



# Tools & Techniques of the Medieval Astrologer

Book One  
Prenatal Concerns  
and the  
Calculation of  
the Length of Life

**SAMPLE PAGES**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 8 **Preface to First Edition**
- 12 **Preface to Second Edition**
- 14 **Preface to Third Edition**
- 15 **Introduction**

### **Section I Prenatal Concerns**

- 18 **On Generating or Conceiving Children**
- 18 **On the Generating or Conceiving of Sons or Daughters**  
*Extract from Bonatti, Liber Astronomiae*
- 21 **On the Causation of the Length of Pregnancy**
- 22 *Trutine of Hermes on the Causation of the Length of Pregnancy*
- 27 *Infusion of Sperm: On the 51<sup>st</sup> Dictum of the Centilogium*

### **Section II The Four *Differentiae* & the Length of Life**

- 30 **On the Four *Differentiae* of Nativities and How They Ought to Be Looked to in Order**
- 32 **Extract from Bonatti, Liber Astronomiae**
- 32 *On the First Differentia*
- 34 *On the Second Differentia*
- 35 *When These Things Occur*
- 36 *On the Third Differentia*
- 37 *On the Fourth Differentia*
- 37 **Commentary on the Above Four *Differentiae***
- 38 **Examination of the First *Differentia***
- 39 **Special Note on House Systems**
- 40 **Comparison and Contrast of *Differentia* 1, 2 and 3.**
- 41 **Examples of Application of the First *Differentia* Rule**
- 41 **First Example: Stillborn Child**
- 46 **Does This Chart Have a Hyleg?**
- 49 **Second Example: Healthy Individual**
- 54 **Conclusion**
- 54 **Example of the Application of the Second *Differentia* Rule**
- 59 **Determining the Length of Life in a Second *Differentia* Figure**
- 61 **Examination of the Third *Differentia***
- 62 **Examination of the Fourth *Differentia***
- 62 **Special Note Comparing the Sun Sign and the Ascendant**

## **Section III**

### **The Length of Life: the Hyleg and Alcocoden**

- 63 **On the Hyleg**
- 65 **On the Alcocoden**
- 67 **On the Discovery of the Hyleg and Alcocoden**
- 67 **Extract from Bonatti, *Liber Astronomiae***
- 68     On the Determination of the Length of Life of the Native
- 69     Again Regarding the Determination of the  
       Years of the Native.
- 70     On the Diversity of Opinions Which Exists  
       Regarding the Hyleg.
- 71     On the Knowing of the Alcocoden
- 73     On Knowing the Length of the Life of the Native.
- 74     When the Planets Add Years
- 74     When the Planets Diminish the Years
- 75     On Caput Draconis and Its Cauda
- 75     On the Direction of Degrees to Planets in Order to Know  
       the Accidents of the Native.
- 77     All the Planets Are Givers of Years
- 80     On the Science of Directing the Rays of the  
       Planets to the Hyleg
- 82     On the Number of Malefics and Benefics
- 84 **Comments on the Hyleg**
- 87 **Comments On the Alcocoden**
- 89 **The Question of the Influence of the Modern Planets**
- 90 **Metaphysical and Scholarly Aspects of the Alcocoden Doctrine**
  
- 98 **Appendix One: Methods for Discovering the Hyleg**
- 102 **Appendix Two: Diagrams and Tables**

## Preface to First Edition

**IT HAS LONG** been my opinion that the status of astrology as a serious study and as an art beneficial to mankind will not be recognised until we raise up the level of the art's practice. This must be achieved through a combination of diligent scholarly research into the ancient and medieval astrological procedures and the development of a clear metaphysical and philosophical foundation on which the art's present practice may be seen to rest.

The first is necessary for three reasons. Firstly, to document the fact that there is a long history of astrologers who have significantly influenced the course of world politics, economics, science, and even religion. Secondly, to establish which part of modern day astrological practice is traditional and which part is innovative. Clearly, this second point cannot be accomplished without first discovering what the ancient and medieval procedures were. A third concern subsumed under the heading of "a need for scholarly research into ancient and medieval astrological methods" is to determine once and for all which of these ancient methods are relevant to us today. In simple terms, to ask "**Which methods work and which methods do not work?**", "Did they ever work?" And, "What do these methods tell us of our predecessors and the professional requirements under which they laboured?"

This first phase, that of research into the ancient methods, is the easier of the two. Its pursuit will pave the way for the second phase, the determination or development of a clear metaphysical and philosophical foundation for the art. This happens to a large degree as one studies the ancient and medieval authors and meditates on their *dicta* struggling to see the reasoning behind their methods. Exactly what I mean here will be seen in the body of this book where comments made on the statements of Bonatti or others set forth certain necessary assumptions in the minds of those authors, which upon reflection, are seen to contain metaphysical import.

Proceeding in this way, I believe, we come to the conclusion that there is, or more strictly speaking, was, an implied philosophical and metaphysical vision behind all ancient forms of the art which, while it seems to be quite closely connected to Vedantic, Gnostic, Kabbalistic, Neoplatonic, Zoroastrian, and Sufi doctrines is still at times in conflict with one or more of these. Hence it cannot be said to be dependent on any one of them alone. Nonetheless, it is also true that some familiarity with one or more of these systems is of great assistance in perceiving the astrological metaphysics and in rendering it credible.

The greatest difficulty I have found in this effort is that we in the twentieth century are so far removed, not only in time, but also in perception from the place and time in which these doctrines were commonplace that often, though we seek the rationale behind the *dicta* of the astrologers we frequently either do not recognise it when we do find it or, recognising, cannot accept it.

It is thus not uncommon to find a beginner in astrology asking **But how is it possible for Venus, so far out in space to affect me here on earth?** While even a serious Western student of astrology at an advanced level may state **How on earth can donating a white cow to a priest change the effects of my Natal Moon?** If we analyse these questions, we find that behind them is the fact that we cannot *see* the connection between the factors involved. Thus, the issue is reduced to one of intellectual perception. We cannot, today, so easily see the connection between these things because for the last 350 years our society has been increasingly conditioned to see only a mechanical connection between things.

