THE
ASTROLOGY
BOOK
The Encyclopedia of Heavenly Influences

JAMES R. LEWIS

Detroit
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ABU¯ MA’SCHAR

The famous Persian astrologer Abū Ma’shar (787–886), whose full name was Abū Ma’shar Ja’far ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Umar al-Balkhi, is perhaps the major representative of Arabic astrology from the medieval Western world. His works were widely translated in the twelfth century, were widely circulated in manuscript, and exerted a very powerful influence on the development of Western astrology. His writings were used as prototypes for astrological practice. For instance, they provided the thirteenth-century astrologer Guido Bonatti with a frequently cited source in his summa of medieval astrology, the Liber Astronomia (c. 1282). Episcopal clergyman Theodore Otto Wedel tells us that English poets Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower were familiar with Abū Ma’shar’s works. One can almost say that Abū Ma’shar established the standard practice for medieval astrology in general with major additional input from Messahala, Ptolemy, and Dorotheus. Abū Ma’shar’s influence upon the philosophical foundations of Arabic and Latin astrology is far greater than has been recognized and to a large degree constitutes the difference between medieval astrological theory and modern astrological theory, especially with regard to fate and free will.

Abū Ma’shar’s astrological writings are also an example of Hermetic influence on Arabic astrology. His works (written in Arabic) represent a fusion of Sabian Hermeticism, Persian chronology, Islam, Greek Science (especially Aristotelian), and Mesopotamian astrology. He, and his teacher Al-Kindi, were instrumental in fostering the identification of the antediluvian prophet Idris with Enoch and Hermes, thereby creating a religious syncretism that had important ramifications for the dissemination of pagan science, including astrology. Abū Ma’shar was an extremely successful practitioner of the art and traveled throughout the Middle East in service to numerous Indian, Persian, Arab, and Egyptian chiefs of state. His reputation was established in the Christian west by Peter of Abano in the thirteenth century in his Conciliator Differentiarum Philosophorum et Precipue Medicorum (Diff. 156), wherein Peter quotes the Al-
Mudsakaret or (Memorabilia) of Abū Sa‘īd Schadsan, a student of Abū Ma‘ṣhar’s who recorded his teacher’s answers and astrological deeds. The Memorabilia, which have come to be known among scholars as “Albumasar in Sadan” due to traditional corruptions of both men’s names, is analyzed by Lynn Thorndike in a 1954 ISIS article.

The astrological works of Abū Ma‘ṣhar we have are:

- The Greater Introduction to Astrology
- The Flores Astrologicae
- On the Great Conjunctions and on the Revolutions of the World (Kitāb al-Qiranat)
- On the Revolutions of Nativities
- The Thousands (Kitāb al-Uluf)

Abū Ma‘ṣhar was a religious Muslim. He was also an astrologer and a noted philosopher. His impact upon subsequent Arabic and Latin astrology is best understood through a consideration of his attitude toward the idea of freedom of the will as it relates to astrology. In his Greater Introduction, he sets forth his theory of astrological determinism in the context of a defense of astrology against its detractors.

Abū Ma‘ṣhar repeatedly mentions the divine will as the originator or director of nature. All motions, including celestial motions, are derived from one unique and unmoved source. Abū Ma‘ṣhar equated this with God. His source, Aristotle, placed it in a universal attraction at the periphery of the supreme sphere—the sphere of the fixed stars. According to Abū Ma‘ṣhar, God is the source of all motions in the universe. God’s intervention in terrestrial affairs, however, never disrupts the regular operation of the system of causes and effects leading to generation in nature. This causal relationship is dependent upon the stars. This means that although Abū Ma‘ṣhar asserts frequently that Allah is omnipotent, Abū Ma‘ṣhar’s universe is conceived primarily in terms of physical science and merely draped in Koranic theology.

We may be excused for questioning whether Abū Ma‘ṣhar believes that divine providence is the actual cause of natural manifestations. Where is human free will in this? Is his cosmo-conception deterministic, or can God intervene in terrestrial affairs? Is the individual human free to choose a course of action? Apart from his many assertions of orthodoxy, Abū Ma‘ṣhar leaves little room for providence because he asserts that the planets and stars intervene in the chain of causes flowing between God and nature as a kind of buffer or series of filters through which the will of God must act.

