with the houses.

For example, let's look at the 5th house, which is called the house of Good Fortune. As the 5th house is under the horizon, we know that it will signify things pertaining to the body. We also know that since it is associated with the benefic planet Venus, the significations must be positive. From this we come to the conclusion that the 5th house would signify good things that relate to the body. Coincidentally, the 5th house became one of the primary houses that signify children.

The 6th house is the house of Bad Fortune. As it is under the earth, it relates to the body. As it is associated with the malefic Mars, it must therefore signify something bad. Thus, the 6th house pertains to bad things related to the body, and it is the house that came to be associated with injuries.

The 11th is the house of Good Spirit. It is above the earth, so it relates to the soul or mind. It is associated with the benefic Jupiter, and so it must signify something good. Thus, the 11th house pertains to good things related to the soul or mind. One of the primary things that the 11th house came to be associated with was friendship, which was viewed by philosophers such as Aristotle as an affinity between the soul or spirit of two people.

The 12th house is the house of Bad Spirit. It is above the earth, so it also relates to the soul or mind. Yet, as it is associated with the malefic planet Saturn, it must signify something bad. Thus, the 12th house

signifies bad things that pertain to the soul or mind. This is why it came to be associated with enemies, as well as other things such as suffering, which could be characterized as an affliction of the soul.

While this scheme cannot be used in order to generate all of the significations of the houses, it does seem to provide a compelling rationale for some of the major significations of the houses that coincide with the planetary joys. It is notable that for the most part the planetary joys do not coincide with the angular houses, as the angular houses are the ones in which it is the easiest to derive significations from, according to the symbolic significance of their astronomical location. For example, the 10th house is the highest and most visible sector in the chart, and it is said to represent the public reputation of the native. This is opposite to the 4th house, which is the lowest and most hidden part of the chart, and is said to signify things related to the native's personal life such as their home. The symbolic meanings of the angles are somewhat straightforward in this way, but it is a bit more difficult to derive significations from the other houses according to their astronomical location, and this is where I believe the joys come in.

The only angle that does contain the joy of one of the planets is the 1st house, which is the house where Mercury rejoices. The Hellenistic astrologers used whole sign houses, and in whole sign houses, the 1st house will always be partially above the earth and partially below the earth; this is because the Ascendant merely marks the sign that becomes the 1st house. In this way, Mercury is situated at the meeting point between the two hemispheres, where the diurnal realm of spirit and the nocturnal realm of the body are brought together. It is no surprise, then, that the 1st house is usually said to signify both the body or physical vitality as well as the spirit (*pneuma*) of the native.⁶⁵

The Origins of the Joys?

As I noted above, the earliest source that we have for the existence of the joys is the text ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus, as cited by Thrasyllus. Thrasyllus explicitly connects the doctrine of the twelve houses to Hermes, and in the excerpt from Hermes he uses the names for the houses, which are connected with the joys. That being the case, it is possible that the scheme that the joys represent was originally introduced in this early text ascribed to Hermes.

But how can we know for sure that the joys were already present in the Hermes text when the only evidence we have is that some of the names of the houses were mentioned? I believe that the answer lies in one of the significations that Thrasyllus cites Hermes for.

According to Thrasyllus, Hermes said that one of the significations of the 1st house is "siblings." This attribution does not make a lot of sense within the context of the later tradition, which tended to

⁶⁵ Valens, *Anthology*, 4, 12: 1. Cf. Paulus, *Introduction*, 24; Rhetorius, *Compendium*, 57.

attribute the topic of siblings to the 3rd house. But it *does* make sense when we consider that Mercury has its joy in the 1st house, and that one of the common significations of Mercury is brothers.⁶⁶ From this we can provisionally conclude that the joys were indeed in the Hermes text, and that some of the significations of the houses were being derived from the joys. If the Hermes text was in fact one of the earliest texts on the houses, then it is possible that this was also the source for the doctrine of the planetary joys.

Conclusion

I hope to have demonstrated in this paper that the planetary joys scheme represents a deliberate and very elaborate construct, which ties together and provides the motivation for the following things:

1. The assignment of the four elements to the signs of the zodiac
2. The order of the sequence of the triplicity lords
3. Part of the rationale for the sect assignments of the planets
4. The assignment of some of the significations of the houses

While much of this argument is difficult to validate textually since we are discussing a conceptual model that is only implicitly referred to or alluded to in many of the texts, I feel that the systematic nature of the model and the way that it consistently connects several different techniques and concepts argues against it being an accident.

The implications of this discovery are far-reaching, since it appears that the planetary joys scheme provides the rationale for a number of major astrological concepts and techniques that have been in use by astrologers since antiquity. It also adds another layer to the debate that has been taking place recently in the astrological and academic communities about the origins of Hellenistic astrology.⁶⁷ I hope that this will shed light on and make a substantive contribution to both sides of that debate.

⁶⁶ Valens, *Anthology*, 1, 1: 38; Dorotheus, *Carmen*, 1, 18: 2;

⁶⁷ This is discussed briefly in Brennan, *Hellenistic Astrology*, pp. 15-17. Greenbaum and Ross recently weighed in on this debate in *The Role of Egypt in the Development of the Horoscope*, pp. 149-153.

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