

COSMOLOGY, ASTROLOGY, AND MAGIC:
DISCOURSE, SCHEMES, POWER, AND LITERACY

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Ultimately no doubt the pairing of astrology and magic derives from the ingenious fabrications of early-imperial *delatores*; but it received theoretical reinforcement from Pliny the Elder's tripartite model, which presented astrology as one of the three foundations of the *fraudentissima ars* along with medicine and religion.¹ The assimilation of astrologers and magicians in the Late-Roman penal legislation collected in *Cod. Theod.* IX, 16 thus had centuries of legitimacy.² The exhibiting of the astrologer Roger Bolingbroke on a throne "with the vestments of his magic and with waxen images, and with many other magical instruments" before his execution in London on a charge of *maiestas* against Henry VI in 1441 in the case of Eleanor, duchess of Gloucester, reproduces the same classical pairing.³ In the early-modern period, it was a trope in the routine denunciation of popular magic. In the 1590s, for example, Welsh clergymen complained of witchcraft, consisting of appeals for help to wizards, astrologers, soothsayers, fortune-tellers, conjurors, charmers and magicians, that was pervasive among the rural population.⁴ The second part of Johannes Rüdingers *De magia illicita* (1635) consists of ten sermons against soothsaying, the 'observation of days', augury, conjuration, astrology, necromancy and the interpretation of dreams.⁵ Astrology as magic consequently became a

¹ Plin., *NH* XXX, 2 with Garosi 1976, 17–22; Marco Simón 2001, 122–125. [Psell.], *Daem.* 5 (p. 41 Boissonade = p. 103 L88f. Gautier): (ἡ μαγεία) περιέζωσται δὲ καὶ τὴν ἀστρονομίαν σύμπασαν, καὶ πολλὰ διὰ ταύτης καὶ δύναται καὶ ἀποτελεῖ. Most of the section on magic, but not this sentence, is taken from Proclus' lost commentary on the Chaldaean Oracles: Gautier 1988, 103 n. 29.

² On the Tacitean narratives, see Fögen 1993, 95–113. Late-Roman legislation: e.g. *Cod. Theod.* IX, 16, 4 (357 CE): *Chaldaei ac magi ac ceteri, quos maleficos ob facinorum magnitudinem vulgus appellat*...; IX, 16, 6 (358 CE):...*si quis magus... aut haruspex aut hariolus aut certe augur vel etiam mathematicus aut narrandis somni occultans artem aliquam divinandi... exercens*...; cf. Desanti 1990, 133–168; Fögen 1993, 20–26, 40–48; Zeddies 2003; Lotz 2005, 68–183.

³ Carey 1992, 138–145.

⁴ Clark & Morgan 1976.

⁵ Cited by Clark 1997, 462.

fixture in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century rationalist attack upon demonology and witchcraft; Reginald Scot, for example, classifies astrologers ("figure-casters") as witches.⁶

From the anti-papistical discourse the pairing was taken over by the Enlightenment, and more especially by nineteenth-century rationalist progressivism, into a pseudo-historical account of the decline of Classical (and indeed medieval) civilisation. A prominent French proponent of this view was Alfred Maury, Membre de l'Institut, whose *La magie et l'astrologie*, which went through four editions between 1860 and 1877, aimed to expose the dark errors of these ancient pseudo-sciences: "Présenter en aperçu l'histoire de ce grand mouvement de l'esprit humain qui nous éleva graduellement des ténèbres de la magie et de l'astrologie aux lumineuses régions de la science moderne, tel est le but de ce petit ouvrage."⁷ Adopting as he did a fantastical, dystopian version of the history of ancient religion, Maury had no difficulty in revealing to his readers the steps by which syncretism turned the religions of Greece, Rome, Egypt, Phoenicia, Asia Minor, Assyria, and Persia into mere demonologies, joined in empire with astrology and magic.⁸ This negative account in turn fed directly into the late nineteenth-century debate in France over the place of 'oriental religions' in the grand narrative of the decline of the Roman Empire and the establishment of Christianity as *Reichsreligion*.⁹ Given this background, Franz Cumont could hardly avoid devoting a chapter of *Les religions orientales* to the pair: "Sœurs jumelles engendrées par l'Orient superstitieux et érudit, la magie et l'astrologie sont toujours restées les filles hybrides de sa culture sacerdotale. Leur existence est gouvernée par deux principes contraires, la raisonnement et la foi, et leur volonté oscille perpétuellement entre ces deux pôles de la pensée."¹⁰

Although Cumont made an effort in this chapter to link magic with 'oriental religion', invoking Egypt, Babylonia and Persia as its source, the handful of pages devoted to the topic are, even by his own standards,

⁶ *A Discoverie of Witchcraft* Bk. XI c. 21. The first edition (1584) was burned on the orders of James VI. The work was translated into Dutch in 1609 (revised 1637); and re-issued in English in London in 1651 and 1665.

⁷ Maury 1860, 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 49–85.

⁹ See Bonnet & Van Haepelen 2006, xxiii–xxix.

¹⁰ Cumont 1906 (1929⁴, 178 = 2006⁵, 294). This chapter was originally published as Cumont 1906b. He rather kindly dismisses Maury's work as "une simple esquisse": Cumont 1906 (1929⁴, 294 n. 74 = 2006⁵, 278).

more than usually vague and rhetorical. It is often difficult to make out what it is he is trying to argue. In fact, even ritual magic was an embarrassment for his wider project of revaluing the 'oriental religions' by showing how they brought about a new degree of personal engagement, ethical behaviour, emotional commitment, interiority, a longing for salvation and immortal life into the "ensemble de rites propitiatoires, averruncatoires et expiatoires" that was Roman religion.¹¹ In this narrative, magic has no place, it is a fossil-remnant from a completely different type of story, that of decline and fall. Astrology, by contrast, for all that it was a "monstrueux édifice d'illusions sidérales",¹² could be fitted into the scheme, inasmuch as it depended upon the rationalised, ordered Eudoxan-Callippic cosmology, which revealed to mankind a divine mind at work in the revolutions of the heavenly bodies.¹³ The value of the oriental religions on this account was that they transmitted to the mass of the urban populations of the Empire a new 'théologie scientifique', a 'mysticisme épuré', in the form of a 'religion astrale', replacing the worship of anthropomorphic gods with the cult of cosmic powers.¹⁴ Inasmuch as this cosmic religion was highly ethical, it favoured the spread of Christianity; but as a form of fatalism, it worked in directly the opposite direction.¹⁵

If astrology alone could be fitted into the paradigm of Cumont's oriental religions, he himself did much to undermine faith in the notion of a popular astral religion derived from the Orient. Even in terms of what he thought he knew in 1906, this was a shaky hypothesis. He could only have supported it by appealing to the supposed centrality of solar worship in 'the Syrian religions' and his own faith in the various neo-Platonist versions of the cult of Mithras, which he gratuitously turned into a

¹¹ Cumont 1906 (1929⁴, 193 = 2006⁵, 313).

¹² Cumont 2000, 89. This chapter, "Le système astrologique du monde" (no. IV), was first published in the Swedish edition, *Den astralen religionen i forntiden*, tr. A. Nielson (Stockholm 1912), and is omitted from the American ed. of the same year.

¹³ Cf. Manil., *Astron.* 4, 873–930; also Orig., *Princip.* II, 11, cited by Cumont 2000, 163f. (this chapter likewise omitted from the American edition). Cumont's most elaborate account of the intellectual aspect of this astral religion was unfortunately buried in the obscurity of *Mémoires présentés par divers savants à l'Académie des Inscriptions*, and has never been reprinted: Cumont 1908–13 [a *separatum* (33 p.) was published by Librairie C. Klincksieck in year 1909; by a slip Cumont himself gives the date as 1919; Cumont 1906 (1929⁴, 270 n. 117 = 2006⁵, 211 n. 117)].

