

# The Theoretical Rationale Underlying the Seven Hermetic Lots

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to propose a reconstruction of the theoretical rationale underlying the calculations of the seven ‘Hermetic’ lots that appear in the work of the 4<sup>th</sup> century astrologer Paul of Alexandria, as well as his later 6<sup>th</sup> century commentator Olympiodorus. It will be demonstrated that there is a subtle conceptual rationale for the way that each lot is constructed, and the discovery of this rationale may have important implications for the way in which each lot is delineated in a horoscopic chart.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

One of the most widespread technical concepts in the Hellenistic tradition of astrology were the hypothetical points known as *klēroi* (κλήροι) or ‘lots’. A ‘lot’ is the Hellenistic equivalent of what is known in modern astrological circles as a so-called ‘Arabic part’.<sup>2</sup> The lots are theoretical points in a

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was originally published in the *Tradition* journal, issue 2, spring 2009, available online at <http://thetraditionjournal.com>. The present version of the paper has been slightly revised and corrected as of June 2010. I would like to express my appreciation to a number of friends who kindly reviewed and made some suggestions about how I might improve this article, namely Patrick Watson, Alan White, Leisa Schaim, Chris Condra, Julie B., Douglas Noblehorse, Polly Rebich, Benjamin Dykes and particularly Demetra George. Thanks also to Dorian Greenbaum and Robert Hand for allowing me to quote the rather long excerpt from the ARHAT translation of Paul’s *Introduction* in which he outlines the calculations for the seven Hermetic lots.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘Arabic part’ is a misnomer which is both historically inaccurate and conceptually barren. It is a historical misnomer because this technical concept was developed centuries prior to the advent of the Medieval Arabian tradition of astrology, and thus there is nothing particularly ‘Arabic’ about it. The term is also somewhat conceptually barren or meaningless because the word ‘part’ is no longer conceptually evocative of the original technical term or notion that it is derived from, at least within the context of the contemporary English language. On the other hand, the word ‘lot’ is still able to directly invoke notions related to the original technical concept, such as the practice of ‘casting lots’ or ‘drawing lots’ in order to determine a random or chance outcome of some matter, with the most immediate modern parallel being the concept of a ‘lottery’.

chart which are derived by synthesizing the zodiacal positions of certain planets or points in order to identify a specific area of the chart which bears the significations of a particular topic. The most well known lot today is the Lot of Fortune, although in traditional astrology there were a host of other lots that were frequently employed in delineations. The lots appear to date back to the earliest strata of the Hellenistic tradition,<sup>3</sup> and they act as one of the major cornerstones in the system within the context of chart delineation and prediction.

## Calculating the Lots

The lots are derived from specific formulas which usually measure the distance from one planet or point in a chart to another point or planet in the chart, and that same distance is then measured from the ascendant in order to determine the position of the lot.

The formula for composing a lot, which is usually expressed algebraically in modern times, starts with the longitude of the ascendant (A) which is then added to the longitude of a planet (B), and then the longitude of a second planet (C) is subtracted from that number in order to determine the specific position of the lot in the chart. Thus the general algebraic formula looks like this:

$$\text{Lot} = A + B - C$$

While this is the most precise method for calculating the lots, it is not necessarily the most conceptually satisfying, nor is it the way in which the lot calculations were actually presented in the texts of the Hellenistic and Medieval astrologers themselves.

Rather, in the Hellenistic and Medieval texts the calculations of the lots are usually presented as geometrical formulas instead of algebraic ones, where the distance between two planets or points is measured, and then this same distance is then measured out from the ascendant. This means that in most lot calculations the lot in question is the same distance from the ascendant as is the distance between the two planets or points which compose the lot. As such, the formula for the Lot of Fortune, the most widely used lot in the Hellenistic tradition, is often presented in the following manner:

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<sup>3</sup> The earliest datable reference to the lots seems to be in Manilius, who is thought to have written his *Astronomica* sometime between 8 and 22 CE, perhaps during the course of the latter part of Augustus' reign and the early part of Tiberius'. However, Manilius was clearly drawing on earlier sources, perhaps alluding to Hermes, Nechepso and Petosiris at the beginning of his work as being the founders of the astrological tradition (*Astronomica*, Book 1. 32-52). There are in fact fragmentary texts ascribed to the legendary authors Nechepso and Petosiris that explicitly address the lots, and these works are usually thought to antedate Manilius by at least a century, although the precise dating of the composition of these works is harder to establish. For Manilius' rather odd treatment of the Lot of Fortune see Manilius, *Astronomica*, ed. and trans. G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1977 (rev. 1997), Book 3: 36-202. For a detailed discussion on the dating of Manilius see Katharina Volk, *Manilius and His Intellectual Background*, Oxford University Press, 2009, pgs. 137-161. For references to the lots in the works of Nechepso and Petosiris see Vettius Valens, *Anthology*, Book 2, Ch. 3 & 18, in *Vettii Valentis Antiocheni Anthologiarum libri novem*, ed. David Pingree, Teubner, Leipzig, 1986.

In a diurnal chart measure the distance from the Sun to the Moon, and then measure the same distance from the ascendant.

In a nocturnal chart measure the distance from the Moon to the Sun, and then measure the same distance from the ascendant.

Nearly every lot calculation in the Hellenistic tradition is presented in this manner, where the formula is to count from point A to point B, and then to count the same distance from the ascendant. Thus the lot calculations are not algebraic abstractions so much as they are specific points in a chart that are derived by measuring geometrical distances.

This is an important point, since it provides the necessary key for understanding the theoretical rationale underlying many of the different lot calculations, and particularly one specific tradition of lots that we will address shortly.

