



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
UNIVERSITY OF WALES
Trinity Saint David

History of Astrology

16th and 17th century astrology

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David

Required Reading: Primary Sources

- Culpeper, Nicholas, 1616-1654, *The English physician: or an astrologo-physical discourse of the vulgar herbs of this nation*, London : Peter Cole, 1652, pp. 1-10.
- <http://www.med.yale.edu/library/historical-old/culpeper/a.htm>
-
- Kepler, Johannes, 'On the More Certain Fundamentals of Astrology', Prague, 1601, trans. Mary Ann Rossi with notes by J.Bruce Brackenbridge, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 123, No 2, (Apr. 27, 1979), pp. 85-163.
- JSTOR
-
- Lilly, William, *Christian Astrology*, London 1647, facsimile edition, London: Regulus Publishing 1985, new edition, London: Ascella Books.
- Chaps 7-17.
- We recommend the annotated PDFs (labelled Partys II, III, IV and V, downloadable from:
- http://www.skyscript.co.uk/ca_downloads.html
- John Gadbury's *The Doctrine of Horary Questions*,
at http://www.hermetics.org/pdf/astrology/John_Gadbury_-_The_Doctrine_of_Horary_Questions.pdf



Required Reading: Secondary Sources

- Champion, Nicholas, *A History of Western Astrology*, Vol. 2 (London: Continuum 2009), chapters 10 and 11.
-
- Graubard, Mark, 'Astrology's Demise and Its Bearing on the Decline and Death of Beliefs', *Osiris*, Vol. 13, (1958), pp. 210-261
- JSTOR
-
- Holden, James Herschel, *A History of Horoscopic Astrology*, Tempe AZ: American Federation of Astrologers, 1996, pp 161-181.
- GOOGLE BOOKS
-
- Stuckrad, Kocku von, 'The Function of Horoscopes in Biographical Narrative: Cardano and After', in Oestmann, Günther, H.K. von Stuckrad, and D. Rutkin (eds.), *Horoscopes and Public Spheres*, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter 2005, Walter de Gruyter 2005, pp. 225-239.
- GOOGLE BOOKS
-
- Tester, Jim, *History of Western Astrology*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press 1987, pp. 228-243.
- GOOGLE BOOKS

Required Reading: Historiography

- Evans, Richard, *In Defence of History*, London: Granta Books 1997, chapter 6.
-
- Geertz, Hildred, 'An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, I', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 6 no 1 (Summer 1975) pp. 71-89.
- JSTOR
-

Key Themes

‘Agnosticism’

Reform v Tradition

Diversity/pluralism/complexity

Magic: separate to astrology? Or not?

After mid-17th century: decline of high and middling astrologies

Decline: the problems

- There is a correlation between the decline of astrology and the rise of a 'scientific', or 'rationalist' mentality (both words in quotation marks to indicate their contested nature), and other development in social life such as enhanced security from insurance, fire services and so on.
- However, no causal connection can be drawn between any development in the 17th c and the dramatic collapse of astrology's status after the middle of the century.

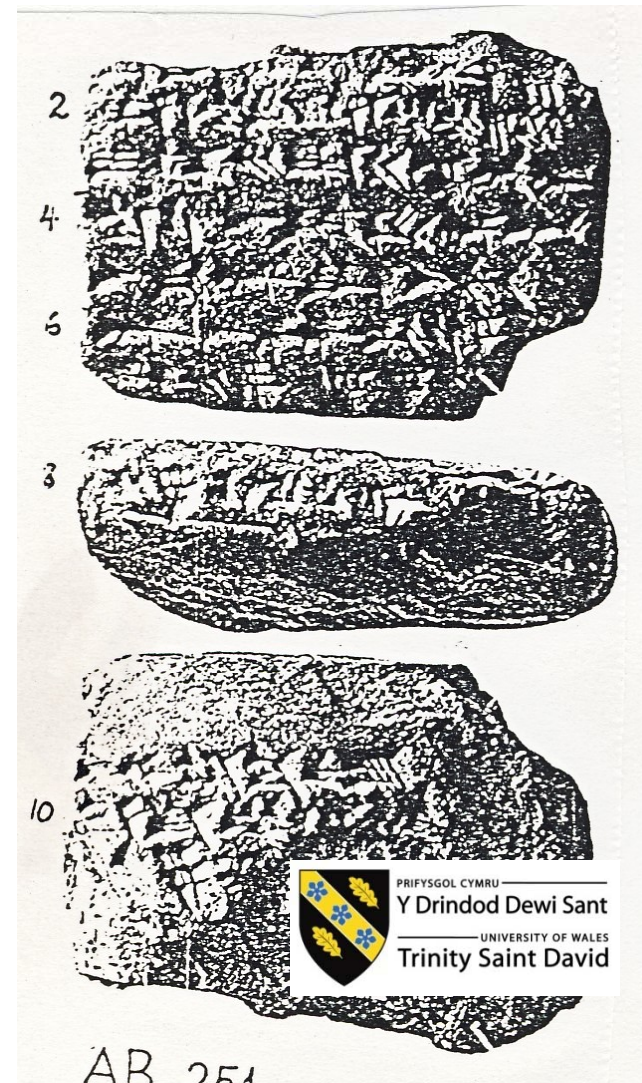
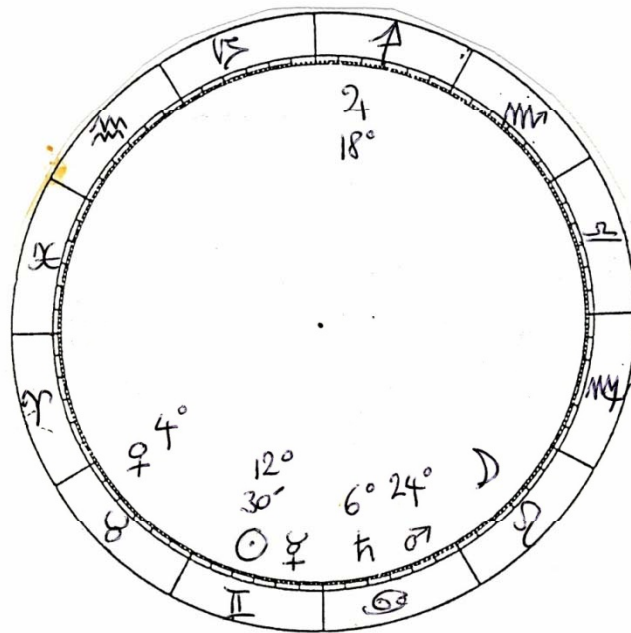
Using Primary Documents