¹⁴ Cumont 2000, 155f., 161. For an excellent critical account of Cumont's 'Orient', see Burkert 2009.

¹⁵ Cumont 1912.

para-gnostic post-mortem journey through the planetary spheres.¹⁶ His major endeavour with regard to astrology, the twenty volumes of the *Corpus codicum astrologorum graecorum*, with which he was engaged as author or editor virtually all his active life, from the late 1890s until his death in 1947, played a decisive role in demonstrating the complex, polythetic nature of ancient astrology, and how little of this complexity could have been transmitted through the 'oriental religions'.¹⁷ More important, however, was the construction after the Great War of a synthetic concept of 'mystery religion', particularly associated with the name of Raffaele Pettazzoni (1883–1959), who sought to demonstrate what the comparative method ('storico-religioso') had to offer to the study of ancient religion by disregarding polis-cult and concentrating on 'mystery', which he linked directly to the phenomenon of tribal initiation, emphasizing features such as tattooing, animal masquerade, temporary deprivation, dramatic ritual, sexual symbolism, and themes of death and immortality.¹⁸ Pettazzoni's concept, unlike Cumont's, took the Eleusinian and other Greek mysteries (Orphic-Dionysiac, the Kabeiroi, Demeter at Andania, Sabazios) as a type, "una categoria *sui generis*", essentially in tension with public cult, even if ultimately absorbed by it. What this type shared with the 'Hellenistic oriental mysteries', Phrygian, Egyptian, Syrian, Phoenician and Persian, was the idea of personal, individual initiation, originating in the remote past and to be encountered in different forms all over the world.¹⁹

Whether consciously or not, this account of 'mystery' picked up the essence of the notion of *Erlösungsreligion*, which had established itself in the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* as a term for the emancipation of religion, in the Hellenistic period, in Gnosticism and above all in early Christianity, from its historical subordination to culture and the emergence of

¹⁶ Cumont 1917. Mithras: Cumont 1903 (1923³, 128–131). The model is rightly dismissed by Culianu 1982; Couliano 1994, 75–79; Colpe & Habermehl 1996, 526–528. Babylonian astronomy never even developed the notion of the celestial sphere or of terrestrial latitude and longitude: Dicks 1970, 169f.

¹⁷ The first vol., *Codices Florentinos* by A. Olivieri (Brussels 1898), contained transcriptions by F. Boll, Cumont, W. Kroll and A. Olivieri. Cumont, the spiritus rector of the enterprise, wrote the preface, deprecating the indifference of previous generations of scholars and enthusing over the insight the mss provide into ancient mentality and religion.

¹⁸ Pettazzoni 1924. I have used the reprint organised by Giovanni Casadio (Cosenza 1997), which also contains the original text of Pettazzoni's review of the relevant research mainly since 1918, previously published as Pettazzoni 1954–1955. The bibliography of 162 titles provides an excellent overview of the type of themes then dominant.

¹⁹ Cf. Speiser 1928; Prümmer 1933.

subjective longing for some type of redemption.²⁰ 'Mystery religion', as institutionalised by German Protestant scholarship in the 1890s as a tool for historicising early Christianity within its pagan context,²¹ thus tended to be reified into a major, independent historical actor. Culture-contact was preferred over evolutionism. Between the wars, the existence of 'oriental mysteries' was taken for granted; only a few scholars, notably A.D. Nock, M.P. Nilsson and A.J. Festugière, argued that they were in fact, as we would now say, mediated and re-constructed products of the Greek reception of selected non-Greek cults. Even in 1955, Pettazzoni could still claim that Cumont had been right to place oriental mysteries in the centre of his grand narrative.²² What then was Christianity but another 'oriental mystery religion'? Where Cumont, sensitive to the delicacy of the issue in Belgium, skirted the subject in *Religions orientales*, the debate over the indebtedness of early Christianity to pagan mystery religions became a central topic from around 1910.²³

It was at the first history of religions conference after the Second World War, held in Amsterdam in 1950, that A.D. Nock drew a line under this discussion by arguing that Christianity was an independent creation within the context of late Second Temple Judaism, that the terminology of 'mystery' was vague and often metaphorical, and that overall the impact of pagan mystery-religions on Christianity was minor and secondary.²⁴ The way was now clear to re-considering the oriental religions as topics in their own right, with their own specific histories. By 1950, Maarten Vermaseren, a pupil of F.J. de Waele at Nijmegen, had already spent months in Rome working on his corpus of Mithraic monuments to replace Cumont's volume

²⁰ On the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, see briefly Hartenstein & Betz 2004. Kippenberg 1997, 172–178 emphasizes the role played by world-rejection in this view of early Christianity. The word *Erlösung* occurs 482 times in Max Weber's œuvre, often in connection with *Erleuchtung* and *Charisma*: Radkau 2005, 539–541.

²¹ Anrich 1894; Bousset 1907; Reitzenstein 1910.

²² "Ma l'apporto dell'Oriente non può essere minimizzato, e in favore della tesi orientalizzante (Cumont) parla il fatto che proprio nella sfera religiosa fu più forte la reazione dell'Oriente alla civiltà ellenistica, e finì poi per trionfare con l'avvento del Cristianesimo": Pettazzoni 1924, 227.

²³ E.g. Jacoby 1910; Clemen 1913; Loisy 1914 (1930²); Dölger 1916; Brückner 1919; Fracassini 1922.

²⁴ Nock 1951. An earlier version had been delivered as lectures at Oberlin College (1942), later versions were published in Nock 1952 and Nock 1964, Ch. 3, 109–145. Note also Wedderburn 1982.

of 1896.²⁵ The increment of new finds, above all the striking number of mithraea turned up by the Fascist excavations at Ostia, and the temples at Dura-Europos and beneath the church of S. Prisca on the Aventine, with their frescoes and graffiti, had given archaeology the key role in this new agenda.²⁶ Although he began his *Corpus* with Asia Minor and Syria, following Cumont's assumption of maximal Iranian input, Vermaseren differed from him in seeing no need to include the ancient literary texts; and he carried that principle over into his *magnum opus*, the great corpus of Cybele monuments in the ÉPRO series.²⁷

By the late 1950s, when Vermaseren conceived the ÉPRO project, both astrology and magic had fallen out of the agenda of the 'oriental religions'. The very term 'religion' created a presumption in favour of institutionalised cults with cult-buildings, iterable rituals, and above all votive-inscriptions. The assimilation of 'oriental religion' to 'mystery-cult' worked in the same direction, tending to edge out cults where there were no mysteries, such as the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus and other Syrian deities. Archaeological pigeon-holing served simultaneously to perpetuate the category in a purely pragmatic sense ("This is an Isis-statuettes, therefore not evidence for *Roman* religion") and to harden the boundaries between the cults, so that working on one of the 'big three' (Isis, Mater Magna, Mithras) came to be one of the commonest strategies for saving the very idea of 'oriental religions'. These tendencies left no room for astrology or magic in the model. This certainly seems to have been Vermaseren's view, since he published just one volume in ÉPRO on astrology, namely Joëlle-Frédérique Bara's edition of Vettius Valens Book 1, which indeed appeared

²⁵ Published after considerable delay as Vermaseren 1956–1960. A first draft won a prize from the *Koninklijke Vlaamse Akademie van Wetenschappen in Brussels*. Vermaseren states in the preface to vol. 1 that Cumont had read through the first volume before his death in 1947. There are however only two letters from Vermaseren to Cumont in the latter's correspondence, the second written from Nijmegen a month before Cumont's death: Bonnet 1997a, 464–466.