### **The Role of Sect in Lot Calculation**

The planets involved in the computation of a lot play an important role in defining its nature, and the sect of the chart is often used as the main criterion for determining the sequence of the computation. That is to say, in most lot formulas the order of the planets in the computation is altered based on the sect of the chart. In a day chart you might measure the distance from planet A to planet B, and then the same distance from the ascendant, but in a night chart you would measure the distance from planet B to planet A, and then the same distance from the ascendant. For example, the calculation for the Lot of Fortune according to Paul of Alexandria, as well as most other Hellenistic sources,<sup>4</sup> is presented in the following manner:

First is the Lot of Fortune which, for those born by day, it will be necessary to count from the solar degree to the lunar degree, and one must cast out the collected number from the degree-number of the ascendant, giving 30 degrees to each sign. And where the collected number leaves off, say that at that place is the Lot of Fortune. For those at night, the reverse, that is from the lunar degree to the solar. And likewise one must cast out the remainder from the degree of the ascendant.<sup>5</sup>

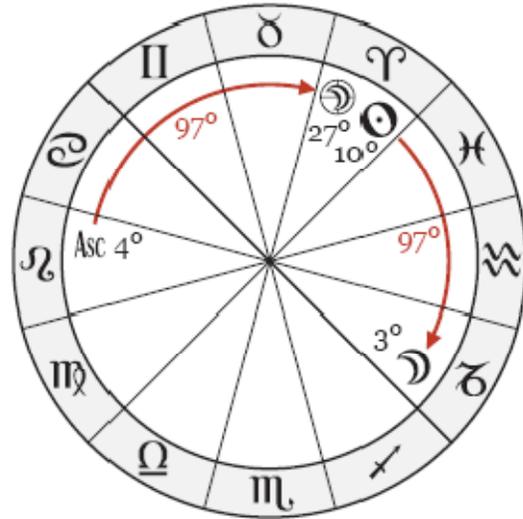
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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Manilius, *Astronomica*, 3: 186-202; Hephaistio of Thebes, *Apotelesmatika*, Book 2, Ch. 18: 10, in *Hephaestionis Thebani apotelesmaticorum libri tres*, ed. David Pingree, Teubner, Leipzig, vol. 1, 1973 (Hephaistio is drawing on Dorotheus of Sidon in this passage), Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis*, Book 4, Ch. 17: 1-4, in *Iulii Firmici Materni Mathesos libri VIII*, ed. Kroll, Skutsch and Ziegler, Teubner, vol. 1, Leipzig, 1907; as well as every example chart in Vettius Valens' *Anthology* where the Lot of Fortune is employed.

<sup>5</sup> Paul of Alexandria, *Introduction*, in *Pauli Alexandrini Elementa Apotelesmatica*, ed. Emilie Boer, B. G. Teubner, Leipzig, 1958, Ch. 23, pg. 47: 15-18/pg. 48: 1-5; translation by Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum in *Late Classical Astrology: Paulus Alexandrinus and Olympiodorus*, ARHAT Publications, Reston, VA, 2001, pgs. 41. In Greenbaum's translation the terms *hōroskopos* (ἡροσκόπος) and *zōidion* (ζῳδίων) are simply transliterated, although I have opted to render the terms into their

The simplest way to calculate a lot visually is to measure the distance from the Sun to the Moon or the Moon to the Sun, or whatever the planets or points involved may be, and then to count the same direction zodiacally from the ascendant as you did when you counted from the first planet to the second one.<sup>6</sup> For example, if you are counting clockwise from the Sun to the Moon in a diurnal chart, you would also count in the same direction, clockwise, when you measure the same distance from the ascendant. Conversely, if you are counting from the Moon to the Sun in a nocturnal chart, you must count in the same direction from the ascendant, whether that be clockwise or counterclockwise.

Here is an example chart. A native with 4 degrees of Leo rising, with the Sun at 10 Aries and the Moon at 3 Capricorn.<sup>7</sup> This is a diurnal chart, so we will use the diurnal formula for calculating the Lot of Fortune, which is to count from the Sun to the Moon, and then the same distance from the ascendant. When we count clockwise from the Sun, at 10 Aries, to the Moon, at 3 Taurus, there is a distance of 97 degrees between the two. We then count the same distance, 97 degrees, in the same direction, clockwise, from the ascendant. This brings us to 27 Aries, which is approximately where the Lot of Fortune is placed in the chart.<sup>8</sup>




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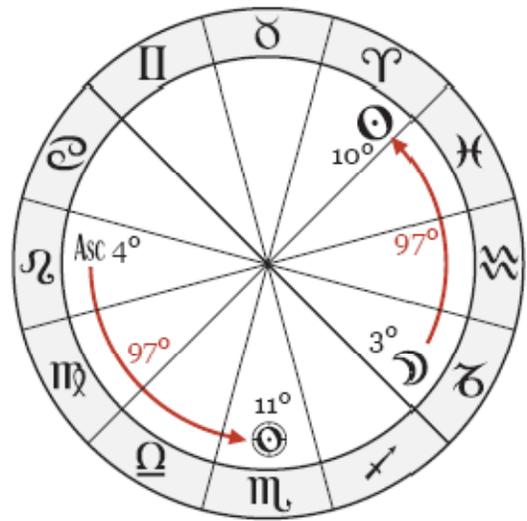
modern equivalents in this paper for the sake of continuity and clarity. The same applies to other quotations from her translation used in this paper.

<sup>6</sup> While this is the simplest way to calculate the lots visually, it should be pointed out that in the tradition it was usually the case that the distance from the ascendant was always measured out in zodiacal order.

<sup>7</sup> March 31, 1948, at 12:53 pm in Washington, DC, USA.

<sup>8</sup> The glyphs used for the Lot of Fortune and the Lot of Spirit in this article were developed by Curtis Manwaring for his Hellenistic astrology software program called Delphic Oracle. The glyph for the Lot of Fortune is a Moon with a circle and a cross behind it, and the glyph for the Lot of Spirit is a Sun which also has a circle and a cross behind it. The reason for this is that in the Hellenistic tradition several authors refer to the Lot of Fortune as the ‘Lot of the Moon’ and the Lot of Spirit as the ‘Lot of the Sun’. Valens says that the Lot of Spirit and the Lot of Fortune ‘signify’ (σημαίνουσιν) the Sun and the Moon (*Anthology*, Book 4, Ch. 4: 1), while Firmicus tells us that an earlier author named Abraham referred to the Lot of Fortune as the “place of the Moon” (*Mathesis*, Book 4, Ch. 17: 5) and the Lot of Spirit as the “place of the Sun” (*Mathesis*, Book 4, Ch. 18: 1). Even Paul himself, who is followed by Olympiodorus, makes this association between the Moon and Fortune and the Sun and Spirit, during the course of his exposition on the lots (*Introduction*, Ch. 23, pg. 49: 11-13). However, given the argument made later in this article about the subtle distinctions between Fortune and Spirit in a day and night chart, it may be necessary to view these associations in a loose sense rather than a strict one-to-one correspondence.