Newtonian Physics, especially as expounded by Descartes required that all sense impressions be explained in terms of physical impingement. In those circumstances where no such physical cause could be measured (usually where any exception to the “rules of measurement” was defined out of the situation) the alleged experience was deprived of reality and said not to exist. Hence, even though a person of today may not know who Newton and Descartes were, so many theories of science, politics, economics, education and psychology are now based on these premises, that these ideas have, in one way or another crept (or rather been hammered) into all our minds so that the majority of us can no longer see things in any other way.

The complete study of astrology, therefore, consists of not merely digging up the writings of the ancients and assiduously studying them but in penetrating their inner meaning and rediscovering their perceptual mode. We must ultimately see the world as the ancients did if we are to understand their metaphysics. I do not mean to imply that we ought to do this to the exclusion of our modern perceptions. We are creatures of *our time* and *our place* and, it is my belief, based upon my understanding, of the ancient metaphysics, that this is significant. We belong here, but as we are attempting to bring forward these studies, we must make ourselves fitting vehicles for the task. This means being able to have good sight in both worlds. Ultimately, therefore this task is a practical one not merely a theoretical one.

At this point one might well ask whether or not too much emphasis is being placed on the Past. Certainly, it seems that the effort is entirely to reconnect with and study only the writings of the “older authors.” This is

not to say that the many excellent efforts of modern writers on astrology and modern astrologers themselves should be ignored. Their efforts are a monument to the relentlessly inquisitive mind of man and the fecund creativity of the Absolute. We can never afford to lose this. But what exists today in the astrological field is a lopsided situation biased toward modernism; in particular, computerisation.

The present status quo has been enforced upon the astrological world as part of the world at large by the priorities of our modern technological society. In this modern world little attention is given to the cultivation of the classical languages in which the ancient authors wrote because it is largely assumed that these languages contain nothing of use to the technological culture in which we live. Thus, progress dehumanises us once again by cutting us off from our past. There are so few astrologers today investigating the works of their predecessors simply because they cannot read them. In this they are hardly to be blamed as the entire thrust of their education, most of which they had little direct influence over (in the wider sense) took them away rather than toward these things. In this sense you may say that many of us have come to this situation through no choosing of our own.

The question of the underlying metaphysical basis of astrology is not merely of interest to astrologers. Astrology attempts to delineate character as well as to forecast events. To either of these matters the question can, and has been asked: **How do these things arise?** *It is important to remember that there is not a scientific world, a world of experience, and an astrological world, each clearly separated and distinct, except in thought.* Therefore, if astrology succeeds in answering the experiential question, “How did this event arise”? Then, it has only been able to do so by means of the laws of nature or shall we say by the laws of the manifestation of events.

An entirely different metaphysics underlies astrology than underlies our modern science and hence they answer the question differently. But while the metaphysics of science are openly discussed – albeit with differing opinions – the metaphysics of astrology have not been clearly expressed since the Renaissance. This is because that at that time the opinion of the prevailing scientists was that the claims of the astrologers were annulled and that astrology was a dead issue. Today, however, the very opinions of the seventeenth century scientists have themselves been overthrown.

Contemporary scientists have, in the course of their investigations, lost the clear border between matter and energy. At about the same time they began to have thrust upon them the close association of energy, consciousness and the reality of thought, mood, and “the irrational”.

Thus, they began to entertain doctrines so abstract and metaphysical (such as a kind of neo-Pythagoreanism) that the very pioneers of science would cringe were they now alive. It is in this context that we turn and look at the supposedly discredited philosophies of our forebears and find that, perhaps, they were not all wrong. Thus the gulf between science and astrology has narrowed in recent years and may narrow yet more. Logic tells us that the discovery of the astrological metaphysics is more relevant now than ever. However, we must take one step at a time. The second step will, as stated above, arise as a result of the first. It is with the first step that we must start.

The thrust of this work is therefore to continue along the path indicated by the subject of my first book, *The Lost Key to Prediction* (New York, 1980) which is the investigation and research of the ancient and medieval astrological methods. That book dealt with the Arabic Parts, a medieval doctrine, which up until now has been obscure. The Arabic Parts permit a considerably greater penetration into the natal figure. This current work before you will investigate specific ancient and medieval doctrines regarding the central issues of life which have up until now been only dimly spoken of more often due to ignorance than discretion.

These doctrines you are about to read of comprised a central part of the medieval astrologer's method chest. They are set forth with comments to help the reader. Examples are given where I have been able to find such, quoting the author that has provided them. However, my primary aim is to put in the public's hands and especially those of astrologers a clear picture of the methodology of the medieval astrologer, as much as possible in his own words. In this way, with many minds working on the material rather than the few, the worth of such methods can be more widely established. So too, can the answers to the other questions posed at the beginning of this preface be ascertained.

Robert Zoller  
New York  
June 1980

## Preface to Second Edition

At the dawn of a new millennium, I find myself writing this second preface to a book I wrote some twenty years ago. Ironically, it is a preface to an electronic edition (2001). There is something paradoxical about publishing an electronic edition of a work on Medieval Astrology, but probably no more paradoxical than publishing a work on that subject at all; especially a work intended to enable astrologers of the twenty-first century to more accurately delineate and predict.

Much has happened in those intervening years.

There has been an increase of interest in predictive astrology, both Indian and Western. Computerisation has made the mathematical dimension of astrology non-threatening to the public, thereby increasing public interest in the study of astrology. A United States astrological college, Kepler College, has received academic accreditation and an increasing number of academics regard astrology and related occult arts as fields worthy of historical and sociological research.

The human genome has been decoded and economic, communication and cultural globalisation are quickly being realised. Indeed, this electronic edition of *Tools and Techniques of the Medieval Astrologer* will be instantly available virtually anywhere in the world. This was something impossible those few decades ago.

For all this change, humanity remains much the same. On the one hand, at the writing of this preface, wars and terrorism still trouble vast areas of the globe, plagues old and new still take their toll, famine stalks much of the world, and death still rides his pale horse.

