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[Steven Birchfield](#) is a thoughtful and articulate astrologer, who has investigated the ancient sources of the cosmic science. He has developed a comprehensive understanding of the traditional bases of astrology and has put his knowledge into a series of articles that we will be presenting on Astrology on the Web over coming months.

An astrologer with over 30 years experience in astrological practice and social services, Steven is now studying for his PhD and a diploma in Medieval Astrology. He tells us he has resided in Africa, Asia, East and Western Europe.

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 You might also like to check out his website: [Divine Astrology](#)

## Hellenistic Astrology

### The Living Signs

#### part 3: Aversion, the loss of sight

*In this, the third part of this fascinating series, Steven Birchfield, astrologer and philosopher, continues his exploration of Hellenistic Astrology, the underlying basis of our system. Here he examines the ideas of Signs, or "zoidia" not only having a sense of "sight", but losing it and having to employ "hearing" and "touch". He looks at the concepts of Aversion and Mitigation, Scia and Antscia, powerful tools in the hellenistic astrologer's toolkit, that can be usefully employed even today.*

As I said earlier in this series, the *zoidia* that do not behold or see each other are in aversion [or inconjunct] to each other. This was one of the worse things that could happen to a planet, to fall in a *zoidion* that was in aversion to its domicile *zoidion*. It was called falling amiss. A planet falling amiss from its own domicile could not for example receive or a help a planet that might be posited there. But equally as bad, that planet could not run the affairs of the 'topical' responsibilities of its *zoidion*. If, for example, Libra marked the ascendant and its lord Venus fell in Taurus/8th *zoidion*, then Venus was in fact 'blind' and the ascendant [or horoskopos], like the helm of a boat as it was called, would lack an effective 'helmsman' to steer the ship. I don't know about anyone else, but having a 'blind' helmsman doesn't inspire a lot of confidence in me that the ship will arrive safely to port. Valens makes a statement in Book I of his *Anthology* that is rather important. He is specifically discussing the nature of the *zoidia* and says,

*"And all things that the ruler is at times accustomed to produce by its own nature, whether good or base, or lesser or greater, each one of the zoidia will also produce according to whether the figure description of its ruler is operative or unprofitable."* <sup>[21]</sup>

The '*figure description of its ruler*' is simply whether or not the *zoidion*, where the ruler is posited, can or cannot 'see' the ruler's domicile. This infers that it's not necessary for the lord of the *zoidion* to be in his domicile for the sign to effectively function, but in order to be 'operative' he must see it. The *zoidion* [and thus the 'house' or 'affairs of life' which were the responsibility of that *zoidion*] became dysfunctional and adverse when the 'lord' could not see it. This was a serious situation, as *"the stars found in these zoidia [in aversion] became inharmonious. And sometimes they bring about hostile conditions, sometimes separations and banishments."* <sup>[22]</sup> If the ruler of the 10th was in aversion to it, then it would be very difficult to find a 'harmonious' integration of one's actions in regards to one's career for example.

History is replete with examples of people with serious impediments and dysfunctions who, in spite of their handicap, have made considerable contributions to society and mankind in general. The dysfunction, where overcome, was made an incredible strength. And likewise we find its parallel within the relationships of the *zodia*. In astrology, as in life, *zoidia* in aversion could overcome an aversion through the use of other 'senses'!

#### A Sharpened Sense of Hearing and Touch

There are then four conditions of the *zoidia* that mitigate aversion and we can well liken them to the conditions that exist when we are physically blind.

The first of these conditions were *zoidia* who were in aversion, or 'blind', but had the same lord or ruler. If you look at figure 5, we find that Cancer and Leo, Taurus and Libra, Scorpio and Aries, and Aquarius and Capricorn are all in



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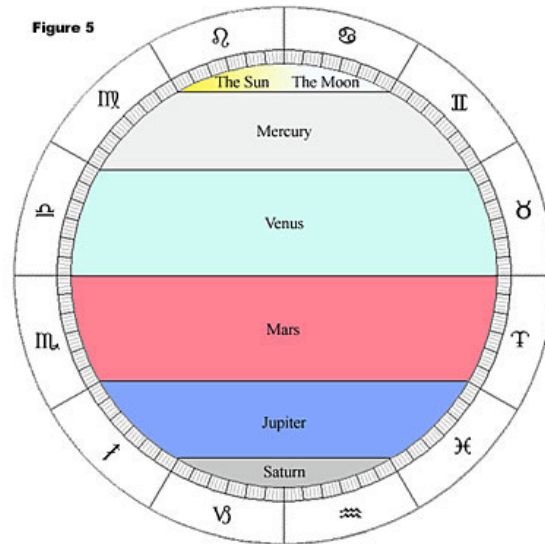
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aversion to one another. According to all the earlier writers, however, this aversion could be mitigated and made strength. [see figure 5]