Reading Horoscopes

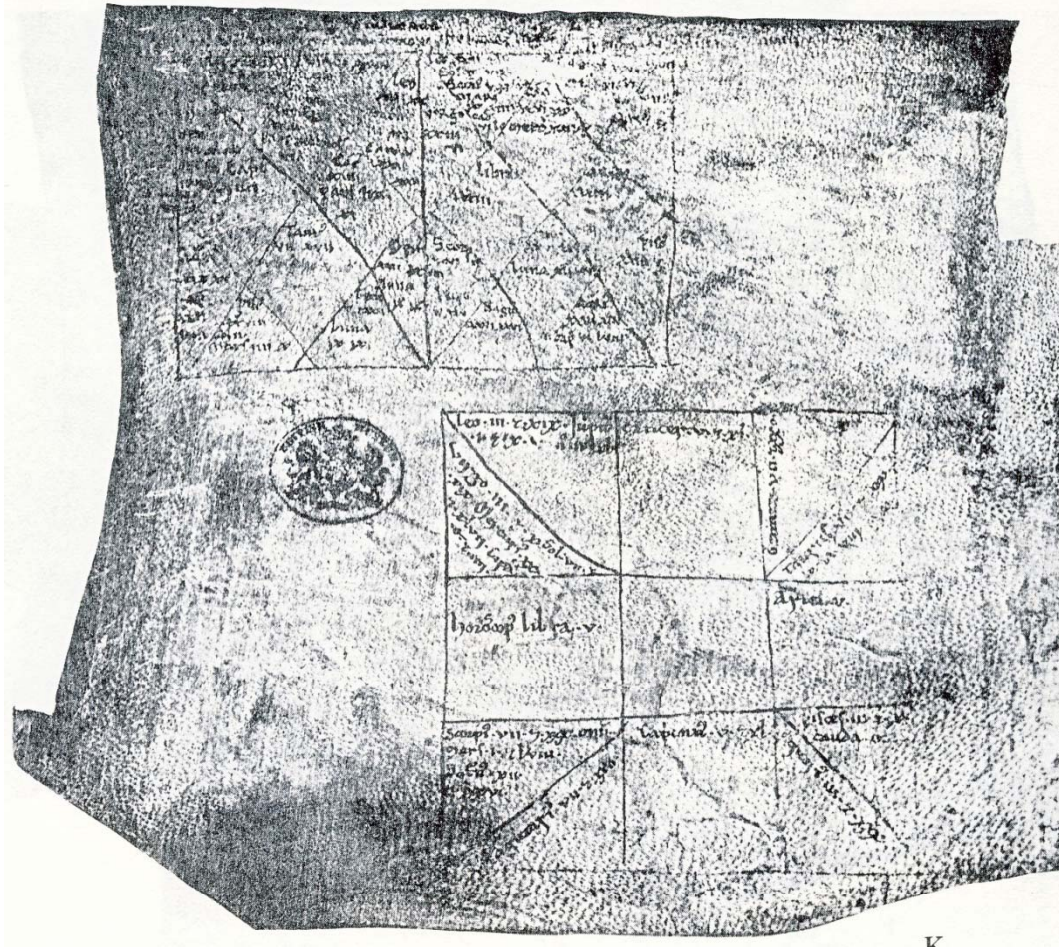
Horoscopes as Visual Images

right: text only

3. The third known natal chart, probably for birth at 4.00 am, 3 June, 235 BC.



12th century square horoscopes



A square chart from the 19th century

ON THE DAYS OF THE GREEK CALENDAR.

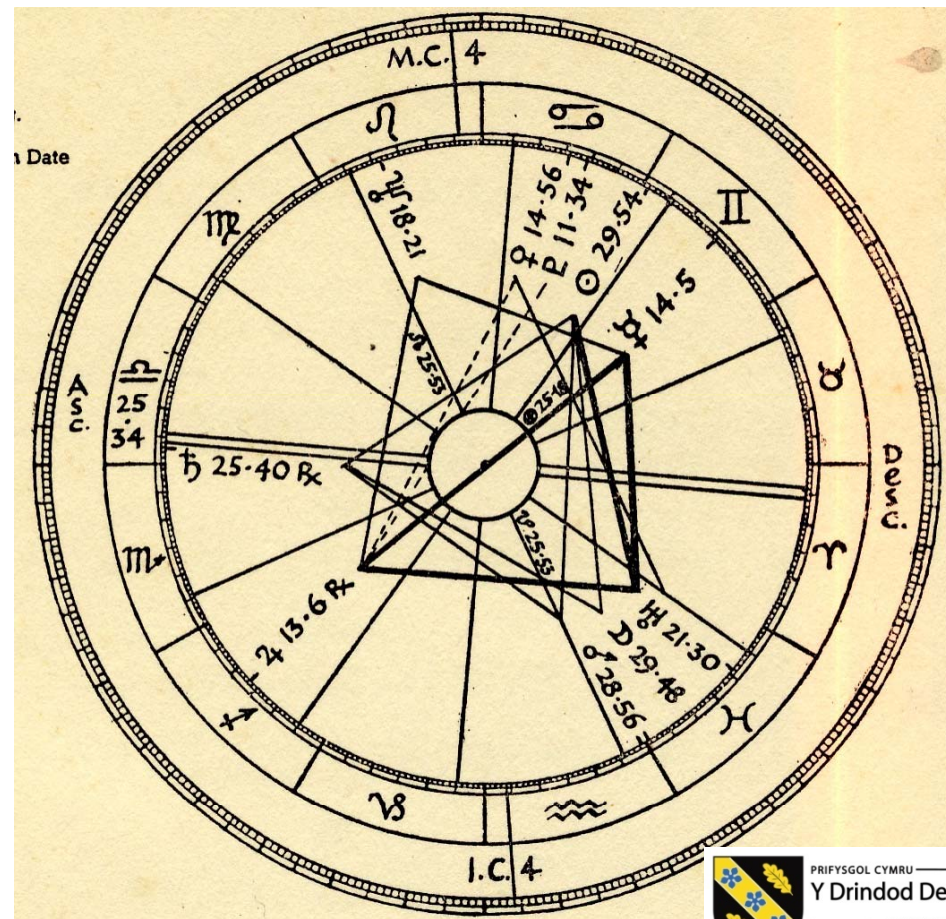
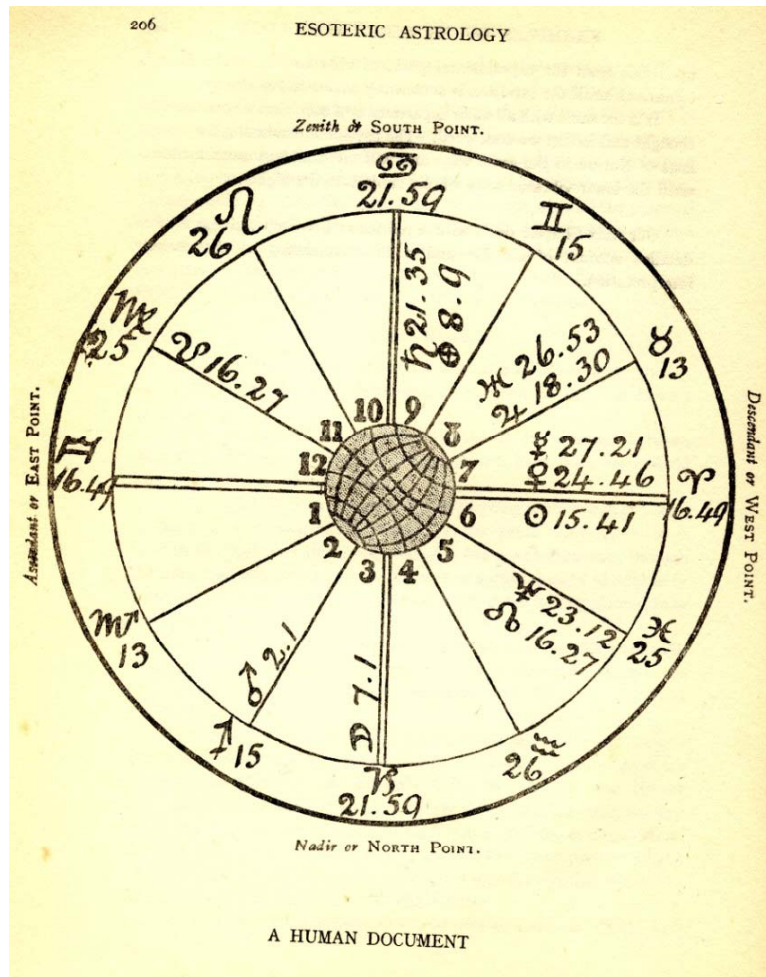
263

