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Kepler on the Soul

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Astrology, History, Spirit and Soul

5 November 2024

Life and Importance

1571-1630

Importance in astronomy: devised the three laws of planetary motion

Importance in astrology: was perhaps the most high-profile astrologer in Europe from c.1610 to 1630; as a reformer he wanted to create an astrology based on (1) the geometrical/harmonic structure of the universe as visible through (2) empirical observation of what could be seen and measured, ie, planetary cycles and public events and (3) a theory of the soul/psyche and the planets.

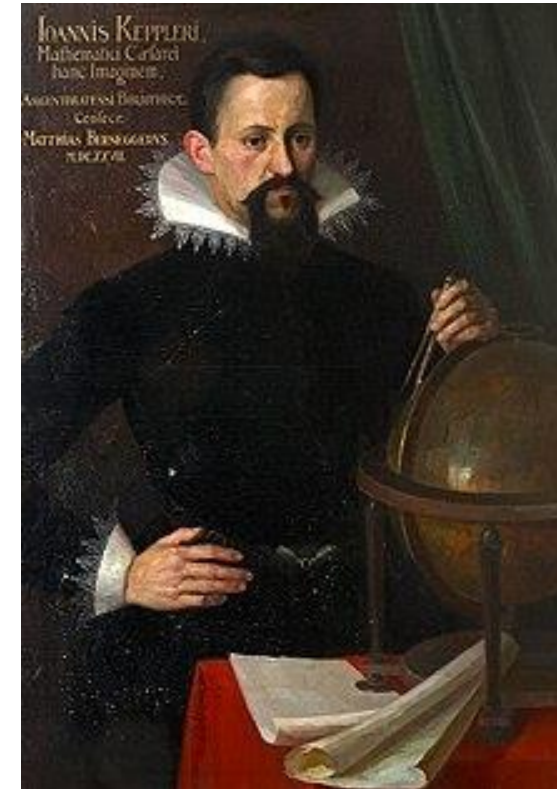
Legacy in astrology: influenced 17th astrologers such as William Lilly (who used Kepler's new planetary aspects and secondary progressions) but as horoscopic astrology disappeared by 1700 his influence disappeared with this.

However, his Harmonic-Platonic astrology was revived in the English-speaking world by John Addey in the 1960s.

Therefore, his importance in the history of astrology is as a major theoretician of astrology, including on the role of the soul/psyche, and a precursor to certain major 20th c astrologers, notably Dane Rudhyar

Influences on Kepler:

1. Plato: cosmos permeated by soul: the creation myth in *Timaeus*.
2. Aristotle: natural influences
3. Lutheran Christianity: the individual is totally responsible to God, who created the universe.



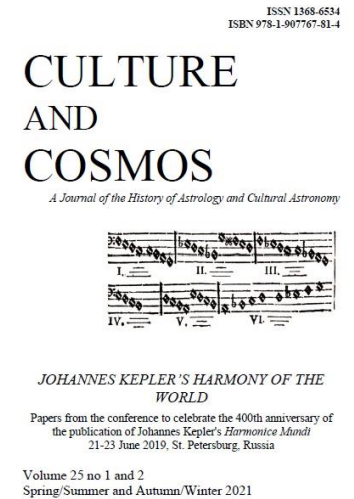
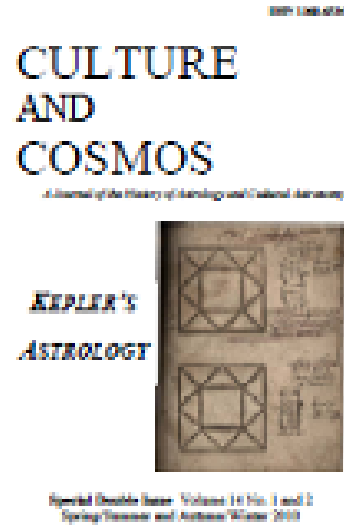
Reading: general articles on Kepler's astrology

