

Project Hindsight's Conclave 2006

by Douglas Noblehorse

I've lived most of my life in the American West in places with shallow historical roots. I was born and raised in a small desert town with not much of a past, reaching back to the World War II era at best. Even Phoenix's civic history only began shortly after the end of the American Civil War in 1865. So traveling to the forested East Coast, where my Shawnee Indian ancestors decisively defeated English intruders, and to be introduced to an ancient astrology that measures its age in astrological ages was indeed a unique experience!



The 2006 Project

Hindsight Conclave took place in picturesque Cumberland, Maryland. With its rolling hills steeped in the early history of the United States when people from many countries were settling the region, it seemed the perfect place to introduce an even more ancient astrological history to people from countries around the world. Canadians, Japanese, Australians, English and Serbians made their way to this small American town - some literally travelling by a succession of "planes, trains and automobiles!"

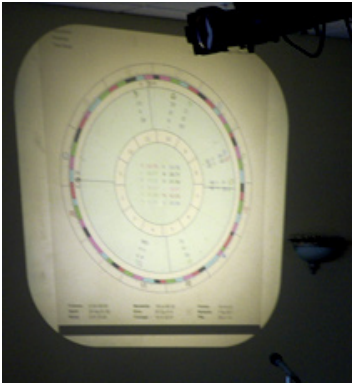
Project Hindsight's panel of speakers, including Robert Schmidt, Demetra George, Bill Johnston, Alan White, Curt Manwaring and others presented the latest translations and understandings of Hellenistic astrology. This presentation covered Hellenistic history, theory, techniques and underlying its philosophy. Supplementing this material was a guest panel including Ken Johnson, Ken Bowser, Ben Dykes, and Robert Corre who offered supporting, though sometimes contrasting viewpoints from the Jyotish, Siderealist, Medieval and Early Modern schools of astrological thought.

The Conclave spanned a full, seven-day week, with informal gatherings starting at 7 am, and formal presentations beginning at 9 am and generally lasting until 10 pm - sometimes even Midnight. This Conclave was not for the faint of heart! Attending (let alone absorbing) all the presentations offered was possible only for the most tireless of students. I found it necessary to forego several of the evening sessions in an effort to get enough sleep. Fortunately, the Conclave was recorded and videotaped - which should help me decipher my written notes!

The first day, Monday, was given over to a presentation of the earliest origins of astrology, including the Babylonian astrology that preceded the Hellenistic world. Our earliest tangible evidence of astrological divination dates from 2028 BCE, but astrological study is thought to have even earlier origins. Early Egyptian astrology was also discussed - and there was even time to touch on the beginnings of Hellenistic astrology, which began around 200 BCE with its earliest architects, Hermes Trismegistus and successors Nechepso and Petosirus.

Tuesday, the audience was treated to explanations of basic Hellenistic astrological concepts and the philosophies behind them, such as sect classifications, planetary meanings, the Greek Lots, and chart rulers to name just a few. We quickly learned that many modern astrological terms are not wholly accurate; Robert Schmidt took great pains to explain why this was so and introduced more accurate translations. For instance, the Arabic Parts, which were actually Greek in origin are more accurately termed as the Lots. They represent the power of the planet involved as it relates to a specific nativity, in other words the specific allotment handed out to the native. As astrology eventually passed





through the Persian world into the Arabic empire, Lots were unevenly translated into Parts. In doing so however, the subtle distinctions in the terms used were lost. Schmidt was painstakingly effective in explaining the complex differences in terminologies. As a result,

the audience had to unlearn accepted language and definitions, and relearn new terminology - a process repeated throughout the week. The advantage to this is the new terms carry a clearer conceptual meaning and application of the technique. Houses become Domiciles or Places, Rulers become Lords, Terms become Bounds, Triplicities become Trignons, etc. Over these two days and into Wednesday as I looked around the room I could see focused attention in the audience, along with the usual amount of note-taking one sees at astrological gatherings. This would soon change as the Hellenistic astrological system, or System of Hermes, began to emerge into a coherent whole.

Wednesday began as a continuation of the techniques discussion from Tuesday. There was a discussion of the Places (Houses) configured to the Ascendant, which are those Places (Houses) that are in a classical aspect relationship to the Ascendant (i.e. 0, 60, 90, 120 and 180 degrees). Places unconfigured are the 30 and 150 degree Places, and are said to be in aversion. We were exposed to the Places (Houses) wherein the planets find their Joy. We were treated to an astronomical discussion of the inferior and superior synodic cycles, along with definitions of heliacal rising and setting, orientality/occidentality and being under the Sun's beams. These are not unfamiliar concepts in modern times (especially to those who practice Medieval and Jyotish astrology), but neither are they extensively used by Modern astrology.