	Capricornus	Arcturus Ascendens	Scorpio	
Amphora	Caput Draconis 25	Jupiter	Moon 19.10	Libra
Pisces				Virgo
Artes		Mars 2.50 Venus 29.0	Sun 8.40 Umbra Draconis 26 Mercurius 26.7	Toro
	Taurus	Gemini	Cancer	



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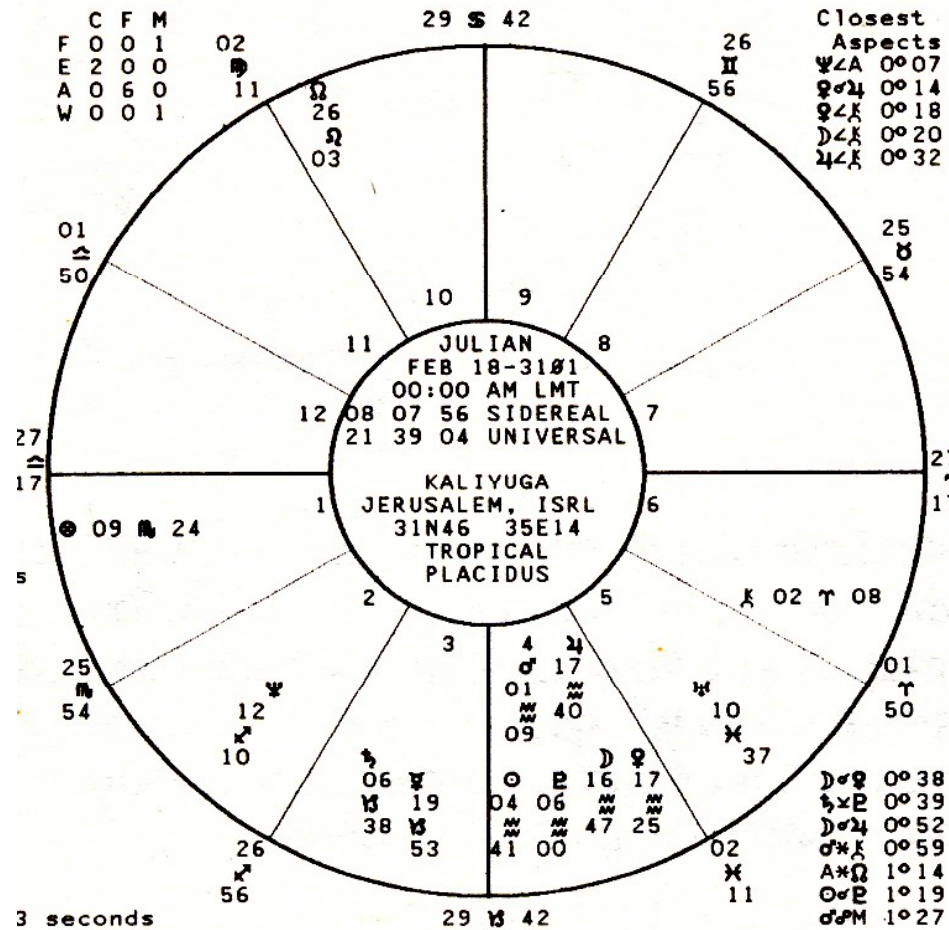
The evolution of the round chart. Left Alan Leo, *Esoteric Astrology*, p 402, 2nd ed. 1925; Right Margaret Hone *Modern Text Book of Astrology*, fourth edition reprinted 1973, [1951], insert p. 200,.



The Huber School: symbolism through colour



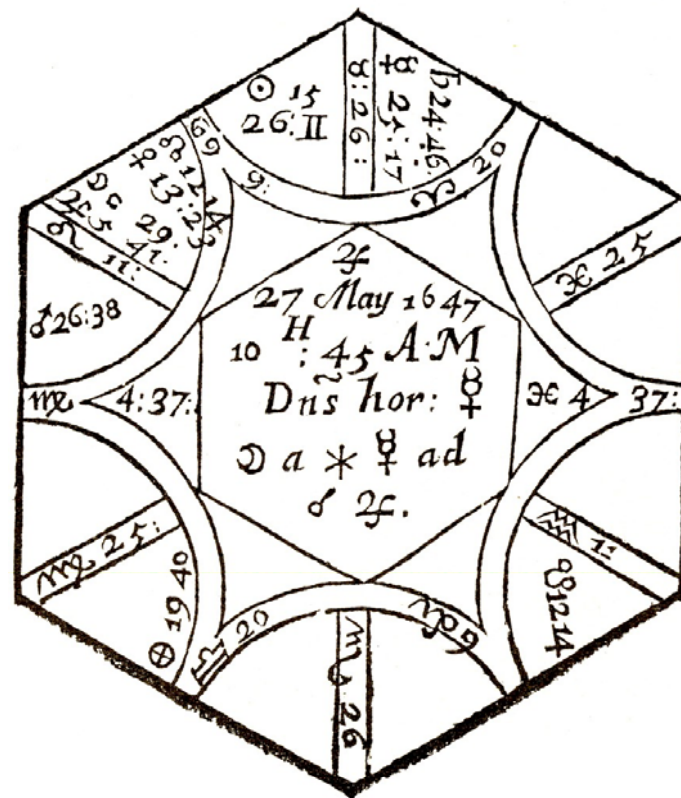
1986: Technology



A chart example (William Lilly *Christian Astrology*, London 1649, p. 442)

CHAP. LXXXI.

If attaine the Philosopher's Stone ?



