

**Anthony Damiani: writes in the introduction to *Astronoesis: on Symbol and Mandala***

There is a contemporary need to organize our understanding of the fundamental metaphysical principles by the use of a symbolism grounded in sensible appearances. We believe that the open-ended schemata provided by the astrological mandala not only organizes our understanding, but reciprocally guides and directs it. Otherwise, the web of interrelationships would overwhelm us.

So In the beginning we restrict ourselves to the scale of perception provided by this sensible universe--more precisely, the particular world revealed by our egos. For the transcendental understanding we seek has its humble origins in this empirical world. Here we find the only phenomenon adequate to serve us in the task our aspiration has been assigned. This symbolism of the cosmos is vast enough to provide the polyvalent systems of conception and logic that will be necessary to synthesize the many faceted aspects of man's perpetual quest, and to reconcile the seeming contradictions among the various philosophic and religious traditions. The sensible world is sufficiently determined in its parts both to keep our understanding under rein and to spur it beyond its limits. *[In file, not PPT]*

The sensible universe is the primordial scripture, the vision granted us, that was previously referred to, and it embodies the wisdom of the primal principles that are beyond it. Who has not thrilled to the excitement of the starry skies--to the silent unanswered questions?

*In sum: the loveliness that is in the sense-realm is an index of the nobleness of the Intellectual sphere, displaying its power and its goodness alike: and all things are forever linked; the one order Intellectual in its being, the other of sense; one self-existent, the other eternally taking its being by participation in that first, and to the full of its power reproducing the Intellectual Nature. (Plotinus IV.8.6)*

Not to initially restrict ourselves in this manner is to risk having our understanding relativized prematurely by the immensities of universal manifestation. Grounding ourselves, therefore, in the experience that we human beings on this earth have of the unique integrity of our own world, our solar system, we take as our model the geocentric world view that has been made familiar through the diagrams of Ptolemaic astronomy. We will tentatively accept and inquire into the nature and structure of the cosmos as it was conceived by the ancient cosmologists and astrologers who claimed that its principles are gods whose activity is conascent with the being, knowledge, and experience of this very world. Our hope is that we will be led to a qualitatively different understanding of our being here--an understanding that does not sidestep or deny the anomaly of sense perception, but, instead, reveals something of the meaning implicit in the orderly and evolving transformation that our minds and bodies undergo. In short, we are going to enter sympathetically into an analysis of experience as conceived by some of the ancient philosophers--to try to understand and appreciate the philosophic insight they summarized in the dictum: ``The world is full of Gods."`

To try to pictorialize this realm, we can imagine the stars as statues of the gods, or the Ideas, that radiate a guiding influence throughout boundless space. . . . The energy of their intelligence lays down the basic pattern within which our world, among others, develops and unfolds.

*If the stars live a blessed life in their vision of the life inherent in their souls, and if, by force of their souls' tendency to become one, and by the light they cast from themselves upon the entire heavens, they are like the strings of a lyre which, being struck in tune, sing a melody in some natural scale: if this is the way the heavens, as one, are moved, and the component parts in their relation to the whole--the sidereal system moving as one, and each part in its own way, to the same purpose, though each too hold its own place--then our doctrine is all the more surely established; the life of the heavenly bodies is the more clearly an unbroken unity . . . (IV.4.8)*

*. . . this All is one universally comprehensive living being, encircling all the living beings within it, and having a soul, one soul, which extends to all its members in the degree of participant membership held by each . . . (IV.4.32)*

*. . . the entire Cosmos puts its entire life into act, moving its major members with its own action and unceasingly setting them in new positions; by the relations thus established, of these members to each other and to the whole, and by the different figures they make together, the minor members in turn are brought under the system as in the movements of some one living being, so that they vary according to the relations, positions, configurations (IV.4.33)*

From the point of view of the ancient, philosophically oriented cosmologist, the astrological mandala is a rare instance of the intellectual imagination--a symbolic reflex portraying how the Gods or Principles are involved in the fabrication of the vehicles that the individual Soul employs for its manifestation. The mandala exemplifies and embodies the knowledge of superior beings--seers--who are capable of transmitting their knowledge of how fundamental principles are operative in the individual and can be understood from his natal chart. *SLIDE 7*

The chart makes available in its deific imagery a formulation by reason-principles of a symbolic method through which these very reason principles are being manifested. The symbolism reveals a topography of the subtle world, including those reason principles operative in the individual mind itself. *SLIDE 8*

*We must understand that, while our souls do contain an Intellectual Cosmos, they also contain a subordination of various forms like that of the Cosmic Soul. The World Soul is distributed so as to produce the fixed sphere and the planetary circuits corresponding to its graded powers: so with our souls; they must have their provinces according to their different powers, parallel to those of the World Soul . . . III.4.6*

These diagrams will allow us to juxtapose philosophy and astrology in such a way as to reveal that the sensible universe and its starry host is the primordial living scripture that embodies the wisdom of primal principles--principles that are as far beyond it as the heavens are beyond the

earth--and that the basis of astrology is an acquaintance with the wisdom-knowledge that sustains the cosmos.

In this juxtaposition, we will distinguish philosophy and astrology from one another, define the terms of each, and illustrate how they combine in manifestation as mutually-implicating elements of a single whole. This method allows us to develop a sharp contrast, to conceptually bifurcate the indivisible in such a way that the understanding, which can operate only in the realm of dualities, may see how it itself is manifested within the cosmic harmony that is evolving it.

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Admiring the world of sense as we look out upon its vastness and beauty and the order of its eternal march, thinking of the gods within it, seen and hidden, and the celestial spirits and all the life of animal and plant, let us mount to its archetype, to the yet more authentic sphere: there we are to contemplate all things as members of the Intellectual--eternal in their own right, vested with a self-springing consciousness and life--and, presiding over all these, the unsoiled Intelligence and the unapproachable wisdom. Plotinus Ennead 5.1.4

***The sensible universe and its starry host is the primordial living scripture that embodies the wisdom of primal principles***

The ancients spoke of the realm beyond the constellations as the World of Ideas. These Ideas or universal substances are not in any place, but were mythologically represented by the constellations. To pictorialize this realm we can imagine the stars as statues of the gods, or the Ideas, radiating a guiding influence throughout boundless space. The energy of their intelligence laid down the basic pattern within which our world, among others, would develop and unfold. The idea of the cosmos--the World Idea--and its inhabitants, evolving and manifesting, can be traced ultimately to this circle of Ideas.

In this sense the stars are a theophany of radiating intelligences, distributing their presence and informing the universe through patterns of intellectual energy. Each of these intelligences is a universal substance correlated to a sign, and these reason principles--the signs--are the paradigms of all living forms or species symbolized by the archetypal zodiac or inerratic sphere, which represents the immutability of the Ideas. So the stars, which are the bodies of the Gods, sensibly represent Ideas that are being transmitted from the Universal Soul to the cosmos. It is not possible for the profane mind of man to acquiesce to these truths, but knowledge and devotion may bring him to that realization wherein the rising and setting of worlds is a terrestrial incident in Eternal Consciousness.