

THEORY APPLIED: THE PROEM AND THE CONTENTS
OF *TETRABIBLOS* II*

By

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A cynical reader could observe that the elemental theory of planetary influence that Ptolemy had so carefully (and yet so partially) described in the opening book of his *Tetrabiblos* comes to the test in the following one: it is here, in the discussion of what we know as *astrologia universalis* that he will have to implement his tenets, to demonstrate the actual effects of heavenly influence, and thus to demonstrate the advantages of astrology. The sequence (from theory to the universal prognostic) seems interesting in itself: effectively, it reflects the author's idea of orderly progression from the generalities and regularity of theoretical knowledge to the particularities and peculiarities of actual practice. Indeed, from the lore dealing with the astronomical objects (or rather from mathematical astronomy) he passed to the principles concerning physical elements (and hence, matter): now, he turns his attention to the considerations concerning terrestrial *to katholou*. Hence, he repeatedly emphasizes that it is always the general that precedes the individual – the assumption reflects his preoccupation with the accepted rules of scientific exposition, but becomes in itself reflected in his exposition, which passes from the immutable and the stable to that which remains in constant contact with the *endechomena*. The structure of his argument in the *Tetrabiblos* II 1 is all the more interesting, for it both follows the paradigm set by the introductory remarks, and – strikingly – introduces several issues that will be of consequence in the later discussion concerning the nativity chart.

In FAZZO's study, the discussion of *universalis* or mundane astrology becomes a clever trick, a step in the development of the rather shaky argument in favour of genethliology: for her, the whole chapter is introduced for the double purpose. First, it foils the traditional weapon of sceptics, bent upon pointing out that ethnic

* Throughout the text, the quotations from the *Tetrabiblos* follow Simonetta Feraboli's edition (Claudio Tolomeo, *Le previsioni astrologiche*, a cura di S. Feraboli, Vincenza 1985); the English translation quoted is that of F. E. Robbins (Ptolemy: *Tetrabiblos*, Cambridge, MA 1940).