The substance of Abū Ma‘ṣhar’s argument is that both the necessary and the impossible, being unchangeable, leave no room for the contingent. But accidental (i.e., possible, contingent) things happen in the world of generation. Thus a third category, “the possible,” is necessary to cover these things. The greatest source of contingency in man’s affairs is his ability to reason. His capacity for deliberation and the exercise of choice constitutes a principle of indetermination for future occurrences; but man’s choice does not extend to things he knows to be necessary or impossible.

Abū Ma‘ṣhar asserts that contingency actually exists and gives examples taken from concrete reality. A piece of cloth may be cut up or, equally possible, it may remain whole until worn out through use. Iron or lead is at one point in time solid and at another point in time liquid. Air may receive more or less heat or cold. All such
possibilities of mutations may materialize or not, but they are clear proof of the existence of contingency in some beings. On the other hand, the necessary and the impossible either are or are not absolute.

Abû Ma’shar recognizes three categories of the possible or the contingent. The first category is *contingens naturalis sive facilis*; an example is that of rain most often following the gathering of clouds. The second category is *per optacionem et difficilis*; an example is that of the non-noble man seeking to become king. The third category is *et contingens equalis*; an example is that of the pregnant woman hoping to give birth to a boy, but who has a 50-50 chance of delivering either a girl or a boy.

Possibility originates in the physical world from the capacity of matter to receive first one quality and then its opposite. Water may be cold at one time and hot in another, with varying intensity in each state. In man, possibility springs from his capacity for deliberation and choice, but also from his capacity to receive the qualities of matter in his body. Hence, though man is endowed with free choice that constitutes a first principle of contingency in him, his freedom of choice is limited, circumscribed by the matter from which his body is made.

According to Abû Ma’shar, something remarkable happens when a thing moves from potentiality to actuality. He concludes that contingency is ultimately absorbed into either the necessary or the impossible! Once a thing has come into being, its potentiality in which its contingency resided no longer subsists, and therefore it must be classified in the camp of the necessary. On the other hand, if it does not materialize, Abû Ma’shar thinks that it must be because of some sort of impossibility. Thus, Abû Ma’shar shares the fatalistic leanings of Arabic Aristotelianism.

Abû Ma’shar holds that planetary influence does not destroy contingency or freedom. He asserts that planetary influence signifies the necessary, the possible, and the impossible. With respect to contingency in matter, Abû Ma’shar holds that universal matter, formed of the four elements, is entirely dependent in all its transformations upon the stellar influences. Thus, the totality of contingency is outlined in advance in the regular motions of the stars. With respect to contingency in animated beings, Abû Ma’shar says it depends upon planetary motion, although a living thing needs more than just a natural motion to pass into action because its soul is a principle of indetermination to it as regards its future action.

Indetermination in man is no insurmountable obstacle to astrology, we are told, because there is a harmony between man’s soul and the souls in the planets. The rational soul, even under the influence of the stars, has a power of deliberation and choice as a result of a similar power in the stars. Man’s body, on the other hand, has the capacity to receive new qualities from the sky. Through the parallelism between the animated planets and living things in this lower world, Abû Ma’shar found it possible to ascribe an unlimited scope to the planets’ influences upon the voluntary contingency in man’s twofold body and soul. Within this cosmological framework, man’s free will appears drastically curtailed from what it was held to be by Aristotle, the Christians, Jews, and Muslims, notwithstanding Abû Ma’shar’s frequently uttered statements to the contrary inspired by his religiosity.
Abū Ma’shar

Having set forth his planetary theory, Abū Ma’shar reviews the various influences exerted by the planets upon man, intending to show how freedom or contingency is not destroyed. As an animated being, man possesses life, which is a necessary attribute of his nature. The animated and intelligent planets signify this for him, and in doing so they signify a modality of being that may be called of the type necessary. On the other hand, there are things incompatible with man’s nature, such as the ability to fly. By excluding this eventuality from the nature of man as he comes to be, the planets signify another modality of man’s being—the impossible. Finally, as man has the power of choice and reason, and the capacity to receive the impression of different physical qualities in his body by virtue of the four elements of which it is composed, human nature is open to a wide range of contingency that is nevertheless signified by the planets. Thus, the planets signify the three modes: the necessary, the impossible, and the possible.