*"[Aspectual connection between] signs in the ecliptic is true for every two signs that are the domiciles of one planet, such as Aries and Scorpio [that belong] to Mars, Taurus and Libra [that belong] to Venus, Gemini and Virgo [that belong] to Mercury, Sagittarius and Pisces [that belong] to Jupiter, Capricorn and Aquarius [that belong] to Saturn. Even though the Moon has [only] one domicile and the Sun has [only] one domicile, as they are both rulers, <sup>[23]</sup> the domiciles are considered as belonging to one ruler." <sup>[24]</sup>*

*"Of them there are those 'agreeing in the path', namely the pairs of signs which belong to one planet, such as Capricorn and Aquarius to Saturn, and Sagittarius and Pisces to Jupiter." <sup>[25]</sup>*

*"Abu Ma'shar has called the two signs which have the same presiding planet as concordant in itinerary. It is a relation which must be considered." <sup>[26]</sup>*



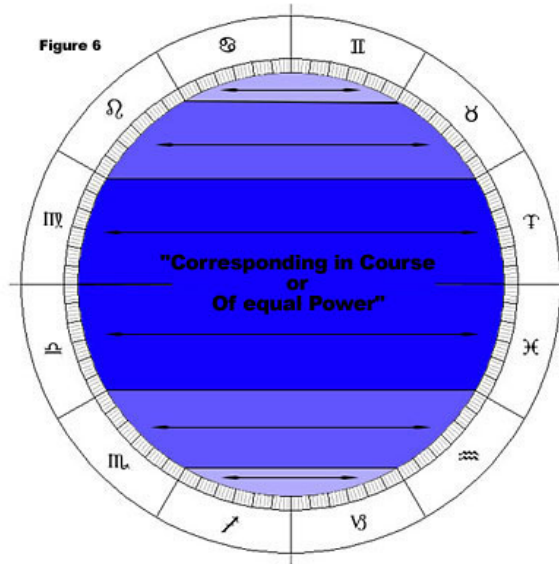
I hope all you women can appreciate the significance of this arrangement between the Sun and Moon! Ibn-Ezra certainly did, *"as they are both rulers, the domiciles are considered as belonging to one ruler"*. Not only are these two signs not in aversion, but also the lord and lady [Sun and Moon] is one and the same ruler. In fact here we may have full equal rights. The Moon is fully familiar with Leo, just as the Sun is fully familiar with Cancer. There was a mutual respect, as if they were one ruler! If we continue this logic to its natural conclusion, it's difficult to say then that the Sun is without dignity in Cancer and just as difficult to say the Moon is without dignity in Leo, as these *zoidia* were seen as having one ruler, a joint rulership. I'm not going to go into it here but this does raise some interesting insights into how sect should function.

Both Schmidt and Greenbaum have translated this relationship as 'like-engirdling' and the like-engirdling zoidia are: Leo and Cancer because of the Sun and Moon, Gemini and Virgo have Mercury representing them, Taurus and Libra whom Venus represents, Aries and Scorpio with Mars representing them, Sagittarius and Pisces because of Jupiter and Capricorn and Aquarius because Saturn represents them.

Before I go into just how these relationships are advantageous, I'd like to finish presenting all of the various conditions that could mitigate an aversion.

### Zoidia Corresponding In Course – Antiscia

The next relationship we meet is one with which many who deal with horary questions are familiar. That is *zoidia* that are *"Corresponding in Course"* or *"Of Equal Power"* [Figure 6]. In other words, these are signs that are equidistant from the solstice points 0° Cancer and 0° Capricorn, and relate to the length of time during which a degree (or moira <sup>[27]</sup>) of the zodiac is above or below the horizon. This is of course relating to *antiscia*. Antiscia are points or degrees symmetrical to the solstice points. In the Northern hemisphere 0° Cancer is above the horizon for the greatest amount of time each day while 0° Capricorn is above the horizon the least amount of time. This reverses in the Southern hemisphere. In either hemisphere 1° Gemini and 29° Cancer are 29° from 0° Cancer just as 29° Gemini and 1° Cancer are both 1° from 0° Cancer. They have corresponding inverse degrees and so have equal light as they spend the same amount of time above (or below) the horizon. The signs that have equal light are Gemini and Cancer (in aversion), Taurus and Leo, Aries and Virgo (in aversion), Pisces and Libra (in aversion), Aquarius and Scorpio, Capricorn and Sagittarius (in aversion).



