

INDIVIDUAL NATIVITY, “BEGINNING OF LIFE” CONTROVERSY  
AND OTHER PROBLEMS: PROEM AND STRUCTURE OF BOOK  
THREE OF THE *TETRABIBLOS*\*

By

JOANNA KOMOROWSKA

Composition of individual nativity and problems involved in respective theory and practice of horoscopy, such as e.g. definition of the individual beginning of life (and, implicitly, the conception versus birth controversy), are of necessity among the issues of particular interest to one trying to uncover the mechanisms of Ptolemy’s exposition in the *Tetrabiblos*. The complexities involved in the subject, closely related to anti-astrological debate current among the intellectuals of Greco-Roman world since the Hellenistic era, gain fundamental importance as the author of the *Tetrabiblos* tries to invest astrology with scientific (or Aristotelian) robes: indeed, the justification of the theory that individual *indoles*, *mores* and, consequently, actual choices of a human being may be effectively motivated by fully external circumstances (or to put it more precisely, by stellar circumstances) at a single moment in time (and this, effectively, is the main premises of the genethliology), seems to demand considerable argumentative skills. In making such an attempt one is forced to navigate the somewhat treacherous waters of ancient predestination theory, epistemology issues and, indeed, the soul-lore.

---

\* This study forms a part of a much larger study devoted to the exploration of Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos*, with particular emphasis on Book Two and in many points relates to my article published in “Eos” XCVIII 2011. I would like to thank the anonymous reader for “Eos” for his valuable suggestions and critical insight.

The translation of the *Tetrabiblos* quoted throughout is that of the Loeb edition (Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, edited and translated by F.E. ROBBINS, Cambridge, MA. 1940). As for the Greek, I employed Simonetta FERABOLI’s edition (Claudio Tolomeo, *Le previsioni astrologiche*, a cura di S. FERABOLI, Vicenza 1985); hence, chapter and paragraph numbers are given according to this source.

Regardless of the stand we take with regard to GIANNANTONI’s contentions concerning the post-Carneadean origin of the polemic (cf. GIANNANTONI 1994), Cicero’s testimony in *De fato* 15 f. leaves us in no doubt concerning the pervasiveness of the respective arguments among the late Republican intellectuals.