

Abû Ma'sar, Libri misteriorum

The astrological metaphors.

Italian translation by Giuseppe Bezza from Angelicus 29, fo. 62ss. Laurentianus Plut. 28, 33, fo. 123ss.
english translation by Daria Dudziak

II, 167. On the opposition of the signs and on the friendship of the stars.

All the signs are opposite to other signs: Taurus and Capricorn, for example, are opposite to Virgo since these signs injure the stars that are in Virgo; and Leo is opposite to Aries, as Leo truly eats the Aries ; and Sagittarius is opposite to Leo, since Sagittarius means bow-shooting. Moreover ,Aquarius is opposite to Gemini, as well as to Libra : in fact, Gemini and Libra, mean the writings and the art of calculation and fairness and justice while Aquarius means the injustices and the impostures; finally, Pisces are opposite to Cancer and the Cancer is opposite to Scorpio and also the stars that are in these signs are opposite to each other. As far as the friendship is concerned it is based on three conditions, among which the most important is the condition which is produced by essence, which is that of the Sun and of Mars since both are hot and dry, or that of Venus and of the Moon because both are damp and cold and also since the exaltation of the Moon is the domicile of Venus. The second condition of friendship is when a star partly shares the essence of another star, as it happens in the case of Venus and Jupiter or of Mercury and Mars: Venus, in fact, has the dampness and the inclination to do good things in common with Jupiter as well as what is beautiful and suitable, but it is at variance in heat and in wisdom. As far as Mercury is concerned, it has the dryness and the zeal in common with Mars and it disagrees in education and in wisdom. The last condition of friendship is given by the union of one star with another in a place in which it has some right of dominion: Saturn, for example, when it comes down in latitude it becomes cold and damp and therefore



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it becomes consonant with the Moon and with Venus and this is why it does not offend and does not harm them; and the Moon, when its light increases and it has an additive number, becomes consonant with the Sun and with the brightest stars. There are also some signs which, even though they are configured in a square aspect, they agree with each other, as it is in the case of Taurus and of Aquarius or of Leo and of Scorpio since they rise in the same times; or also of Taurus and of Leo, of Scorpio and of Aquarius which rise in the same points of the horizon. Moreover, other signs, are in agreement although they are not configured: this is the case of Gemini and of Capricorn, of Cancer and of Sagittarius which are in agreement by the same times of ascension. Then , as far as Taurus and Libra, Aries and Scorpio are concerned, they proceed along the same way (or they have only one Lord).

II, 169. On the meanings of Venus when it joins Mars or Saturn or Jupiter or the Sun and on the meanings of Jupiter when it is conjunct to them.

When Venus is with Mars it is similar to a woman who searches for pleasure and who joins a man that is perverse and is a whore-monger; she fears him, flatters him and she has a loving attitude towards him and shows affection to him; and however these things are pretence, she does them for fear. When Venus is with Saturn, it is similar to a young woman with a good figure who keeps company with an old , impotent man. She is distressed for this reason and the way she leads her life seems unbearable to her. When it is with Jupiter it is similar to a woman who is in the prime of life, and who joins up with an honest man and there is affection between them. When it is conjunct to the Sun, it is similar to a grieved and suffering woman who is always subjected to her husband. When the stars of Jupiter ,of Saturn are together , they are similar to two mates who, nevertheless , are completely different and each of them aspires to harm the other and bring him to a ruin. Then , if we find Jupiter with Mars, it is similar to an honest man who joins another man who is wicked and dissolute. If we find Jupiter with the Sun, instead , it is similar to a man of lowly origin and living standard who can not do anything. If we find Jupiter with Venus, it is similar to a strong, rich and generous man. Finally, if Jupiter is with Mercury, it is similar to a man who shows a lot of care in carrying out his duty successfully.

II, 170. On the operation of the stars.