Lilly Philosopher's Stone Regio

Natal Chart

27 May 1647 OS, Thu

10:45 LMT +0:00:40

London, United Kingdom

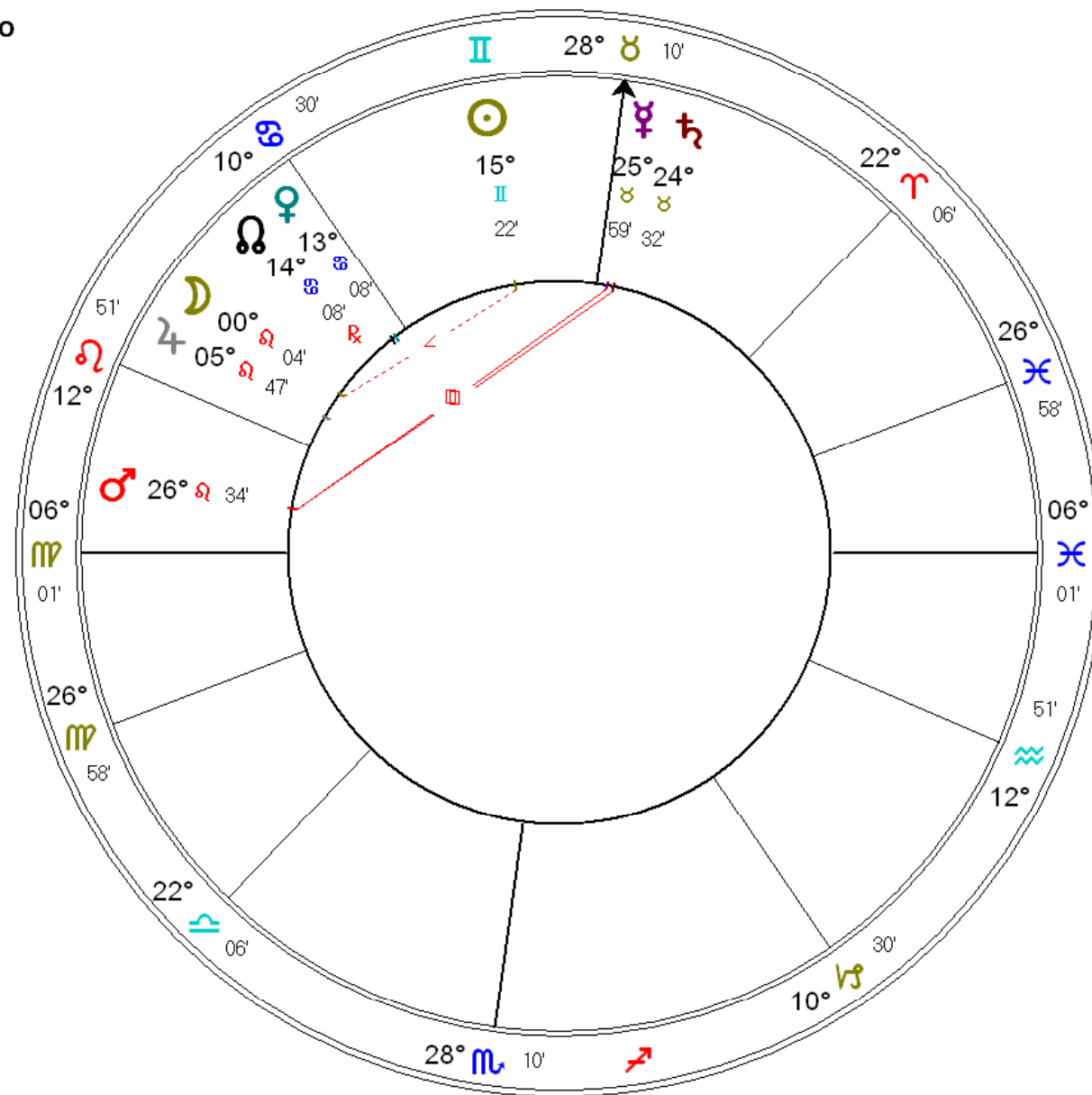
51°N30' 00°W10'

Geocentric

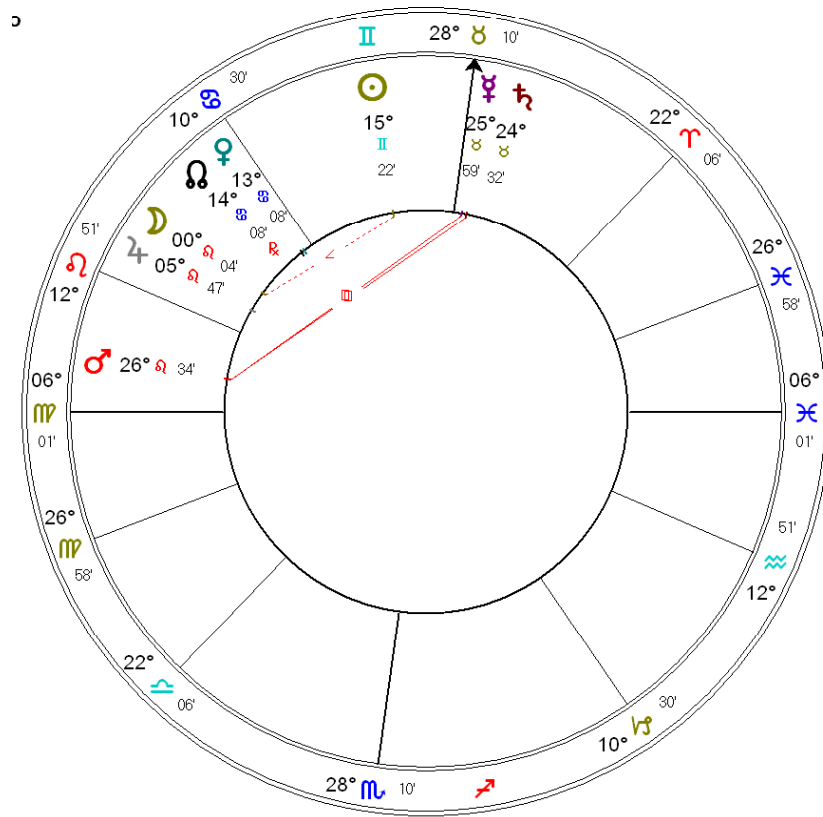
Tropical

Regiomontanus

Mean Mode



- C



- 'I advised the querent to decline his further progress upon that subject'. (Free will: he could proceed if he wished)
- I 'advertised him how incapable he was' (A psychological judgment, or is it a matter of technical skill?)
- 'and (of) the improbability of the thing he intended, according to natural causes' (scepticism)
- and 'he erred in his materials...working upon things...too grosse and heavy' (Mercury was conjunct Saturn, the heavy planet: the astrologer was able to discern matters of which he could have no direct knowledge)
- Returning to psychology he adds, 'where Mercury is corrupted, there the fancy or imaginative part is imbecill'.
- Lastly, because the 'lord of the work' i.e., Mars, the ruler of the 9th house, is unfortunate, the ambition cannot succeed (fate). The alchemist is therefore free to carry on trying but he cannot succeed.
- Finally, an observation: the alchemist was suffering from Consumption (tuberculosis) and Lilly advised him to focus on the pain of his illness rather than taking on the pain of failure in his quest

Elias Ashmole 1617-1682

- Favourite of King Charles II of England, Ireland and Scotland
- Unofficial 'Royal' astrologer
- Practising alchemist
- Founder of Ashmolean Museum in Oxford