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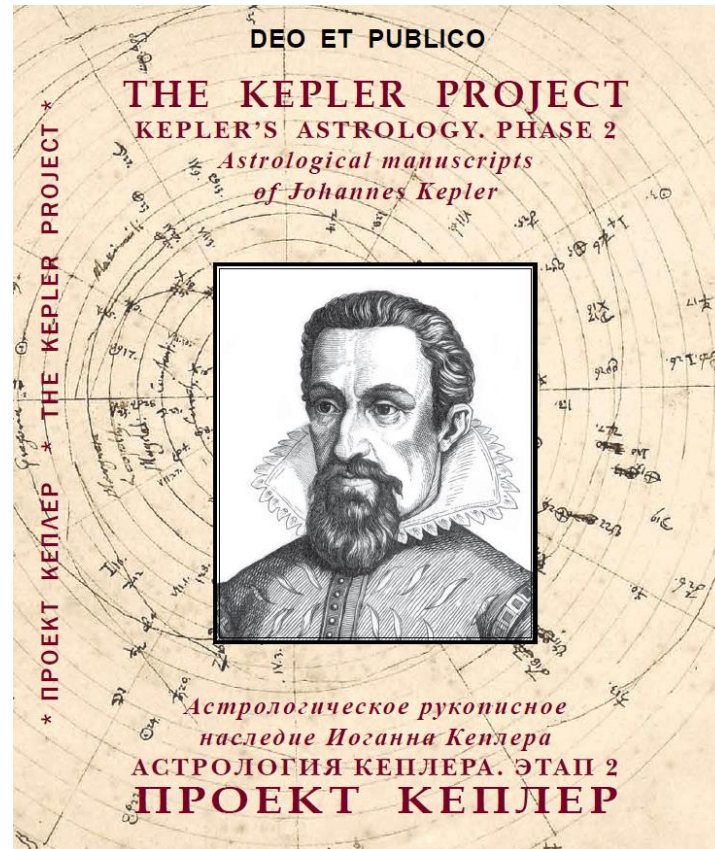
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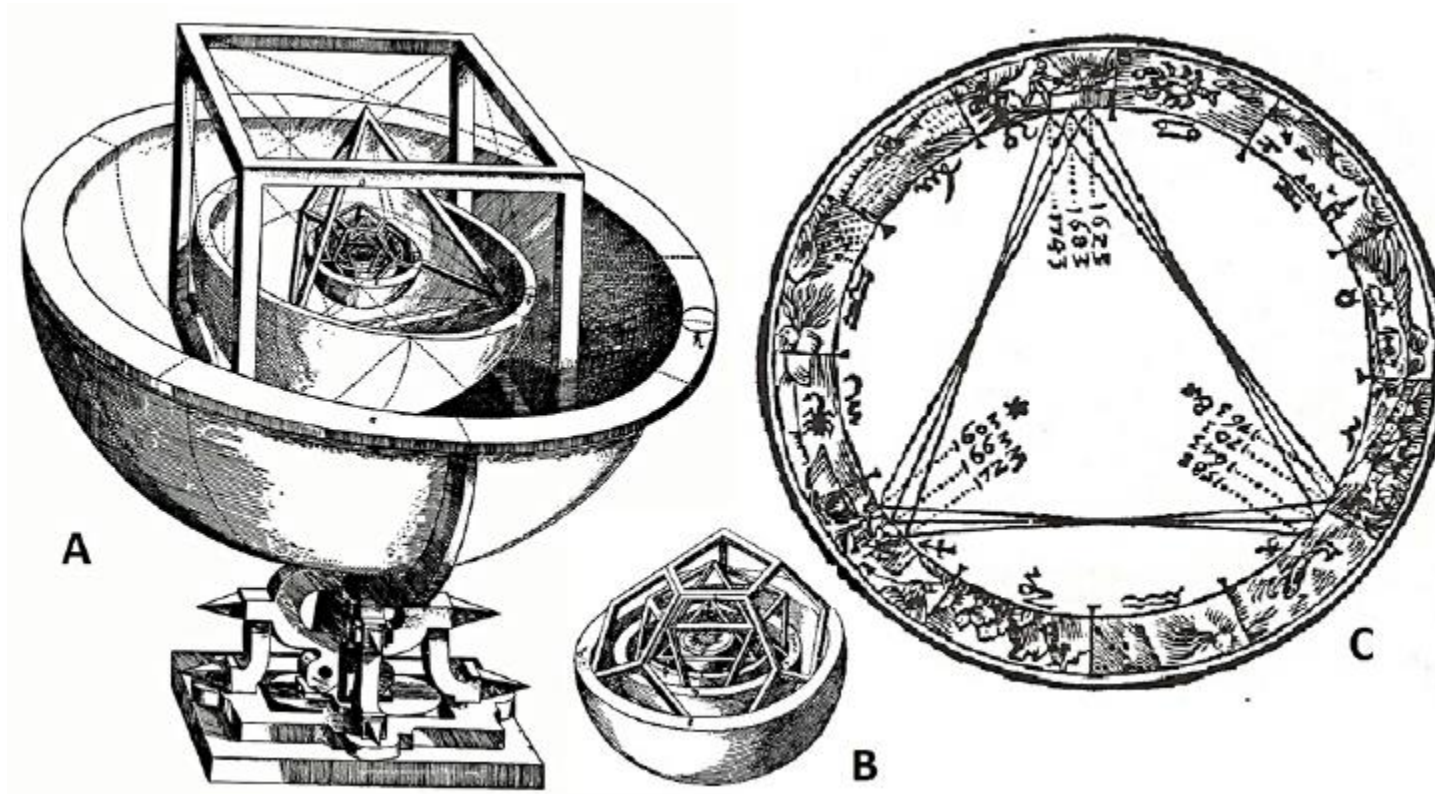
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Karine Dilanyan: The Kepler Project