Note that if we had been trying to calculate the Lot of Spirit in the same diurnal chart then the calculation would have been reversed, so that we would be counting from the Moon to the Sun, and then the same distance from the ascendant going in the same direction. There would still be a 97 degree difference between the Moon and Sun, but instead of counting clockwise from the ascendant we would count 97 degrees counter-clockwise, since this is the same direction that we would be counting from the Moon to the Sun in our example chart. This would bring us to 11 degrees of Scorpio, which is approximately where the Lot of Spirit is located in this chart. In this way we see that the Lot of Fortune and Spirit are equidistant from the ascendant.



### The Seven Hermetic Lots in Paul of Alexandria

In the late 4<sup>th</sup> century CE an astrologer named Paul of Alexandria wrote a basic work on Hellenistic astrology known as the *Introduction* (Εἰσαγωγικά). Almost nothing is known about Paul's life, although we know the date of the composition of his work because in chapter 20, within the context of a discussion about determining the planetary ruler of the day, Paul demonstrates the technique by calculating what the lord of the day is “on the present day” (ἐπὶ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας).<sup>9</sup> Combined with other information from his work, it becomes apparent that he was writing that particular chapter of his book on Wednesday, February 14, 378 CE.<sup>10</sup>

In chapter 23 of Paul's *Introduction* he presents the calculations for seven lots which are each associated with one of the seven traditional planets. The chapter heading for this section says that these seven lots were derived from a work known as the *Panaretus* (Πανάρητος), which means “all-virtuous,” and, according to later scholia and commentary on Paul's *Introduction*, the *Panaretus* was a work attributed to Hermes Trismegistus:<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Paul of Alexandria, *Introduction*, ed. Boer, Ch. 20, pg. 41: 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> See David Pingree's article on Paul of Alexandria in the *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, vol. 10, ed. Charles Gillispie, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1974, pg. 419.

<sup>11</sup> For the specific attribution in the scholia see *Pauli Alexandrini Elementa Apotelesmatica*, ed. Boer, pg. 118-119: 48. For the attribution in the commentary by Olympiodorus see *Heliodori, ut dicitur, in Paulum Alexandrinum Commentarium*, ed. Emilie Boer, Teubner, Leipzig, 1962, pg. 51, 13-15.

And these, on the one hand, are the seven lots in the *Panaretus*, written about by the most divine Hermes Trismegistus, which Paulus set forth here.<sup>12</sup>

Based on this attribution to Hermes, it is possible to refer to the lots presented by Paul in this chapter as the ‘seven Hermetic lots’ in contemporary discussions on the subject. Given Hermes’ status as one of the mythical founders of the Hellenistic tradition of astrology, it might be speculated that the seven Hermetic lots comprise the original or archetypal set of lots that date back to the earliest strata of the Hellenistic tradition.<sup>13</sup> However, given Paul’s somewhat late date in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and the fact that no earlier references to this exact set of lot calculations can be found,<sup>14</sup> the ‘seven Hermetic lots’ in Paul may simply represent a later Hellenistic lot tradition that was ascribed to Hermes at some point prior to

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<sup>12</sup> Olympiodorus, *loc. cit.*, trans. Greenbaum, *Late Classical Astrology*, pg. 105.

<sup>13</sup> For ancient references to Hermes as the founder of the astrological tradition see Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis*, Book 4, preface: 5; as well as an anonymous papyrus fragment that was attached to a horoscope, edited in *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* [henceforth CCAG], vol. 8, part 4, ed. Boudreaux & Cumont, Brussels, 1921 pg. 95. The original Greek horoscope that this statement prefaced appears with a translation in Neugebauer & van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA, 1959, pg. 42, No. 137c. As noted earlier, Manilius also alludes to Hermes as being the founder of the tradition in Book 1: 32 of his *Astronomica*.

<sup>14</sup> Although the Lot of Eros and Necessity are mentioned in other Hellenistic sources and authors, such as Valens and Firmicus for example, they both seem to employ a completely different method of calculating these two lots that does not involve Venus or Mercury at all, but instead just the distances between the lot of Fortune and Spirit. See Valens, *Anthology*, ed. Pingree, Book 4, Ch. 25: 13 & 16; Firmicus, *Mathesis*, Book 6, Ch. 32: 45-46. Interestingly, the later Medieval tradition, as represented by Abu Ma’shar and Bonatti, seems to have picked up on a mixture of the two different lot traditions, drawing on the tradition represented by Valens for the calculations of Eros and Necessity, and drawing on the tradition represented by Paul for the calculations of Victory, Courage and Nemesis. See Abu Ma’shar, *The Abbreviation of the Introduction to Astrology*, trans. Charles Burnett, Keiji Yamamoto, and Michio Yano, E.J. Brill, Leiden and New York, 1994, Ch. 6: 6-11. Abu Ma’shar is followed closely by Bonatti, although Bonatti’s statement about not wanting to present the “diversity of the opinions of the ancients” is interesting because it is followed by a sort of citation of his sources as being “Hermes, Vettius [Valens], [and] Abu Ma’shar.” See Guido Bonatti, *Book of Astronomy*, Treatise 8, Ch. 2, trans. Benjamin Dykes, The Cazimi Press, Golden Valley, MN, 2007, vol. 2, pgs. 1047-1049. Based on Pingree’s argument that manuscripts of Rhetorius of Egypt’s compendium were transmitted to Māshā’allāh in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century by his colleague Theophilus of Edessa in Baghdad, and that Rhetorius drew on the works of Valens and Paul, I suspect that this may have been the source of the transmission of the two variant traditions of lot calculations to the Medieval astrologers, which later made their way to Abu Ma’shar and Bonatti. See David Pingree, ‘From Alexandria to Baghdad to Byzantium. The Transmission of Astrology’, in the *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, vol. 8, no. 1, Summer 2001, pgs. 3-37. Rhetorius preserves a nearly verbatim quotation of Paul’s delineation of the significations (although not the calculations) of the Hermetic lots in his compendium, edited by Franz Boll in CCAG, vol. 1, ed. A. Oliveri, et al., 1898, pg. 160: 11-29. He also displays a somewhat thorough familiarity with Valens’ work throughout his compendium as well, particularly in a synopsis that he wrote on different steps to take and techniques to employ in the process of delineating a chart, edited by Franz Cumont in CCAG 8, part 1, Brussels, 1929, pgs. 243-248. At the moment there is no evidence which explicitly shows that Rhetorius was fully aware of the calculations of Eros and Necessity as presented in Valens though, or the actual calculations for the Hermetic lots presented by Paul (the current evidence only mentions the significations), although one would assume based on the passages from his work cited above that he likely would have been.