²⁶ The 16 (17) Mithraic temples uncovered mainly by G. Calza's excavations were published by Becatti 1954. Dura: Rostovtzeff, Brown & Welles 1939, 62–134; the Final Report was a casualty of Rostovtzeff's acute depression and never appeared. S. Prisca was discovered in 1935; Vermaseren continued the excavations in 1952–53 with C.C. Van Essen, and published the results not in ÉPRO but in Vermaseren & Van Essen 1965. He did however re-publish in ÉPRO the important mithraeum of S. Maria Capua Vetere, discovered in 1922: Vermaseren 1971.

²⁷ Vermaseren 1977–1989. It is said, however, that Vermaseren intended to edit the literary texts in the projected third vol. of *CIMRM*, the files of which were destroyed on his instructions after his death in 1985.

after his death,²⁸ and, if we except W.O. Möller's misguided book on the Rotas/Sator square, which claimed it was Mithraic,²⁹ just two articles on magic, one of them in the synthetic volume which most clearly shows a change in his later reflection about the entire received category, *Die orientalischen Religionen im Römerreich* (1981), which included papers on early Christianity, Manichaeism, Judaism and Gnosis.³⁰ Given the extremely—bewilderingly—wide interpretation he gave to the term 'religions orientales', this negative record is extremely telling both about his own understanding of the concept and that of the contemporary scientific community.

If we include the notion of cosmology, the situation is slightly, but only slightly, different. In 1977 Vermaseren agreed to publish an English translation of an article on the celestial sphere by the Roman archaeologist Otto Brendel (1901–1973) that had originally appeared in German in 1936, much of it devoted to a wayward interpretation of the 'Philosophers mosaic' in Naples and its congener in the Villa Albani.³¹ ÉPRO also published two volumes on what we may loosely call cosmological issues in the cult of Mithras, one on the briefly-fashionable neo-Renaissance identification of Mithras with a constellation, the other a more serious examination of the possible meanings of planetary representations on selected Mithraic monuments.³² Neither invoked the supposed passage of the cult through Babylonia in the mists of antiquity, which had been Cumont's favoured scenario for the 'religion astrale'.³³ As for the relation of the 'oriental religions' to the standard Hellenistic cosmology, only the cult of Mithras,

²⁸ Bara 1989.

²⁹ Möller 1973.

³⁰ Schwartz 1981. The other is Vermaseren's own contribution to the 1979 soteriology conference in Rome: Vermaseren 1982b, a piece thoroughly in keeping with the Nilsson-Festugière view of these texts.

³¹ Brendel 1977, which is a translation by Brendel's wife of: Brendel 1936. No one now accepts his interpretation of the Naples mosaic (inv. no. 124545) as a depiction of the Seven Sages, cf. Gaiser 1980. The Naples mosaic (early 1st c. BCE) was taken from the villa of T. Siminius Stephanus in Pompeii. In the centre fore-ground is depicted a large sphere, in a wooden box, marked with the Eudoxan-Hipparchan celestial and circumpolar circles and some token celestial longitudes. Brendel nowhere mentions the 'oriental religions'.

³² Speidel 1980; Beck 1988. Note also Möller 1978. Flamant 1982 drew attention to the so-called 'geo-heliocentric' theory ascribed to Heracleides of Pontus, as a device to reconcile the Eudoxan and 'Chaldaean' planetary orders.

³³ This claim involved his skating rapidly over numerous inconvenient facts, for example that the Babylonian orders of the planets bear no relation to the Greek ones, and that concentric spheres were unknown in Babylonia.

with its interpretation of the cave as the cosmos, seems wholeheartedly to have adopted it (Fig. 1). By the late 1st c. CE Attis had been promoted to the status of ouranic deity, and the solar aspects of Serapis prompted him to be shown with the zodiac (esp. with Leo) on gems; but neither of these cults, nor that of Jupiter Dolichenus, presupposed the Hellenistic cosmology.³⁴

In the remainder of this paper, I consider briefly the four themes listed in my sub-title, namely discourse, schemes, power and literacy in relation to cosmology, astrology and magic, all of them topics broached over the life-time of ÉPRO, if scarcely in the series itself.

Cosmology

In the days when the dominant 'grand récit' was that the Hellenistic, and a fortiori the Roman imperial world, experienced a creeping loss of faith in the traditional gods, which gave rise to the oriental cults and so Christianity, Martin Nilsson wrote an article arguing that the new cosmology was partly to blame.³⁵ By locating the earth at the centre of the cosmos, and removing the fixed stars to the inside of an infinitely distant imaginary sphere, it rendered belief in Olympus as the home of the gods incredible, and left them in effect homeless in the void. In this scenario, ancient science is made to play the enemy of religious belief. But it seems to me that, on the contrary, the invention of the spherical model, which may have begun with Philolaus' notion of an imaginary centre of rotation, but was mainly due to Eudoxus of Cnidus and Callippus of Cyzicus

³⁴ Stars on Attis' cap, e.g. on the Hildesheim treasure: Schwertheim 1974, 245 no. 218b with pl. 96 = Vermaseren 1977–1989, III, 123 no. 394 = Vermaseren & de Boer 1986, no. 345; also *deum maxime Atthis tyranne* in AE 2004, 1006¹ (Groß Gerau). The Parabiagio lanx is of course fourth-century, cf. Gundel 1992, 260 Cat. no. 190. Serapis: with eagle and stars, as *kosmokrator*: Zwierlein-Diehl 1979, vol. 2, no. 1247 (2nd–3rd c. CE); Philipp 1986, 56f. nos. 57f. with further parallels; Sarapis in zodiacal circle: Philipp 1986, 57 no. 59; Gundel 1992, 252 no. 167; Harpocrates riding on a goose, in zodiacal circle: Gundel 1992, 253 no. 172. The Roman coins with Sarapis as *kosmokrator* are probably to be dated 379–394 CE: Bricault 2008b, 52 n. 139. Isis' cosmic presence is to be understood rather in Egyptian terms: Sfameni Gasparro 2007. The great exception is no doubt Lucius' *per omnia vectus elementa remeavi* (Apul., *Met.* XI, 23)—though the rest of his reported experiences do *not* presuppose the Hellenistic cosmos.

³⁵ Nilsson 1954.



Fig. 1. Mithras as a baby, holding the sphaera and turning a semi-ecliptic containing six zodiacal signs, Aries → Virgo, representing Spring and Summer. Found re-used in the late-3rd c. CE mithraeum in the Altbachtal, Trier. Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier, inv. ST 9981.

in the fourth century, in fact triggered a whole variety of new imaginative possibilities.³⁶

The two key ideas are 1) that the universe is a coherent, self-sufficient and predictable system, such that the courses of the heavenly bodies follow strict rules; and 2) that the whole thing depends on something as simple and intelligible as a gigantic door-hinge, the celestial axis posited by Plato in the *Timaeus*.³⁷ The location of the earth at the very centre of this system, as posited by successive thinkers from Anaxagoras to Aristotle, in turn conveyed the idea that its principal inhabitants, humankind, are the major focus of divine attention, just as the divinity of the stars, whose courses are rational and intelligible, provided new reinforcement of the traditional thesis that the gods are rational, and in particular ethically rational.³⁸

The intense interest aroused by this grand effort at rationalising the cosmos is most plainly visible in the reception of the *Phainomena* of Aratus (c. 276–274 BCE), which was a verse paraphrase of Eudoxus' major work.³⁹ A century later, Boethus of Sidon wrote an account of him and his poem in at least four books; not long afterwards, the astronomer Hipparchus provided a critical commentary on the poem in three books. In the following century we know of other commentaries by Attalus of Rhodes and Geminus of Rhodes, partial translations into Latin by the youthful Cicero and the neoteric Varro of Atax, an adaptation by Ovid, and an improved edition later by Germanicus the nephew and adoptive son of

³⁶ A convenient account of cosmology between Anaximander and Aristotle will be found in Dicks 1970, who is rightly sceptical of the doxographic tradition regarding the Pre-socratics.