Kepler's Harmonic Universe, derived from Plato's *Timaeus*

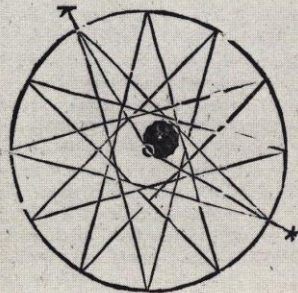
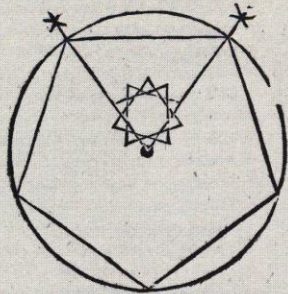


HARMONICIS LIB. IV. 147

CAP. V.

Propositio XIII.

Quartus in Efficacitate Configurationum Gradus est Quintilis, Biquintilis, & Quincuncis.



Huic enim communis est congruentia figurarum primarum totarum in plano, non tamen singularum specierum secum ipsis; sed primarum duarum inter se mutuo, ultima cum alijs sibi cognatis. Preceunt duo priores aspectus eo, quod congruunt figurae, Pentagonus & stella eius, etiam in solido, faciuntque duas figuras solidas regulares; qua nobilitate penes associant aspectus suos Trino & Quadrato; stella Dodecagonica in solido non congruit. At vicissim praeceunt & Dodecagonica, congruentia plana; quam habet continuabilem in infinitum; cum ille non longe continuari possit sine mixtura irregulari. Vide haec omnia libr. II.

Quod scibilitatem attinet laterum in figuris centralibus; hic etiam medio loco consistunt latera Decagoni & Tridecili & Dodecagoni, quae sunt hac in classe centrales, inter latera Trigonum praecedentis, & latera Pentagoni, stellaeque Pentagonicae, centralium figurarum in classe sequenti, Nam libro I. demonstratum est, prius esse in scientia, Decagonum lateri Pentagonico, Tridecile, stellari Pentagonico. Itaque & Scibilitas eodem ducit, quo & Congruentia, per pr. VII: quae huius potissimum demonstrationis causa fuit praemittenda, ne Decilis vel Tridecili praeferebantur Quintili & Biquintili. Si vero quis missa figuram a centrali, Scibilitatem potius in circumferentiali querere velit, non minus quam Congruentiam: esse fatendum est, hoc pacto praestitum iri Decilem Quintili, Tridecilem Biquintili; ac meminere is, praecipuas esse partes Congruentiae, ut

HARMONICIS LIB. V. 207

omnia (infinita in potentia) permeantes actu: id quod aliter à me non potuit exprimi, quam per continuam seriem Notarum intermedia.



Fig. 4d From Kepler, *Harmonices Mundi* Book IV, Chapter V.

Aristotle: Three levels of soul

c. 384-323 BCE

Student of Plato

Tutor of Alexander the Great.

Three levels of soul, like Plato, but embedded in nature, not transcendent.

But : the 'Active Intellect' is immortal.

Aristotle taught that every thing needs to find its proper place, to become itself. E.g. fire goes up, stone goes down.

De Anima / On the Soul

Levels of soul

1a. Active Intellect (Higher)

1b Passive intellect

2. Emotional (Lower)

3. Animal (Lower)



The Christian background: Thomas Aquinas (c.1275-1224)

The soul's relationship to the body

The human soul is the form of the body, life force which enables the physical body to live (from Aristotle, Stoics)

However, human beings have activities which do not involve the body, thinking – using the intellect

[\(See Summa Contra Gentiles, II, 56\)](#)

Therefore, the soul exists of itself, separate from the body.

This distinguishes the human soul from the souls of animals, where the soul does not exist separate to the body.

[\(Summa Theologica, Ia, 75, 3\)](#)

The soul exists separately to the body.

However, it is not complete without the body [\(Summa Contra Gentiles II, 68\)](#)

It needs the body in order to be able to do anything.