The two malefic stars mean enmities and aversions; moreover, many times they harm each other and thanks to an offence of this kind the man becomes free, as it happens to the man who, during his journey, runs into two highwaymen that fight one against the other in order to steal him his goods and owing to this fight, the traveller is free; the two malefic stars produce fury , foolishness , deceptions and impudence and other similar things; the benefic ones produce carefree and serene condition, things that last ,friendships and adulation. When a benefic star travels with a malefic one, the virtue of the malefic star joins the virtue of the benefic star, in a way similar to a wise person who travels with a fool: the wise person considers carefully what he or she has to say, the fool adds his or her idle talks to it without considering the result. The star of Mars is similar to a lion and to a snake and it is necessary to avoid it. The star of Saturn is similar to a foolish and cowardly thief. Moreover, when we find a malefic star which is maleficated, it causes an immense damage which no one, except God, can avoid; indeed it is similar to a rabid, loose dog that bites the unlucky people or to a desperate thief armed with a sword who kills all the people he meets.

II, 171. On the way in which the malefic stars cause offence.

It is necessary to know as well that when the malefic stars are in their own place in or in a place in which they have the right of dominion their wickedness fails. That's why it is said that Mars during the night, under the horizon, does not cause offence, neither does Saturn during the day. Indeed, the malefic stars in their own places are similar to a trustful lion ; however , the malefic stars cause offence when they are lords of the wicked places such as the sixth, the eighth , the fourth and the seventh.

II, 177. On the great virtue of the stars.

The stars, when they become morning and go out of the sunlight, they show clearly their operation and they have great force. Then, when Mars gets free of the Sun, it is similar to a sharp and infallible blade and the wound caused by it is incurable; and when Saturn goes out of the sunbeams it is like a lion which throws itself out of its den and kills whoever it meets; but when Jupiter gets free of the rays of the sunlight it is like a man who loves justice, who is honest and who got free from any bond, reason for which he or she becomes mild and well-disposed towards everything, kind and merciful; when Venus is free from the sunbeams, it is like a woman who being already subjected to needs and to torments and to diseases, recovers health; and when Mercury goes out of the rays, if in that moment it puts itself near a benevolent star or is configured to it, it means a good thing, but if it is conjunct to a malevolent star, it means a very serious offence.

II, 178. On the virtue of the stars that are in the heart.

Some people say that when a star is in the heart of the Sun, it becomes stronger; nevertheless, I say that in that moment the star is similar to a man who purifies himself and who therefore does not have strength in the purification, but he regains his health afterwards. When Saturn is burned it is similar to an old shabby man that is not able to bear pains, sorrows and punishments; and when Jupiter is burned it is similar to a man put to the test and who is however able to bear pains and sorrows since he hopes to take an advantage of it. Then, when Venus is burned it becomes absolutely weak and without strength and it can not really bear combustion; but when Mercury ,which bears combustion, becomes burned, it is similar to a man accustomed to difficulties and to miseries and poverty and who bears such things since they are familiar to him; then, it is said that when Mars becomes burned it is similar to a very wicked man whose wickedness and offence increase.

II, 179. The reason why people who say that a star which becomes burned in its own domicile or elevation does not offend, are mistaken.

Some people say that when a star becomes burned in its own domicile or in its own elevation it does not cause offence. However ,when Saturn, which is cold and dry becomes burned, it is similar to stone which being burned by the fire, decays and breaks .When Jupiter becomes burned it is similar to gold that melts and when it moves in the rays of sunlight its pure substance takes on a red hue. Then, when Venus and the Moon become burned they are similar to the quicksilver that if we throw it into the fire, the fire escapes from it like from something different from its nature and is not able to tolerate it.

II, 180. On the stars that have direct motion and on the stars that have retrograde motion.

You have to know that these five stars have two different arrangements in their motion: they stop in order to retrograde after and then they stop again in order to proceed by direct motion afterwards; and each of these arrangements has its own meaning. In truth, the star that reaches the first station, by which I mean