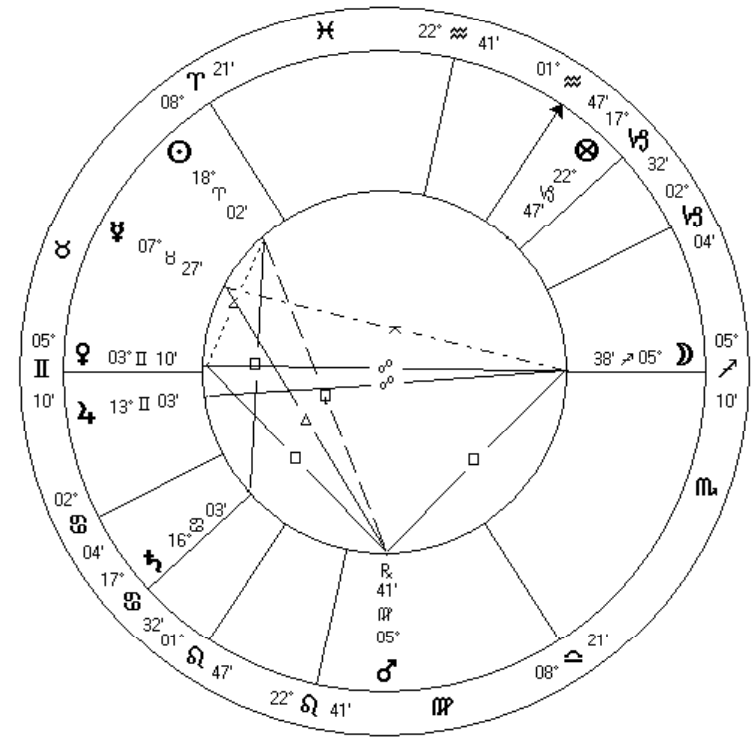


Elias Ashmole

making a sigil [talisman] of Jupiter and Venus 1

- 'I began to cast the 5 Gemini ascending/ but the metal spluttered and burnt my fingers and the sigil came not/ Mars behold[s] the ascendant with square/ Those cast about 6H.45' were for a continued health and favour with great and good men and women/'
- Josten, C.H. (ed.), *Elias Ashmole (1617 – 1692), His Autobiographical and Historical Notes, his Correspondence, and other Contemporary Sources relating to his Life and Work*, 5 Vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966, Vol. 4, p. 1679.

Ashmole-Alchemy-6.45
Natal Chart (16)
7 Apr 1681 NS
07:11:40 LMT +0:00:40
London, Eng
51°N30' 000°W10'
Geocentric
Tropical
Regiomontanus
True Node



Using Textual Sources

- Ashmole's Account
- the metal spluttered and burnt my fingers and the sigil came not/ Mars behold[s] the ascendant with square
- [square – planets 'separated by fourth part of circle' Lilly, *Christian Astrology* p. 105.
- Ascendant –so-called because 'even the sun commeth to the cusp of this (first) house, he ascends...and is visible on our horizon Lilly, *Christian Astrology* p. 51.]
- Textual Sources
- Mars – 'He is in nature hot and dry' Lilly, *Christian Astrology* p. 66
- Square – 'quartile (is) disharmonious because (it is) composed of signs of opposite kinds'.
- Ptolemy *Tetrabiblos*, I.13

Using Textual Sources

- Ashmole's Reading
- Those cast about 6H.45' were for a continued health and favour with great and good men and women'
- Horoscope Data
- Setting chart for 7.11 (which corresponds to 5 Gemini ascendant, Venus and Jupiter were rising.
- Textual Sources
- Jupiter 'is Magnanimous, Faithfull, Bashfull, Aspiring in an honourable way at high matters' (*Christian Astrology* p. 62).
- Venus is 'a Feminine Planet, not given to Law, Quarrel or Wrangling...a Company-keeper, Cheerful...a right vertuous Man or Woman'.
- (*Christian Astrology* pp. 73-4).

The Babylonian Nativity Omens

surviving from c.475 BCE

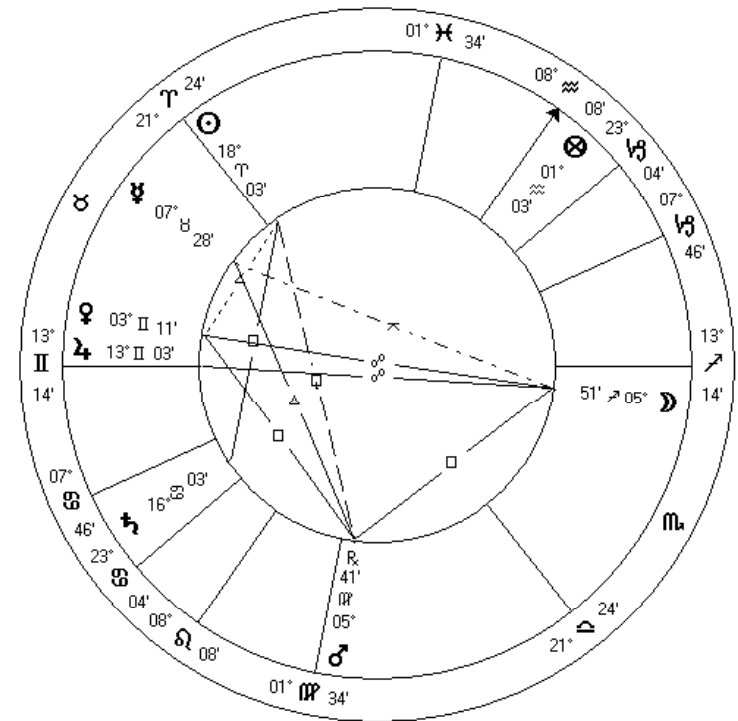
- the child born under Jupiter will have a 'regular (life)...will become rich (and) will grow old.
- the child born 'when Venus has come forth', will be have a life which is 'exceptionally calm (and) favourable' and marked by longevity.
- the child born with Mars may have a hot temper
- the child born when Saturn has come forth will live a life which is 'dark, obscure, sick and constrained'.

Elias Ashmole

making a sigil of Jupiter and Venus 2

- Those cast about 7: were to strengthen and enlarge memory, fancy and tongue, and wit/to assist and encourage a search into mysteries and learning.
- Josten, C.H. (ed.), *Elias Ashmole (1617 – 1692), His Autobiographical and Historical Notes, his Correspondence, and other Contemporary Sources relating to his Life and Work*, 5 Vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966, Vol. 4, p. 1679.