On the other hand, love still bewitches, beauty and art still captivate and ennoble, human excellence still rises from mediocrity, and improved conditions follow adversity. The greater portion of mankind still calls upon God's Mercy. The saying goes: "The more things change, the more they stay the same." Thus, the interests of the Medieval Astrologer are the interests of the Modern Predictive Astrologer. Both have sought to foresee and avoid adversity and to anticipate and cultivate the *Good*. This book is as relevant today as when it first brought to light practical techniques for achieving these goals.

My first book *Lost Key to Prediction* (subsequently re-dubbed by the publisher *The Arabic Parts in Astrology*) was narrow in its purview. It concerned itself with one of the many techniques of delineation and prediction, the so-called *Arabic Parts*. *Tools and Techniques* widened the scope to other medieval astrological methods. In 1980, it was ahead of its time and met with a less than enthusiastic response from publishers who were more interested in pop-astrology. Practising astrologers however, were quite receptive and, by breaking the book up into single topic lectures, I was soon able to build an active lecturing circuit. Fortunately, together with the practical application of the techniques described in this work I was able to do quite well as a professional astrologer.

Later in 1994, I created the Medieval Astrology Correspondence Course. That original course drew heavily upon *Tools and Techniques* (and other sources), which served as the course textbook. Then earlier this year I restructured that course dividing it into a [Foundation Course](#) for the beginner and a [Diploma Course](#) for the advanced student. Together, with the work presently before you, now revised and forming one of the distinct parts that the original *Tools and Techniques* has now been divided into, they present a much more complete exposition of practical Medieval Astrology than did *Lost Key to Prediction*.

In the preface to the first edition, I mention the need for more scholarship in astrology in order to establish the art on a more solid footing. I am glad to say that much has been achieved along these lines though with the caveat that a great deal more still needs to be done. Just as importantly, the time has also come for practice. A large quantity of material has been produced in the last twenty years, which must be applied and tested if the value in it is to be realised.

Many of the questions raised by students can be answered in the application of the techniques of practical horoscopy. I therefore urge astrologers to be practitioners more so than theoreticians. For in this regard the Truth in astrology is to be found in practice.

Robert Zoller  
14 December 2000  
New Paltz  
New York State  
United States of America

## Preface to Third Edition

Since the last edition, I have been engaged in further research and have reached a number of new insights, which reflect in this new edition. This has resulted in a general revision of the entire work and the substantial reworking of the material on the four *differentiae* and the use of house systems.

In particular, the Almuten tables, which play such an important role in the *differentiae* of birth, have been re-written and should be studied afresh. I have also phased out the use of the Placidus house system in favour of the Alchabitius Semi-arc house system. Of these two quadrant systems, it is now clear that the latter gives the greater accuracy for those following Medieval Predictive practise. However, the Alchabitius system should also be read in tandem with the Whole Sign Houses. This simultaneous consideration of both should be adopted as standard practise and I am certain it will become the norm in time. In doing so you will gain insights and an understanding of issues presented in a natal figure that are not immediately apparent when approaching it using only one system.

Robert Zoller  
1<sup>st</sup> August 2002  
West Vancouver  
British Columbia  
Canada

## Introduction

Astrology had re-entered Europe in the twelfth century as part of the “New Science.” This “New Science” consisted of texts previously known only in Arabic or Greek which European scholars eagerly translated into Latin thus making them accessible to Western mind for the first time since the end of the Roman Empire.

Much of this new body of learning consisted of astrological treatises by astrologers of the Moslem world written between 700 AD and the year 1200. Some were Arabic translations from the Hellenistic period. Before this time, these texts were only dimly known of in the West. This wave of new knowledge caused the number of astrologers, few at that time, to swell. These zealous students of the art commenced to collect the texts as they became available and practised the art in the form in which they received it.

This stage of astrological inquiry in the West took approximately one hundred years and by the beginning of the thirteenth century we see two new developments in the field.

**Firstly**, the popularisation of astrological practice as it moves down the social hierarchy. From an exclusive interest of esoteric and *avant garde* circles among the clergy and occult circles within the Jewish communities<sup>2</sup> to the common man and the middle class.

**Secondly**, the attempts on the part of some astrologers to collate the texts, now widely circulated in Latin manuscript, to synthesise them and establish which procedures, of the many found in the texts, were reliable. An excellent example of both of these developments is Guido Bonatti’s *Liber Astronomiae*.

Written sometime in the late thirteenth century, it is an encyclopaedic compendium of western astrological methodology based upon Latin translations of Arabic sources. For us the *Liber Astronomiae* comprises an invaluable window to the practice of the art in Europe shortly after its reintroduction reflecting both its Arabic origins<sup>3</sup> and an incipient European character.

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<sup>2</sup> For the dissemination of astrological doctrines among the European Jews dating from at least the first half of the twelfth century see *Jewish Astrology* at [www.new-library.com/zoller/features](http://www.new-library.com/zoller/features)

<sup>3</sup> see *Arabic Astrology* at [www.new-library.com/zoller/features](http://www.new-library.com/zoller/features)

When we wish to discover what the medieval astrologer actually did, we are in effect looking for a teacher. Often we may read of great feats of astrological prognostication and wisdom. Therefore, quite naturally we want to know how these astrologers came to their conclusions. **What methods did they use?** However, in the absence of first hand information all we can do is to wonder and all too frequently to doubt. If only we could find a medieval astrologer, somehow miraculously spirited away from that time and place and deposited in our presence, free to answer all our questions.

This is precisely what makes the *Liber Astronomiae* so valuable. In it, we get a view of the thinking of a medieval astrologer of the first rank. Bonatti was a professional astrologer. He worked for Frederick II Hohenstaufen, the Holy Roman Emperor and for Count Guido Montefeltro in his war against Pope Martin IV. In his capacity as court astrologer to Montefeltro, Bonatti served also as [military adviser](#).<sup>4</sup> His *Liber Astronomiae* was widely circulated and enjoyed great popularity. It was in the library of Pico della Mirandola as well as that of John Dee and influenced the work of Johann Schöner, the sixteenth century German astrologer, cartographer and associate of Melancthon.