The astrologer is only concerned with the possible. He does not inquire whether fire burns or not, but rather will fire burn tomorrow a matter that has a disposition to be burned? Will this individual talk to that one tomorrow? What the astrologer does in these cases is to make sure that the focus of the enquiry belongs to the possible. The planets can indicate that something cannot occur (impossible), that something may occur (possible), or that something must occur (necessary). If the signification holds only in the future, it will remain uncertain until the time of occurrence, when the actual event will fall into the category of the necessary. If, for instance, no impediment deprives a man from the use of his tongue, the man enjoys potentially the faculty of speaking or not. But only until he speaks. When he has spoken, his speech falls into the category of the necessary. Abū Ma’shar holds that the modes of activity of concrete beings exist potentially in them before they are translated into action. Once they have reached the stage of a completed action they fall into the category of the necessary.

Abū Ma’shar concludes that “since the planets signify the contingent in nature as well as in deliberation and choice proper to man, they indicate that man will choose only what is implied in planetary motion.” If there is a providential intervention in this scheme of natural motion, it must come from outside the regular activity of nature and, presumably, against it.

Abū Ma’shar holds that the choice exercised by man’s rational soul is circumscribed by its connection to the physical body, whose potentials are already limited. Man’s rational soul acts in connection with his vital soul, but the latter is influenced by the animated planets. For instance, among the motions within his possibilities through the physical properties of his body, he may select walking, sitting, or standing (but not flying). Once he chooses, the possibilities of his material nature are forthwith determined to this particular motion. Moreover, man’s choice is itself limited to the actual determination caused by the planetary motions.

In conclusion, what we see here is a doctrine of astrological determination that is, from one point of view, an exercise in double-talk. The planets give possibilities because they are ensouled, and, as such, they are in harmony with man’s soul. So they judge and deliberate and so does man. Yet man, it turns out, judges and deliber-
ates what the planets have already deliberated, and, thus, man’s reason and choice merely reflect the celestial reason and choice. In fact there is little, if any, freedom.

Again, man’s body may receive influences from the heavens or it may not. But the body exists because of heaven ordering the elements. Therefore, the body is determined already by the stars. The rational soul is free to reason. Yet the rational soul acts in concert with the vital soul, which reflects the celestial decrees. Thus, the rational soul’s rational choices are adulterated by the appetitive, emotional, and instinctive inclinations of the vital soul.

Abū Ma’shar’s description of the constitution of man agrees well with the esoteric teachings coming down to us from the Middle Ages, which attribute to man a rational soul, an astral soul (the soul of the middle nature, or Tree of Life), and a physical body. A fifth factor, the highest, is alluded to elliptically by the reference to the sphere of the Moon, which was associated with the intellect. There is much implied in the statement “If there is a providential intervention in this scheme of natural motion, it must come from outside the regular activity of nature and presumably against it.”

Abū Ma’shar’s theory of astrological influence is actually deterministic in spite of his pious posturing. As such, it is contrary not only to religious tendencies in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, but also to the contemporary New Age idealism to which most modern (nineteenth- to twenty-first century) astrologers consciously or unconsciously ascribe. It is this difference that must be appreciated if one is to properly understand the difference between modern and medieval astrological practice.

—Robert Zoller

Sources:
Alkindi’s On the Stellar Rays. Translated by Robert Zoller.
Hermetis philosopi de revolutionibus nativitatum incerto interprete… (bound with Proclus In Claudii Ptolemaei quadripartium ennarator ignoti nominis Basilicae, 1559).
L’Astrologie et la Science Occulte. Le R. P. Festugière, O.P.

