

INTRODUCTION

I am happy to present *The Search of the Heart*, the first of three volumes in the horary installment of my *Essential Medieval Astrology* series.¹ Along with al-Kindī's *Forty Chapters* (volume II, 2011) and *The Book of the Nine Judges* (volume III, 2011), it breaks new ground in this important branch of traditional astrology. In 2009-10 I published the natal installments (*Persian Nativities I-III*) as well as an introductory text to the whole series, *Introductions to Traditional Astrology (ITA)*.

For students learning horary astrology, each of these volumes is helpful in its own way. If you are new to traditional astrology, and horary in particular, you should be familiar with (or have on hand) Books I-V of *ITA*, since that material is used in every branch of traditional astrology.² A less complete version of this introductory material may also be found in *Forty Chapters* Chs. 1-4. From there, the student should advance to the books in this series. Following are some of the features of each volume:

- *Search* is the primary source for methods of thought-interpretation and using victors,³ and has many useful tables for learning the significations of the signs and planets (for example, in describing people and objects). It also contains exotic things such as instructions for finding buried treasure. It gives advice on examining planetary conditions throughout, but does not have much formal, introductory material for the astrology or horary beginner—there is little hand-holding in it.
- *Forty Chapters* is a famous, self-contained book on numerous questions, with much good introductory material. But it does not touch on as many kinds of questions as *Judges*, and not every astrologer agrees with al-Kindī's approach to each topic.
- *Judges* is the most compendious and complete in terms of horary questions (and other matters), but it lacks a detailed primer on horary itself. So, I have supplemented it with more general and helpful material on how to judge a horary chart in its Appendices, drawing on Sahl, Bonatti, and others.

¹ See Appendix M for a complete listing as of 2011.

² Throughout each book, I make constant reference to definitions and topics in *ITA*, to help the student understand individual concepts and techniques.

³ See below.

So, each of these has its own value as a course text and for learning how to approach thoughts and questions. *Search* is the best guide to thoughts and victors, as well as some basic ways of approaching a chart. *Forty Chapters* is the best for those wanting a smaller and more manageable introduction to horary and astrological principles. And *Judges* is the best for serious students who know all the basics but want many source texts plus handy guides to horary interpretation.

§1: *The Search of the Heart* and its title

Search is a 12th-Century compilation by Hermann of Carinthia on two little-explored and related areas of handling client inquiries: identifying a client's thoughts (what I call "thought-interpretation"), and the use of victors (or "almutens" or *mubtazzes*).⁴

Both thought-interpretation and victors were important components of what has now come to be called "horary"⁵ astrology. This branch⁶ of astrology is sometimes called "interrogations" or simply "questions," because it standardly involves a client seeking an answer to a specific concern or question. The client or "querent"⁷ poses an explicit question, the astrologer casts a chart,⁸ identifies what planets or places in it signify the matter, and then applies various rules to answer the question. Such questions can range from the location of lost pets to the outcomes of wars, which makes it a rather remarkable practice. Some astrologers' reputations (such as that of

⁴ From the Arabic *al-mubtazz*, "the winner" or "the victor." Victors are planets which play the leading role in signifying something, when there are many possible competing rulers and indicators. Some victors are used to identify the significator of thought, while others act as the primary signifiers for a certain house or even the whole chart. See below.

⁵ Lit., "pertaining to the hour," suggesting questions of the moment or questions posed on the occasion of some matter.

⁶ The other three branches are nativities, elections, and mundane astrology. (Astrologers do not normally recognize magical and spiritual astrology as being a standard branch.) Some kinds of charts have ambiguities that make it hard to categorize them neatly, such as "event charts" cast for the time of a past event. On the one hand they seem to be akin to electional charts, but on the other hand astrologers often examine them similarly to horary charts. Still others cast charts for political events and treat them according to mundane significations.

⁷ *Quaerens*, lit. "the one seeking/asking."

⁸ As we will see below, there was some controversy over *when* to cast the chart.

William Lilly)⁹ are built largely upon their horary work, and indeed apart from its versatility one of its chief attractions is that the interpretation process is relatively quick and to the point, compared with the general qualities and lengthy interpretations of nativities and annual predictions. For some astrologers, handling questions is their bread and butter.

Now, many contemporary astrologers cast and interpret “consultation charts” for the time of a consultation (even for natal readings): that is, a chart cast just beforehand in order to get a sense of the client’s mood and purpose. If this is done just before a horary consultation, the consultation and horary charts will be extremely similar; and since the horary chart is already supposed to describe the querent’s situation accurately, it might seem as though there is little practical difference between interpreting a client’s mood or interests, and answering an actual question. For instance, suppose we cast a chart a few minutes before the client arrives, and see that the lord of the Ascendant is in the third house. We might reasonably assume that the client (the lord of the Ascendant) is interested in something pertaining to his siblings (third house), and there will not really be any practical or theoretical difference between identifying this thought beforehand, and pointing out that lord’s location once he actually opens his mouth and formally asks the question. In fact, this overlap may even suggest that thought-interpretation is unnecessary, especially since the lord of the Ascendant will already be a primary significator in the chart anyway.