Thorndike, in his *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol. II, p.826, called the *Liber Astronomiae* the “most important astrological work produced in Latin in the thirteenth century.” The popularity of Bonatti’s work is attested to by the fact that numerous manuscripts of it are still extant. Thorndike, on page 839 (*Ibid*) lists it twenty-three times in only a partial listing (alternately called the *Liber Astronomicus* or *Liber Astrologiae*). Testimony to its comprehensiveness is found in its immensity, being over 800 columns in the printed editions.

The *Liber Astronomiae* appeared in print in Latin first in 1491 at Augsburg. Radolt was the publisher (G.W. 4643). Other Latin editions being produced in Venice 1506, and Basel 1530 and 1550. The work in the publication before you is based on the 1550 Basel edition – *Guidonis Bonati Forliviensis Mathematici de Astronomia Tractatus X universum quod iudiciariam rationem nativitatum, aeris tempestatum attinet, comprehendentes. Adiectus est Cl. Ptolemaei liber Fructus, cum utilissimis Geogii Trapezuntii.* (15) p.1 848+62 columns.

It was translated into Italian, a manuscript of which is in the Laurentian Library at Florence and into German at Basel in 1592. Thus far, only parts of the work have appeared in English. The *146 Considerations*<sup>5</sup> or *Tractatus Quintus* were translated by Henry Coley and edited by William

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<sup>4</sup> see *Bonatti on War* at [www.new-library.com/zoller/books](http://www.new-library.com/zoller/books)

<sup>5</sup> see [www.new-library.com/zoller/books](http://www.new-library.com/zoller/books)

Lilly in 1675 (later being re-published in by W C Eldon Sergeant in 1886 with a modern edition released by New Library, London in 2000) and I have translated several of Bonatti's treatise including *Bonatti on the Arabic Parts*, *Bonatti on War*, *The First Tractatus of Bonatti* and *The Second Tractatus of Bonatti* as well as several other sections which have been incorporated into the *Diploma Course in Medieval Astrology* and its accompanying articles [See also the *Advanced papers*].<sup>6</sup>

Bonatti was referred to by the chroniclers of his day<sup>7</sup> and was influential enough for Dante to place him in the Eighth Circle of the Inferno in his *Divine Comedy*. When Pico railed against the astrologers in his *Disputatio Contra Astrologiam Divinatricem* it was primarily Bonatti he had in mind. Bonatti's work became a major source of astrological theory and practice in the Middle Ages.

In the *Liber Astronomiae* Bonatti's opinions are valuable to us as they document the standard opinions of the various sources he draws upon. Frequently, he differs from these but for the most part, he dutifully records the opinions of his predecessors. His major source is *Abu Ma'shar*<sup>8</sup> perhaps the most famous and influential astrologer of all time. In all, forty-five sources are named at the beginning of his work, some of which will be found in the current work before you. Using *Liber Astronomiae* as a reference point, I have expanded from it to other works of notable medieval astrologers in an attempt to get a wider view of the medieval practice of the art. Valuable as the *Liber Astronomiae* is, it remains only one astrologer's efforts to master the art. Comparison with the practice of other leading astrologers is useful and so I have introduced the opinions and writings of other astrologers where the subject seemed to warrant it.

Many doctrines, unheard of since the seventeenth century will be explained in this work and in other articles, books and translations found at [www.new-library.com/zoller](http://www.new-library.com/zoller). Should these doctrines be followed in practice they will go a long way to explaining why at times what seems to be astute and considered astrological opinion turns out to be inaccurate and why some enterprises begun under apparently favourable configurations either never materialise or fail when they should succeed.

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<sup>6</sup> see [www.new-library.com/zoller/books](http://www.new-library.com/zoller/books) & [www.new-library.com/zoller/advanced](http://www.new-library.com/zoller/advanced)

<sup>7</sup> For instance by Salimbene in his *Cronica* and the annalist of Forli quoted in Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, revised edition. Fasc. 20, 1903, p.10

<sup>8</sup> see *Abu Ma'shar: Prince of Astrologers* at [www.new-library.com/zoller/features](http://www.new-library.com/zoller/features)

## Section I Prenatal Concerns

### On Generating or Conceiving Children

In an age when primogeniture was the rule and the political stability of the realm depended upon the monarch's successfully fathering a strong and able son to whom the reins of power would be transferred, no effort was spared to ensure that there would be an heir and, if at all possible, a male.

Hence it was that astrologers were called upon to predict from the natal figure of the king, whether his progeny would be male or female; and whether or not a particular intercourse would result in a male or female child or none at all.

The second of these considerations comes under the heading of Horary Astrology unless it had already been determined that chance would not be permitted any role whatever. In this case, the astrologer would be called in to the nuptials to select the most auspicious time for the generation of a child. This is Electional Astrology, the name being taken from the Latin verb, *eligo* or *electo*, - to choose, or from the noun form, *electio*, *electionis*, choice or option.

In what follows we have the thirteenth century astrologer, Guido Bonatti's instructions for such an election. Bonatti presents his own opinions and those of some of the outstanding astrologers of the past who had addressed the matter. He specifically mentions two well-known astrologers of the Arab world, Haly<sup>2</sup> and Zael<sup>3</sup> and one Achaiat (probably Abu `Ali al-Khayyat, c.770-835), before giving his own opinion.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Ali b. Ridwan b. 'Ali b. Ga`far Abu Hassan, (998-1061).

<sup>3</sup> Abu`Utman Sahl ibn Bi\_r ibn Habib al-Israili. One of the most important astrologers of the 9th century.

The following refers us to what is generally known as the *Trutine of Hermes*. It is a method of determining the length of pregnancy and involves, as we shall see, the exchanging of the positions of the Moon and Ascendant in the natal and "conception" figures.