the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, the calculations for the seven Hermetic lots according to Paul are presented as follows:

First is the Lot of Fortune which, for those born by day, it will be necessary to count from the solar degree to the lunar degree, and one must cast out the collected number from the degree-number of the ascendant, giving 30 degrees to each sign. And where the collected number leaves off, say that at that place is the Lot of Fortune. For those at night, the reverse, that is from the lunar degree to the solar. And likewise one must cast out the remainder from the degree of the ascendant.

Second is the Lot of Spirit. You will count for a diurnal birth from the Moon's degree to the Sun's degree, and one must cast out the collected number from the degree of the ascendant, again likewise apportioning up to 30 degrees from each sign. And where the number leaves off, there will be the Lot of Spirit. Thus by day, but the reverse by night.

Third is the Lot of Eros. You will count for those born by day from the Lot of Spirit to the degree of Venus and an equal amount from the ascendant, but the reverse for those at night.

Fourth is the Lot of Necessity. You will calculate it for those born by day from the degree of Mercury to the Lot of Fortune, and an equal amount from the ascendant, but the reverse for those at night.

Fifth is the Lot of Courage, which you will work out from the degree of Mars to the Lot of Fortune, and an equal amount from the ascendant for those born by day, but the reverse for those at night.

Sixth is the Lot of Victory. You will count for those born by day from the Lot of Spirit to the degree of Jupiter, and an equal amount from the ascendant, but the reverse for those at night.

Seventh is the Lot of Nemesis. You will count for diurnal births from Saturn to the Lot of Fortune, and an equal amount from the ascendant, but by night the reverse.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> While there may be several references to Hermes as the founder of the astrological tradition, we need not believe that every work ascribed to him necessarily goes all the way back to the earliest strata of the horoscopic tradition. Many of the texts that comprise the so-called 'philosophical Hermetica' were written by different authors who flourished in different eras, and they too were ascribed to the mythical sage Hermes Trismigistus. Garth Fowden argues that this should not be seen as a deliberate attempt to mislead through false attribution, so much as it is representing a sort of 'continuity of inspiration' or rendering of homage to the eponymous founder of the tradition, thus marking certain texts with the stamp of a specific school of thought. See Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1993 [rev. ed. 1986], pgs. 186-187.

<sup>16</sup> Paul of Alexandria, *Introduction*, Ch. 23, trans. Greenbaum, *Late Classical Astrology*, pgs. 41-42. In Greenbaum's translation the planets are translated with their Greek names (i.e. Aphrodite, Hermes, Kronos, etc.), although I have opted to render them here with their Roman/Modern equivalents (i.e. Venus, Mercury, Saturn) for the sake of clarity and continuity. The same goes for the terms *hōroskopos* and *zōidion*.

In Paul's work the Lot of Fortune is associated with the body (σώματος), while in contrast the Lot of Spirit is associated with the soul (ψυχῆς) and intelligence (φρονήσεως) of the native.<sup>17</sup> They are both given somewhat positive or neutral attributions.

The two lots that are associated with the benefic planets, the Lot of Eros (Venus) and the Lot of Victory (Jupiter), are said to signify (σημαίνει) rather positive attributes. Eros is associated with yearnings (ὀρέξεις) and desires (ἐπιθυμίας) that are actualized because they are deliberately chosen, as well as friendship (φιλίας). Victory is associated with faith or trust (πίστεως), partnership or fellowship (κοινωνίας), and success (ἐπιτυχίας).<sup>18</sup>

On the other end of the spectrum, the lots associated with Mercury and the two malefic planets, the Lot of Necessity (Mercury), the Lot of Courage (Mars), and the Lot of Nemesis (Saturn), are ascribed rather negative significations by Paul (or his source).<sup>19</sup> The Lot of Necessity is associated with significations such as oppressions (συνοχάς), contentions (μάχας), fights (πόλεμος), and hatred (μίσος). The Lot of Courage is associated with things such as rashness or insolence (θράσους), treachery (ἐπιβουλῆς), and wickedness (κακουργίας). The Lot of Nemesis is said to signify things which are concealed or hidden (κεκρυμμένων), as well as banishment (φυγῆς), loss (ἀπωλείας), sorrow (πένθος), and quality of death (ποιότης θανάτου).

As you can see from reading the lists of significations that are associated with each of the Hermetic lots in Paul's work, while they seem to have a role in indicating different types of situations that a native might experience or encounter, they are also associated with states of being, manners of action, and different psychological conditions or impulses. Each Hermetic lot seems to narrow down the broader significations of each planet in a way that is much more specific and focused, and the key to understanding the nature of each lot and why certain significations are associated with them is to identify the basic rationale underlying their computation.

