

# ASTRONOESIS

Philosophy's Empirical Context ♦ Astrology's Transcendental Ground

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*The dedication is eternal and to the Eternal.*

ANTHONY DAMIANI

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## *Foreword: An American Philosopher*

HIS LOVE FOR WISDOM AND MEANING in all its historic diversity may only be compared to his love of humanity and its higher potentials. It was an occasion to find a thinker or philosopher with whom he wasn't acquainted. For philosophy to him meant comparative philosophy, involving dialogue, debate, discussion, and exchange of ideas. In this—the realm of thought—he was most American, accepting all philosophies from around the world as valid perspectives but demanding an open exchange through rational discussion. And if he demonstrated a preference, it was for the spirit of Greek philosophy where the spirit and principles of democracy itself were born some 2500 years ago.

He is an American philosopher in the tradition of Ralph Waldo Emerson, wherein he placed upon himself the demand to acknowledge and investigate man's striving for a nobler life as bodied forth in its diverse cultures, religions, and philosophies. He studied under Christian Jesuits, Hindu pundits, Zen Buddhists, N.Y.U. professors. Yet, like Emerson, he had to go his own way in the face of opposition from all quarters—friends, foes, family, and students; not in the spirit of criticism and rejection but in the need for universalism of approach and understanding in our times which flowed from his vision.

Like other great leaders he had an ennobling vision, in which different thinkers, religions, philosophers could think together, contemplate divinity together, laugh together, without giving up their own heritage, could side by side enrich life through their different approaches.

For all his erudition he was no scholar or academician, but more like an artist inspiring those around him to explore the mysteries of the universe, soul, and God. Always egging one on, ensnaring one into *thinking*, and in the act of thinking he would point to

those diviner implications in Man, the light of his soul, its ordering presence, and the facticity of each person's higher potentials.

Philosophy for Anthony was this inalienable aspect of Man. No school, religion, or group has a monopoly on it, for it flows and follows along the spirit of wonder and enquiry itself. For, as he once expressed, philosophy aims to bring about Good Citizenship with the whole of mankind and the world.

*—composed for Anthony's memorial service, October 7, 1984, by his son, Paul Damiani*

## *Editors' Introduction*

ANTHONY DAMIANI WAS AN INFORMED VISIONARY. He learned all he could from giants who came before him. Then—as carriers of a new impulse so often do—he stood on the shoulders of those he thought tallest, and saw more. What he saw inspired him, and in turn inspired others who experienced the spiritual passion and human warmth it sustained in him.

Much of Anthony's creative work was done in the context of preparing and leading classes at Wisdom's Goldenrod Center for Philosophic Studies, which came into being under his directorship in 1972. In the mid-seventies, he started to express his key ideas in writing and enlisted a few students to help write papers that would form the basis of a book. Under the working title of *Astronoesis* (derived from Greek words that mean Star-Wisdom), the writing evolved in the spirit of a suggestive enquiry rather than with the goal of producing a polished, final statement.

*Astronoesis* is a maiden voyage into an unusually fertile way of thinking. As Anthony became increasingly adept at it, he evolved ways of expressing his vision more vividly. In the process, he discovered and developed a language increasingly more adequate to the details of that vision—one that sustains deep thought on the nature of reality and the complex interrelationships of its metaphysical, cosmological, psychological, and physical levels. His method often makes “thinkable” things we could not think before for lack of adequate language.

Anthony was not the type of scholar who was meticulous about using primary sources, in dotting all his philological i's, or crossing all his historical t's. His strength was in penetrating deeply into big ideas and seeing how they lived together as parts of an evolving organic whole.

Many of us who embark from this seminal work onto journeys of our own will respond at two levels to Anthony's inspiration. Both responses will draw power from the Vision we encounter through reflecting deeply on this pioneering work.

At one level, we will try to express in more familiar terms what catches our breath in Anthony's writing. We will try to translate his multivalent intuitions into the kind of thinking that our conventional dualistic, school-fed intellect is more familiar with (and that our separative ego is more comfortable with). To some extent we will succeed. But on the whole this kind of thinking will give photographs, or at best video clips, of a majestic bird in flight. It won't deliver the experience of flying *as* that bird. And it won't domesticate the raw, challenging power of the text that urges us to gather our energies, soar to its height, and See.

As we rise more often to this challenge, we will awaken in jolts and flashes at a higher level and become part of a motley crew: sometimes seeing, sometimes blind; sometimes hearing, sometimes deaf; sometimes flying, sometimes losing even the memory of wings. Painfully honest with ourselves. Clumsily creative. Plugged in to the Vision one moment, aware of having lost it the next. Always seeking more of it. Often experiencing what Anthony felt when he could find no good way to express what he had seen, or to express it even as it shone before his rapt eyes.