³⁷ The best impression of how the Eudoxan-Callippic-Hipparchan system was received is given by non-specialists, above all Geminus, *Eisagoge* with the notes of Aujac 1975; Vittr., *Arch.* IX, 1, 1–6.3 with the notes of J. Soubiran (Budé 1969) and Plin., *NH* II, 5–101, with the commentary of D.J. Campbell (Aberdeen 1936); cf. Pedersen 1986. We might add the rather muddled third section (ἡ περὶ ἀστρολογίας παράδοσις) of Theon of Smyrna's *On mathematics useful for understanding Plato* (E. Hiller ed., Leipzig 1892), written c. 100 CE.

³⁸ *Verum in his deos agere curam rerum humanarum credi ex usu vitae est, poenasque maleficiis aliquando seras, occupato deo in tanta mole, numquam autem inritas esse, nec ideo proximum illi gentium hominem ut vilitate iuxta beluas esset*, "Experience legitimates the belief that in these matters the gods take an interest in human affairs, and that evil-doers are punished—sometimes very late in the day, since God has so many things to attend to—but never let off, and that humans were not created God's kin in order to vie with animals in baseness": Plin., *NH* II, 26. Note also the Stoic claim that the world is as it is in order to satisfy the design of the Creator-God, e.g. Cic., *ND* II, 133, with Furley 1999, 448–449.

³⁹ Eudoxus' two major works were Φαινόμενα and the later Ἑνοπτερον: Hipparch., *Phaen.* 1.2 and 8.5, cf. Hultsch 1907, 940f. §16.

Tiberius.⁴⁰ Much of this interest was due to the adoption of the poem as a school-text.⁴¹

All Aratus had done was to describe the constellations systematically in verse, starting from the North celestial pole. Yet this was enough to suggest fresh ways of accommodating the past. Eratosthenes' prose *Katasterismoi*, which integrated classical mythology with this newly ordered heaven, seems to have been the earliest such response.⁴² Another innovative recuperation is the Farnese Atlas (original probably 50–25 BCE), which smoothly effects a triple impossibility, giving the mythical Titan not just the sky (*caelum*) to carry but the cosmos (*mundus*); and turning the star-chart as it were inside out, so that *per impossibile* the spectator seems to be gazing at the cosmos from outside, yet the signs are represented as they would look from the earth.⁴³ A still more decisive innovation however was Hipparchus' decision to begin his account of the cosmos with the sun's course around the ecliptic, in other words through the twelve constellations of the zodiac. Vitruvius, who was no expert and therefore had to rely on handbooks, adopts this procedure, which implies that it became standard in the later Hellenistic period; at any rate, it is also adopted by Manilius, Hyginus' *Astronomica* and Ptolemy. The authoritative promotion of this organisational scheme, and with it the Sun as master-principle, opened up new imaginative possibilities,⁴⁴ some based on the ancient idea of Helios as a charioteer, others quite original, such as variations on the theme of *consecratio in formam dei* that show the dead within the

⁴⁰ The fragments of these and many other anonymous commentaries were collected by E. Maass, *Commentariorum in Aratum reliquiae* (Berlin 1898). Boethus of Sidon: Gemin., *Eisag.* p. 61a = Maass, *Comm.*, 152. Latin reception: Hübner 2005; on Manilius' debt to Aratus, see Volk 2009 34–35, 184–192. A draped figure on a rare bronze struck by his home city, Soli in Cilicia, during the reign of Gordian III is generally thought to represent Aratus (*SNG Paris* 1250), though this seems to be a mere guess, as is the notion that the bearded 'astronomer' on a lapis-lazuli gem in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge might be Aratus: Gundel 1992, 61 fig. 30a, 298 Cat. no. 329.

⁴¹ Lewis 1992, 113–118.

⁴² For the recoverable fragments, see Robert 1878; Pàmias & Geus 2007. Eratosthenes' work was later adapted as a commentary to Aratus: Geus 2002, 211–223.

⁴³ Museo Naz., Naples inv. 6374 = Karusu 1984, 926 no. 104 = Gundel 1992, 204 Cat. no. 8. The existing sculpture is a Hadrianic copy, which the Farnese acquired from the sale of the del Bufalo collection in the 1560s. I take it that the image alludes to Atlas as *πρῶτος εὐρέτης* of astronomy in general and the idea of the sphere in particular: Diod., *Bibl. Hist.* III, 60, 2.

⁴⁴ Gundel 1992 has revealed an unsuspected variety of imaginative responses to the theme of Helios in the context of the ecliptic.

zodiacal circle (Fig. 2),⁴⁵ the promotion of individual zodiacal signs,⁴⁶ the summary representation of Time and cosmic order,⁴⁷ or the transformation of a private sacred space into a planetary hemisphere, as in the mithraeum beneath the Palazzo Tagliamonte on the island of Ponza (Fig. 3).⁴⁸

To gain an impression of what could be done with the idea of a spherical cosmos, we have only to look at some politically-motivated images of the *sphaera*. The earliest Roman coin to show a globe dates from 76/5 BCE, and already suggests the idea of the unlimited military might of Rome.⁴⁹ The post-Actium celebratory coinage of Octavian conveys the same idea by showing Victoria, with a victor's wreath and a palm-frond, standing on the globe.⁵⁰ Another type shows Octavian, heroically nude, placing his foot on the sphere as though it were Poseidon's rock (Fig. 4). The literal absurdity shows us we are talking of symbolic meanings here, the 'sphere', we say, *stands for* the idea of universality, or even just 'a lot'—Actium was after all a decisive victory. The same idea promptly appears on intaglios, as personal jewellery,⁵¹ but was soon adapted in a rather different, though analogous, direction, to convey the desire for good fortune without limit—in fact, I would say, the visible form of Max Weber's "theodicy of

⁴⁵ This type is in fact itself a variant on the commoner *clipeus*-type. Hanfmann 1951 collected the then-known examples; cf. Kranz 1984, nos. 34, 44, 72.

⁴⁶ Terio 2006; for Augustan coins showing Capricorn and the globe, Radnóti-Alföldi 1999, 87–88 with figs. 105–107. Personal intaglios of Aries, Scorpio and Capricorn: Vitellozzi 2010, 90–92 nos. G36–39; Henig & Whiting 1987, no. 326 (Capricorn).

⁴⁷ For example, the mosaic at Hippo Regius showing a Genius turning the zodiacal ring: Parrish 1984, 194–196 no. 46 pl. 62 = Gundel 1992, 302 Cat. no. 352 with the image on p. 235; cf. Jackson 1994.

⁴⁸ Vermaseren 1974; cf. Gundel 1992, 88 fig. 44 = Cat. no. 18.

⁴⁹ Rev. of den. of Cn. Cornelius Lentulus, cos. 56 BCE (as quaestor in Spain?); sceptre with wreath, globe and steering oar, implying Roman domination *terra marique*. Legend: EX SC and CN. LEN. Q(*aestor*). See Crawford 1974 (*RRC*), 393/1a, pl. XLIX.

⁵⁰ E.g. Den. minted in Cyrenaica by L. Pinarius Scarpus, who abandoned Antony immediately after Actium and took his troops over to Octavian (legend IMP. CAESAR DIVI F.) = Crawford 1974 (*RRC*), 546/4 and 6, with pl. LXII; also den. of c. 29/28 BCE, rev. = RIC I² 59 no. 254b.