## Basic Patterns in the Seven Hermetic Lots

Some basic patterns as well as some questions immediately become apparent in the arrangement of the seven Hermetic lots. We note that the Lot of Fortune and the Lot of Spirit are the only lots which count from celestial body to celestial body, while the rest of the hermetic lots count from a specific planet to either the Lot of Fortune or the Lot of Spirit, or vice versa. Olympiodorus, who wrote a

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<sup>17</sup> Paul, *Introduction*, ed. Boer, pg. 49: 17-22. My primary reference for the meaning of each word was the Liddell and Scott *Greek-English Lexicon*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, rev. ed. 1996. For alternate renderings and translations of this passage in Paul consult Greenbaum, *Late Classical Astrology*, pg. 42; Paulus Alexandrinus, *Introductory Matters*, trans. Robert Schmidt, The Golden Hind Press, Berkley Springs, WV, 1993, pg. 48; James Holden, *A History of Horoscopic Astrology*, The American Federation of Astrologers, Tempe, AZ, 1996, pgs. 77-78.

<sup>18</sup> Paul, *Introduction*, ed. Boer, pg. 50: 1-3/10-12.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 50: 4-9/13-16.

commentary on Paul's *Introduction* in 564 CE,<sup>20</sup> actually makes note of this as being an important distinction:

From all these it is shown to us that on the whole, the number comes to be either from stars to stars, just as it was said for Spirit and Fortune – for there the number comes to be from the Sun to the Moon and from the Moon to the Sun... or from stars to lots or from lots to stars as it was said also for the Lot of Eros and Necessity and the rest for a diurnal and nocturnal nativity.<sup>21</sup>

Olympiodorus' statement here seems to emphasize the importance of the planet or point that is being counted from, and the planet or point that is being counted to in each individual lot calculation. By taking this distinction into account and applying the it to the first of the Hermetic lots, the Lot of Fortune, we see that part of the rationale underlying the mechanics of the calculation is that the lot is always determined by starting from the luminary that is of the sect in favor, otherwise known as the 'sect light', and then counting the distance to the luminary that is contrary to the sect in favor. Thus, when calculating the Lot of Fortune in a day chart the starting point will always be the Sun, since the Sun is the sect light during the day, and then the distance will be measured to the Moon, since the Moon is contrary to the sect of the chart during the day. However, in a night chart the Moon is the dominant luminary or 'sect light', and thus it becomes the starting point during the night, and then the distance is measured to the Sun, which is contrary to the sect during the day.

The measurement itself seems to imply the notion of moving from the light to darkness, since the calculation literally involves counting from the dominant or shining luminary during one part of the day, to the luminary that is in some sense obscured or darkened during that same part of the day. Underlying this seems to be some sort of an allusion to a deeper Gnostic or Hermetic conceptualization of darkness being associated with matter and physical incarnation,<sup>22</sup> and according to Paul the Lot of Fortune is indeed the lot that is most commonly associated with the body of the native:

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<sup>20</sup> It is generally agreed upon at the present time that the commentary on Paul's work that survives is based on a series of lectures given by the Neoplatonic philosopher Olympiodorus the Younger between May and July of 564 CE, perhaps based on an earlier late 5<sup>th</sup> century commentary by Heliodorus. This argument was first made by L. G. Westerink in his paper 'Ein astrologisches Kolleg aus dem Jahre 564,' in the journal *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 64, 1971, pp. 6-21 (reprinted in his collected works *Texts and Studies in Neoplatonism and Byzantine Literature*, Amsterdam, 1980). David Pingree apparently found the argument to be rather convincing. See Pingree's entry on Heliodorus in *The Yavanajataka of Sphujidhvaja*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1978, vol. 2, pgs. 428-429.

<sup>21</sup> Olympiodorus commentary, ed. Boer, pg. 53: 3-11; trans. Greenbaum, *Late Classical Astrology*, pg. 106.

<sup>22</sup> For Gnostic views on the relation between the soul and light, matter and darkness, see Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, Beacon Press, Boston, MA, 1958 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev. 1963), especially chapter 9 on Manichaeism. For parallels in the Hermetic tradition, see the *Corpus Hermeticum*, particularly book 1, often known as the *Poimandres*, edited and translated by Walter Scott, *Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings Which Contain Religious or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*, Shambhala, Boston, MA, 1993 (first published in 1924), pgs. 115-133. While the association is more pronounced and explicit in Gnosticism, the occasional parallels and borrowings between certain Gnostic and Hermetic ideas

And Fortune signifies all things about the body (σώματος) and actions throughout the life.<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, the Lot of Spirit in a day chart is computed by counting from the luminary that is contrary to the sect in favor (Moon) to the luminary that is of the sect in favor (Sun), implying some sort of underlying notion of moving from darkness to light. Again, this seems to imply a Gnostic or Hermetic association between the concept of light and the soul or intellect. Indeed, in the Hellenistic texts themselves the Lot of Spirit is primarily associated with the mind and soul of the individual, as opposed to the Lot of Fortune which is associated with the body:

Spirit happens to be lord of soul, temper, sense and every capability...<sup>24</sup>

It is in this implicit underlying assumption, between light and the soul, and darkness and the body, that we may begin to see inklings of how this particular astrological tradition of lots ascribed to Hermes may in fact be tied into broader conceptual motifs in the Hermetic philosophical tradition.

### More Complex Patterns Underlying the Hermetic Lots

Other patterns can be identified in the arrangement of the Hermetic lots as well, particularly when all of the calculations are presented together schematically:

<i>Diurnal</i>			<i>Nocturnal</i>	
☉ → ☾	Fortune	☾ → ☉		
☾ → ☉	Spirit	☉ → ☾		
☉ → ♀	Eros	♀ → ☉		
☉ → ♃	Victory	♃ → ☉		
♀ → ☽	Necessity	☽ → ♀		
♂ → ☽	Courage	☽ → ♂		
♃ → ☽	Nemesis	☽ → ♃		

seems sufficient to allow us to speculate about the possibility of such a conceptualization developing within a specific Hermetic sect based on what is a predominantly Gnostic notion of the universe.

<sup>23</sup> Paul of Alexandria, *Introduction*, ed. Boer, Ch. 23, pg. 49: 17-18, trans. Greenbaum, *Late Classical Astrology*, pg. 42.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Also see Vettius Valens, *Anthology*, ed. Pingree, Book 4, Ch. 4: 1-2.