Ashmole-Alchemy-0700
Natal Chart (13)
7 Apr 1681 NS
07:37:40 LMT +0:00:40
London, Eng
51°N30' 000°W10'
Geocentric
Tropical
Regiomontanus
True Node



Conclusions

- Ashmole's astrological statements can be sourced to astrological texts. He was working within a high literary tradition.
- The literary tradition he was sourcing can be traced to the Hellenistic world, and before then to Babylon
- Until the latter part of the 17th century Hellenistic cosmology was flourishing at the highest level of English society

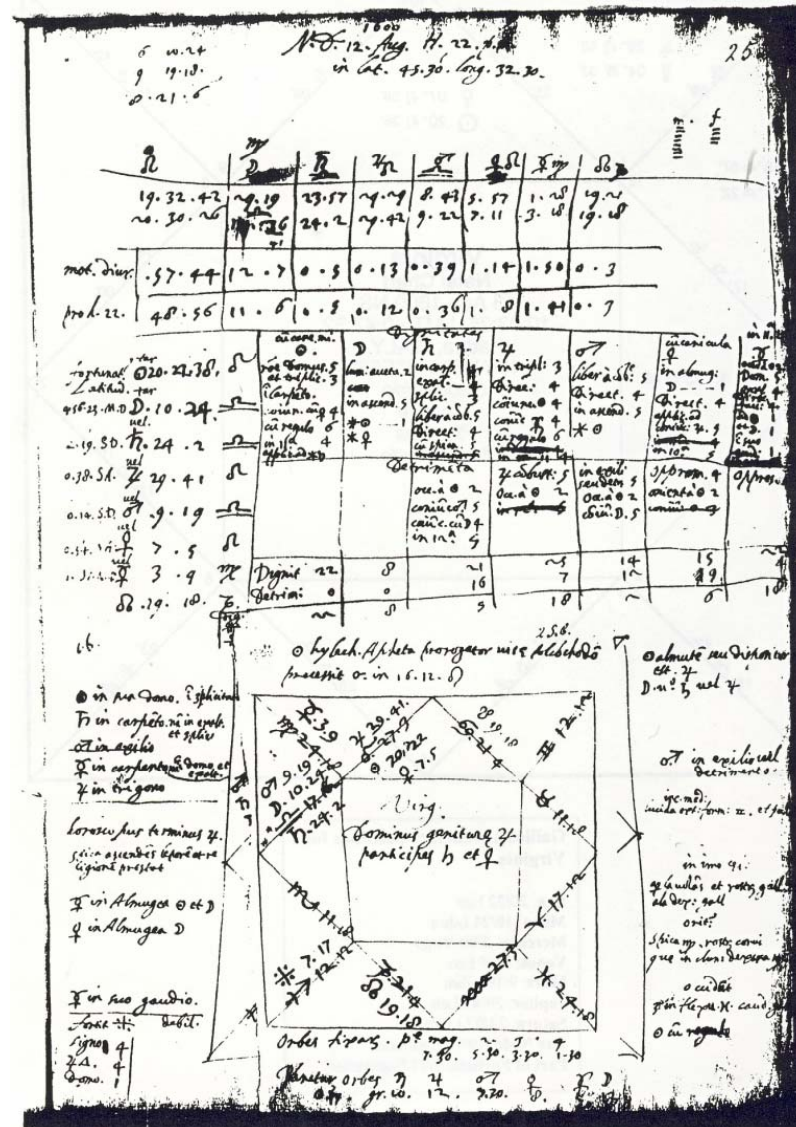
- This cosmology included
- The attribution of ‘agency’ to the planets – they are agents of change.
- An exact attention to the timing of particular events

The Babylonian Nativity Omens

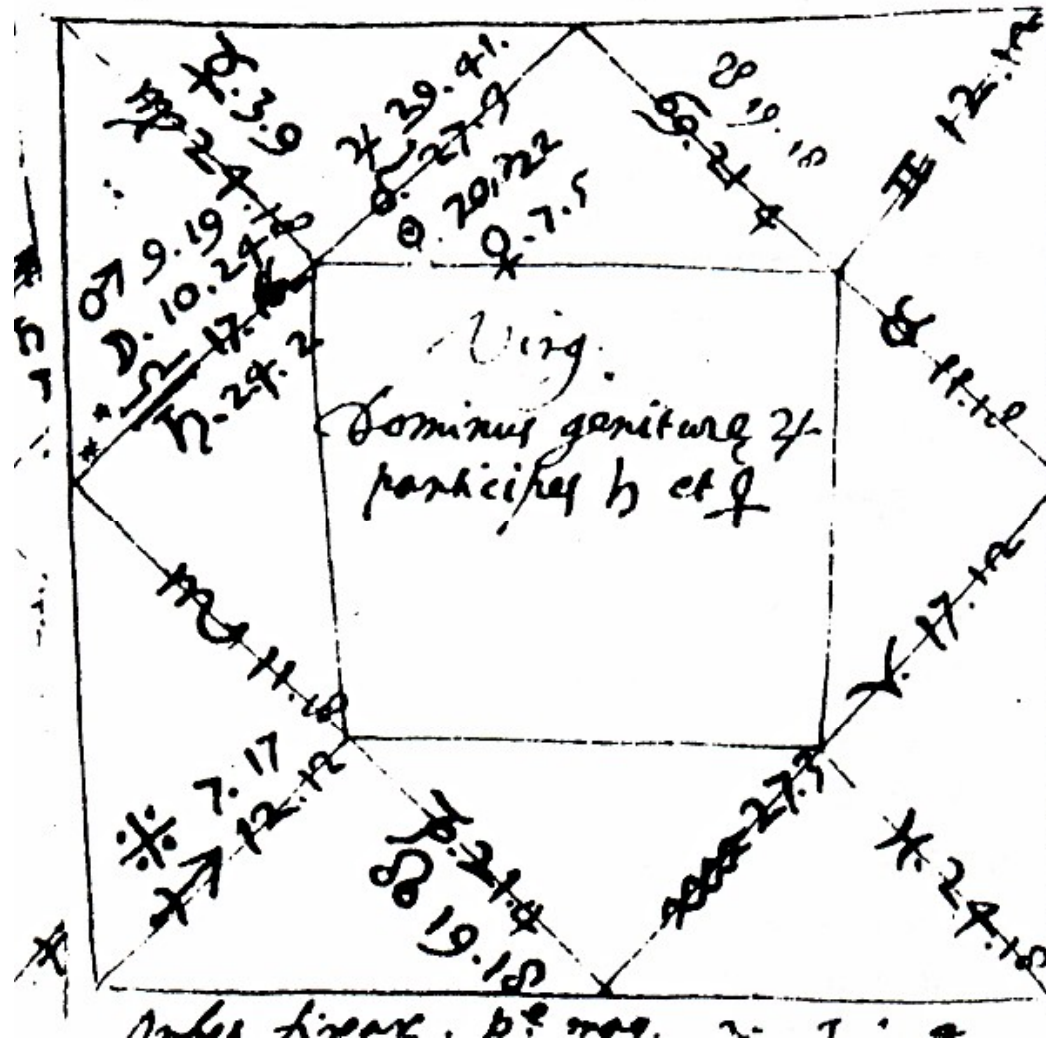
surviving from c.475 BCE

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Galileo's daughter Virginia



Galileo's daughter Virginia



Galileo

His daughter Virginia born on 12 August 1600

He wrote 'Mercury and the Moon are in separate places, sharing no aspect but having a certain discord, and this denotes a jarring between the rational and sensitive powers of the soul'.^[1]

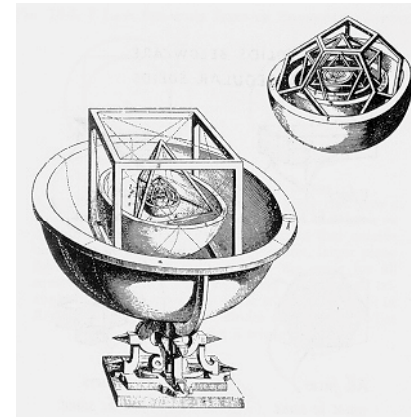
[1] Galileo, 'On the Customary Ways of Virginia', trans. Grazia Mirti, *Galileo's Astrology*, Bristol: Cinnabar Books 2004/*Culture and Cosmos* Vol. 7 no 1, Spring/Summer 2003, p. 102.