⁵¹ Personal jewellery, e.g. Zwierlein-Diehl 1979, nos. 1074 (a fuller variant of the type mentioned in the previous n., third quarter 1st c. BCE); 649 (a similar variant, this time alluding to the *Clipeus virtutis* of 27 BCE); 801 (bust of Octavian above globe on two cornucopiae, c. 40 BCE); 925 (raven on altar [Apollo]; two cornucopiae, each with globe, 1st c. CE); 931 (club of Herakles between two cornucopiae with globes, 1st c. BCE/1st c. CE); 1180 (cornucopiae on globe, with bird eating fruit, mid 1st c. CE); 944 (steering-oar with two emergent Capricorns, surmounted by an eagle, all on a globe, 1st c. BCE/1st c. CE); 992 (warship containing a globe surmounted by a Capricorn, 2nd c. CE?) etc.



Fig. 2. Seasons sarcophagus, 230–60 CE, Campo Santo, Pisa. The deceased and his wife within a clipeus formed of the zodiacal circle, Aries and Taurus above their heads.

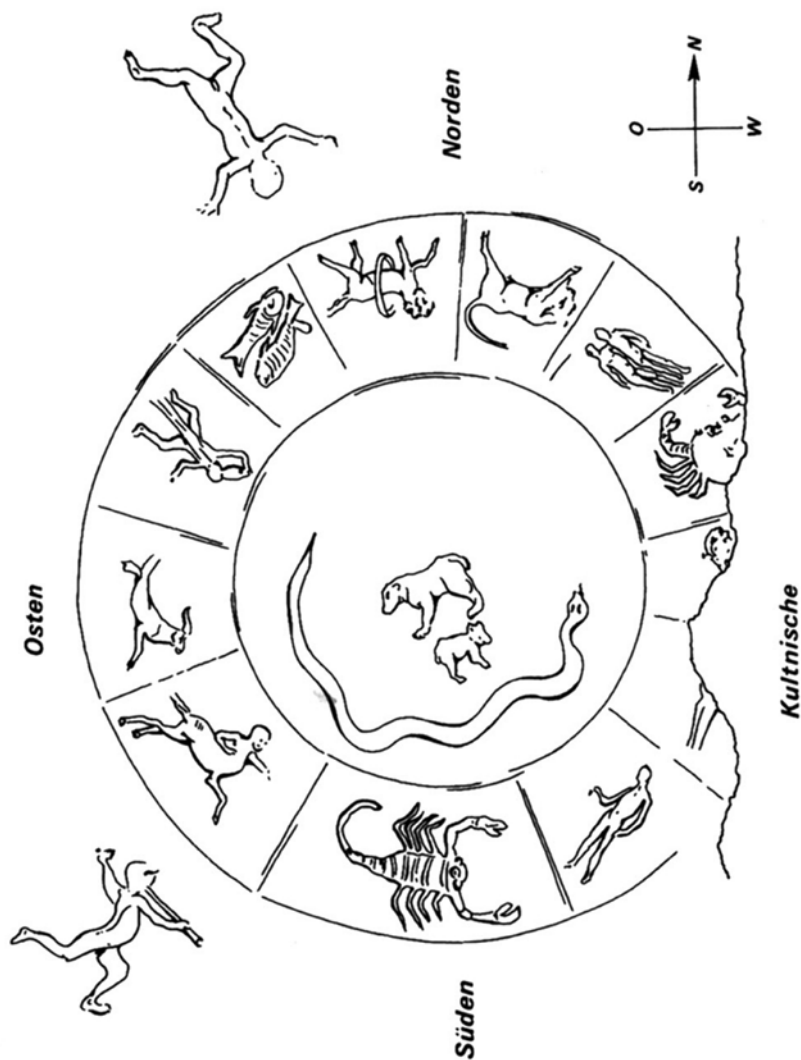


Fig. 3. The Great and Little Bear with Draco (i.e. the circumpolar stars) within the zodiacal circle. Stucco vault-decoration above the cult-niche of the Mithraeum, Corso Carlo Pisicane 19, S. Maria, Ponza. Probably 3rd c. CE.



Fig. 4. Rev. of denarius, 30–27 BCE: Octavian, heroically nude, holding a spear (l.h.) and an *aplustre* (r.h.). His r. foot rests on the sphaera, marked with the ecliptic and the celestial equator. The type recalls images of Poseidon/Neptunus with his foot on a rock. Legend: CAESAR DIVI F. RIC I² no. 256.

good fortune", *Theodizee des Glückes*, the claim by the rich and powerful that they deserved, and should by rights continue to deserve, their good fortune.⁵² But it was the role of warfare and conquest as the fundamental legitimization of empire that made the image of the globe so attractive in imperial self-styling: it could be used (Fig. 5) to convey the idea of the emperor's limitless authority, inexhaustible resources, invincibility, and so support the fiction of power as a quantum that can be controlled; or it might suggest the dream of dynastic and imperial perpetuity; or convey the ontological otherness of the imperial family; or suggest, in any given context, an entire range of themes, the link between emperor and Jupiter via Hercules, the legacy of Alexander the Great, *temporum felicitas, pacator orbis, aeternitas* . . .⁵³

The topic of cosmology has thus served to introduce the topics of discourse, schemes, and power. As Mario Vegetti has argued, the Hellenistic period saw both the establishment of numerous specific technical or semi-technical discourses and the formation of a new class of leisured reader, capable of appreciating them.⁵⁴ Fine examples are the specialised discussions conducted within the more or less organised philosophical schools, also rhetoric, medicine, botany, pharmacology, biology/history of animals, architecture, technical inventions. What the Germans handily term *Dis-kursivierung*, the process of creating specialist language, procedures and styles of argument specific to particular fields of enquiry, which in turn create dependent forms in other literary genres and in other media, such as art- or craft-production, is perfectly exemplified in the field of *astrologia*.⁵⁵ As an account of the world it displays the appropriate requirements of parsimony, invariance, internal consistency and rejection of the

⁵² Weber 1914 (1920–1). Cited from Winckelmann 1992⁶, 398–440 (403): "Der Glückliche begnügt sich selten mit der Tatsache des Besitzes seines Glückes. Er hat darüber hinaus das Bedürfnis: auch noch ein *Recht* darauf zu haben. Er will überzeugt sein, daß er es auch « verdiene »; vor allem: im Vergleich mit anderen verdiene".

⁵³ Cf. Radnóti-Alföldi 1999, Index s.v. *Globus*. One really only needs to go through all the volumes of *RIC* in order to grasp the omnipresence of the sphere in imperial iconography.

⁵⁴ Vegetti 1984. Efforts to enlarge on this topic include Barton 1995 (shaky on details); and the essays on medicine, zoology and geography in Kullmann, Althoff & Asper 1998.

⁵⁵ There exists no lexicon of technical terms introduced by ancient astronomy/astrology, but see the glossary of 135 terms used by Paul of Alexandria, *Eisagogika* collected by Bezza 2005. One has only to glance at Olympiodorus' ['Heliodorus'] *Commentarium in Paulum Alexandrinum* (ed. Æ. Boer, Leipzig 1962) to see that Bezza could have added many more; see also Sconocchia & Toneatto 1993, 1997 & 2000.