As shown in the diagram, the calculations for the two lots that are associated with more positive significations, the Lot of Eros (Venus) and Victory (Jupiter), both involve the Lot of Spirit. On the other hand, the calculations for the three lots that are ascribed more negative significations by Paul, the Lots of Necessity, Courage and Nemesis, all involve the Lot of Fortune. Underlying this arrangement seems to be a deliberate attempt to associate the benefic planets with the Lot that is associated with light, the soul and the intellect (the Lot of Spirit), and the malefic planets with the lot that is associated with darkness, matter and the body (the Lot of Fortune).

It seems possible that these assignments were made simply due to the apparent brightness of each of the planets involved, with Venus and Jupiter being the two brightest visible planets, and Mars and Saturn being the darker visible planets, although Mercury's association with the malefics is usually seen as somewhat perplexing at first glance.

Mercury usually plays a more neutral or vacillating role in Hellenistic astrology, both with respect to sect and with respect to benefic and malefic status,<sup>25</sup> but in Paul's delineation of Mercury's lot, the Lot of Necessity, the significations given are decidedly more negative or malefic:

Necessity signifies imprisonments, subordinations, battles and wars, and it makes enmities, hatreds, condemnations, and all other constraining circumstances which happen to men as their lot at birth.<sup>26</sup>

The negative significations that Paul ascribes to the Lot of Necessity seem to result from its association with the Lot of Fortune in the calculation, although it is still somewhat curious as to why it was decided that Mercury's Hermetic lot should be associated with Fortune rather than Spirit. It seems plausible that this association may have been made simply because of Mercury's vacillating nature in the Hellenistic astrological tradition, where it is seen to take on the characteristics of the planets surrounding it in a given chart, such as their benefic or malefic character or sect status, and this passive stance was seen to be more in line with the Lot of Fortune, which is associated with things that befall the native or things that we encounter that are "not depending on us."<sup>27</sup>

Aside from the obvious grouping of the benefics and the malefics with Fortune or Spirit, there is also an interesting schematization in the order of the computation depending on whether the chart is nocturnal or diurnal. Some of the calculations for the Hermetic lots count the distance from a lot to a planet, while others count from a planet to a lot, and they are all reversed depending on the sect of the

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<sup>25</sup> Mercury is usually said to be common or neutral with respect to benefic or malefic status, but to align himself with one side or another based on which planets he is associated with in a given chart. See Claudius Ptolemy, *Apotelesmatika* (a.k.a. *Tetrabiblos*), Book 1, Ch. 5: 2, ed. Wolfgang Hübner, *Claudius Ptolemaeus, Opera quae exstant omnia*, vol 3, 1: *ΑΠΟΤΕΛΕΣΜΑΤΙΚΑ*, Teubner, Stuttgart & Leipzig, 1998, pg. 26. Similarly, Mercury is often said to be somewhat neutral with respect to sect, but to align himself with the diurnal sect when he is a morning star, and with the nocturnal sect when he is an evening star. See Ptolemy, *Apotelesmatika*, Book 1, Ch. 7: 1.

<sup>26</sup> Paul of Alexandria, *Introduction*, ed. Boer, Ch. 23, pg. 50: 4-7, trans. Greenbaum, *Late Classical Astrology*, pg. 42.

<sup>27</sup> Olympiodorus commentary, ed. Boer, pg. 47: 1-5; trans. Greenbaum, *Late Classical Astrology*, pg. 104.

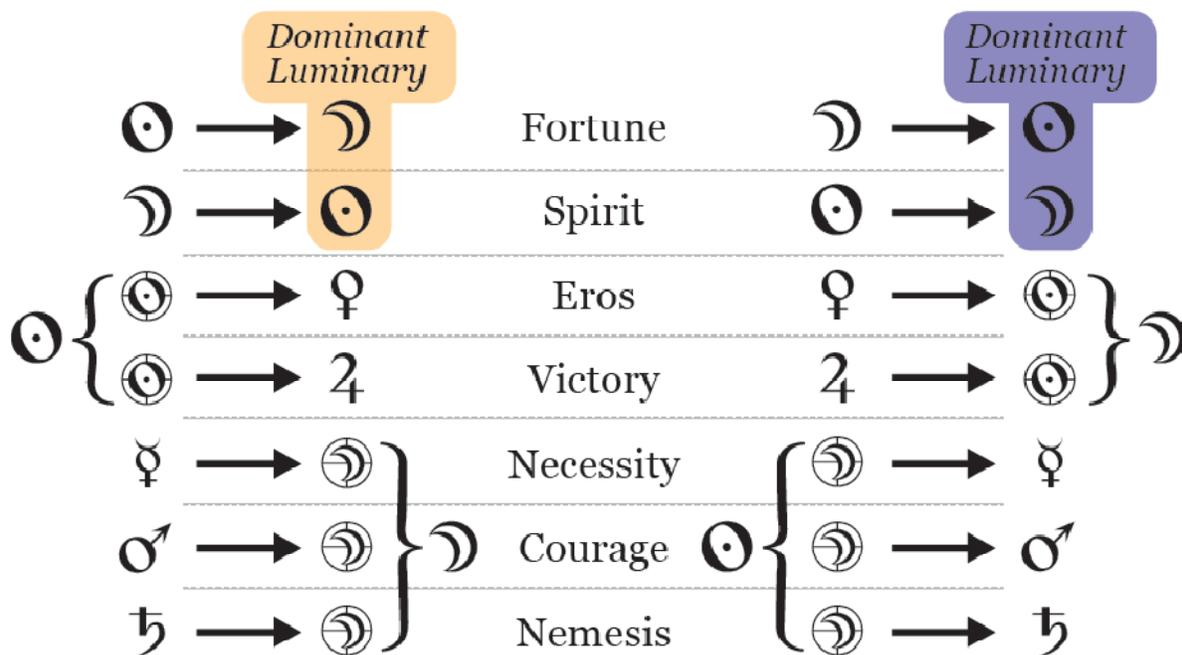
chart.<sup>28</sup> Olympiodorus makes a point to note this, although his comments are not particularly helpful in elucidating the rationale underlying the arrangement:

For Eros and Victory on the one hand for diurnal births from lot to stars, but the reverse for nocturnal. But for Courage, Necessity and Nemesis on the other hand, for diurnal births from stars to lots, but for nocturnal from lots to stars.<sup>29</sup>

### The Rationale Underlying the Calculation of the Five Planetary Lots

In analyzing the other five Hermetic lot calculations presented by Paul the question becomes thus: why is it that in a diurnal chart that the lots hand over to the planets in the calculations for Eros and Victory, but the planets hand over to the lots in the calculations of Necessity, Courage and Nemesis? Furthermore, why is the order for each computation reversed in nocturnal charts?

