



Tools & Techniques of the Medieval Astrologer

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

Robert Zoller.

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Book One

**Prenatal Concerns and the
Calculation of the Length of Life**

Robert Zoller

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*Book Three : Horary and Electional Astrology
and an Astrological Miscellany*

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Special Note For Astrologers

This work is further expanded in the [Advanced Medieval Astrology papers](#). It is recommended that those seeking to gain a more thorough understanding of the practical application of these matters should refer, in the first instance, to those publications.

Please bear in mind that without doing so a proper understanding of this work may not be achieved. In particular, it should be noted that recourse cannot be made to techniques used in the psychological or other non-predictive schools of astrology.

The techniques presented in this work are firmly rooted in the Western predictive astrological tradition (some 2000 years old) and should not be confused with recent hybrids or pseudo-astrology that has developed in the West in the last 100 years or so.

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.¹ 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 important, 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

¹ see www.new-library.com/zoller/courses. Also see [Advanced Astrology papers](#)

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
1st 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 communities² 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 origins³ and an incipient European character.

² 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

³ see *Arabic Astrology* at 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](#).⁴ 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*⁵ or *Tractatus Quintus* were translated by Henry Coley and edited by William

⁴ see *Bonatti on War* at www.new-library.com/zoller/books

⁵ see 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*].⁶

Bonatti was referred to by the chroniclers of his day⁷ 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*⁸ 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. 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.

⁶ see www.new-library.com/zoller/books & www.new-library.com/zoller/advanced

⁷ 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

⁸ see *Abu Ma'shar: Prince of Astrologers* at 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 Astrology⁹ 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, Haly¹⁰ and Zael¹¹ and one Achaiat (probably Abu `Ali al-Khayyat, c.770-835), before giving his own opinion.

On the Generating or Conceiving of Sons or Daughters

Extract from Bonatti, *Liber Astronomiae Tractatus Tertius* col. 445

“Zael said, “When you desire to elect the hour of coupling¹² with your wife so that you may generate a male child, let the Ascendant, its lord, the Moon and the lord of the house of children be in masculine signs,

⁹ for more on this branch of astrology see www.horary-astrology.com

¹⁰ `Ali b. Ridwan b. `Ali b. Ga`far Abu Hassan, (998-1061).

¹¹ Abu`Utman Sahl ibn Bišr ibn Habib al-Israili. One of the most important astrologers of the 9th century.

¹² *conjugendi*

or in a masculine part of the circle¹³ which is the dexter part in the hour of the conjunction,¹⁴ and do not place a planet in the Ascendant in the same hour, nor in the sign of children unless it is masculine.”

“And if you desire that [the child] be feminine, let those significators be in the feminine part of the circle which is the left. And if you are not able to do this, and these significators are diverse, namely that some of them are in masculine signs and some in feminine signs, let the lord of the hour participate with the planet which receives the disposition of the Moon, and judge from those which may have the most testimonies in masculine signs or feminine and the conception will be according to this.”

“But Hali had more to say concerning this than Zael.¹⁵ Indeed he said as follows, “It is fitting in this election that the sign rising may be masculine, and of direct¹⁶ ascension; that the angles may be fixed and not remote;¹⁷ that the lord of the Ascendant may be in the Ascendant or in the *Medium Coeli* or in the 11th, and that the planet which will have previously come to the rising degree by its own motion may be a benefic.”

“And he said. “It has been noted by means of those things, which have been said before that both the luminaries ought to be employed¹⁸ for things like this, and above all it is necessary that the lord of time be employed.¹⁹ Let none of the malefics be in an angle but the benefics [should be] strong and free.” And he said, “it is also appropriate that we attend to the lord of the Ascendant and that we take heed lest the lord of the Ascendant be a planet which is impeded in the ninth month. For, indeed we see that the birth frequently occurs in that month. Likewise, it is especially praiseworthy if this were also guarded against in the seventh and tenth month, [because] sometimes the birth will occur in these months. And the lord of the Ascendant ought to be in those places, fortunate and free, and the luminaries too.”

