

MA Cultural Astronomy and Astrology

History of Astrology

Week 4

Weekly Description: Astrology in Medieval Europe

Nick Campion

Purpose of the Week

To gain a critical understanding of the nature and role of astrology in Medieval Europe.

Tasks this week

Review the final essay topics.

Make sure you have a schedule for completion of your essays.

Attend the webex seminar and/or listen to the recording

Weekly Description

This week deals with issues in astrology in the long Medieval period, defined broadly as being between the end of the Roman Empire in western Europe in the 5th/6th centuries to the Renaissance of the 15th century. Although horoscopic astrology died out in western Europe in the late fifth century CE following the collapse of the Roman empire and the virtual end of literacy (except in the monasteries), combined with the impact of profound opposition from Christianity, some basic astronomical and astrological knowledge survived. We will cover this period briefly in the class. Horoscopic astrology was reintroduced into western Europe from the eleventh century onwards following the translation of former Greek and classical texts from Arabic into medieval Latin, along with major works from the Islamic world, a process which peaked in the twelfth century. This class deals with astrology in the European Middle Ages, the translation of astrological and Aristotelian astronomical texts into Latin and its repercussions, including the reconciliation between astrology and Christianity engineered by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. Questions will be asked both concerning the relationship between classical philosophy and medieval Christianity on the one hand, and between cosmological models and the practical uses of astrology on the other. We have not set any specific course material on the practical astrology of medieval Europe but, if you wish to investigate this further, we can advise you.

You should note that you are NOT expected to cover all the week's material! Instead, having tackled the required reading you should use this material as an on-line library, pursuing your interests.

Alchemy: for space reasons we are not including alchemy as a separate topic. However, one way to see alchemy is as a practical application of the astrological worldview. It is possible to develop this in the optional reading, if appropriate. A good initial online resource is The Alchemy website, <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/index.html>

Thought for the week: is medieval astrology related to medieval cosmology?

Tutors Notes

General Cosmology

Nick's Notes on Classical Cosmology in the Medieval World (revising Plato and Aristotle)

Nick's notes on Medieval Cosmology

Nick's notes on Christian Cosmology

Nick's notes on Thomas Aquinas

Astrology

Please remember that you are NOT supposed to be learning the complex techniques of medieval astrology. That said, if you have a background in this area or wish to develop it, you can do so. For an introduction (recommended, read Chris Mitchell's paper. Chris is a MA CAA graduate, now a PhD student at Leicester University. Bernadette's notes are more advanced.

Bernadette's Notes on Medieval Astrology: Aspect Theory

Bernadette's Notes on Medieval Astrology: Almutens

Bernadette's Notes on Medieval Astrology: Glossary of Terms

Chris Mitchell: 'The Provenance of Astrological Techniques Used in Medieval Astrology', postgraduate research paper, Leicester University, 2013.
PDF