Abundantia

Abundantia, asteroid 151 (the 151st asteroid to be discovered, on November 1, 1875), is approximately 42 kilometers in diameter and has an orbital period of 4.1 years. Its name is Latin for “affluence” or “abundance.” Abundantia’s location by sign and house in a natal chart may show where one experiences the most abundance or an area that can be cultivated to achieve affluence.
ACCIDENTAL ASCENDANT

Horary astrology is the branch of astrology in which an astrological chart is cast for the moment a question is asked. The chart is then read to determine an answer to the question. The ascendant (degree of the zodiac on the eastern horizon) for a horary chart is referred to as the accidental ascendant.

ACCIDENTAL DIGNITY

A planet is said to be in its dignity when it is in the sign that it rules. For example, because Pluto rules Scorpio, Pluto is in dignity when in the sign Scorpio. As the term implies, this is regarded as a fortunate placement; a planet in its dignity is traditionally regarded as being in harmony with the sign and consequently strengthened.

A planet’s being in the sign of its rulership is sometimes referred to as essential dignity to distinguish it from certain other placements that tend to strengthen a planet’s influence by virtue of its position in an astrological chart; these other placements are traditionally termed “accidental” dignities.

For example, the 12 signs of the zodiac correspond to the 12 astrological houses so there is a natural affinity between successive signs and successive houses (i.e., between Aries, the first sign, and the first house; Taurus, the second sign, and the second house; Gemini, the third sign, and the third house; etc.). When a planet is placed in a natal chart so that it falls in the house corresponding to the sign it rules, it is said to be “accidentally” dignified. Thus, Mars in the first house, Venus in the second house, and Mercury in the third house would be accidentally dignified because Mars rules Aries, Venus rules Taurus, and Mercury rules Gemini.

Planets are also strengthened by certain other placements, such as when a planet in the first house is conjunct the ascendant, or one in the tenth house is conjunct the midheaven. These other placements are sometimes also referred to as accidental dignities.

Sources:

ACHILLES

Achilles, asteroid 588 (the 588th asteroid to be discovered, on February 22, 1906), is approximately 116 kilometers in diameter and has an orbital period of 11.8 years. It was named after the famous Greek hero of the Trojan War and was the first of the so-
called Trojan asteroids (asteroids that travel along the same orbital path as Jupiter) to be discovered. Achilles’ location by sign and house in a natal chart shows an area of exceptional strength, but at the same time the site of an Achilles’ heel.

Sources:

ACRONYCAL
Acronycal (Greek for “on the edge of night”) refers to a planet directly opposite the Sun that rises after sunset or sets before sunrise, which, as a consequence, is in a favorable location for astronomical observation. The acronycal place is the degree in the sign of the zodiac directly opposed to the Sun.

ADAD
Adad is a term from Mesopotamian astrology that refers to meteorological and astrological phenomena.

ADAMS, EVANGELINE
Evangeline Adams, born February 8, 1868, in Jersey City, New Jersey, was the premier American astrologer of the early twentieth century. She was the daughter of George and Harriet E. (Smith) Adams and was related to U.S. presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams. Raised in Andover, Massachusetts, she was educated there and in Chicago. She became part of the elite metaphysical community in the larger Boston area and was introduced to astrology by Dr. J. Heber Smith, a professor of medicine at Boston University. Adams also studied Hindu philosophy under Swami Vivekenanda. She eventually became so interested in the science of the stars that she chose it as her life’s work.

In 1899, Adams visited New York City and stayed at the fashionable Windsor Hotel. Her first client was Warren F. Leland, owner of the Windsor. After casting his chart, she told him that he was under a planetary combination that threatened immediate disaster. The next afternoon, on March 17, 1899, the hotel burned to the ground. Adams subsequently gained much newspaper coverage, which led to her becoming an astrological superstar, and she gained many rich and powerful clients. She eventually established her studios at Carnegie Hall and was consulted by financier J. P. Morgan, tenor Enrico Caruso, playwright Eugene O’Neill, mythologist Joseph Campbell, and actress Mary Pickford, among many others.