“And we ought to beware if the lord of the sixth or the eighth is malefic, that it is not commixed with any significator in any way.”

¹³ Compare Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, Book I, chapter VI, Masculine and Feminine.

¹⁴ “*hora conjunctionis*” – This phrase literally “in the hour of the conjunction” means “in the figure of the heavens erected for the time of the conjunction.”

¹⁵ There follows a lengthy report on Hali’s opinion – which includes the opinion of other Arabic writers.

¹⁶ *directae ascensionis*

¹⁷ I do not know what is intended by this term. Ducange gives *Remotus*, *Immotus*, *sine motu*. That is, “not moving,” which might mean fixed, but this is speculative.

¹⁸ *aptanda*, *aptare* – to be fit, suitable, appropriate, accommodated to.

¹⁹ See previous note.

“And all those things ought to be universally avoided which are referred to in the books of nativities as unworthy. And those which are approved in those works with the basis of the election.²⁰”

“Achaiat agreed with what we said to be best, namely, that the Moon may be in the Ascendant in the trine of the Sun. Moreover he said, ‘Beware of the *Via combusta*, and let us apply²¹ Venus.’ Indeed, if Venus were impeded, the “*aliara*”, that is the woman or the matrix²² is corrupted. But if the Moon [is impeded], the semen is corrupted.”

“Adapt²³ also the fifth house and its lord. Indeed they favour the odd hours, that is in the first, third, fifth etc. But if it happens that the Ascendant and the Moon are in Libra, which is a rational sign, it will be good, provided that its ruler be free from affliction. For then Cancer will be on the *Medium Coeli* which is a sign of many sons, and [if] the rest of the significators are in masculine signs, [the wife] will be impregnated and will conceive a masculine child.”

“And we may apply our work in the things which pertain to it, that is, we will judge that the “*aliara*” or the matrix of the wife is not deformed or medically infirm in any way.²⁴ The significators of the circle perfect the subjected mater according to that which they are able to perceive. This is Haly’s word on generation and corruption, but it is very hard to precisely apply all these things in this way, and as they²⁵ reported. Nonetheless we pass on to you the dicta of the philosophers.”

“In my opinion this seems to me [to be the way to proceed]. Make²⁶ the Moon rising and its lord in the conjunction of the man with the woman, and place Jupiter in the degree of the tenth house, if you are able to do so. Because this signifies that the woman conceives in the first coitus which is made at that time unless she were a virgin and therefore not able to conceive in the first union.”

“However she is able to conceive in the second and if you are not able to place Jupiter in the degree of the tenth house, place him in the tenth or the eleventh in such a degree that he aspects the Ascendant exactly to the degree: or place him in the fifth so that he aspects the Ascendant

²⁰ The idea seems to be that since we are electing a time for coitus from which a nativity results, we ought to consider what is good for Nativities as well as what pertains to elections and to join the principles of the two in this matter. Hence we ought to avoid things, which cause unworthy characteristics and use those factors, which at once contribute to good and harmonize with the principles of election.

²¹ *aptare*

²² the womb.

²³ See two notes previous.

²⁴ In other words, let the womb be medically sound, or, let then there not be anything wrong with the womb.

²⁵ The forenamed writers.

²⁶ *aptare*

or the Moon or the lord of the fifth with a laudable aspect; or place the lord of the first and the Moon in the fifth, or one of them, so that it may be above the line of the fifth house by two degrees, or between 3 to 15 degrees under it.²⁷”

“These signify that the woman will conceive at that time. If the greater part of the significators are masculine and in masculine places, it signifies a masculine child, and if in feminine places, a female child. And if there are as many significators masculine as feminine, they are able to signify either, namely one or many male children or as many feminine children or an hermaphrodite.”

On the Causation of the Length of Pregnancy

Introduction

This section has gone under several appellations. Sometimes referred to as *De Mora Infantis in Utero Matris* (On the Period of the Infant in the Mother’s Belly). Sometimes as the Conception. What is of importance for us is to realise that in the astrological texts that treat of conception, such as the one before us here, it is actually coitus (the act of sexual intercourse) that is referred to.