But the older texts did not see things quite this way, and in fact the use of thought-interpretation may originally have predated what we normally think of as horary astrology. The primary difference is that thought-interpretation is focused on identifying a topic that the client has not yet stated, whereas horary questions involve explicit inquiries.¹⁰ There are a wide variety of techniques for identifying the significator of thought, leading to expanded possibilities for types of thoughts, compared with the standard horary significators for the querent.¹¹ Sometimes the significator of thought alone

⁹ Lilly (1602-81 AD) was English, and probably the brightest star in the twilight years of traditional astrology. The republication of his classic *Christian Astrology* (on nativities and questions) in the 1980s was one of the primary reasons for the modern revival of traditional astrology.

¹⁰ See for instance *Search* Ch. II.4.1, and Argafalau’s material in Appendix I.

¹¹ In fact, Māshā’allāh even defends the use of such techniques precisely because the Ascendant, its lord, and the Moon (typical significators in horary questions) move and change so slowly that only a few topics could be predicted throughout the working day if we were limited to them. See *Search* Ch. I.10, and the excerpt from *Thought* in Appendix C.

was used both to identify an issue and predict its outcome (such as through its applications and separations).¹² Sometimes the significator of thought was identified *prior to*, and then used *alongside* the usual horary significators in the same chart.¹³ Then again, sometimes thought-interpretation seems to have been used specifically as a foil for doubters and skeptics.¹⁴ And sometimes the texts seem to be uninterested in the *outcomes* of the thoughts (unlike in horary), which would be especially true if the purpose of thought-interpretation was to catch skeptics or show off the skill of the astrologer.¹⁵ Below I will explain in a bit more detail what I believe the more important purpose of thought-interpretation really was: identifying a general topic as the basis of further discussion and formulation of an explicit question, and then the selection and analysis of appropriate horary significators. Although my view is hard to prove directly, the texts in this book make it clear that thought-interpretation at least preceded horary questions *procedurally*, and may also have done so *historically*.

And so, thought-interpretation was a distinct approach to handling inquiries, even though in practice it often overlapped with the kinds of horary interpretation we'd expect to follow upon identifying a client's intention or purpose. In order to identify the thought, but also to identify the most important significator of the querent or the topic or even of the whole chart, astrologers often sought victors which would sum up the content of some matter, and act as a proxy for it. In §3 below, I will deal with victors at length.

But what about Hermann's unusual title? The first thing to note is that it is virtually identical to a currently untranslated Arabic work by 'Umar al-Tabarī (d. ca. 815 AD): his *Treatise on the Discovery of Innermost Thoughts*¹⁶ *by the Way of the Stars*.¹⁷ Hermann's *indagatio* ("search") corresponds to 'Umar's "discovery," and refers to the act of tracking something down or searching it

¹² Such is the case in Book I of *Search* itself.

¹³ See Sahl's *On Quest*. §1.9, in Appendix B.

¹⁴ For example, one might compare what the client *says*, with what the chart indicates is the true nature of the thought. Or, one might respond to a challenge by a skeptic to identify what is in his hand (see Appendices I and J). In the former case, one might still be interested in predicting the outcome of a matter which the client is concealing.

¹⁵ In that case, thought-interpretation would be a stand-alone technique distinct from the answering of specific inquiries.

¹⁶ *Istikhraj al-ḍamīr*: lit. the "drawing out" or even "solution of," the "conscience, mind, heart, what is innermost."

¹⁷ *Risāla fī istikhraj al-ḍamīr bi-ṭarīq al-nujūm*. See Sezgin p. 112.

out (as in hunting). His *cor* (“heart”) corresponds to ‘Umar’s “innermost thoughts,” and has a range similar to the English and Arabic: the soul and center of thought and emotions, one’s sense. We cannot be sure if Hermann had access to this text of ‘Umar’s, but the uncanny resemblance between the two titles suggests that ‘Umar himself may have devoted an entire work to thought-interpretation.

Hermann’s notion of a search is important because it allows him to unify three senses of searching found in his book: first, there is the personal sense in which the client is searching for an answer to real problems in life (Book I); second, there is the practical sense of searching for missing objects and hidden treasure (Book II); third, there is the professional and phenomenological sense in which the astrologer is searching for answers.¹⁸ This last sense is not trivial, particularly given how Hermann and his colleagues (Hugo of Santalla and Robert of Ketton) understand the Arabic verb “to signify” or “to indicate.” This verb (*dalla*) has the more concrete sense of leading someone to something, of guiding the way—such as when we *indicate* something by *pointing at* it, and so *lead* someone’s attention to it. This is precisely the spirit in which Hermann decided to use variants of the Latin *duco* (“to lead”) for all types of signification: in his work, a significator becomes a “leader” (*dux*), and its significating activity becomes its “leadership” (*ducatus*). In other words, for the client the chart may indicate a thought or point to a lost watch; but for the astrologer, the *process of interpretation* involves *being led* by the planets to something not directly seen, in being absorbed by and drawn through the intention of one’s heart into the heart of something else, into the heart of the client or the heart of the matter.¹⁹ We begin without knowing the client’s intention or the objective affairs, but by opening our own hearts and starting out in a spirit of searching and unknowing, we let the chart and the planets lead the way into something else—from the heart, into the heart. To my mind, this is a profound, divinational notion that should command our respect and remind us that in astrology we are ultimately doing something sacred.