The *Trutine of Hermes* {also known as the *Trituna Hermetis*} is attributed to Hermes Trismegistus and forms the 51<sup>st</sup> aphorism from the *Centiloquim* (attributed to Ptolemy but now generally considered to have been written in the tenth century by the Arabic astrologer Ja'far Ahmet ibn Yusuf ibn Ibrahim al-daya). For more detail see below.

### ***Trutine of Hermes on the Causation of the Length of Pregnancy***

Extract from Bonatti, *Liber Astronomiae Tractatus Decimus*, chapter 6, cols 670-671

“The periods of pregnancy are caused by the dispositions of the super celestial bodies according to their three principle diversities, which are the greater, the middle, and the lesser. To these, certain other means are subordinated. “

“For if we see the Moon in the superior part of its own epicycle, going from the east to the west at the time of the coitus or in the horary figure made after the conception <sup>21</sup>, it signifies that the period of the infant in the mother's womb is the greater {period} which consists of 283 days {measured} from the hour of coitus to the time of birth. “

“However, if you discover her {i.e. the Moon} in the lower part of {her} epicycle going from the west to the east it signifies that the period was the middle one which consists of 273 days and this if the Moon is distant in the question from the degree - in which it was at the time of coitus or from the degree which was then ascending by only 90 degrees. “

“If however it is distant more or less, it signifies that the circular motions will not be perfect and then the period was some other mean between the greater and the lesser.”

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<sup>21</sup> *in hora casus seminis in matrice vel in hora quaestionis factae post conceptionis.*

influential people. Amongst these being John Dee and Pico della Mirandola but to name two. We also know that Bonatti influenced Johann Schöner, the cartographer, astrologer, and associate of Melancthon in Germany.

Moreover, the *Liber Astronomiae* is not our only source for this doctrine. Not by a long shot. We find it in Vettius Valens<sup>32</sup> and in Albiruni's *Elements of the Art of Astrology*<sup>33</sup> showing that aside from Bonatti's Arabic sources there were yet other sources in the Moslem and Byzantine worlds for this doctrine. Albiruni wrote in the eleventh century AD. Vettius was known in the original Greek to the Byzantines and in Arabic to the Moslems.

Closer to home, however, we find that prior to the destruction of the Palatine Library in 1620 by the Austrian Army in the Thirty Years War there were at least two manuscripts dealing with this subject. Jesuits accompanied the Austrians and most of the Bibliotheca Palatina was taken as spoil to Rome. Some of the books, however, managed to find their way to Austria.

I have a copy of a manuscript by Dominicus Maria de Novarra from the National Bibliotek, Vienna bearing a stamp that indicates that it was once in the Bibliotheca Palatina.<sup>34</sup> That it deals with this subject is noteworthy as its author was a student of Marsilio Ficino, the great Florentine Platonist and adviser to the Medicis; and this same Dominicus Maria de Novarra is reputed to have been an associate of Copernicus.

This manuscript gives yet another system of attributions of periods to the angles of the figures: 258 when the Moon is exactly ascending, 273 when exactly descending, and 288 when immediately under the degree of the Descendent.

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, trans. Ramsey Wright London 1934 Luzac & Co.

<sup>34</sup> *National Bibliothek Handschriften* 5503 ff 196r-199v.

While the question of whether or not the doctrine in fact does what it was intended to do is not yet answered. It is certain that it was part of the stock in trade of the medieval and ancient astrologer and that considerable time and effort was expended in preserving, and, we must assume applying it through out the centuries prior to the modern period.

As an example of the interest of the European nobility in astrology, and in this particular doctrine, I submit the following text written by Andalo di Negro in the fourteenth century. Thorndike, in his *History of Magic and Experimental Science* devotes more than half of Chapter XII of Vol. III (pp 191-204) to Andalo.

He tells us that Andalo was of a noble House and served as ambassador from Genoa to Alexius Comnenus, Emperor of Trebizond (Empire bordering the Black Sea, north-east of Constantinople). He was a highly respected man both as an astrologer and as a political figure. He wrote an introduction to judicial astrology and four titles on the relation of the stars to human generation, one of which is translated for the first time into English below.<sup>35</sup>

Boccaccio praised Andalo in his work on classical mythology in the most glowing of Terms, as follows:

“Often I have mentioned the generous and venerable old man, Andalo di Negro of Genoa, once my teacher in the movements of the stars. And you have known, Oh best of kings (Hugh IV of Cyprus 1324 -1359) how great was his circumspection, how grave his deportment, how vast his knowledge of the stars. Not only by the rules of the ancients did he know the movements of the stars, as we have many a time made proof, but, since he had traversed nearly the whole world, and had profited by experience under every clime and every horizon, he knew as an eye witness what we learn from hearsay.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The other three are: *Ratio Diversitatis Partus* (*The Reason of the Diversity of Births*), *Liber Iudiciorum Infirmorum* (*The Book of Judgements of the Infirm*), and *Canones Modernorum Astrologorum de Infirmatibus* (*Canons of the Modern Astrologers Regarding the Infirm*).

<sup>36</sup> As quoted by Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol III, Chapter XII, p 195.

Here then, is another example of the astrologer in high places, greatly respected, the adviser of kings, doing - in this case writing - marvellous things. The text of Andalo's piece on the 51<sup>st</sup> aphorism of the *Centiloquium* is given below for the reader's comparison with Bonatti's treatment of the same material, as above. However as mention has been made of the *Centiloquium* and the 51<sup>st</sup> thereof, it is fitting that I first tell you something of that work.

The *Centiloquium* is, as the name implies, a collection of astrological aphorisms, 100 in number, covering many areas of astrological practice and theory. The work was also known as the *Liber Fructus* or *Book of Fruit* and was generally attributed to Ptolemy, the author of the *Tetrabiblos*. Some historians of science now consider, however, that the work was really the product of a tenth century Arab astrologer. Whoever was the author of the text, it has proved to be a very handy series of reminders to professional astrologers even to this day.