The medieval, still less the ancient astrologer/physician, was unable to determine when the actual conception occurred. The ability of our modern physicians to do this had to await the more sophisticated medical procedures of the twentieth century. Thus, the references in Ptolemy and other places to the Conception Figure or to the moment of conception are references to the moment of insemination or coitus.

It would seem that the ancients, not knowing about true conception²⁸ assumed that the actual fertilisation took place at the time of insemination. When we consider today that the fertilisation can occur days afterwards in some instances, it is difficult to credit such astrological *dicta*.

Nevertheless, this matter played an important role in the medieval as well as we assume the ancient astrologer’s practice.

²⁷ *ita quod sit duobus gradibus supra lineam quintae domus, vel ad plus tribus, vel 15 gradibus sub ea ad plus.*

²⁸ Indeed their ideas regarding the nature of semen and the actual process of fertilization are at times bizarrely different from ours and clearly wrong from the physical point of view as may be seen, for instance, by reference to the works of Paracelsus on this subject.

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 51st 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,²⁹ 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.”

“And if the Moon was in the degree of the Ascendant at coitus, then it signifies that the period was the lesser [one] which consists of 258 days. But if it were above the earth, distant from the eastern or western [degree]³⁰ more than the 5°, the period of pregnancy will be some mean between the middle and the lesser. But if the Moon was exactly³¹ in opposition of the degree of the Ascendant at the time of coitus you are able to err by one month.”

²⁹ *in hora casus seminis in matrice vel in hora quaestionis factae post conceptionis.*

³⁰ i.e. the cusp of the ascendant as the 7th house.

³¹ *recte*

“Whence Hally (also known as Haly – see above) said that in order to avoid this error you ought to take the degree which was between the western degree and the degree of the Moon and to double these and to divide by 24 and as much as results will be the days and as much as remains less than 24 will be hours.³² Because the Moon completes one degree in two equal hours according to its mean motion.³³ Therefore add those days and hours, to [the days and] the hours of the lesser period of pregnancy and whatever the sum is will be the sought for period of pregnancy. Then you will subtract this period from the days of the birth and you will have what you desire.³⁴”

“But if it was bisextus (a leap year) add then 5 hours and 59 minutes and with that which results in the tables,³⁵ and equate the Moon, for the degree [of the Moon] will then be the ascending; because that degree was ascending at the time of coitus.³⁶”

“But if the Moon was under the earth going³⁷ from the east to the west, take that which was between the degree of the Ascendant and the Moon in degrees, minutes, seconds and divide by 24 as has been said and add it to the middle period subtracting whatever that sum is from the days and hours of the nativity and with that which remains go into the tables³⁸ and equate the Moon to that hour and according to the place in which you then find her, you will find the Ascendant of the time of coitus as has been said above.”

³² *duplicare ipsos et dividere per 24 et quot exierunt erunt dies et quot remanserint infra; 24 erunt horae.*

³³ *Secundum medium cursum.*

³⁴ That is, once you have determined the period of pregnancy you subtract this from the date of birth – or count backwards from the day of birth to find the day and time of coitus.

³⁵ I take these tables to be the planetary positions tables.

³⁶ In other words add the 5 hours and 59 minutes to the period of pregnancy. This gives you the day of coitus by counting backwards from the birth. The time of the coitus is found by making the degree of the Moon in the figure the ascendant.

³⁷ *tendens*

³⁸ *vide supra*

The above quoted passage demonstrates that while today huge amounts of money are spent on genetic research and although we tend to think of this as a purely modern phenomenon it is by no means so. In fact, the desire to unlock the secrets of procreation has been with man for a long time. The section quoted above was penned sometime in the late thirteenth century and rested upon material that was much older.³⁹ The ancient and medieval astrologer was expected to be able to arrange things so that a child of the required sex was born and moreover, if we are to believe the texts, that he or she was to be born at the proper time.