In 1914, Adams was arrested and charged with fortune-telling. She went to court armed with reference books and proceeded to explain the principles of astrology. She concluded her defense by reading a chart of an individual unknown to her.
Impressed with the accuracy of her reading, Judge John H. Freschi remarked that “the
defendant raises astrology to the dignity of an exact science” (New York Criminal
Reports, volume XXXII, 1914 ed.). He found Adams not guilty, and the case set a
precedent on how similar cases would be tried in New York City in the future.

Adams continued to practice and promote the science of the stars to the
general public. She marketed monthly forecasts featuring her predictions about political
and economic events (including a 1931 prediction that the United States would be at
war in 1942). During the last decade of her life, she wrote some of the most popular
astrology books ever published: The Bowl of Heaven (1926), Astrology: Your Place in the
Sun (1928), Astrology: Your Place Among the Stars (1930), and Astrology for Everyone
(1931). Much of her published work on astrology was originally done in collaboration
with the English magician and occultist Aleister Crowley. On April 23, 1930, Adams
began to broadcast on radio three times a week. As a result of this show, she received
150,000 requests for astrological charts over the course of the next three months. As
much as a year later, requests and letters were still being received at the rate of 4,000 a
day. Adams was a major contributor to the popularization of astrology in the United
States. She died on November 10, 1932, in New York City.

—Karen Christino

Sources:
———. The Bowl of Heaven. New York, Dodd, Mead & Co., 1926. Reprint, New York: Dodd,
Christino, Karen, Foreseeing the Future: Evangeline Adams and Astrology in America. Amherst,

**Adjusted Calculation Date**

The adjusted calculation date is the date on which a planet in a progressed horoscope
culminates (i.e., reaches the midheaven).

**Admetos**

Admetos is one of the eight hypothetical planets (sometimes referred to as the trans-
Neptunian points or planets, or TNPs for short) utilized in Uranian astrology. The
Uranian system, sometimes referred to as the Hamburg School of Astrology, was
established by Friedrich Sieggrün (1877–1951) and Alfred Witte (1878–1943). It
relies heavily on hard aspects and midpoints. In decline for many decades, it has expe-
rrienced a revival in recent years.

Admetos may symbolize blockage, patience, frustration, delay, hindrances,
standstill, and so forth. More positively, it may represent depth, profundity, and that
which is fundamental. For example, a link between the planet Mercury and Admetos
may indicate limited thinking, or it may indicate deep thinking.
Based on the speculative orbits of the Uranian planets, the Kepler, Solar Fire and Win*Star software program will all locate this hypothetical planet in an astrological chart.

Sources:

Adorea
Adorea, asteroid 268 (the 268th asteroid to be discovered, on August 18, 1884), is approximately 122 kilometers in diameter and has an orbital period of 5.5 years. Adorea is a “concept” asteroid; the name means glory and originally referred to the gift of corn that was given to soldiers after a victory. In a natal chart, Adorea’s location by sign and house position indicates where a person gives or receives recognition. When afflicted by inharmonious aspects, Adorea may indicate negative or false recognition.

Sources:

Aestival Signs
The aestival signs are the summer signs, namely, Cancer, Leo, and Virgo.

Aeternitas
Aeternitas, asteroid 446 (the 446th asteroid to be discovered, on October 27, 1899), is approximately 52 kilometers in diameter and has an orbital period of 4.7 years. Its name is Latin for “eternity,” and refers to the immortality achieved by deification. When prominent in a natal chart, Aeternitas may indicate a person with interest in the “eternal verities” or one who can expect a long life.

Sources:
Affinity

Astrologers use the term affinity to refer to compatibility between certain planets or signs. It is also used to denote attraction between people whose charts interact harmoniously and magnetically with each other.

Affliction

An affliction is (1) any difficult aspect, such as a square, or (2) a more neutral aspect, such as a conjunction, in which at least one of the planets is a “difficult” planet, such as Saturn. A planet involved in more than one such aspect, especially if there are no benefic aspects counterbalancing the hard aspects, is said to be heavily afflicted.