The 51<sup>st</sup> aphorism reads:

“Make the Sign occupied by the Moon at the time of birth the ascending Sign at the conception; and consider that in which she may be posited at the conception, or the opposite one, as the Sign ascending at birth.”

It is also proper to add here, that this rule, which is trickier than it appears, has been used more frequently for purposes of rectification of the birth time than for determination of the birth time, itself, at least in the modern period. The reason for this is apparent when one considers that, if the rule is valid it should work equally well forward in time as backward in time.

Having stated the 51<sup>st</sup> aphorism now we will consider Andalo on the matter.

*Tractate on the Infusion of Sperm: On the 51st Dictum of the Centiloquium*<sup>37</sup>. According to Lord Andalo di Negro of Genoa

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<sup>37</sup> The text is *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana* 4085 f 28r-v. It was translated and edited by Lynn Thorndike and published in *Isis* 47, 1956 pp 395-397 as part of an article titled "Notes upon Some Medieval Latin Astronomical Manuscripts at the Vatican."

## Section II

### The Length of Life

#### On the Four *Differentiae* of Nativities and How They Ought to Be Looked to in Order

This matter is central to Natal Astrology and is of greatest seriousness. Unfortunately, it is rarely dealt with in modern works on the genethliology. For the medieval and ancient astrologer it was of central importance to be able to determine under which configurations death or, worse, deformation and monstrous births, would result. To ignore this aspect of the art would have been considered criminal in as much as the welfare of the client, his wife, and perhaps the realm depended upon the successful and safe bearing of offspring.

Again it was considered absolutely necessary to know, given a birth, whether the child would survive or not and if so for how long. To pass judgement on a figure and to announce an auspicious future for one who would die a month afterwards was considered to be an indication of professional incompetence which, oftener than not in royal cases, earned the practitioner death.

Rules such as those given below were intended to address this issue and we must assume that considerable time and effort was expended in order to make sure that they were the best that could be framed. They are submitted here for investigation with no claims being made to their reliability {but read further below}. They will stand or fail on their own merit and though in what follows I will at times give some examples and make comments thereon I do this for the purposes of encouraging investigation rather than affirming dogmatically my endorsement of the rules.

In the following section, taken from Bonatti's *Liber Astronomiae, Tractatus Decimus, De Nativitatibus*, we see that the first thing the astrologer did when analysing a figure was to determine which of four *differentiae* or cases it fell into.

The first includes stillbirths, abortions and those who do not live long enough to be nourished. It includes a discussion of the astrological signatures of monstrous births. The statements made herein were not to be taken symbolically or analogously. They were meant literally. In our society today, most of us are spared this side of procreation. Though difficulties such as monstrous births still occur, no one except the nurse-midwife and the attending physician is usually aware of the fact. In Bonatti's day, birth was often or exclusively at home. Under such conditions, it was impossible to hide the matter and there was a whole system of divination, which centred on such births and the things they were considered to portend.

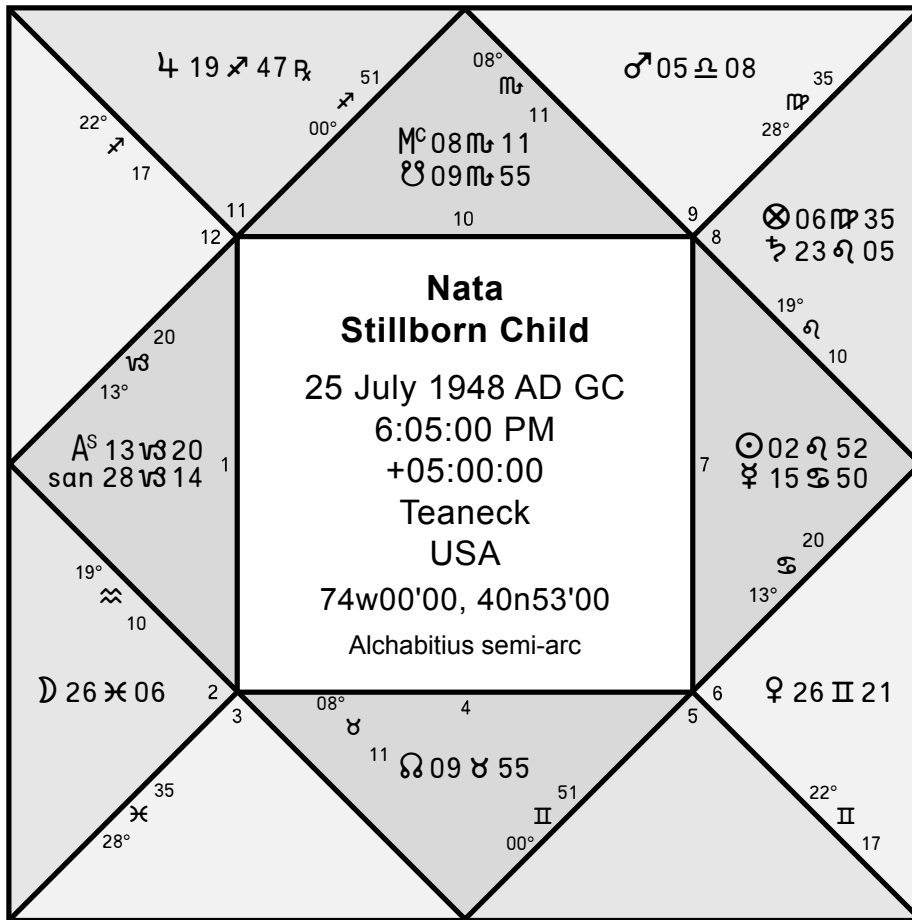
Furthermore, the astrologer himself was frequently the physician and thus had more than enough experience with the matter. Finally the conditions of life under which the people lived, the lack of proper attention to hygiene and proper prenatal care all tended then, as now in the underdeveloped nations, to wreak havoc on pregnancy, birth, and longevity. Under such circumstances, no doubt the unfortunate side of birth was too common.

The second *differentia* deals with those cases in which the native, though physically normal, nevertheless did not live long after birth due to inherent weakness or disease.