Now this amounts to a kind of astrological genetic counselling and if the texts embody an accurate and reliable method of accomplishing such things we would truly be in the presence of the marvellous. The question is however, whether such techniques in fact worked. As usual, as we turn to one astrologer or another the texts vary, sometimes only slightly, sometimes greatly. Only further research along practical lines can determine whether the doctrine has merit. The prime concern here is to expose it and thereby to permit further inquiry.

As an astrologer, I cannot say that the method works. I simply have not had sufficient experience against which to pass judgement on the matter. At the same time, one cannot avoid speculation in this regard.

If our forebears did in fact have a means of astrologically determining auspicious births they would have in fact been a long way ahead of us in medical technology since such a method would have been entirely without noxious side effects which are always present to some degree when the body is interfered with through the use of hormones, drugs, and surgery. The method would have been entirely natural involving only the determination of the proper time for coitus.

On the other hand, such a method, practised by the astrologer for a noble or wealthy client would never have been commercially available to the common people. It would have been exclusively available to the

³⁹ An excellent discussion of what is probably the oldest extant exposition of this doctrine is to be found in William Sucher's *Mercury Star Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, Midsummer 1976, pp. 43-45. Sucher produces an English translation of the original Greek of Vettius Valens' *Anthologiarum Libri*, I, 23-24, edited by Wilhelm Kroll, Berlin 1908, pp. 50-54. Valens' presentation is a good deal clearer than Bonatti's and differs from it in its attribution of the mean period to the Ascendant, the Eastern Horizon rather than to the *Imum Coeli* as Bonatti does. Sucher accepts Ptolemy as the author of the *Centiloquium* but perhaps he was unaware that this attribution is now called into question. Thus while the *Tetrabiblos*, undeniably Ptolemy's, was produced just before Valens' *Anthologiarum Libri* which covers the years 154 A.D - 174 A.D. as the former work does not give any examples of this doctrine, nor even address it, it would seem that Valens' work is the oldest extant expression of the doctrine we know of.

aristocracy. However, it is just this group, the wealthy, privileged class of Europe and the Middle East who were responsible for making the great decisions affecting all of society.

If such a method were able to be shown to have been widely used and effective it would necessitate a rewriting of the history of Europe, Asia and the Middle East, for if these premises proved to be true, a significant number of the scions of powerful and prestigious houses, princes, popes, bankers, military personages, perhaps even philosophers and theologians could have been produced by these means. Under such circumstances, our ideas of how things happened would have to be reconsidered.

Such speculation should not be dismissed too lightly. For we know that the *Liber Astronomiae*, from which the above quote comes, was an extraordinarily widely distributed and influential book. It is to be found in the libraries of many well placed, famous and highly 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 Valens⁴⁰ and in Albiruni's *Elements of the Art of Astrology*⁴¹ 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 Biblioteca 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 Biblioteca Palatina.⁴² 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.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, trans. Ramsey Wright London 1934 Luzac & Co.

⁴² *National Bibliothek Handschriften* 5503 ff 196r-199v.

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.

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 throughout 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.⁴³

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.”⁴⁴

Here then, is another example of the astrologer in high places, greatly respected, the adviser of kings, doing – in this case writing – marvellous

⁴³ 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)*.

⁴⁴ As quoted by Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol III, Chapter XII, p 195.

things. The text of Andalo's piece on the 51st 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 51st 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 51st 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 51st aphorism now we will consider Andalo on the matter.

*Tractate on the Infusion of Sperm: On the 51st Dictum of the Centiloquium.*⁴⁵ According to Lord Andalo di Negro of Genoa:

“Hester, Ptolemy and Hermes said that the place or degree of the sign in which the Moon is at the time of the infusion of sperm is the ascending degree in the nativity and that the degree which is ascending in the infusion of the sperm, in the said degree of that sign the Moon will be at the time of birth.”

“Indeed, Ptolemy and Hermes said that when the Moon, at the time of the infusion of sperm is in the Ascendant, then the period of the native in his mother's womb is the space of 273 days and this is called the

⁴⁵ 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.”

mean [or middle] period. Then when the circles of the revolutions of the Moon have been completed namely that in that sign and degree in which the Moon and Ascendant were at the infusion of sperm, in the like sign and degree it will be in the nativity.”