The term affliction has tended to drop out of usage among contemporary astrologers, although the revival of classical and horary astrology has also revived traditional terms. Astrologers are more likely to refer to such aspects as inharmonious, challenging, or difficult. More is involved in this change of terminology than the goal of making the language less dramatic: Some difficult aspects are necessary to bring challenges into one’s life, and the modern terminology more accurately denotes challenge. People without at least a few such aspects in their natal charts usually lack character and rarely accomplish much in life.

Sources:

Age of Aquarius (Aquarian Age)

The Age of Aquarius is one of 12 successive 2,150-year periods, each of which corresponds with one of the 12 signs of the zodiac. In the same manner in which individuals born at different times of the year are thought to be dominated by different astrological signs, astrologers also tend to view different historical periods as being dominated by the influence of particular signs. According to this view, Earth, for the past several thousand years, has been passing through a period dominated by the sign Pisces (the Age of Pisces). This succession of ages is based on a phenomenon known as the precession of equinoxes.

Due to the precession of equinoxes, the spring equinox moves slowly backward through the constellations of the zodiac, so that approximately every 2000 years, the equinox begins taking place in an earlier constellation. Thus, the spring equinox has been occurring in Pisces for the past several thousand years and will begin to occur in the constellation Aquarius in the near future. This is the background for current speculations about the so-called Age of Aquarius. The phenomenon of the precession of equinoxes also means that the spring equinox occurred in the sign Aries during the Hellenistic period (the period of Ptolemy), in Taurus several thousand years prior to the Hellenistic period, and so forth backward through the zodiac.
Because of the space between different constellations, it is difficult if not impossible to determine precisely when one age ends and another one begins, although this has not prevented many practitioners of traditional astrology, as well as esoteric astrology, from asserting that the Aquarian Age has already begun. A popular date for the beginning of the Age of Aquarius is the year 2000. If, however, the Age of Pisces began with the ministry of Jesus (as many claim), and if each age is 2,150 years in duration, then, clearly, there is a long way to go before the arrival of the Age of Aquarius.

The contemporary notion of the Age of Aquarius, developed in occult and theosophical circles in the last century, was mediated to the larger society by the counterculture of the 1960s (as in the well-known song "Age of Aquarius" that was featured in the rock musical Hair). The metaphysical subculture that emerged as a successor to the counterculture in the early-to-middle 1970s eventually dropped the appellation Aquarian Age in favor of New Age. Most popular accounts of the difference between the Piscean Age and the Aquarian Age emphasize the negative traits of Pisces and the positive traits of Aquarius. Thus, attention is called to the negative Piscean tendency to adopt an attitude of blind faith, and to the positive Aquarian tendency to adopt a more empirical attitude. The limits of this approach—which often ignores positive Pisces traits as well as negative Aquarius characteristics—should be clear.

A comprehensive critique of the Aquarian Age notion can be found in Nicholas Campion’s important treatment, “The Age of Aquarius: A Modern Myth.” Although this work is useful, contrary to Campion’s argument, the ancients did put forward a theory of successive astrological ages based on the precession of equinoxes (see Mithraism and Astrology).

Sources:

AGES OF MAN
The Ages of Man refers to the ancient notion that the different stages of human life are ruled by different planets and the luminaries (i.e., the Sun and the Moon). The traditional schema was as follows: Moon—growth (ages 1–4); Mercury—education (5–14); Venus—emotion (15–22); Sun—virility (23–42); Mars—ambition (43–57); Jupiter—reflection (58–69); and Saturn—resignation (70–99).

AGRICULTURAL ASTROLOGY (PLANTING BY THE SIGNS)
Agricultural astrology is the practice of choosing the time to plant and harvest crops according to the phase and sign of the Moon. As such, agricultural astrology is a branch of electional astrology. Planting according to the phase of the Moon—during
the waxing phase for most yearly food crops that produce their yield aboveground—may be the human race's oldest astrological practice. In the more recent history of the West, agricultural astrology has been referred to as “planting by the signs”—the practice of planting seeds according to the astrological sign of the Moon, which, because