Johannes Kepler: management of the state 1571-1630



Plato's (and Kepler's geometrical cosmos)

- Astrology works because
- all things are part
- of an unfolding
- geometrical order.



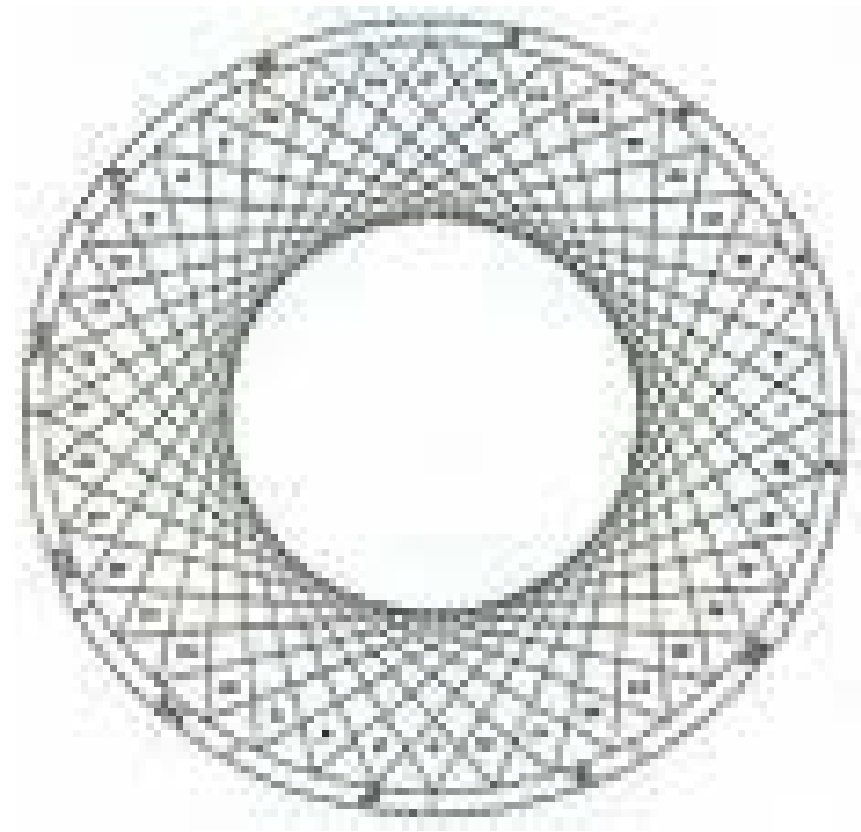
What Motivated Kepler?

- Apart from the desire to reveal God's plan and reform political life, his 'eureka' moment came when he realised the pattern of Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions



What Motivated Kepler?

- The complete cycle of Jupiter Saturn conjunctions described a circle which, according to Plato, was the most perfect of shapes:
- God himself was a sphere.



Kepler's programme

- Jean Bodin: Medieval astrology had failed. Therefore strip astrology back to its essentials – planetary cycles. That will allow effective prediction.
- But what do you do then? Manage the state effectively.
- Thesis 71: 'these remedies are always in our power, however things may happen, and nothing is absolutely predetermined'.

Kepler in 1601

- Astrology is a negotiation
- Thesis 73.
- For although the sun shines upon and warns the whole world, yet it does not produce olive trees everywhere except where they have been planted.
- i.e. prediction depends on context and, from moment to moment on our actions within that context.
- We can plant an olive tree or not, but only in an environment in which it will grow.

Kepler's political programme

- Experimental forecasts for the year 1602.
- Kepler took the first tentative steps towards his research programme.
- Cautious predictions, warning of the possibility of defeat should there be war with Poland at the time of the Mars-Saturn conjunction in August and September.

Mars-Saturn-Conj-1602

Natal Chart (6)

20 Sep 1602 NS

00:00 LMT -1:24

Warsaw, Poland

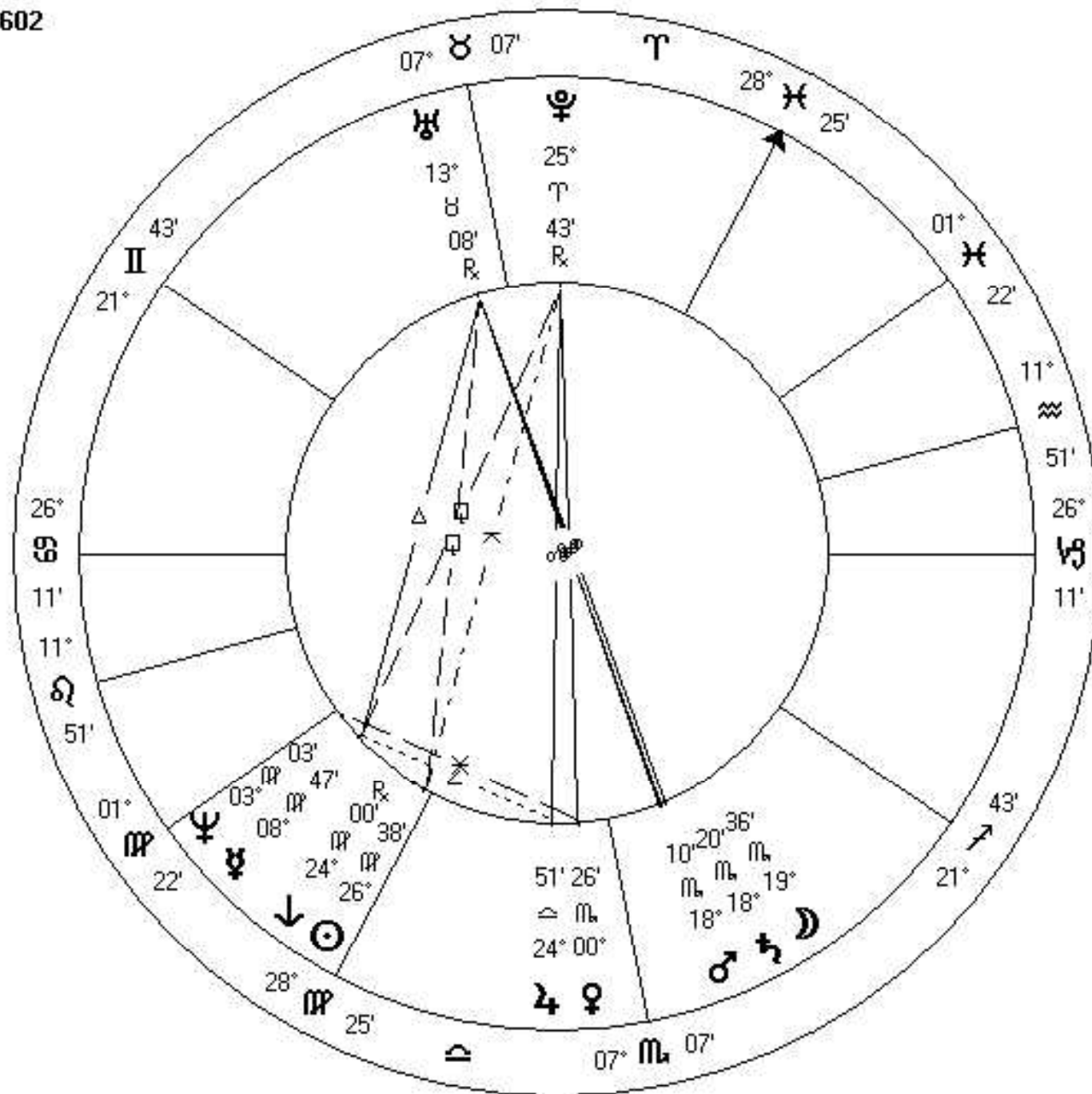
52°N 15° 02'E 00'

