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Fortune, Spirit & the Lunation Cycle

by **David Plant**



The Roman Goddess Fortuna

The term 'Arabian Parts' is misleading. The medieval Arab astrologers inherited their art from a long-established tradition, which they did much to refine and develop, but did not originate. References to the parts are found in all the major astrological texts that have survived from Greek and Roman times. One such account is given in the *Mathesis* of Firmicus Maternus, written in the 4th century. He had a rich legacy of sources to draw upon and, despite the gloomy fatalism of his interpretations, the *Mathesis* is invaluable for its insights into classical techniques, such as antiscions, dodecatemoria (an early form of harmonics), and parts.

THE PART OF FORTUNE (☿)

The Part of Fortune is the one part which has survived in general use, though the method of calculation is often incorrect. By day,

The Astrological Parts

Fortune, Spirit and the Lunation Cycle
By David Plant

Al Biruni's Parts
by Deborah Houlding

The Parts in Action
by David McCann

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Dreamhouse:
Arabic Parts & Lots

Paul Vachier's
Arabic Parts
Calculator.

measure from the Sun to the Moon and add that distance to the ascendant, but by night the arc must be subtracted from the ascendant. Firmicus described this part as *the place of the Moon*, because it projects the Moon's elongation from the Sun out into the circle of the houses.

Clues to the part's significance can be found in classical mythology. Fortuna was the Italian goddess of destiny, (the first-born daughter of Jupiter), whose worship was said to have been introduced to Rome by King Servius Tullius. At her famous shrine at Praeneste, oracles were obtained by a child drawing from a bag of wooden tokens, each inscribed with a cryptic message. She was also honoured as the bringer of fertility and increase, her name meaning 'She who brings things', from the Latin *ferre* 'to bring'. Her Greek counterpart was Tyche, from the Greek *teuchein* 'to cause'. Tyche was originally a philosophical concept rather than a goddess, the 'pure chance' which brings either good or evil fortune. The later worship of *Agathe Tyche*, 'Good Fortune', may owe something to the cult of Fortuna.

THE PART OF THE SPIRIT (☿)

According to the ancient astrologers, the Part of Fortune is only half the picture. If you measure from the Moon to the Sun and add the result to the ascendant by day or subtract by night, you arrive at the Part of the Spirit (Greek: *daimon*). Firmicus called this *the place of the Sun*, saying "it is not right that it should be separated from the place of the Moon". However Ptolemy makes no mention of this part in his *Tetrabiblos*, even though he paid a great deal of attention to the Part of Fortune. The *Tetrabiblos* became the key text in the development of astrology after the Renaissance and so the Part of the Spirit has been largely forgotten. Ptolemy's intention was to place astrology on a respectable, scientific basis. The Part of Fortune, indicative of material success, was evidently more acceptable in this context than the mysterious Part of the Spirit.

The term 'daimon' was originally applied to divine power, seen as a cause of events, then to the resulting events themselves - fate. It literally means 'that which distributes' or 'that which is distributed'. The *daimones* were the ancestral spirits of the family who watched over their descendants, later they became the *genii*, the guardian spirits or angels that guide individuals through life. In Stoic philosophy, they were the sparks of divinity present in all intelligent beings. Just as it was possible to experience good or evil fortune, so one could be guided by a good or evil genius. This is echoed in the ancient names for the houses - in Latin the 5th and 6th houses are called *Bona Fortuna* and *Mala Fortuna* (good and evil fortune), while their opposites, the 11th and 12th, are *Bonus Spiritus* and *Malus Spiritus* (good and evil genius).

Taken together, these two parts reflect the fundamental polarity of Sun and Moon, day and night. They are always symmetrical

about the horizon and move in opposite directions through the houses as the elongation of the Moon from the Sun increases. According to Firmicus, the Part of Fortune shows 'the quality of life' and the Part of the Spirit, 'the essence of the soul'.

LOVE AND POVERTY

Two other parts were derived from the lights. These show the same polarity, ruling love and hatred, success and failure.

If you measure from the Part of Fortune to the Part of the Spirit and add the arc to the ascendant by day, or subtract by night, the result is the Part of Love. Abraham ibn Ezra said that it indicates love, joy, and delight. It may also be found both by day and by night from the formula:

$$\text{Asc} + 2 \times (\text{Sun} - \text{Moon}).$$

If you measure from the Part of the Spirit to the Part of Fortune and add the arc to the ascendant by day, or subtract by night, the result is the Part of Poverty or Hatred. Albiruni called it the Part of despair and penury and fraud, and Guido Bottatti said that it indicates fear, hatred, and contention. It may be found both by day and by night from the formula:

$$\text{Asc} + 2 \times (\text{Moon} - \text{Sun}).$$

THE LUNATION CYCLE

At the New Moon, the parts of Fortune, Spirit, Love, and Poverty will always be in conjunction with the ascendant. As the Moon waxes, the parts of Fortune and Spirit move in opposite directions through the houses - Fortune below the horizon by day, Spirit below by night. The parts of love and Poverty separate from the ascendant at twice the speed of Fortune and the Spirit - Poverty below the horizon and Love above.

The First Quarter occurs when the Moon makes a dexter square to the Sun: the parts of Fortune and Spirit are then in opposition to each other and in square to the ascendant, with Spirit at the longitude of the zenith by day and Fortune there by night. Love and Poverty have travelled twice as far and are in conjunction with the descendant.

At Full Moon, Fortune and Spirit are in conjunction with the descendant, while Love and Poverty are in conjunction with the ascendant. At the Last Quarter, when the Moon makes a sinister square to the Sun, Love and Poverty have returned to the descendant. Fortune and Spirit are in opposition, squaring the ascendant, with Fortune at the zenith by day and Spirit by night.

At each phase of the cycle, these four parts form hard aspects to each other and to the ascendant, no matter where the luminaries happen to be in the houses. The interaction between the parts and the horizon brings the lunation cycle down to earth, projecting it, via the ascendant, into the sublunar sphere of the mundane houses.

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Note - The *Mathesis* of Firmicus has recently been republished by Ascella in an edition revised by David McCann. Firmicus used the same word for place, part, and house. Although these meanings can be distinguished from their context, the translator misinterpreted, for example, the Part of Children, as the house of children. Now that this has been corrected, we see that Firmicus placed more emphasis on the parts than was previously thought. Like most classical astrologers, Firmicus treated them rather like houses: their influence was extended to the whole sign, not just the specific degree.

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