"Two signs revolving in the same parallel, North or South (equidistant from a Solstice) are described as corresponding in course (in itinerary), their day hours are equal as are their night hours, and their ascensions are identical at the equator, such as Gemini and Cancer, Taurus and Leo. The correspondence is also by inverse degrees, the beginning of Cancer corresponding to the end of Gemini, and the tenth of the former to the twentieth of the latter." <sup>[28]</sup>

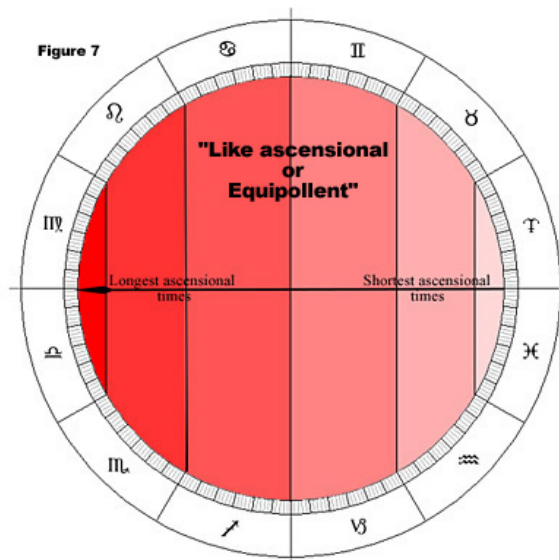
"Six of these signs are direct in rising; these are from the beginning of Cancer to the end of Sagittarius. Six are oblique in rising; these are from the beginning of Capricorn to the end of Gemini...Two signs indicate agreement and friendship, for example Gemini and Cancer, Taurus and Leo and the others like these. Those agreeing in the length of daylight are said to be powerful agreeing in power." <sup>[29]</sup>

"Those of the same strength are the sign whose crooked [temporal] hours are equal, like Cancer and Gemini, Taurus and Leo, Aries and Virgo, Pisces and Libra, Aquarius and Scorpio, Capricorn and Sagittarius." <sup>[30]</sup>

### Equally Ascending and Equipollent Zoidia – Contra-antiscia

The last two conditions are related, and contain a familiarity between the same *zoidia*. These *zoidia* are of equal ascension and they are likewise equidistant from the equinoctial points of 0° Aries and 0° Libra. The latter was referred to as "equipollent". [Figure 7] The equally rising *zoidia* and equipollent *zoidia* are Aries and Pisces (in aversion), Taurus and Aquarius, Gemini and Capricorn (in aversion), Cancer and Sagittarius (in aversion), Leo and Scorpio, Virgo and Libra (in aversion).

'Equipollent' is referring to the fact that at 0° Aries and 0° Libra the night hours are equal the day hours. This relation remains constant as you move away from the equinox by inverse degrees. So at 1° Aries the daylight hours are equal the night hours at 29° Pisces just as at 29° Aries the daylight hours are equal the night hours at 1° Pisces. This later became known as *contra-antiscia*. [Compare this similarity with 'Like in Course' whose daylight hours and nocturnal hours were equal at all points.]



"Any two signs configured with each other at an equal distance from the same, or from either equinoctial point, are termed commanding and obeying, because the ascensional and descensional times of the one are equal to those of the other, and both describes equal parallels." [31]

"Of them (as may be said of each pair of them) there are those 'agreeing in the zodiac-belt'; namely, the pairs which are equal in their rising times such as Aries and Pisces, Taurus and Aquarius, Capricorn and Gemini and the others which follow this." [32]

"Two signs equidistant from an equinoctial point are said to be equipollent, because the day hours of each are equal to the night hours of the other, and their ascensions are equal in all places, such as Aries and Pisces, Taurus and Aquarius, etc. The correspondence is by inverse degrees (contra-antiscia), one being north the other south, the 1st of Aries being equal to the 29th of Pisces and the 10th (of Aries) to the 20th (of Pisces)." [33]

"The signs in the summer semicircle are commanding; those in the winter semicircle, obeying: for when the Sun is present in the former, he makes the day longer than the night; and when in the latter, he produces the contrary effect." [34]