The soul needs God either to reunite it with its body or endow it with knowledge, both of which would be supernatural.

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 2.2.95.5.

The stars cannot influence the soul

- In the second place, acts of the free-will, which is the faculty of will and reason, escape the causality of heavenly bodies. For the intellect or reason is not a body, nor the act of a bodily organ, and consequently neither is the will, since it is in the reason, as the [Philosopher](#) [Aristotle] shows (De Anima iii, 4,9). Now no body can make an impression on an incorporeal body. Wherefore it is impossible for heavenly bodies to make a direct impression on the intellect and will: for this would be to deny the difference between intellect and sense, with which position [Aristotle](#) reproaches (De Anima iii, 3) those who held that "such is the will of man, as is the day which the father of men and of gods," i.e. the sun or the heavens, "brings on" [Odyssey xviii, 135.



Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 2.2.95.5. The stars cannot influence the soul

- Hence the heavenly bodies cannot be the direct cause of the free-will's operations. Nevertheless they can be a dispositive cause of an inclination to those operations, in so far as they make an impression on the human body, and consequently on the sensitive powers which are acts of bodily organs having an inclination for human acts. Since, however, the sensitive powers obey reason, as the [Philosopher](#) shows (De Anima iii, 11; Ethic. i, 13), this does not impose any necessity on the free-will, and man is able, by his reason, to act counter to the inclination of the heavenly bodies.'
- <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/309505.htm>



Astrology works in two ways

Astrology can make correct predictions due to the failure of human being to transcend their natures and reject celestial influence:

‘That astrologers not unfrequently forecast the truth by observing the stars may be explained in two ways. First, because a great number of men follow their bodily passions, so that their actions are for the most part disposed in accordance with the inclination of the heavenly bodies: while there are few, namely, the wise alone, who moderate these inclinations by their reason. The result is that astrologers in many cases foretell the truth, especially in public occurrences which depend on the multitude.’

Summa Theologica 2.2.95.5

<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/309505.htm>



Kepler on the Soul

Escobar, Jorge M., 'Kepler's theory of the soul: a study on epistemology', [*Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A*](#), Vol. 39, Issue 1, March 2008, Pages 15-41.

(In University library but I don't recommend you read it)

P 16 Kepler's theory of the soul is a general theory of knowledge (or epistemology) whose main problem is to explain what makes knowledge possible

p.25 Planetary minds and souls and solar minds do not exist in the Keplerian heavens. He did indeed postulate them as a plausible conjecture to explain the motion of the planets, and consequently they must be included in our reconstructions, yet just as a conjecture—not as an entity

‘...The human being, however, with his soul and its lower powers has such an affinity with the heavens, as does the surface of the Earth, and this has been tested and proven in many ways, of which each is a noble pearl of astrology’

Johannes Kepler, *Tertius Interveniens*, 1610.



Levels of the Soul (derived from Aristotle)



- ‘Furthermore he [Jean Bodin] shows from Plato that this pattern of the state is revealed in man, as in it are
- 1. the mind;
- 2. the faculty of reason...
- 3 the angry faculty; and
- 4. the libidinous faculty.
- Kepler, Johannes, *The Harmony of the World*, trans. E.J. Aiton, A.M. Duncan, J.V. Field (American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1997), chap XXII (p. 277)

God and harmonies



- ‘...God, Who shapes and imposes on bodies these forms, all images of Himself, though more or less close, and makes them display the harmonic ratios in themselves, just as **he has embraced them in His mind from eternity, and has expressed them in His creation**, as has been stated above; or else, which comes to the same thing, I shall adduce the affinity... **Of these souls, even the inferior ones, with the circle, in accordance with which, as with a rule of law, they have been arranged and shaped, along with the circle**, and it’s constructibility, they have also taken on the idea of the **harmonic proportions** which depends on it. **For this philosophy is strongly confirmed by horoscopes**, as we see that the character of the concurrence of **celestial rays** at the same point, as if from a common circle, **is imprinted on the mind of the newborn**.
- Kepler, Johannes, *The Harmony of the World*, trans. E.J. Aiton, A.M. Duncan, J.V. Field (American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1997) Book IV, chap II (p. 308).