Fig. 5. Rev. of aureus of Antoninus Pius, 152–3 CE: the emperor standing l., togate, holding the sphaera in his extended r. hand, and a papyrus-roll in his left. Legend: COS IIII. BMCRE Pius no. 796 = RIC Pius no. 226. From a private collection.

marvellous-supernatural. A major resource of such conceptualisation is the formal scheme, such as the zodiac, or the planisphere, which orders part of the field in an apparently natural or logical way.⁵⁶ Such schemes represent one development of rationality, and are the major means of communicating such discourses. Once schemes of this kind exist, they can be exploited in the political power-game, in the Empire most of all by the emperor or more loosely the court, but also, their status thereby enhanced and confirmed, by many others for private ends. Such schemes neatly blend intelligibility with authority. We are near to Bourdieu's dictum that every established order seeks in one way or another to naturalise its own arbitrariness.⁵⁷

None of these possibilities could exist in the absence of enhanced literacy. Although the spoken word naturally remained dominant, the Hellenistic world can claim to be the first period in which organised literacy began to play a major part in the lives of the leisured male elite. The Cambridge social anthropologist Jack Goody has suggested that one of typical consequences of literacy is the graphic manipulation of conceptual schemes. "One of the features of the graphic mode is the tendency to arrange terms in (linear) rows and (hierarchical) columns, in such a way that each item is allocated a single position, where it stands in a definite, permanent and unambiguous relationship to the others".⁵⁸ In such schemes, more complex and shifting associations and analogies tend to be sacrificed and get lost; and where there are no natural items to fill a gap, existing ones must be misrepresented so as to fit the pigeon-hole. The creation of correlations between elements of the observed world, in itself a process of rationalisation, turns insensibly into arbitrary or fanciful systematisation. The history of ancient *astrologia*, especially what we call astrology, is full of such artificial schemes.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ I say 'apparently' since of course the actual constellations have little to do with the scheme of 12 x 30° (plus decans) which was essential to the instrumentalisation of the scheme in astrology.

⁵⁷ Bourdieu 1977, 167. Neither the sentence itself nor the entire section in which it occurs are to be found in the French version. In his preface, Richard Nice notes simply that certain changes have been made; but there are so many that the English version amounts almost to a different book. We must assume that the alterations and additions were made by Bourdieu for the English version, and ignored in the Editions du Seuil reprint of 2000.

⁵⁸ Goody 1977, 68; cf. 153: "Each space in the Table *has* to be filled; the scheme allows no empty boxes; the matrix abhors a vacuum".

⁵⁹ An array of fine examples in Hübner 1983.

Astrology

Although the twentieth century was the beneficiary of the magisterial synthesis by Auguste Bouché-Leclercq, a work that no modern scholar would be capable of writing, or perhaps even wish to write,⁶⁰ and saw the publication of all twenty fascicules of CCAG (1898–1953), the study of astrology became for much of the century a purely specialist study, thoroughly marginalised by the dominant view of its superstitious irrationality.⁶¹ Considerable progress however was made towards the publication of more reliable texts: whereas Cumont's list of sources in *L'Égypte des astrologues* (1937) cites as current an edition of Paul's *Eisagogika* printed in 1559, of Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* printed in 1553 and Proclus' *Paraphrase* of Ptolemy printed in 1635,⁶² many astrological texts have been (re-)edited to modern standards over the past forty years.⁶³ As in the case of magic, it was the 'symbolic turn' in the historical sciences that encouraged the study of astrology as a discourse, with its own internal logic, strategies and transformations, with its own shifting place in the history of divination.⁶⁴ Modern histories of western astrology thus present themselves as cultural histories, of concepts of time, discursive schemes, political rhetoric, social estimation and religious debate.⁶⁵ This shift in attitude has also benefited the study of ancient astrology, understood less as an 'oriental import'—the actual contributions of Babylonia and Egypt are now recognised as

⁶⁰ Bouché-Leclercq 1897 et 1899. This period, under the inspiration of the early decipherment of Babylonian astronomical texts from 1870, saw an initial burst of scholarly enthusiasm for the topic. Well-known names here include F. Boll, W. Kroll, W. Gundel, A. Rehm, E. Rieß, A. Engelbrecht. Otto Neugebauer and his co-authors did more than anyone to continue this tradition in the middle years of the twentieth century. A fundamental contribution to the understanding of the historical growth of the genre in antiquity was Gundel & Gundel 1966, which started life in 1928 as part of a projected volume on magic and astrology in the Müllersches Handbuch series, but was more or less completely rewritten after his father's death in 1945 by H.-G. Gundel.

⁶¹ A useful bibliographical survey of the century's achievements will be found in Pérez Jiménez 2001.

⁶² Cumont 1937, 11. Several others are cited from CCAG.

⁶³ These include: Pingree 1973 and 1986; Hübner 1998—which for the first time offers a stemma of the mss. and an Index verborum; and Monat 1992–1997.

⁶⁴ The legitimacy of the topic remains contested however, and as a divinatory *practice*, astrology remains rigidly excluded from the Academy: Curry 2000 and 2005.

⁶⁵ The best of them is probably von Stuckrad 2003; note also Tester 1987; Campion 2008. Carey 1992 is an excellent example of the historicisation of astrology in one medieval context.

marginal—than as an original, rationalised and rationalising, divinatory mode developed in response to the new Hellenistic cosmology. Symbolic mile-stones here are the foundation of *MHNNH*, the journal directed by Aurelio Pérez Jiménez at the university of Málaga, now in its eleventh year, a new interest in Manilius' intellectual background and ambitions, an intellectual 'biography' of Vettius Valens, brave new introductions, and a raft of papers by French and Italian scholars.⁶⁶

One major stumbling-block has always been the difficulty of understanding and representing the technical doctrines, which used to be understood as *the* subject-matter. Even today very few texts with translation and adequate commentary are available.⁶⁷ It is now however recognised that the technical doctrines are by no means the whole story—for they display all the typical features of a discourse driven by the need to compete in a market-place. The discourse needed to establish two things: the authority to speak, and its capacity to deliver reliable information. Now the basic material, the cosmos, was complicated enough; the major means of establishing the authority to speak was the elaboration and presentation of individual, at least partly personal schemes. The text of Manilius is full of such schemes, such as the *trigona* (2, 273–286), the groups of three signs that have a beneficial influence, and the *hexagona* (2, 358–384), which connects all male and female signs.⁶⁸ But the logic of such schemes, and their role in the production of horoscopes, is far from clear: they owe their existence, like many distinctions in rhetoric, to the need to establish the writer's authority.⁶⁹ The other tricky problem was how to connect astral schemes to human life, in this case via the so-called *athla* or 'lots';⁷⁰ here again Manilius, like all other writers, has

⁶⁶ Manilius: Goold 1977, xi–cxxii; Hübner 1984; Liuzzi 1991–1997; Maranini 1994; Volk 2002, 196–244; Volk 2009; Gale 2011; Abry 2011. Vettius: Komorowska 2004, with the review by Pérez Jiménez 2006. Introductions: Barton 1994 has rightly been praised for its liveliness; Bakhouche 2002; Schmid 2005, 183–202; Beck 2007. Papers: I am thinking of work by J.-H. Abry†, R. Caldini Montanari, F. Gury, D. Liuzzi, all listed in Pérez Jiménez 2001. The doyen of these studies however is Wolfgang Hübner of Münster.

⁶⁷ Goold 1977 and Liuzzi 1991–1997, and P. Monat's recent Budé edition of Firmicus Maternus' *Mathesis* (Monat 1992–1997) are notable exceptions.

⁶⁸ See Barton 1994, 101, figs. 20 and 21.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 139–141. Volk 2009, 95 speaks of the reader of Books 2 and 3 being "overwhelmed with technical details"—which nevertheless do not amount to an effective demonstration.