¹⁸ It is precisely for this kind of reason that I cannot agree with Burnett (2006, p. 99), who suggests that the hidden treasure material in Book II was merely an attempt to compile comparative material on a specific topic. The choice of hidden treasure fits perfectly into the general theme of hiddenness and searching which thematizes the whole book.

¹⁹ Thanks to Chris Brennan for pointing out this English idiom.

§2: Texts distinguishing thoughts and questions

“They even disagree on learning the querent’s thought...”²⁰

In the previous section, I said that thought-interpretation was distinct from, but sometimes led into or overlapped with, the answering of explicit questions. The texts in this book give overwhelming evidence of this fact, but here are a few of the more striking examples which flesh this out further:

Starting with the oldest-known sources, the *Yavanajātaka* (270 AD)²¹ is conspicuous for its use of thought-interpretation. The long section from Chs. 52.7-63 begins with the statement that the positions of various planets in a chart indicate the querent’s *thought*, while its *success* depends on such things as the Ascendant (i.e., the default horary significator of the querent). Chapter 53 then begins to discuss “the thought of the querist [sic],” based on “the planet or the sign which is strong.” So for example, if the Sun is in the Midheaven, then the client is thinking about authority or starting enterprises (Ch. 54.9); or if the Sun is in a *varga* of Jupiter, he is thinking about swords, missiles, spells, and so on (Ch. 55.3). But good relationships of benefic planets to the Ascendant will bring about the thought successfully, planets in their enemies’ houses indicate bad results, *etc.* (Ch. 54). Other chapters delineate complex combinations of planets, but hardly deal with outcomes at all. Ch. 63 briefly offers a mathematical operation for determining a thought’s outcome. Chapters 64-67 offer more advice on outcomes, but without the usual leading formula we see in later horary material, such as “If someone wanted to ask about...”: so, it is hard to say whether these chapters describe the outcomes of thoughts, or outcomes of explicit questions, or outcomes of the questions that *devolve from* the thoughts previously identified.

Hephaistio’s *Apotelesmatics* (early 5th Century AD) endorses a view elsewhere attributed to the Indians and others,²² stating that we may foretell the client’s thought by looking at the twelfth-part of the Ascendant. Hephaistio then proceeds to list these 144 different possibilities based on the house

²⁰ *Skilled* I.5.2 (see Appendix A).

²¹ The Sanskrit *Yavanajātaka* of Sphujidhvaja was a versified version of an earlier Sanskrit prose translation (ca. 150 AD) of an earlier Greek text.

²² See Hephaistio III.4.20ff (Appendix H below), *Search* I.9.3, and *OHT* §2 (Appendix C). Leopold and ibn Ezra also describe this approach in Appendices G and J.

placement of the sign indicated, its qualities, and its lord. I have translated all of these interpretations in Appendix H.²³

Sahl's *On Quest.* §1.9 recommends that one use a victor-significator over the chart (which is normally used for thought-interpretation) *alongside* the more usual significators of querent and quaesited (see Appendix B). Hermann does the same thing in *Search* II.4.5.

Appendix A (from al-Rijāl's famous *Book of the Skilled in the Judgments of the Stars*)²⁴ is filled with material distinguishing significators of thought from the usual significators and victors over the querent, the topic, and the chart. Some of the more striking material is distributed throughout *Skilled* I-III: at the beginning of the material on most houses, al-Rijāl begins by describing what belongs to that house, what its triplicity rulers are, the color attributed to it, and then how to tell whether or not this house is the subject of the question. Take the 2nd house: "And if, in a question, a fiery sign and the thought of the querent were in this house (that is, if the significator of the thought were in it), judge that the question is about assets. But if it were earthen, you should say that it is about entering into a city...". Not only does al-Rijāl identify the thought by the location of its significator, but he even distinguishes the types of thoughts based on the triplicity of the sign itself. I also find it interesting that al-Rijāl's entire book on questions (after running through general significations of the planets) begins with a discussion of finding significators and victors for thoughts, topics, and the whole chart—as though this was a conceptually (and possibly historically) prior practice. Al-Rijāl also highlights the fact that the interpretation of thought is its own area of study, by saying: "They even disagree on learning the querent's thought, and how they can understand it, and what signification they ought to have over him."²⁵

A 10th-Century Latin source by a pseudonymous "Argafalau" or Ergaphalau, but undoubtedly based on earlier Arabic material, offers further views on interpreting thoughts and their outcomes, referring to thoughts and topics that are "hidden," "hitherto unshared," "silent," and "not yet asked about." It also includes something a bit more unusual: how to tell what someone holds secretly in his hand. In this case, the identification of objects seems to

²³ Hephaistio also offers several other methods of thought-interpretation, including material on their outcomes. See Appendix H.

²⁴ Abū al-Hasan 'Alī bin Abī al-Rijāl (11th Century AD) is often known as Haly Abenragel.

²⁵ *Skilled* I.5.2.