The third *differentia* deals with those cases, in which the native takes nourishment, living, therefore long enough to be fed but may be expected to die in infancy. This *differentia* would include what we today call "crib death."

The fourth *differentia* deals with those who survive infancy and who will live to an indeterminate age. These are the subject of the method used to determine the length of life.

The model used by the astrologers in arranging their material is clearly Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, Book III, chapters 9 and 10 in Ashmand's edition. However, the authors who Bonatti quotes have opinions differing from Ptolemy on these matters and modify this arrangement somewhat.



**Figure 1**  
Stillborn Child

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**Note:** “san” is an abbreviation for *syzygy ante nativitatem*, and refers to the closest conjunction (New Moon) or prevention (Full Moon) prior to birth.

## Examples of Application of the First *Differentia* Rule

### First Example : Stillborn Child

Female child. Born at Teaneck, New Jersey, USA. July 25, 1948, at 6:05 EST. Placidus Houses. [Figure I – ref: Appendix One](#)

#### Table For Figure I : Stillborn Child

List of the Important Points According to Bonatti's Application of the First *Differentia* incorporating the method ascribed to Aboali

| Important Point  | Degree | Term Ruler * |
|--|--------|--------------|
| Ascendant  | 13° CP | Jupiter      |
| Ruler of Ascendant - <i>Saturn</i>                                 | 23° LE | Venus        |
| Rulers of the Triplicity of the Ascendant (Earth)                  |        |              |
| <i>Venus</i>   | 26° GE | Saturn       |
| <i>Moon</i>  | 26° PI | Saturn       |
| <i>Mars</i>  | 05° LI | Saturn       |
| Seventh House  | 13° CN | Jupiter      |
| Ruler of Seventh House - <i>Moon</i>                               | 26° PI | Saturn       |
| Fourth House   | 08° TA | Mercury      |
| Ruler of Fourth House - <i>Venus</i>                               | 26° GE | Saturn       |
| Tenth House  | 08° SC | Venus        |
| Ruler of Tenth House - <i>Mars</i>                                 | 05° LI | Saturn       |
| Sun  | 02° LE | Jupiter      |
| Ruler of Sun - <i>Sun</i>  | 02° LE | Jupiter      |
| Moon   | 26° PI | Saturn       |
| Ruler of Moon - <i>Jupiter</i>                                     | 19° SG | Mercury      |
| Prevention (Full Moon before Birth) at 29° CN is ruled by the Moon | 26° PI | Saturn       |
| Part of Fortune  | 06° VI | Mercury      |
| Ruler of the Part of Fortune - <i>Mercury</i>                      | 15° CN | Mercury      |
| Jupiter as benefic   | 19° SG | Mercury      |
| Venus as benefic   | 26° GE | Saturn       |
| Jupiter as diurnal planet  | 19° SG | Mercury      |
| Saturn as diurnal planet   | 23° LE | Venus        |

\* For Ruler of the Terms see Appendix Two: Table V

**Table Showing Assignment of Points for Figure I**

| Degree        | Sun       | Moon      | Mercury   | Venus     | Mars      | Jupiter   | Saturn    |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 13 CP         |           | 3         |           | 3         | 4,3 1     | 2         | 5         |
| 23 LE         | 5,3       |           |           | 2         | 1         | 3         | 3         |
| 26 GE         | 1         |           | 5,3       |           |           | 3         | 3,2       |
| 26 PI         |           | 3         |           | 4,3       | 3,1       | 5         | 2         |
| 5 LI          |           | 1         | 3         | 5         |           | 3         | 3,4,2     |
| 13 CN         |           | 5,3       | 1,2       | 3         | 3         | 4         |           |
| 26 PI         |           | 3         |           | 4,3       | 3,1       | 5         | 2         |
| 8 TA          |           | 4,3       | 2,1       | 5,3       | 3         |           |           |
| 26 GE         | 1         |           | 5,3       |           |           | 3         | 3,2       |
| 8 SC          |           | 3         |           | 3,2       | 5,3,1     |           |           |
| 5 LI          |           | 1         | 3         | 5         |           | 3         | 4,3,2     |
| 2 LE          | 5,3       |           |           |           |           | 3,2       | 3,1       |
| 2 LE          | 5,3       |           |           |           |           | 3,2       | 3,1       |
| 26 PI         |           | 3         |           | 4,3       | 3,1       | 5         | 2         |
| 19 SG         | 3         | 1         |           |           |           | 5,3       | 3,2       |
| 26 PI         |           | 3         |           | 4,3       | 3,1       | 5         | 2         |
| 6 VI          | 1         | 3         | 5,4,2     | 3         | 3         |           |           |
| 15 CN         |           | 5,3       | 2,1       | 3         | 3         | 4         |           |
| 19 SG         | 3         | 1         |           |           |           | 5,3       | 3,2       |
| 26 GE         | 1         |           | 5,3       |           |           | 3         | 3,2       |
| 19 SG         | 3         | 1         |           |           |           | 5,3       | 3,2       |
| 23 LE         | 5,3       |           |           | 2         | 1         | 3         | 3         |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>45</b> | <b>49</b> | <b>50</b> | <b>67</b> | <b>47</b> | <b>85</b> | <b>75</b> |

In relation to the above two tables and Figure I note the following with care: Jupiter is cadent by Whole Sign Houses. Of the Triplicity Rulers of the Ascendant (Venus, Moon and Mars) two out of three planets are cadent by Whole Sign Houses. The Sun is determined to the 8<sup>th</sup> House and in 8<sup>th</sup> Sign from the Ascendant. The Triplicity Rulers of the Sun (Sun, Jupiter and Saturn) give no strength to the Chart - as the Sun is ruler of the House of death, while Saturn (and the Sun again) are in the 8<sup>th</sup> Sign from the Ascendant. Jupiter being cadent and retrograde. The chart speaks of death rather than life.