The inferior soul



- ‘This perception of the harmonies in the inferior faculties of the soul is dull and dim, and in a sense material, and under a cloud of ignorance; for they do not know that they perceive, as when we see something but we do not notice that we are seeing it.... Such also is the **natural feeling of hate or love**, especially with a remarkable predisposition, as judging the goodness of another soul, or it’s resemblance to one by the symmetry of the parts of the body and the qualities of voice and temperament, he is wonderfully inflamed towards it. **Therefore, the crazy youth loves the girl; and he does not know why, nor what he loves in her most of all, ...**but if a physiognomist comes on the scene, he finds in both personalities some resemblance of character; and if the characters are defective, they give occasion for perpetual strife (p. 310) in the marriage, but if they are good, for perpetual tranquility in life.’
- Kepler, Johannes, *The Harmony of the World*, trans. E.J. Aiton, A.M. Duncan, J.V. Field (American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1997) Book IV, chap II (p. 309-10).
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Music (See Ficino)



For our delight in the harmonies of sounds as the character of an experience, in fact of being anointed or caressed, and hence the philosophers also called it, from its being passive, a response shared between minds and music. However, it is a reality and operation of the soul, acting bites natural motion on itself, and exciting itself; and it is brought to that not by intentional will but by natural instinct.

Kepler, Johannes, *The Harmony of the World*, trans. E.J. Aiton, A.M. Duncan, J.V. Field (American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1997) Book IV, chap II (p. 310).



Kepler: How does Astrology Work

Thesis 64. All powers coming down from above are ruled according to Aristotle's teaching: namely, that inside this lower world or earthly sphere there is a spiritual nature, capable of expression through geometry. This nature is enlivened by geometrical and harmonic connections with the celestial lights, out of an inner drive of the Creator, not guided by reason, and itself is stimulated and driven for the use of their powers.

Kepler, Johannes, 'Johannes Kepler's Tertius Interveniens', (thesis 64), trans Ken Negus, *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 1, no 1, Spring/Summer 1997, pp. 51-2.



Kepler: Free will



The passive soul 'operates on its own account, is the offspring of the inferior faculties of the soul..is subject to the powers of nature...is strong by the motion of the alteration which it brings to its body, so that it is completely subject to the vital faculty', whereas the active soul is 'occupied in activity...(is subject) to the will of man...(and) operates outside itself..adapting its operations to the proportions, or bringing the proportions into them'.

Kepler, Johannes, *The Harmony of the World*, trans. E.J. Aiton, A.M. Duncan, J.V. Field, (American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1997), Book IV, p. 310; see also p. 309

Psychology in Kepler's Prediction for 1602 (Thesis 71)



Previous aspects:

1572 Mars conjunct Saturn:

St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in Paris: Catholics massacre Protestants

1596 Mars opposed to Jupiter

Castle at Eger in Hungary was captured by the Turks: major victory in Turkish expansion in Hungary

Conclusion:

'experience shows that under these two conjunctions **souls are generally stunned and frightened, or aroused** in the expectation of revolts, and this fact is very significant for a multitude of people congregated in one place either for some undertaking or for destruction, as military experience testifies' (thesis 71).

Kepler's fundamental model was therefore psychological. The mechanism was one in which the movements of the planets stirred up the collective soul, and such disturbances then expressed themselves through political volatility. There is a clear process, then, in which an initial disturbance in the soul, results in violent disturbance.



Kepler's Prediction for 1602

a solar eclipse at 3° Capricorn, a sextile (60° separation) between Mars and Saturn, a conjunction of Mars and Jupiter (similar to 1569) and a conjunction of Mars and Saturn (the same as in 1572).

'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).

Astrology is therefore not deterministic: 'these remedies', he wrote, 'are always in our power, however things may happen, and nothing is absolutely predetermined' (Thesis 71).

'For although the sun shines upon and warms the whole world, yet it does not produce olive trees everywhere except where they have been planted'. (Thesis 73).

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)

Kepler's Prediction for 1618: politics



'[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'.

Previous events

- Peasants' War in 1525,
- the revolt in the Netherlands in 1565
- Bocskai uprising in Hungary in 1604.

'Defenestration of Prague on 23 May 1618 initiated the Thirty Years War, a conflict in which almost every European country was involved, and Germany was devastated.

Kepler, Johannes, 'Astrological Predictions for the Year M.DC.XVIII', trans. John Meeks, *Culture And Cosmos*, Vol. 14 no 1 and 2, Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter 2010 pp. 177-198.

Kepler, Johannes, 'Prognostication for the year 1618', in 'Kepler's Weather Calendar of 1618, 'trans. And annotated John Meeks, *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 12, no 1 and 2, Spring/Summer and Autumn Winter 2009, pp. 177-98 (pp. 186, 197)

Conclusion

Kepler was the last of the great European scholars to have been a practicing astrologer.

His attitude to astrology cannot be understood without reference to his theory of soul.

His astrology can be described as psychological.