"Those whose ascension [time] is equal are Aries and Pisces, Virgo and Libra, Taurus and Aquarius, Leo and Scorpio, Gemini and Capricorn, Cancer and Sagittarius." [35] "A planet in one of the even [temporal hours] signs is called the master [commanding] and the one in the opposite degree in one of the crooked signs is the slave [obeying]." [36]

In this particular familiarity between the signs we also find the aspect of 'hearing'. As mentioned by the earlier authors, one sign 'commands' and one sign 'obeys' based on 'temporal signs' [summer signs] and 'crooked signs' [winter signs]. While these signs cannot 'see' one another they sense one another and are familiar with one another through what I would compare to a sense of 'touch'. Likewise these same *zoidia* also possess a sense of hearing.

**The Mitigation of Aversion**

"All signs, between which there does not exist any familiarity in any of the modes above specified, are inconjunct and separated." [37]

Although Ptolemy did not include *zoidia* which were 'like-engirdling' many other authors did, and his statement is nonetheless valid. Being 'familiar' was not just aspectual, as we have seen; it was also based on other astronomical association, whether of equal ascension, equal diurnal hours or where diurnal hours were equal to nocturnal etc. We have in our Zodiac 24 pairs of inconjunct *zoidia* and through 'familiarity' 12 of them are mitigated. Following is a table that lists these.

**Table of Pairs of Mitigated Aversion**

	♈	♉	♊	♋	♌	♍	♎	♏	♐	♑	♒	♓	
♈						Mitigated: Like in Course		Mitigated Like - engirdling					Mitigated Like - ascension
♉							Mitigated Like - engirdling						
♊				Mitigated: Like in Course						Mitigated Like - ascension			
♋			Mitigated: Like in Course		Mitigated Like - engirdling				Mitigated Like - ascension				
♌				Mitigated Like - engirdling									
♍	Mitigated: Like in Course							Mitigated Like - ascension					
♎		Mitigated Like - engirdling					Mitigated Like - ascension						Mitigated: Like in Course
♏	Mitigated Like - engirdling												
♐				Mitigated Like - ascension								Mitigated: Like in Course	
♑			Mitigated Like - ascension							Mitigated: Like in Course		Mitigated Like - engirdling	
♒											Mitigated		

										Like - engirdling		
☿	Mitigated Like - ascension						Mitigated: Like in Course					

Paulus in his *Introductory Matters*, gives us some insight into just how this mitigation works.

*"And those neighbouring to themselves have sympathy for one another just as if they were placed in the same domicile, while those zoidia 6, 8, or 12 intervals away have power just as if they were in diametrical position. The equally-ascending zoidia which are adjacent to each other likewise will exert the same power on each other as has been said, as if they were positioned in like-engirdling or similar configuration."*<sup>[38]</sup>

While Paulus does not explicitly list the antiscia *zoidia*, other later authors certainly do, but Paulus nevertheless does leave us with the feeling that these two are not the only such configurations, as he ends this chapter by saying "or other similar configurations".

Paulus tells us that "And those neighbouring to themselves have sympathy for one another just as if they were placed in the same domicile". That is, they are similar to a conjunction. You may feel some confusion in his next statement however when he says, "while those zoidia 6, 8, or 12 intervals away have power just as if they were in diametrical position". This may seem that it doesn't make sense. If you consider Pisces, for example, has Aries (2), Leo (6), Libra (8) and Aquarius (12) in aversion to itself. The aversion with Aries is mitigated because they are equally-ascending and the aversion with Libra is mitigated because they are of equal-light (antiscia). So by his explanation, a planet in Pisces should be "as if they were placed in the same domicile"[or conjunct] with another placed in Aries. Libra being in the 8th position from Pisces would "have power just as if they were in diametrical position" or behave as if in opposition. These are so far clear, but the confusion arises if you consider Aries has these *zoidia* in aversion to it: Taurus (2), Virgo (6), Scorpio (8) and Pisces (12). The aversion with Virgo is mitigated because they have equal-light; with Scorpio because they have the same ruler, Mars, and are like-engirdling. These two according to Paulus should have the power of the opposition. What about Pisces? His list says it should be like an opposition. There appears to be some ambiguity here. I say this because he clearly states "those [plural, like Aries/Pisces] neighbouring to themselves [plural] have sympathy for one another just as if they [the plural again] were placed in the same domicile." and again at the end of his chapter he re-affirms this by saying, "The equally ascending Zoidia which are adjacent to each other, likewise will exert the same power on each other." This is specifically talking about Aries and Pisces or Libra and Virgo, "or similar configurations." So it is perhaps difficult to see the consistency of logic in being in conjunct on one side but opposition on the other.