I will propose a rationale for this schematic arrangement below by using the following diagram:



The theory underlying the calculations of the seven Hermetic lots seems to take a few principles for

<sup>28</sup> Robert Schmidt of Project Hindsight has recently questioned whether the calculations of the Hermetic lots presented in Paul were originally meant to be reversed, in a private workshop on the topic, however this position does not appear to be supported by the extant Hellenistic texts. In point of fact, in the Olympiodorus commentary the reversal of the lots is explicitly demonstrated. See the Olympiodorus commentary, ed. Boer, pg. 50: 6-15; trans. Greenbaum, *Late Classical Astrology*, pg. 105. cf. Benjamin Dykes' translation of Guido Bonatti, *Book of Astronomy*, vol. 2, pg. 1047, fn. 593.

<sup>29</sup> Olympiodorus commentary, ed. Boer, pg. 53: 11-16; trans. Greenbaum, *Late Classical Astrology*, pg. 106.

granted. Here is the first broad principle, which involves the Lots of Fortune and Spirit within this context:

**Principle 1)** In a diurnal chart the Lot of Spirit is associated with the Sun, insomuch as the Sun is the sect light and it is the dominant luminary in the calculation. However, in a night chart the Lot of Spirit is associated with the Moon, because at night the Moon is the sect light and it is the dominant luminary involved in the calculation.

This rule is simple enough, since we have already established earlier that the calculation for the Lot of Spirit is based on counting from the luminary that is contrary to the sect to the sect light itself. This is fully dependent on the sect of the chart, and it implies that *the planet that you count to is the dominant planet in the calculation.*

However, there is a catch: the nature of each luminary is fundamentally different, and this creates a significant distinction between the nature of the Lot of Spirit in a day chart versus the Lot of Spirit in a night chart. The Sun is seen to play an active role in emitting or emanating its rays and its light, whereas the Moon plays a passive role in receiving and reflecting light. To put it more simply, the Sun “emits,” and the Moon “receives.”

We find support for such a conceptualization of the Sun and Moon in another commentary by Olympiodorus on Plato’s *Gorgias*:

And further they say that Helios is male and Selene female, since it belongs to the male to give and to the female to receive. So since the sun gives the light and the moon receives it, for this reason they give him a male name and her a female.<sup>30</sup>

This appears to be the notion underlying the difference between the Lot of Spirit in a day chart and the lot of Spirit in a night chart, since by day the Sun is the dominant planet in the calculation of the Lot of Spirit, but by night the Moon is the dominant planet associated with the Lot of Spirit.

In a diurnal chart the Sun is the sect light, so the Lot of Spirit in a day chart will always take on an active character of emitting, whereas in a night chart the Moon is the sect light, so the Lot of Spirit in a night chart will always take on a more passive character of receiving.

This leads us to the second principle underlying the Hermetic lot calculations, which only applies to the Lot of Eros and Victory since those are the only two lots which incorporate the Lot of Spirit into their calculations:

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<sup>30</sup> Olympiodorus, *Commentary on Plato’s Gorgias*, Lecture 47.4 (523A1-B1), trans. and comm. by Robin Jackson, Kimon Lycos, and Harold Tarrant, (*Philosophia Antiqua* 78.), Brill, Leiden, 1998, pg. 299.

**Principle 2)** Whether the calculation for the lots that involve Spirit is measured from a lot to a planet or a planet to a lot is predicated on which of the two luminaries is dominant in the Lot of Spirit calculation.

This rule incorporates the notion that within the context of the Lot of Spirit the Sun is dominant during the day, and Moon is dominant at night, with the Lot of Spirit either “emitting” or “receiving” the other planet in the calculation depending on which luminary is dominant.

Therefore, in the **diurnal** calculations of the Hermetic Lots which incorporate the Lot of Spirit, the calculation starts with Spirit itself and then the distance is counted to the planets, mimicking the radiating nature of the solar force. However, in the **nocturnal** calculations of the Hermetic Lots which incorporate the Lot of Spirit, the calculation will start with the planets themselves and then the distance is counted to lot, mimicking the receptive nature of the lunar principle.

As you can see by looking at the diagram above, this notion that the Lot of Spirit emits when it is dominated by the Sun and receives when it is dominated by the Moon seems to fit perfectly when it is applied to both of the lot calculations that involve the Lot of Spirit, which are the Lot of Eros and the Lot of Victory.

This principle of having a dominant luminary in the lot calculation also holds true when we apply it to the Hermetic lots that involve the Lot of Fortune: Necessity, Courage and Nemesis. Essentially the converse of the above rule for the lots that involve Spirit is true for the Lots that involve Fortune, and the structure of the calculation is still predicated on which luminary is dominant.

Thus the third principle underlying the Hermetic lot calculations, which only applies to the Lots of Necessity, Courage and Nemesis, since those are the only lots that incorporate the Lot of Fortune into their calculations, is:

**Principle 3)** Whether the calculation for the Hermetic lots that incorporate the Lot of Fortune into their computation is measured from a lot to a planet or a planet to a lot is predicated on which of the two luminaries is dominant in the Lot of Fortune calculation.