\* \* \* \*

Anthony invoked the third-century sage Plotinus, founder-genius of the Neoplatonic tradition, as his guide for writing *Astronoesis*. Through many years of extensive study and rigorous comparing of the major spiritual traditions, his admiration of Plotinus had increased steadily. He was awed and inspired by Plotinus' unusual combination of skills: the ability for profound mystical introversion and the intellectual development to articulate his immediate mystical experience in precise, thrilling detail.

When it came to understanding, developing, and deepening his own vision, Anthony's repeated readings of Plotinus' *Enneads* offered the most fertile context for his own insights



to emerge. He felt that he owed much of his understanding to these intense readings, and that he could best develop his own original contribution with ideas and terms acquired through them. The Plotinian framework was sufficiently deep and inclusive for Anthony to juxtapose and integrate *detailed* intuitions that he had earned through personal experience and broad study of many sacred teachings.

*Astronoesis* accordingly has four major chapters. Each focuses on one facet of the four-fold nature of reality as Plotinus saw it: the One, the Intellectual-Principle (Nous), Soul, and the system of Nature. Each of these fundamental features of reality—as one, as intelligent, as alive, and as manifesting—yields a unique perspective on the whole. Each contributes a different richness to the mandala in which Anthony planted and nurtured the seed ideas of his relentlessly creative work.

\* \* \* \*

But *Astronoesis* is not direct from Anthony’s pen. His life ended before his work on it was complete. Shortly before his death in October, 1984, he confided to his wife that the manuscript included all of the ideas he planned to discuss, but much work remained undone: The chapter on the One was “finished”; the Intellectual-Principle was “almost finished”; Soul was still “a series of papers”; and Nature “needed work,” including more on astrology.

Anthony’s teacher Paul Brunton had told him in 1981 that he didn’t have to finish the book, just get the intuitions onto paper well enough that they wouldn’t be lost; and in the process he should do his best to see that others around him could complete the book in the event that he could not. He had done the first. It remained to be seen how well he had succeeded with the second.

Several of us who had studied, meditated, and worked on this text with Anthony at Wisdom’s Goldenrod eventually found out. It took years of exploring options to reach consensus on how best to complete and present the material Anthony left. Finally, thanks to the patient, persevering, and often inspired leadership of Avery Solomon (who worked most closely and continuously with Anthony on the manuscript), we are ready for publication.

▼ NOTES: Two facing pages may have up to five notes, correlating to points in the text, each successive note marked by one of the following glyphs: ▼ + ◊ ▲ ◆

The main text is Anthony's work, essentially as he left it. Sentences and paragraphs often have been moved within or between sections for better continuity and/or clarity. Words have been changed only when the improvement is significant and unquestionably clarifies the meaning. We have put interpretive additions that may influence meaning in [square brackets].

We have provided several levels of commentary:

*EDITORS' INTRODUCTIONS AND EDITORS' EXTENSIONS.* These papers, which the editors (primarily Avery Solomon) have based on Anthony's ideas and notes, appear in some sections. We feel that the information in them is critical to understanding the sections they accompany.

*MARGIN NOTES.* These appear on many pages to enhance or bring necessary clarification or development to the text they accompany. ▼

*EPILOGUE.* This important section gives a brief overview of how Anthony combined the principles in *Astronoesis* with traditional astrology to appreciate the flow of meaning in an individual life. It also brings a "roundness" to the material in The System of Nature that we were unable to develop to our satisfaction within that chapter itself. Detailed applications of this method will appear in a series of books to be published through the next several years.

*SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES.* The superscripts that appear within the flow of the text refer to numbered notes in the back matter. These consist of scholarly references, technical information, and short essays (in some cases Anthony's own) that expand the text. Consult them only for supplemental information.

*GLOSSARY AND INDEX.* We have also developed a glossary to familiarize readers with Anthony's sometimes unique use of terms. Consult this first when uncertain of terms that appear in the flow of reading. If that doesn't provide enough help, then locate the term in the index, where asterisks indicate pages on which the term is explained in the text.

Anthony customarily illustrated and developed his ideas with diagrams and pictures. Facsimiles of some of his hand-drawn diagrams provide an aesthetic ambiance to the beginning of each of the major sections; they are not meant to illustrate or accompany any particular section of the text. The majority of the diagrams and figures that do illustrate text have been computer generated; most of them are reproductions of diagrams Anthony used and indicated for use in the text; the remainder are based on diagrams he used in classes. A few in-text diagrams are facsimiles of Anthony's originals.

Quotations from Plotinus' *Enneads*, unless otherwise noted, are from the fourth edition of Stephen MacKenna's translation, which Anthony preferred. The definitive edition of that text, published by Larson Publications in 1992, has an appendix that gives a concise overview of key ideas in *Astronoesis*.

Quotations from Plato, unless otherwise noted, are from *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Anthony also prized the Thomas Taylor and F. Sydenham translation of Plato, primarily because of Taylor's valuable notes.

\* \* \* \*

We express deep gratitude to all past and current members and associates of Wisdom's Goldenrod who contributed skills, financial support, and many other resources to this project through the years. Completion of this work has truly been a community effort. May we all be worthy of the community it has helped foster.