The only way this arrangement can make sense is that Paulus also in the same chapter says, "the power being more for those averse zoidia, which are like-engirdling and equally ascending, which come to be active this way by position on the right". In other words, the relation is more powerful from Pisces to Aries (Pisces being on the right of Aries) than Aries to Pisces (Aries being on the left of Pisces). That is to say a *sinister* aspect, one that looks forward in the order of the zodiac, is more powerful than one that looks back, or is *dexter*. This is consistent with the Greek concept of 'seeing' and 'perceiving', but is the opposite of medieval tradition, which considered the dexter as superior to the sinister. But it's important to remember that here we are talking about aspects from *zoidia* and not planets. The medieval tradition lays more significance to the aspects of the planets than those of the *zoidia*. In both Hellenistic and later traditions, it was more propitious for Saturn, Jupiter and Mars to be oriental of the Sun. The Sun would then be casting its rays against the order of the zodiac in dexter aspect to these slower planets (a lighter planet always aspects a heavier or slower one). Likewise it was better for Mercury and Venus to be occidental of the Sun, because, since they were lighter, they would cast their rays against the order of the zodiac, or in dexter aspect to the Sun. So it is a significant point to notice that the activity of the zoidia was not quite the same as that of the planets.

This is the end of part three of *The Living Signs*. Read the next chapter of [The Living Signs](#).

▶ [Click here for Steven Birchfield's excellent Introduction to Hellenistic Astrology](#)

#### Footnotes & References:

- [21] Bk I ch.2 — "The Anthology" of Vettius Valens, Translated by Robert Schmidt and published by Golden Hind Press.
- [22] Chapter 11 of Paulus' *Introductory Matters*. "Late Classical Astrology: Paulus Alexandrinus and Olympiodorus with the Scholia from Later Commentators" — Translation by Dorian Greenbaum — ARHAT Publications
- [23] They are the presiding "sect" rulers. — S.B.
- [24] Chapter III of Ibn-Ezra's — "The Beginning of Wisdom" — Translated by Meira B. Epstein — an ARHAT publication © 1998
- [25] Chapter 1:97 of Abu Ma'shar's — "The Abbreviation of the Introduction to Astrology" — Edited and translated by Charles Burnett — ARHAT Publications © 1997
- [26] ¶377 of Al-Biruni's "The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology" — Translation by R. Ramsay Wright 1934 — Published by Ascella
- [27] "Update on Moira. Chapter 3 of the present translation deals with the assignment of boundaries (traditionally called 'terms') to different parts of the zodiacal divisions. The grammatical usage there leads us to believe that we were correct in assuming that the Greek astrologers used the word 'moira' in full consciousness of its meaning as an 'allotment' or 'apportionment', and did not simply regard it as a neutral division of a circle into parts...We are moving more and more in the direction of discarding the translation 'degree' entirely." — Translator's Preface Bk I "The Anthology" of Vettius Valens — by Robert Schmidt — © 1993 Published by The Golden Hind Press
- [28] ¶377 of Al-Biruni's "The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology" — Translation by R. Ramsay Wright 1934 — Published by Ascella
- [29] Chapter 1:90, 92 of Abu Ma'shar's — "The Abbreviation of the Introduction to Astrology" — Edited and translated by Charles Burnett

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[30] Chapter III of Ibn-Ezra's — *"The Beginning of Wisdom"* — Translated by Meira B. Epstein — an ARHAT publication © 1998

[31] Chapter XVII BkI of Ptolemy's *"Tetrabiblos"* — J.M. Ashmand Translator — Astrology Classics Publishing © 2002

[32] Chapter 1:96 of Abu Ma'shar's — *"The Abbreviation of the Introduction to Astrology"* — Edited and translated by Charles Burnett — ARHAT Publications © 1997

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[35] Chapter III of Ibn-Ezra's — *"The Beginning of Wisdom"* — Translated by Meira B. Epstein — an ARHAT publication © 1998

[36] Ibid

[37] Chapter XIX BkI of Ptolemy's *"Tetrabiblos"* — J.M. Ashmand Translator — Astrology Classics Publishing © 2002

[38] Chapter 12 of Paulus' *Introductory Matters, "Late Classical Astrology: Paulus Alexandrinus and Olympiodorus with the Scholia from Later Commentators"* — Translation by Dorian Greenbaum — ARHAT Publications




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