Geocentric

Tropical

Placidus

True Node



The Management of the State

- Once such problems had been foreseen, they could be guarded against by military leadership: 'a great safeguard for the army lies in their loyalty to and high regard for their commander; for every victory depends on a driving force of the spirit'.(Thesis 72)
 - That might be combined with sensible political management: 'it is preferable for peace and quiet to prevail, and sedition is feared, let meetings not be held in August and September, or let them be broken up, or better yet, let the causes exasperating people's dispositions be taken quickly away, or by the introduction of some new deterrent, let their minds be changed'.(Thesis 71)
 - Kepler's cosmic state would manage dissent by social and political reform where possible, but propaganda and repression if necessary. We can, perhaps, see him laying the groundwork for twentieth century social-democracy.
-
- 53. Kepler, Astrology, Thesis 72.
 - 54. Kepler, Astrology, Thesis 71.

Kepler's Style

- Examine past events, accurately timed and dated.
- Consider the nature of those events and current possibilities carefully
- Make a prediction in the knowledge that we can change events
- First you need to expose the mathematical order which inclines human beings to act without thought

Kepler's Prediction for 1618

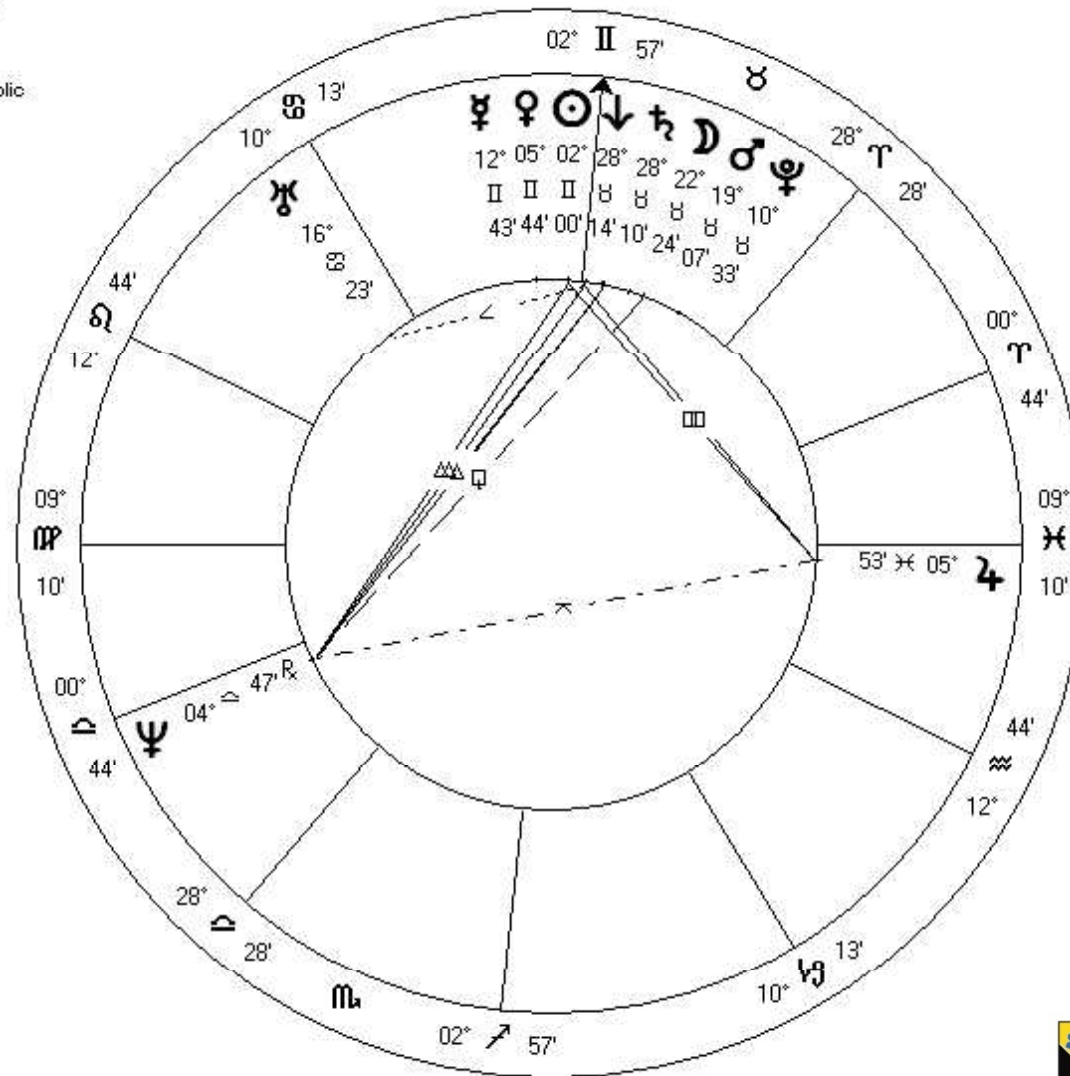
- [May] has very dangerous aspects, as five planets gather together in Taurus, four of which advance from a Sextile to a Quintile with Jupiter
- My fundamental argument is this: that a Conjunction of Mars and the Sun takes place next March in Aries, under the influence of which Germany stands; while numerous Conjunctions take place in May in Taurus near the Plejades; and that we have precedents to show us the effects of such aspects in definite instances, as in the Peasants' War in 1525, in the Revolt in the Netherlands in 1565, and in 1604 in Hungary.

The Event

- 23 May 1618
- The Thirty Years War Begins.
- Almost every European country was involved.
- Germany was devastated.

The Thirty Years War

Thirty-Years-War
Natal Chart (7)
 23 May 1618 NS
 12:00 LMT -0:57:44
 Prague, Czech Republic
 50°N05' 014"E26'
Geocentric
Tropical
Placidus
True Node



Conclusion

- The careful reading of primary documents enables us to study the ‘internal’ history of astrology as opposed to its ‘external’ (e.g. social, political) history.
- Placing this internal history into a wider context in the history of ideas, means we can then, potentially, enhance general understanding of the history of ideas.