the station from which it will start to recede afterwards, is similar to an ill man whose strength is failing, his vigour and energy weakened by the illness. When the star gets to its second station it is similar to a man who has already started to recover his health and finally, when it moves by direct motion, it is like a man recovered from an illness. Venus in particular is offended by receding: indeed, when it retrogrades, it gets burned, that's why we have a kind of double distress: one is given by receding, the other by burning. Mercury is also distressed when it recedes since it gets burned as well, but it is not offended by its receding and by the fact that it is burned as much as Venus. Also as far as the superior stars are concerned we can say that the offence of their receding is slighter than the offence of the receding of the inferior stars, especially when they recede from a non-familiar place towards a place in which they have some right of dominion or also if while they recede they move from a malefic towards a benefic star. Then, they are similar to a man who travels and who wants to pass through the fairs and who after being stopped by someone who he meets during his walk, goes back and is safe. However, the superior stars are different in their receding and in their stations as well as in their burning and in other distresses: in fact, when Jupiter recedes it is similar to a rich man subjected to a lot of bondage and therefore distressed or to a wise, sensible and careful man who submits to the mediocre anxieties of the rational part of his mind; as for Saturn it debases itself completely in its receding and it is similar to a slave who escapes and who is caught by his master again and put in chains; finally Mars, when it recedes it is similar to a son of a fugitive that escapes from his father and then returns relying on his father's affection. The stars cause offence particularly if in their receding they are in a foreign place or in their adversities or in their humiliations and especially if they are afflicted with a malevolent star in their receding: then, they are similar to an ill man whose strength is failing and who is seized by another bad thing at once. Indeed, the stars which recede alter their nature and therefore they complete their operations in a weak way.

II, 181. The reason why some stars in their humiliations offend a lot and other offend little.

There are differences in the humiliations of the stars as far as the damage is concerned: Mars offends very much in its humiliation or in Cancer since it is a cold and moist sign while Mars is hot and dry as the nature of the fire is and therefore when it humiliates itself its affliction is double: both because it is in its own humiliation and because it is in a sign different from its own nature.

The Sun distresses itself in its own humiliation which is Libra, on the one hand it approaches the hypogeum, on the other hand Libra is a moist sign while the Sun is dry. Jupiter grieves in its humiliation that is in Capricorn, the domicile of Saturn which is opposite to Jupiter's nature since Saturn is malefic while Jupiter is benefic and is opposed to Saturn as far as the essence is concerned. Saturn distresses itself in its own humiliation which is Aries since it is hot and dry while Saturn is cold and dry, but since Saturn has the dryness in common with Aries it is not harmed much. The Moon and Venus are not harmed very much in their humiliations: in fact, the Moon humiliates itself in Scorpio and Scorpio is its triangle and it shares the nature of the Moon and has a trigon with Cancer which is the Moon's domicile. As for Venus, it humiliates itself in Virgo, but it agrees with this sign owing to the feminine nature and besides almost everybody knows that Virgo means dancing, singing harmonies, lyres and other musical instruments and the search for marriage, all the things which are typical of Venus. Moreover, Venus has its humiliation in the XXVII degree of Virgo which is not far from Libra, its domicile; we can therefore say that it is similar to a worried and distressed man who briefly goes from distress to cheerfulness and joy. If a star which is in its own humiliation is moreover watched by the benefic stars it is similar to a

man who is a victim of misfortune, but is nevertheless aided by friends and relations and his heart is made stronger by their aid. However if a star which is in its own humiliation is observed by malefic stars it is similar to an unlucky man who has many enemies and contradictors in his misfortune who do all they can to make him lose.

II, 185. What the stars which have direct motion and the stars which go back mean.

The star that recedes means falsities and deceptions, the star that has a direct motion means the truth and all that is upright, but if it is burned ma is like a dull, ill man who does not have confidence in and is not sure of anything except his own weakness.

II, 186. The reason why the stars that recede or are in slow signs bring the results slowly and the stars which are direct in motion are fast in bringing the results.

When the stars have subtractive motion they lead to slow results as well as when they are in slow signs. The signs which have the nature of Saturn and Jupiter such as Capricorn and Aquarius, Sagittarius and Pisces are slow; but when the stars have a direct motion what they mean arrives quickly and especially if they are in a tropical sign.

II, 201. What the morning and occidental stars mean.

It has to be known that when a star is a morning one it is similar to a boy who is in the bloom of youth and is at height of his incentives while the vespertine star is like an old oppressed man whose vigour is lacking.

II, 202. On the configuration of the Moon with the stars.

You have to know that the Moon is like the messenger of the stars: in fact , it transmits their virtues from one star to another.