

Rhetorius on inceptions

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James H. Holden's *Rhetorius the Egyptian, Astrological Compendium* contains most of "Rhetorius", *Explanation* 5.0–118, translated from the available imperfect editions, as well as various associated texts as appendices. These include Rhetorius's *On the Signs* (I) and *On the Stars* (II), an anonymous text on judging eclipses (III), and chapters 12–13 (IV–V) of a ninth-century revision of "Rhetorius's" *Explanation*. The text translated below, a systematic analysis of inceptions, is a supplement to Holden's book.

The text is extant in two versions. The shorter version is attributed to Rhetorius on ff. 180v–181r of its unique manuscript, ms Paris, BNF, gr. 2425 (**R**), where it constitutes the second part of "Rhetorius", *Explanation* 6.23. The extended version, which is obviously based on Rhetorius's version, is found as the first part of "Rhetorius", *Explanation* 6.23 (**R**, ff. 179v–180r), chapter 6 of "Balchus", *Book of Astrology*¹ – on ff. 96v–97v of ms Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, gr. 29 (**E**) and f. 99rv of ms Milan, BA, B 38 sup. (Martini–Bassi 88; **A**) – and as an unnumbered chapter on f. 163rv in the front matter of book III of ms Vatican City, BAV, Vat. gr. 1056 (**V**).

Whereas Rhetorius's version has never been edited, a few editions of the extended version have been published. Franz Cumont edited the last two paragraphs from **AE** in CCAG 5.1, 179.4–15, and later the whole chapter was published by Josef Heeg from **V** in CCAG 5.3, 126.1–127.9. In 1932, Carlo Oreste Zuretti edited it again from ms El Escorial, RB, Φ. I. 5 (Andrés 183; **Φ**), an apograph copied from **E**, using the various readings of **A**, in CCAG 11.1, 270.1–271.17. For the present translation, I examined the entire textual tradition (**A** from Zuretti's edition).

This is the first modern translation of both versions. A lacuna that I have not been able to recover is indicated by [***]. Passages substituting lacunas are in [square brackets], words inserted to facilitate understanding stand in (round brackets), and a sentence deemed to be a later interpolation is secluded in {curly brackets}. Ellipsis ('...') is used to break sentences so that the parallel versions can be studied side by side. The numbering in Rhetorius's version is original.

¹ This is in fact a Byzantine anthology composed of chapters of various origins. It was transmitted together with a Greek translation of Abū Ma'shar's selected works, and at some point of the transmission, a scribe probably believed he was copying yet another book by Abū Ma'shar. This may be the reason why "Balchus", a Graecized version of his *nisba*, al-Balkhī, is added as the author of the anthology. For the form "Balchus", which appears in **A**, **E** writes "Palchus", and this latter name variant has been adopted by scholars.

On inceptions

(1) In each inception, take the supervisor and the administrator,² and examine whether they are subtracting or adding³.

(2) Then examine in what sign the Hour-Marker is: in a solid, a double-bodied, or a tropical one; and whether the sign is one of the straight or the crooked ones, and whether it is one of the aquatic⁴, the terrestrial, the four-footed, or the lurking ones.

(3a) Also, examine what appearance⁶ the lord of the Hour-Marker has: (whether he is) morning or evening, setting or rising;⁷ additive or subtractive; being exalted or depressed; opposing (his domicile) or in his own domicile. (3b) Then, (examine) in what place he is located: whether he is pivotal, succeeding, or having declined, swiftly rising or slowly rising; (and examine) by whom he is beheld: by benefics or malefics.

(4a) In addition to these, (examine) in what places Helios and Selene happen to be; by whom they are beheld; [in] whose bounds they are; and whether they are in bright degrees.

(4b) And (examine) the trigonal masters of the Hour-Marker, Helios, and Selene.

(5a) And (examine) in what places the domicile-masters of Helios and Selene are; what appearances they have; whether they are additive

In another manner, on inceptions according to Rhetorius

1. In every inception, examine the supervisor and the administrator, and examine whether they are not subtracting.

2. Then, above all, examine in what sign the Hour-Marker is: in a tropical, a double-bodied, or a solid one; and whether it is straight or crooked, moist⁵ or aquatic, and so forth.

3. Then, [examine] what appearance the lord of the Hour-Marker has: (whether he is) morning, evening, or setting; adding or subtracting; being exalted or depressed; opposing (his domicile)⁸ or in his own domicile or trigon; pivotal, having declined, or succeeding; or by whom he is beheld: by a benefic or a malefic.

4. Then, examine in what place Helios and Selene are; by whom they are beheld; in whose bounds they are; and (whether they are in) bright degrees.

5. Examine in what place the domicile-masters of Helios and Selene are; what appearances they have; whether they are subtracting or adding; and

² The planetary lords of the day and the hour, respectively.

³ Following **RV**; these expressions normally refer either to speed or acceleration, but in comparison with the other version, it seems that retrograde and direct motion, or, for the Sun and the Moon, slow and fast motion is meant here, respectively. – **AE** write “whether neither marks the hour.”

⁴ Reading καθυγρῶν for the manuscripts' ὑγρῶν, 'moist'.

⁵ Presumably, a result of a dittography (ἢ ὑγρὸν ἢ καθυγρὸν from ἢ καθυγρὸν ἢ καθυγρὸν), which perhaps should be read as εἰ καθυγρὸν ἢ χερσαῖον, 'whether it is aquatic or terrestrial.'