⁷⁰ *Astron.* 3, 43–159 with Goold 1977, lxxi–lxxv and fig. 14. This account conflicts with that of the *dodecatropos* in 2.856–967; cf. Hübner 1995. Special schemes were applied to many different areas of practical life: for example, conception and obstetrics: Frommhold

to rely on the simple assertion of specific connectivities, all of which are under-determined. The gap that could be tolerated between assertion and performance can be measured by the degree of inaccuracy in horoscopes: practical astrologers did not observe risings themselves but relied entirely on prepared tables, some more reliable than others.⁷¹ As Geoffrey Lloyd has insisted in relation to ancient scientific, especially medical, discourse, bluff, self-staging, was essential to success in the market-place.⁷²

Astrology sold itself as a mode of divination superior, thanks to its reliance on visible divinities and its technical sophistication, to more traditional modes. If a Ptolemy in the *Tetrabiblos* could warn that *to prognostikon*, the sign, can only have approximate value in the sub-lunary world, many people preferred the claims of the Egyptian astrologer Horus in Propert., *El.* 4, 1: *inque meis libris nil prius esse fide*, “in my books the truth has priority”.⁷³ For that reason, as Marie-Theres Fögen has argued, with the establishment of the autocracy the status of astrology became a major issue: enquiring after the nativity of the reigning emperor was already a crime under the early Julio-Claudians, so much so that accusations of magical practice in Tacitus, for example, almost all refer in fact to accusations of astrological enquiry. As far as emperors were concerned, above all in the third and fourth centuries, the more reliable their own astrologers, the more dangerous the astrologers of potential rivals.⁷⁴ The cultural authority of genethliacal astrology in the Roman world was a by-product of this paradox.

My final point concerns the link between divination and perceived uncertainty.⁷⁵ In a world where there was no effective insurance against loss or damage, and with high rates of mortality and pathology, guidance as to future action was at premium. Although the technical manuals are almost all devoted to genethliacal astrology, because it was held to

2004; various iatromathematical schemes, cf. Hübner 2002a; foundation and construction of cities and buildings: Pérez Jiménez 2004; ships: Pérez Jiménez 2007; schemes for plants, metals, stones etc.: Pérez Jiménez 2010 (I thank Profs. Pérez and Montero for sending me a copy of the volume, which is not in Munich).

⁷¹ Neugebauer & van Hoesen 1959; Baccani 1992; Jones 1999.

⁷² Lloyd 1987, 15, 28, 109, 335.

⁷³ Ptol., *Tetrab.* 1, 2.6–9; Propert., *El.* 4, 1, 80 Barber. On stochastic methods in astrology, linked to metaphors of aiming and shooting, cf. Komorowska 2009; Gieseler Greenbaum 2010.

⁷⁴ Fögen 1993, 89–182. The standard work on the relation between astrology and politics at Rome is still Cramer 1954.

⁷⁵ Eidinow 2007, 10–25.

be more difficult and prestigious, in my view the main pragmatic value of the art lay in katarchic astrology ('interrogations'), which offered the authority of the stars in helping individuals to take decisions regarding imminent projects, such as going on a sea-journey, buying land, erecting a house, marrying off a daughter, quarrels with a wife, buying or freeing a slave, debts. As we can see from the Greek fragments/Arabic translation of Dorotheus of Sidon's *Carmen*, the number of astrological variables that the *mathematicus* needed to take into account compelled him to establish numerous matters of fact about the native, a discussion which at the same time forced the latter to consider the project from a variety of different points of view, some positive, others negative.⁷⁶ Consultation of a competent *mathematicus* should be seen as a relatively rational form of uncertainty-resolution, by comparison with innumerable types of inductive divination, where the client had to rely on the mere assertion of the practitioner, let alone the response provided by an institutionalised oracle. Moreover, each such consultation re-affirmed faith in the 'new standard' cosmology, and distanced the native from the common herd, who imagine that each mortal is assigned a star, whose brilliance is proportionate to one's status, and that each shooting star indicates a corresponding death.⁷⁷ In the light of this, increased attention to the katarchic manuscripts listed in ccag will surely provide new insights into the pragmatic strategies and the self-estimation implicit in astrological consultations.

Magic

Of all the topics in the general area of oriental cults, hardly any has been so radically re-evaluated in the past forty years as magic. Theorised by Frazer and even Mauss as the inverse of religion, magic continued until the *Annaliste* invention of the history of mentalities in the 1970s to be the victim of dogmatic apriorism,⁷⁸ and in ancient history until long after, where, like astrology, it was represented as the inverse of the ideal of Classical rationality.⁷⁹ Only twenty years ago, Henk Versnel defended

⁷⁶ Pingree 1976 with the comments of Hübner 2011; cf. Hübner 2002b and 2003.

⁷⁷ Mocked by Plin., *NH* II, 28–29 *ut existimat volgus*.

⁷⁸ Frazer 1922, 14–79; Mauss 2006¹¹. See also Tambiah 1990. The anthropologists' usual strategy was to study witchcraft *accusations*.

⁷⁹ E.g. Green 1990, 597–600.

the dichotomy between magic and religion in quite traditional terms.⁸⁰ Whether the very word can still be used is now a matter of debate: Bernd-Christian Otto has recently published an all-out assault on the unreflected use of the term by historians from antiquity to the present.⁸¹

In my view, the term is a polythetic one, which can be applied to a great number of vaguely related phenomena, as one can gather from the two enormous bibliographies published early this century.⁸² My preference is to differentiate so far as possible between a complex ancient discourse about magic represented as the Other of (my/our) 'religion', ranging from the violently hostile to the interestedly speculative (such as Democritus' atomist explanation of the evil eye), and the practice of magic, which I would say is simply a branch of instrumental religion.⁸³ An interesting alternative suggestion is instead to tackle the normativity implicit in the notion of (polis-)religion, and use social network theory to include as many different practices as possible into a re-worked understanding of religious action in a given ancient community.⁸⁴ The editors of "Religions in the Graeco-Roman World", the successor series to ÉPRO, likewise count magical practice as religious practice, and have now published three volumes of conference-proceedings on the topic, with papers ranging from the ancient Near-East to the Byzantine period.⁸⁵

My theme here however is explicit discourses and their contribution to claims to power. There can be no doubt that specialised discourses of magic were established in antiquity. As a shorthand, we can equate them with the pseudepigraphic 'Magian' literature, virtually all of it now lost, represented by the names Zoroaster, Ostanes, Dardanus of Phoenicia and Apollonius of Coptus in Upper Egypt, Moses and Jannes.⁸⁶ One extensive branch specialised in methods of divination. Another concerned the

⁸⁰ Versnel 1991b.

⁸¹ Otto 2011, picking up from Kippenberg 1978 and 1998. Many others of course have wished to get rid of the term altogether, e.g. Pettersson 1957.

⁸² Brillet & Moreau 2000; Calvo Martínez 2001.

⁸³ Cf. Carastro 2006, 8–9, advocating the need to focus on the semantics of the relevant Greek terms: "ce sont les *magoi* de la cité".

⁸⁴ Eidinow 2011 (I thank Dr. Eidinow for sending me a copy). Kindt 2009 raises similar queries about the limits of the polis-religion model; cf. now Kindt 2012, chap. 4.

⁸⁵ Meyer & Mirecki 1995; Mirecki & Meyer 2002; Gordon & Marco Simón 2010. Note also Fauth 1995, 1–120; Dieleman 2005.

