

reasonable expectations and preparedness concerning what each period means for life as a whole.

Benjamin N. Dykes

See also: Court Astrologers; Horary Astrology; Medieval European Astrology

Further Reading

Alighieri, Dante. 1996. *The Inferno*, trans. John Ciardi. New York: New American Library.
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BRAHE, TYCHO (1546–1601)

Tycho Brahe was an astrologer and astronomer. He proposed to apply an observational method to astrology, avoiding the vulgar charlatanism and popular beliefs surrounding it. Brahe sought to convert astrology into a practically exact science and thereby improve astronomy. Although some scholars deny this, he cultivated astrology throughout his life.

Born in the Castle of Knudstrup (Scania, then Denmark, now Sweden) into a noble family, he was destined to study law to become a statesman. After learning Latin, he began to study rhetoric and philosophy in 1559. But he was very prone to astrology/astronomy and after the observation of an eclipse of the sun on August 21, 1560, he became even more interested in astrological predictions and horoscopes. After knowing that the eclipse had been exactly predicted, he started to think that astrology has something divine because men could know the motions of the stars so accurately that they could foretell their places and relative positions well beforehand. He remained in Copenhagen for three years learning mathematics and astronomy. However, his tutor insisted he continue his studies of law and he was sent to the University of Leipzig (Germany). He arrived at the university in March 1562. It seems that he did not attend the lectures on law but made some astronomical observations using the “radius” and “cross-staff,” instruments of sailors of the time. He also went on to use the sextant and the quadrant later.

He cast horoscopes for his friends and, more importantly, he predicted wet weather. He returned to Denmark in 1565 but visited Wittenberg, Rostock, and Ausburg afterward where he was in touch with the best German astronomers. He resided in Helsingborg from 1570 onward. While in Helsingborg, he devoted himself to alchemy (1570–1572), an essential complement to astronomy because the planets ruled the elemental world and the microcosmos. So, the moon represented silver, Mercury quicksilver, Venus copper, sun gold, Mars iron, Jupiter tin, and Saturn lead. He applied the traditional astrological principle: “as above, so below.”

Brahe’s year of glory was 1572: he described a new star (*nova stella*) in the constellation of Cassiopeia. This discovery was published in Copenhagen: *De nova stella* (1573). Brahe’s writings on the new star included an interpretation of its astrological meaning. As a result of his increased fame, he was invited to teach at the University of Copenhagen. At the same time he was appointed court astronomer to Frederik II of Denmark and commissioned to design horoscopes for the three princes.

In Brahe's first lecture (1574) (*De disciplinis mathematicis*) he gave his opinions about astrology. Brahe advocated the legitimate use of both natural (prediction of the weather) and judicial astrology (foretelling of human events). The prediction of events required many accurate measurements so as to produce correct results. The discussion of natal astrology is divided into sections by topic: infancy, life span, mood, moral dispositions, bodily build, travels, wedding, sons, friends, and death.

He concluded by stating that no prediction is irrevocable because the will of God orders everything. The reference to the will of God was made in order to not contradict the theologians attending the lecture. Brahe was very interested in astrometeorology and from 1582 onward he kept long records of the weather that were correlated to planetary positions, the appearance of comets, and the moon's phases. But he became increasingly skeptical mainly because of the insufficient accuracy in the calculation of the positions of planets in advance. This was why Brahe worked to improve the accuracy of the observations necessary for a true astrology including weather prediction and nativities. It was necessary for time to be determined correctly and for the position of planets on the astrological chart to correspond with the actual sky. He claimed to have developed an experience-based method, differing from those previously used. But he did not want to inform others about this method.

In 1576, by order of the king, he went to live and make astronomical observations in an observatory on the island of Hven known as Uraniborg, fortress of Urania, muse of astronomy. In 1599, after a quarrel with the new king and a stay in Germany, Brahe went to Prague, under the protection of Emperor Rudolph II, where he died in 1601. These approximately 20 years were the period in which he did his best astrological and astronomical work.

Astrology and alchemy were included in Brahe's cosmology. In his books *De mundi aetheri phaenomenis* (1588), *Epistolarum astronomicarum* (1596), and *Astronomiae instauratae mechanica* (1598) appear two drawings that bear the meaningful captions *suspiciendo despicio* (by looking up I see downward) and *despiciendo suspicio* (by looking down I see upward). Both pictures show a man in reclining posture and a youth, but in one case the man is looking upward into the sky and leaning on a globe with a pair of compasses in his hands. In the other one, he is escorted by an alchemical instrument, holding a bunch of herbs in his hands and looking downward. In other words astrology is the mirror of alchemy and vice versa: as above, so below. Brahe's observations were inherited by Johannes Kepler, who used them to develop his own astronomy and astrology.

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See also: Kepler, Johannes; Renaissance and Reformation Astrology; Science

Further Reading

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- Oestmann, G. 2002. "Tycho Brahe's Attitude towards Astrology and His Relations to Heinrich Rantzau." In *Tycho Brahe and Prague: Crossroads of European Science*, ed. John Robert Christianson, Alena Hadravová, Petr Hadrava, and Martin Šolc, 88–94. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Harri Deutsch.