In a **diurnal** chart the Hermetic lots that involve the Lot of Fortune start with the planets, because in a day chart the Moon is the dominant planet in the calculation for the Lot of Fortune, and thus the Lot of Fortune “receives” the other planets involved in the calculation. Conversely, in a **nocturnal** chart the Hermetic lot calculations that involve Fortune start with the Lot of Fortune itself and then measure the distance to the planets, since in a night chart the Sun is the dominant luminary in the calculation for the Lot of Fortune, and thus the Lot of Fortune “emits” towards the other planets involved in the calculation.

The rules outlined here can be summed up with the following tables:<sup>31</sup>

### **Spirit and Spirit Lots**

	<b>Lot of Spirit Dominant Light</b>	<b>Lot of Eros (Venus) Lot of Victory (Jupiter)</b>
<b>Day</b>	Sun Solar Lot of Spirit emits	From Lot of Spirit emitting to Venus/Jupiter
<b>Night</b>	Moon Lunar Lot of Spirit receives	From Venus/Jupiter to receiving Lot of Spirit

By day, the Sun is dominant and the solar Lot of Spirit emits to planets.

By night, the Moon is dominant and the lunar Lot of Spirit receives from planets.

### **Fortune and Fortune Lots**

	<b>Lot of Fortune Dominant Light</b>	<b>Lot of Necessity (Mercury) Lot of Courage (Mars) Lot of Nemesis (Saturn)</b>
<b>Day</b>	Moon Lunar Lot of Fortune receives	From Mercury/Mars/Saturn to receiving lunar lot of Fortune
<b>Night</b>	Sun Solar Lot of Fortune emits	From solar Lot of Fortune emitting to Mercury, Mars, Saturn

By day, the Moon is dominant and lunar Lot of Fortune receives from the planets.

By night, the Sun is dominant and the solar Lot of Fortune emits to the planets.

### **Erratic Movements Resolved**

The final component that the proposed theoretical reconstruction helps to resolve is the question of why some of the Hermetic lots should move about the chart in a somewhat slow and regular fashion during one part of the day, while other lots move about in a relatively quick and somewhat erratic fashion during the same part of the day, with these roles being reversed at night.

This occurs by virtue of the fact that any lots whose calculations start with a planet and then count to a lot are apt to move about the chart at a much faster rate, since the position of a lot is much

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<sup>31</sup> Thanks go to Demetra George for creating the tables presented here in order to help me to convey my argument more clearly.

more unstable throughout the course of a day. On the other hand, the Hermetic lot calculations that involve counting from a lot to a planet will move around a chart in a relatively slower and more consistent fashion, since the movements of the planets are much slower during the course of a day.

The erratic movement of some of the lots and the comparatively consistent movements of others can easily be explained within the context of the above paradigm, when it is realized that the Moon will always be the dominant luminary in the calculations of the more quickly moving Hermetic lots, while the Sun will always be the dominant luminary in the calculations of the slower moving Hermetic lots.

The disparity of the speed in the movement of the different lots, then, is nothing more than a reflection of the relative speeds of the Sun and Moon, and perhaps on a deeper level the perceived inconsistency of the Moon on the part of the Hellenistic astrologers, versus the perceived stability of the Sun.

## Concluding Remarks

The end result of this attempt to reconstruct the theoretical rationale underlying the calculations of the seven Hermetic lots is the discovery of a highly complex and subtle conceptualization of the natures of the Lots of Fortune and Spirit. Based on the reconstruction presented in this paper, presuming that it is a valid reconstruction, the source of Paul's seven lots seems to have had a rather intricate and unique notion of how the Lot of Fortune and the Lot of Spirit function depending on the sect of a given chart. Astrologers have known for some time that sect is an important factor in determining the sequence of the calculation for many of the lots in the astrological tradition,<sup>32</sup> although the proposed model underlying the Hermetic lot calculations seems to imply that the role of sect is not merely limited to determining the sequence of the computation, but indeed that it has a role in altering the very function and nature of two of the most important and widespread lots that were used in the Hellenistic tradition.<sup>33</sup>

This leads to a far more advanced method of delineating each lot in a chart, with subtle distinctions to be made about such things as what it means for a person to actualize their intellectual potential when their Lot of Spirit is dominated by the Sun, versus when their Lot of Spirit is dominated by the Moon. For example, a native who has a solar Lot of Spirit and focuses their intellectual faculties in a way that “emits” or generates works through the independent parthenogenesis of new ideas, versus

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<sup>32</sup> See Rob Hand, *Night & Day: Planetary Sect in Astrology*, ARHAT Publications, Reston, VA, 1995, pgs. 34-39.

<sup>33</sup> Greenbaum notes that out of about 300 extant charts from the Hellenistic tradition, approximately 91 calculate the Lot of Fortune (in one form or another), and 33 employ the Lot of Spirit, thus making them by far the two most widely employed lots. See Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum, ‘Calculating the Lots of Fortune and Daemon in Hellenistic Astrology’, *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 11, no. 2, Autumn/Winter 2007, pg. 164. This paper presents a very useful overview of some of the variations in the calculation of the Lot of Fortune in the Hellenistic tradition, although these variations are not necessarily germane to the present paper, since I have tried to limit the discussion to the way the Lot of Fortune and the other Hermetic lots are presented in Paul in particular, thus making it focused on one particular lot tradition.

a native who has a lunar Lot of Spirit and tends actualize their intellectual faculties by “receiving” or pulling together the work of others in order to reflect and compare them, thus also creating something new in the process. Both scenarios pertain to the “disposition and intelligence” of the native,<sup>34</sup> which is the purview of the Lot of Spirit, but describe different ways that a person with a day or night chart might go about putting those capabilities into action.<sup>35</sup>

Not only does this help to solve the somewhat riddling structure of the calculations underlying the seven Hermetic lots presented by Paul of Alexandria, but it also points to a deeper level of philosophical thought and delineation that can be explored in the future.

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<sup>34</sup> This is Holden’s rendering of two of the significations of the Lot of Spirit in Paul. See Holden, *A History of Horoscopic Astrology*, pg. 77.

<sup>35</sup> While a full exploration of these interpretive distinctions is outside of the scope of the present article, the subject will be addressed in forthcoming works.