⁶ 'Appearance' refers to the planet's position within its synodic cycle, which affects its visibility, direction, speed, and acceleration.

⁷ **RV** have ἑῶρος ἢ ἑσπέριος ἢ δύνων ἢ ἀρκτῶος, 'morning, evening, setting, or belonging to the Bears (i.e., northern)', of which the last one does not make sense. **A**, on the other hand, writes ἀνατολικὸς ἢ δυτικὸς ἢ ἑσπέριος, 'rising, setting, or evening'. (**E** uses the same words as **A** but here it is the appearance that is rising etc.; this is obviously wrong.) Since the order in **RV** better resembles Rhetorius's version, the original likely wrote ἑῶρος ἢ ἑσπέριος ἢ δυτικὸς ἢ ἀνατολικὸς (and this is what I translated) the last two of which words would be then faultily resolved from an abbreviation in the hyparchetype of **RV**. – 'Setting' refers to being under the Sun's beams, while 'rising' to being out of the beams; 'morning' and 'evening' are corresponding to orientality and occidentality, respectively.

⁸ Possibly the trigon is also understood here.

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or subtractive; and whether they look upon the lights. (5b) (Examine) in particular whether the domicile-master of Selene is not opposing Selene; whether he lies in a good place; whether he is beholding her (i.e., Selene) in any way, except a diameter; and whether he welcomes her presence.⁹

(5c) Also, examine in which sign Selene is located: in a tropical, a double-bodied, or another sign; whether she is waxing or waning, adding or subtracting, or running swiftly or tardily.¹⁰

(6) Also, examine in which place the Lot of Fortune is located, and whether Helios is beholding the Lot of Fortune – since it brings success...

(7) ...and the lord of the Lot of Fortune.

(8) Also, consider the separations and the applications of Selene...

(9a) ...and the twelfth-parts of hers and the Hour-Marker.

(9b) Also, examine the (constellations) co-rising with the Hour-Marker, Selene, and the other stars, the faces of the decans, and the effects of the bounds.

(10a) Also, examine whether Selene does not happen to be in the eclipsing degrees or the degrees without light,¹¹ especially in the Descending Node; and whether she is not running in the void, (not) approaching the bond of Helios,¹² (not) cut into two,¹³ (not) approaching Kronos after loosening the bond, (not) in aversion to her own domicile-master, or (not) enclosed by Ares and Kronos. (10b) For if Selene happens to be in a double-bodied (sign) before the Hour-Marker in the upper hemisphere, it indicates that the matter

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whether they are looking upon the lights. And, in particular, whether the domicile-master of Selene is not opposing Selene; whether he is in a bad or a good place; whether he is beholding Selene, and welcomes the presence of her...

...and whether Selene is waxing in her light or waning; and whether she is adding in numbers or subtracting.

6. [Examine] in which place the Lot of Fortune is, and whether Helios is beholding it: for it brings success and choices.

7. Examine the lord of (the Lot of) Fortune.

8. Also, consider the applications and the separations of Selene.

9. [***] the twelfth-part...

...and the faces of the decans.

10. Examine whether Selene does not happen to be in the eclipsing degrees or the degrees without light, especially in the Descending Node; and whether she is not running in the void, [or] (not) approaching the bond of Helios, (not) cut into two, (not) approaching Kronos after loosening the bond, (not) in aversion to her own domicile-master, or (not) enclosed by Ares and Kronos.

⁹ A planet 'welcoming' the presence of the Moon is the one to which the Moon is applying bodily.

¹⁰ It is possible that 'running swiftly or tardily' is simply interpreting 'adding or subtracting'; otherwise, 'adding or subtracting' should refer to the Moon's acceleration.

¹¹ These two expressions are synonyms and refer to the lunar nodes.

¹² The Moon is under the Sun's bond when it is within 15 degrees from the new or full Moon. 'Approaching' refers to application to the conjunction or opposition, while 'loosening' to separation.

¹³ This refers to the first and last quarters.

has also been advanced previously, and this is the second inquiry. (10c) But if Selene happens to be (in a double-bodied sign) after the Hour-Marker in the lower hemisphere, it indicates that the matter has already begun and is beginning again.

(10d) {Also, examine the character of the decan in which the Hour-Marker is.}¹⁴

(11) Also, observe the three ninths and the four sevenths of Selene, and the eighth, the eighteenth, and the twenty-eighth day of the whole Roman month; (12a) and for a great certainty, also observe the neaps and the rips of Selene, as the Gauls observe them. (12b) From the 27th (day) of Selene until the middle of the 3rd, there are seven days and a half¹⁵ – these are called ‘rips’: in these days, nothing is to be done. (12c) Conversely, from the middle of the 3rd day of Selene until the 11th, (the days) are called ‘neaps’: in these (days), everything is to be done. (12d) From the 12th day until the middle of the 18th, they are again rips, but from the 19th¹⁶ day until the 26th, they are neaps; and the remaining (days) are rips until the middle of the 3rd day of Selene: and in neaps, everything is to be done while Selene is below the earth and not above the earth.

11. Also, observe the three ninths and the four sevenths of Selene.

12. And observe the neaps and the rips, as the Gauls¹⁷ do.

¹⁴ This looks like a repetition of (9b), so I secluded it.

¹⁵ This scheme presupposes a uniform lunar month of 30 days.

¹⁶ Actually, from the middle of the 18th day.

¹⁷ Reading Γαλλοί with the other version for **R**'s Χαλδαῖοι, ‘Chaldaeans’.