## The Hyleg and Alcocoden

### On the Hyleg

The doctrine of the Hyleg is found in Book III. 10 of the *Tetrabiblos* where Ptolemy discusses his system of Prorogation, which, as was pointed out earlier, is simply a system of primary directions, used to determine the length of life. The Hyleg is the "giver of life", that is the planet which sustains the physical life of the native and which figures continually in all incidents of serious illness. Ptolemy calls it the *Anaereta*. Ptolemy's system of Prorogations entails the identification of the *Anaereta* (Hyleg), the killing point or *Apheta*, and taking the distance between them in the appropriate circle.

It may seem strange, that, such a role would be given to a planet, in as much as the Ascendant, which represents the physical body, is generally acknowledged to be the important point in matters of health. However, the ancient metaphysics held that the body was merely a shell unable of itself to cause anything: purely a passive object in which dwelt the vital soul, itself, the sheath of the rational soul.

Hence, health happened to the body because of harmony in the higher bodies or souls but especially of the vital soul. This vital soul, or *pranamayakosha* in Sanskrit; *nephesh* in Hebrew; *anima* (as opposed to *animus*, the rational soul) in Latin was a "celestial" or subtle factor and hence, in astrology it had to be represented by the sky and the dwellers in the sky, the planets.

Those planets, which were most properly associated with such a role as the preservation of life, were the luminaries and thus it is that the metaphysical astrologers sought to assign this role to them. Inherent in this view is the recognition that the health of the lower body depends upon the health of the higher vehicles, which is to say that superiors rule inferiors. Since, the superior vital or instinctual, appetitive body is closely associated with and ultimately formed by the rational body (*manomayakosha* in Sanskrit; *ruach* in Hebrew, *animus* in Latin) and since this mind is the seat of our opinions and thinking, we may phrase the understanding of the chain of causality in regard to health (which before we referred to as superiors rule inferiors) in moral Terms - as the sages frequently did - by saying, that by leading a moral life one enjoyed health and well being.

Conversely, deviation from the Law would result in disease, misery, strife and death for the individual; war, famine, pestilence, and death for nations. For according to this metaphysics a moral life is the outward expression of justice and harmony in the soul, i.e., harmony between a man's opinions, his appetites, and God's Word which is Law for the Creation.

This Law, *Veda* for the Indians, *Torah* for the Jews, finds manifestation in the cosmological scheme and so the planets and luminaries become the instruments of the Law. At this point astrology, theology and metaphysics merge into one holy science the practical application of which is, in part, in the science of medicine; one facet of which is the ability to determine whether or not the patient will survive, and if so how long. The traditional physician, therefore, combining his medical knowledge with astrological knowledge sought to answer this question not only of a patient, but also of any individual whatever, based on his natal figure.

Galen openly affirmed the importance of astrological considerations in his treatises on medicine. The Arabs and Jews of the Middle Ages, basing their medical practice on Galen's teachings developed the reputation for being the most advanced and competent physicians of the day. As astrological considerations played a central role in much of their practice, it was necessarily included in medical training just as, conversely, much medical knowledge found its way into astrological texts.

The two arts of medicine and astrology, while not always united, nevertheless were so closely interwoven that many of the best astrologers were physicians and many of the best physicians were astrologers. Finally, due to the metaphysical principles underlying the practice of both medicine and astrology, we see the two closely linked to moral philosophy and theology. It was, therefore not at all unusual for one to receive a sermon with one's treatment as these physicians, armed with the psychological insights of astrology and the spiritual guidance of their traditions intended to treat both the symptom and the cause of the patient's misery.<sup>65</sup> In this genre the doctrine of the Hyleg would play an important role for in this way the times of serious illness would be known as well as the times at which the native's life would be endangered.

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<sup>65</sup> A perfect example of the wedding of spiritual advice with medical practice in the Islamic tradition of the Middle Ages is *The Spiritual Phvsick of Rhazes* trans. A.J. Arberry. John Murray, London, 1950.

## On Caput Draconis and Its Cauda

“Alkindi said that when *Caput draconis* {Dragon’s Head} was with the Alcocoden (within 12 degrees before or 12 degrees after) that he diminishes a fourth part of his years. But I have not experienced this. But I do remember that this is true concerning the tail. And it is more harmful when it is with the Moon than when with any of the other significators.”

“Otherwise the years of the native are varied and are given by the power of the nativity of the native's own offspring who shall survive, just as the years are varied by the revolutions after the nativities. (Concerning this more is said in Bonatti’s chapter on the father - On the fourth House - the English translation of which is yet to be released.)”

In closing this section I will direct attention to Bonatti's discussion of the relation of *Caput draconis* (head of the Dragon) and *Cauda draconis* (tail of the Dragon) to the diminishing of the years of the Alcocoden. He relates that it was Alkindi's opinion that when the Alcocoden was with the *Caput* that he diminishes a fourth part of his years. Bonatti says that he has not witnessed this but has witnessed that such was the effect of the *Cauda*.

I have myself noticed that the tail of the Dragon is malefic. All texts from India seem to make the head more malefic than the tail. This would imply that somewhere along the line an error was made in the transcription of the glyph of *Caput* for *Cauda*. This would have had to occur before Bonatti, therefore before 1282, which is the last date he mentions in the *Liber Astronomiae*. It would appear that a revision would be in order as there is both textual and experiential evidence that the Western interpretation of the Nodes is mistaken. In practice it would mean that the current flowing along the axis of the Nodes actually goes from *Cauda* to *Caput* and that *Cauda*, (presently called the South Node) is malefic while *Caput* (presently called North Node in the West) is benefic.

In the foregoing as we have explored the legacy of some of these learned and skilled people, whether Arabic, Jewish, Indian or indeed categorized as Medieval or Renaissance European. (There are of-course others we have not looked at such as those in China or Asia and other parts of the world). In so doing it has been demonstrated that metaphysical principles are not only discoverable but are the natural preserve of the astrologer. Without this bedrock upon which to build there is no astrology and so it is incumbent on those of us today who seek to be as skilled and as competent as our forbears to understand that not only *can* we discover metaphysical principles but that we *must*.

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