And then Schmidt launched into his exposition of Hellenistic universal techniques - in particular the Preliminary Natal Analysis. This is an interconnected grouping of planetary considerations, each one adding a piece to the puzzle of

planetary condition. Each planet's condition is made up of Fitness, Ability and Completion, along with Favorability and Rejoicing qualities. And each one of these is referenced to three spheres of influence, the Zodiac, the Lights and the Horizon. In my opinion, this matrix forms the core of Hellenistic natal study, and seemed to me to be the centerpiece of the weeklong Conclave. As I looked around the room I noticed people were furiously intent on their note-taking - even those who hadn't taken notes before. Everyone was focused on not missing any of the material that Schmidt was presenting - including panel members! People were even standing and jockeying for position in an effort to see the overhead projection more clearly, all the while scribbling away!

Thursday continued the discussion of Universal Techniques with a presentation of how the Hellenistic astrologers determined chart rulers - and yes, that's plural! Unlike Medieval astrologers who use a weighting system of essential and accidental dignities, or Modern astrologers who simply see the ruler of the Ascendant as chart ruler, the Hellenistic determination of chart rulerships is based on an underlying paradigm that characterized Greek life, namely a seafaring or nautical paradigm. This paradigm (and at least one other) offers a deeper understanding of astrological technique and application that was lost as astrology made its way through the Persian and Arabic periods into India, and eventually back into Europe. In effect, the "letter" of astrological "law" survived more or less, but the "spirit" did not.

As Thursday wore on, Topical Inquiries were discussed,



but were not so difficult for the audience to grasp as they resemble techniques employed today, with the possible exception of including the study of the appropriate Lot. As we do, the Hellenistic astrologers would study a particular issue by analyzing the suitable Place (House) involved along with its Lord (Ruler), the appropriate Lot (i.e. Part of Mother, Part of Siblings, etc.), and the planetary significator. Some Hellenistic astrologers, such as Dorotheus, would also consider the Trigon (Triplicity) Lord of the significator to determine motive.

By Friday, many of us felt like we were running a marathon. Fortunately many of us were catching our second wind as well! We would need it, as on Friday we were introduced to Hellenistic aspect doctrine. It was this doctrine that had been one of the most stubborn of problems for Schmidt and Project Hindsight - and was responsible for delays in their translation effort. Ultimately the dilemma was resolved to their satisfaction, and on this day we were provided with the results. Modern aspect doctrine is filled with disputes over orbs, aspects to be used (major only, or all mathematical aspects) - even debates over the names of aspects. The Hellenistic astrologers saw these matters a bit differently. Planets either aspect or stand with one another, or they are in aversion and do not relate to one another (unless mitigated by some special factors). Many ancient techniques do not use orbs - aspects are sign-based. The few aspects recognized were the sextile, square, trine and opposition, along with the conjunction which was not technically defined as an aspect. These are the so-called Ptolemaic aspects, which are somewhat of a misnomer as I feel they would

be better defined as Hellenistic aspects.

However, in some cases orbs were in fact used. In most cases the orb used was 3 degrees. Planets aspecting within this 3 degree orb were delineated in much the same manner as we do today - planetary influences were combined. However, there was a special within-orb case, and that was when the faster of the two planets was separating from the slower planet. In these special cases, the slower planet acted upon the faster planet, melding and modifying their significations as opposed to mixing significations if the aspect was only applying. We had Friday evening off, as the weekly downtown celebration in Cumberland was in full swing. And by this point, we all needed it!

Saturday brought the subject of Time Lords, which was the primary predictive method employed by the Hellenistic astrologers. Secondary progressions are briefly mentioned, but not developed in the surviving Hellenistic texts. Transits were used, but they were the last technique employed, often as a confirming technique. The first thing we in the audience had to learn was that the classical astrologers looked at time a bit differently than we moderns do. In general we're used to correlating specific astrological timing indicators, either progressions or transits, to specific points in time, which should then in turn correlate to specific events. The Hellenistic astrologers approached planetary timing influences as correlating to spans of time over which they were Lord (or Ruler). This span of time in turn was the period in which the planet released or demonstrated its significations. These spans of time were further divided into smaller and smaller periods of time, with subsequent sub-

Time Lords, which taken together gave the astrologer clues as to what would happen to the native. There are several different Time Lord systems, each used for a specific kind of inquiry, each with its own technique of determining the proper Time Lord. I can't imagine the time spent by the average classical astrologer in doing the calculations for these procedures - in an age before computers, calculators, even pencil and paper!

Sunday was a wind-down day. The panel was joined by Michael Erlewine



as they discussed the future of astrology, and just how Hellenistic principles could be brought forward and integrated into modern astrological practice. After all, we now know the existence of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto (and so many more!), as well as their demonstrated influences. While they cannot figure or be shoehorned into the Hellenistic astrological system, they certainly can be utilized as transcendental, modifying (or perhaps distorting) influences in their own right.

The Conclave came to a conclusion with an evening open house at the residence of Robert Schmidt and Ellen Black, where the Project Hindsight work is done. This was a chance to relax and exchange ideas and observations with panel participants and new-found friends (otherwise known as fellow Conclave survivors!) At the beginning of the week as I looked around the audience I saw small groups of people, friendly in nature but interacting only with known friends and acquaintances. By the end of the week every break was filled with furious and intense discussion between people who not long before had been complete strangers. This, along with the astrological material and techniques presented, will be the greatest legacy of this Conclave!