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**Where Are the Planets in Manilius' *Astronomica*?**

This paper examines a curious fact about the astrological poem of Marcus Manilius (early first century AD): the absence, in all of the five books, of a detailed discussion of the planets. That the Latin poet does not treat the planets is surprising since, after all, the discipline of astrology consists primarily in determining and interpreting the exact position of the sun, moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn vis-a-vis the backdrop of the fixed stars, especially the signs of the zodiac. While Manilius talks about the zodiac at great length, going into astronomical detail, and even offering mathematical formulae for calculating the ascendant, he hardly mentions the planets at all, which gives a somewhat surreal feel to his astrological treatise: it reads little bit like a discussion of the game of soccer that talks in detail about the field and goals, without ever mentioning the fact that a ball is involved as well.

Classical scholars have been so perturbed by the absence of the planets in Manilius that they have suggested either that their discussion fell into a known lacuna in Book 5 or that Manilius was going to treat them in a later part of the poem, but died before he could get to it, and that the *Astronomica* is thus unfinished. By contrast, I propose that the poet deliberately marginalized the "wandering stars," whose seemingly erratic movements he felt posed a threat to the orderly Stoic universe celebrated in his poem. Manilius thus actively ignored the scientific achievements of the Hellenistic period and the advances made in planetary theory (such as Eudoxus' model of homocentric spheres and the intricate system of epicycles and deferents developed by Apollonius of Perga and Hipparchus and later perfected by Ptolemy), deciding to present instead a more primitive and unscientific cosmos, but one that was more suited to his purpose. I suggest that this strategy is not peculiar to Manilius, but indicative of a general split, in the Hellenistic and especially Roman periods, between "hard" science on the one hand and scientific literature, especially of a poetic or philosophical kind, on the other.