

MA Cultural Astronomy and Astrology

History of Astrology

Week 4

Astrology in Medieval Europe: Required reading

Nick Campion

Required Reading: Primary Sources

The primary source reading this week is lighter and tends to the theoretical. Only the section from Bonatus on 4th House Elections gives you a flavour of practical astrology. Elections, of course, are horoscopes set for auspicious moment to launch new enterprises. A 4th house election would concern property matters, amongst other things.

Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans James F. Anderson, Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975, books two and three, extracts. Book 3, chaps 84 – 100, 104.

<http://dhsprory.org/thomas/ContraGentiles3b.htm>

Thomas Aquinas was called upon to provide a response to the challenge of astrological material which implied that the soul was subject to the stars, and hence the ability to make moral choices and choose salvation through Christ was restricted. These chapters are the crucial passages in which he reconciled Christian doctrine with astrological influence.

Bonatus, Guido, 'Considerations' trans. William Lilly, London 1676.

http://www.hermetics.org/pdf/astrology/Guido_Bonatus_-_Anima_Astrologiae.pdf

Paras 1,2,3, 7, 10, 11, 12,

Bonatus, or Bonati, was one of the most famous astrologers of the 13th century. The Considerations was a set of preliminary rules on the interpretation of horoscopes. Many of the paragraphs are highly technical but the ones we have recommended give a flavour of the cosmological ideas underpinning technical astrology.

Bonatus, Guido, 4th House Elections, extracted from Bonatti, Guido, *Liber Astronomiae*, trans. Benjamin Dykes, 2 Vols., Golden Valley MN, The Cazimi Press, 2007.

<http://www.skyscript.co.uk/4elect.html>

The language may be unfamiliar and you should not be daunted by the technicalities, but this passage gives an idea of the kind of questions which astrologers were asked.

Ptolemy, Claudius, *Centiloquium*, transcribed and annotated by Deborah Houlding from the Henry Coley edition. Paragraphs 1-14.

<http://www.skyscript.co.uk/centiloquium1.html>

It is now known that Ptolemy was not the author of the *Centiloquium*. However, it was translated into Latin in the 12th century and became an essential work for students of astrology, based on the understanding that Ptolemy was the author.

Required Reading: Secondary Sources

Campion, Nicholas, *A History of Western Astrology*, Vol. 2 (London: Continuum 2009), chapters 1-6.

Grant, Edward, 'A New Look at Medieval Cosmology, 1200-1687', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 129, No. 4 (Dec. 1985), pp. 417-432.
JSTOR

Laird, Edgar, 'Heaven and the Sphaera Mundi', *Culture & Cosmos*, Vol. 4 no 1, Spring/Summer 2000, pp.10-35.
http://www.cultureandcosmos.org/pdfs/4-1/4-1_Laird_Sphaera_Mundi.pdf

Poss, Richard L, 'Stars and Spirituality in the Cosmology of Dante's *Commedia*', *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 5 no 1, Spring/Summer 2001, pp. 49-66.
http://www.cultureandcosmos.org/pdfs/5/5-1-dante_stars_spirituality.pdf
A good insight into astrology and literature in the fourteenth century.

Gunzburg, Darrelyn. 'Giotto's Sky: The Fresco Paintings of the First Floor Salone of the Palazzo Della Ragione, Padua, Italy.' In *The Imagined Sky: Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Darrelyn Gunzburg. 87-113. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2016.

EBOOK THROUGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
An important exploration of a visual source.

North, John, *Stars, Minds and Fate: Essays in Ancient and Medieval Cosmology*, London, The Hambledon Press 1989, chap 8: 'Astrology and the Fortune of Churches', chap 18 'Celestial Influence – The Major Premiss of Astrology'
GOOGLE BOOKS

Required Reading: Historiography

Evans, Richard, *In Defence of History*, London: Granta Books 1997, chapter 4.

Nick Campion Notes on Astrological Historiography
Remember, as lecture notes these are not quotable, but you can use them as a resource.