⁸⁶ Plin., *NH* XXX, 9; Apul., *Apol.* 90. On the term 'Magi' see briefly Dickie 1999, 172–177. The materials ascribed to 'Zoroaster' and 'Ostanes' were collected by Bidez & Cumont 1938; for a critical discussion see Beck 1991.

marvellous effects of plants and animal parts, which Pliny also ascribes to the Magi, 'Zoroaster', 'Democritus', 'Pythagoras', texts whose lore was transmitted by inter alios Nigidius Figulus and Anaxilaus of Larisa.⁸⁷ A close reading of the relevant passages on animals and their parts tells us something about the rationalising procedures involved. One move is to look for natural anomalies, i.e. creatures that do not follow the classificatory rules.⁸⁸ Another is to look for extreme rarity, on the principle that Nature only makes things rare for a purpose. The animals that possess the greatest power are those that score high on several counts; best of all is uniqueness, the "only animal that . . .".⁸⁹ Yet another genre is represented by the literature on the marvellous properties of stones, known to us mainly through the so-called Greek Lapidaries, and Books 36–37 of Pliny's *Natural History*.⁹⁰ An example is the stone called *sandaistros*, which contains stars whose number and location resemble the constellations Hyades and Pleiades; the stone, partaking in the divinity of the stars, makes their power available here below (*NH* XXXVII, 100–102). At least some of this material descended from the Babylonian *abnu šinkinšu* texts, on the nature of stones, which were edited and translated into Greek in the centuries after Alexander's conquest.⁹¹

As usual, though, it is not the putative fact of borrowing from the 'Orient' that is important but the nature and aims of the re-appropriation. The accounts, such as they are, suggest that the 'Orient' was a device to legitimate a claim about the marvellous powers inherent in Nature. The supposed journeys of Pythagoras, Democritus and Empedocles to the East (and to Egypt) stood for the process of asserting a conception of magical or occult power as a reality distinct from the divine order sustained by public cult.⁹² If we can talk about a strategy here, it might be to establish the claim that there exists an objective hierarchy of means to occult power, knowledge of which

⁸⁷ Behind 'Democritus' stands no doubt the shadowy figure of Bolos of Mendes, cf. Dickie 1999, 177–189; he also discusses Nigidius Figulus (168–172) and Anaxilaus, who was expelled from Rome by Augustus in 28 BCE (165–168).

⁸⁸ Aristotle regularly uses the verb ἐπαμφοτερίζειν for this status; see Lloyd 1983, 44–46.

⁸⁹ Plants: Ducourthial 2003; animals: Gordon 2010.

⁹⁰ Halleux & Champ 1985; Wellmann 1935.

⁹¹ Reiner 1995, 119–132; Dickie 1999, 183–185. Editions of and commentaries on these Babylonian texts are badly needed.

⁹² In some cases, such as the celebration of the power of animals such as ticks, crickets and moles, which are intimately linked with night and the underworld, magic is represented as the inverse of public cult, just as the dominant view claimed.

distinguishes true—and essentially literate and learned—magicians from quacks and wise-women. Quacks and wise-women know only a praxis; the true magus, equipped with a demanding theory of intentionality in Nature, can give reasons.⁹³ It is precisely this claim that legitimated the interest in Magian texts of people like the consular Nigidius Figulus, Anaxilaus of Larisa, and the doctor Sextius Niger, one of Pliny's sources for the Magian recipes cited in Book 30.

This learned discourse used the 'Orient' as legitimation for a re-reading of the powers of Nature, a debate that made no sense outside the context of a rationalised cosmology subject to laws. But the Graeco-Roman world knew another type of 'oriental' magical discourse, which based its claim to authority on the institution of the Egyptian temple. Our major source for this practice is the so-called magical papyri.⁹⁴ Although these texts constantly invoke the authority of the Egyptian temple,⁹⁵ and take a training in temple-ritual for granted (the practitioner is assumed to be technically competent, to know how to apply 'eye-paint', conduct a bowl-divination with or without medium, recite a fixed prayer, pose as a god, compose a letter to the dead, be able to obtain 'hieratic papyrus', natron, and other ingredients), they exemplify a new type of practice, directed at a new type of client, for private malign and aggressive (mainly erotic) magic; for personal success and attractiveness; written phylacteries for individual protection. The allusion to the temple sometimes takes the form of miniaturizing its rituals and ritual paraphernalia.⁹⁶ Two things seem to have changed: first, the demands of the clients, whom I take to have been mainly the relatively prosperous Greek-speaking inhabitants of Alexandria and the *metropoleis* of (mainly) Lower Egypt; and second, the status of many priests, who were forced to add to their income by selling 'personal' magical services.⁹⁷ Despite their markedly syncretic character, the texts

⁹³ On the role of the physicists' concept of *δύναμις* in these contexts, see still Röhr 1923/4. The role of the scheme sympathy-antipathy in these contexts, though it can be found in Pliny, is often greatly exaggerated by modern scholars—it was simply one explanatory option among several.

⁹⁴ Preisendanz (*PGM*); Daniel & Maltomini 1990–1992.

⁹⁵ Betz 1982; Dieleman 2005, 254–280. On the continuing use in the Graeco-Roman period of the temple regulations for rituals, including 'magical' rituals, see Quack 2000 and 2002.

⁹⁶ Moyer & Dielemann 2003. Some objections to their thesis have been offered by Quack 2009.

⁹⁷ J.Z. Smith, The temple and the magician, in Smith 1978b, 172–207. Examples are *PGM* I, 84–85: καὶ (τὸν θεόν) εἰς στενὸν τόπον ἐνεγκών, ὅπου κατοικεῖς, καθ[ίστη] πρῶτον δὲ τὸν οἶκον

strongly project a desire to continue a glorious ancient tradition within a changed world.

The magical papyri purport to be instructions whose correct performance will enable the practitioner to obtain, say, a revelation from a god, a prophetic dream, protection from fever, attraction of a sexual partner, the death of an enemy; or a whole bundle of such aims. It hardly needs saying that the broader meaningfulness of such claims is underwritten or protected by a whole series of implicit assumptions about the nature of the divine world, its possible modes of intervention in human life, the prestige and efficacy of theological knowledge, the rhetoric of conjuration, the power of certain words and names, and so on—the underpinning that, at least within the world of this *dispositif*, makes appeal to ritual-magic a rational and plausible step. At the same time, by invoking extraneous deities, notably the Jewish god under various names, Iao, numerous angels and archangels, even Mithras and Ereschigal, the magical papyri create their own ‘Orient’ in their bid for universalism.

In relation to cosmology, astrology and magic, ÉPRO reproduced pretty exactly the uncertainties of its day: the gradual dissolution of the Cumontian paradigm, the assimilation of the ‘oriental religions’ to the category of mystery cults, the tendency to isolate the different cults from one another, Vermaseren’s very loose editorial rein—all these factors prevented the series from performing its nominal function, the modernisation of the concept. The one true lineal descendant of Cumont’s *Religions orientales*, Robert Turcan’s *Les cultes orientaux dans le monde romain* was written too late to appear in the series.⁹⁸ It was only with Ugo Bianchi’s Rome conference on soteriology in 1979, and the *Begleitbuch* to the important exhibition devoted to the ‘oriental religions’ in the *Badisches Landesmuseum*, Karlsruhe in 1981, whose conception was heavily influenced by the archaeological staff of the Museum, that we can see significant impulses towards reconceptualising the problems.⁹⁹ Cosmology was mainly understood as a

στρώσας, καθὼς πρέπει, ‘take (the god) into a small room, where you live, and sit him down. But first clean the room, as is fitting . . .’; III, 193; 302; IV, 1859–1861; 2187–2189; VII, 540–541; 727; 875; XII, 164; XIII, 5–7; 1034; XXXVIII, 5–6. In all these cases *oikos* means a room in a house, but occasionally it seems to denote a workshop or place of business, e.g. XII, 104: ἐν ᾧ οἶκῳ πραγμάτευομαι ἐγὼ <δ>δε.

⁹⁸ Turcan 1989; the English tr. is entitled *Cults of the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1996)—all reference to the ‘Orient’ has been suppressed.

⁹⁹ Rome: Bianchi & Vermaseren 1982; Karlsruhe: see esp. Colpe 1981; Versnel 1981b.

problem in the history of philosophy. The intellectual shifts that revived interest in astrology and magic as discourses stemmed from the 'symbolic turn' in the historical sciences, largely inspired by the *Annales* school.¹⁰⁰ Bianchi's model of mystery-cult accommodated neither. Here, as in other respects, RGRW signals a paradigm-shift.

¹⁰⁰ The best account will be found in the collection of essays ed. by Clark 1999.

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