“But if the Moon in the infusion of sperm will be on the western horizon below the earth, the period will be greater than the mean by 15 days, that is, the days will be 288. And, when it is discovered in the conception of the sperm far from the western horizon proceeding toward the eastern horizon then the period [of pregnancy] is diminished by 2 hours for one degree. And, when it is discovered in a conception, elongated by 12 degrees, then the period is 287 days. And thus, it proceeds by subtracting one day for every 12 degrees, which it is elongated, [or separated] from the west, until it is discovered in the eastern horizon. There the period [of pregnancy] is 273 days which is the mean period.”

“In a similar way when the Moon is discovered above the earth at the time of conception proceeding towards the west, it proceeds by diminishing the period from the mean [of 273 days] by one day for every 12 degrees which the Moon is found elongated from the eastern horizon all the way until it comes to the western horizon above the earth. And then the period [of pregnancy] is 258 days which is the lesser period and then the difference from the lesser period to the greater is 30 days, that is, when the Moon is discovered above the earth in the west, the period is 258 days and when it is discovered under the earth it is 288 days.”

“Hester Catayus had some difference from Ptolemy and Hermes. He, indeed, posited that the Mean period was from ten revolutions of the Moon, that is, from the departure from one degree all the way until it returns to the same degree. However, if in one revolution, which happens to be completed in 27 days, 7 hours, and almost 21 minutes, we multiply by 10 – 273 days, 1 hour and 30 minutes results. He said that this was the mean period. Indeed, he said that the greater period exceeded the mean by one half of one revolution, which is 13 days, 15 hours, 40 minutes, 30 seconds. And, just as the greater period exceeded the mean by the quantity, by the same quantity the mean exceeds the lesser period.”

“But Ptolemy and Hermes said that the greater period exceeded the mean by 15 days. This is the reason why Hester said that between the mean period and the greater or lesser these are 13 days, 15 hours, 40 minutes and 30 seconds. Because if in the conception the Moon was on the western horizon where it is the greater and the lesser period it is necessary that it be in opposition to the Ascendant.”

“Therefore, it is manifest that the mean revolution is between the Ascendant and the mean. And because the mean revolution consists of 13 days, 15 hours, 40 minutes and 30 seconds, therefore he said that such was the difference between the mean period and the greater and lesser. Indeed, Hester said that the mean period was the right, complete and perfect period, however the greater period was an excess from the mean and not perfect, but the minor period was diminished from the mean and not perfect.”

“And he said that although one revolution consisted of 27 days, 7 hours, and almost 21 minutes, he said this according to mean motion because according to true motion it is more and less and therefore it is necessary that the period may be greater sometimes and sometimes lesser than the mean and as a result the period is greater or lesser.”

“Indeed, they said that the planets which rule from the conception all the way to the nativity, that is, each planet [rules] one solar month which consists of 30 days, 10 hours and almost 30 minutes, according to mean motion but according to true [motion] sometimes more and sometimes less. And they said that Saturn ruled in the first month, Jupiter in the second, Mars in the third, the Sun in the fourth, Venus in the fifth, Mercury in the sixth, the Moon in the seventh. In the eighth the dominion returned to Saturn and the ninth, Jupiter ruled, then the mean period was completed and what was left over from the mean period to the greater Mars ruled.”

“Hester said that in every conception, the Hyleg, and Alcocodeus Actazir⁴⁶ are necessary just as in Nativities there may be as many Alcocodeus as you like. However, the Moon in the conception is the principle Alcocodeus since she is the giver of the period of gestation as is said above, and with her is the Alcocodeus. According to the discovery of the Alcocodeus as it is discovered in nativities and if the Moon is well placed⁴⁷ then the above-mentioned periods are precise, just as when some planet is the Alcocodeus, it changes the period as is said in the chapter of the period the Alcocodeus.”

⁴⁶ Sic. I do not know what this word refers to.

⁴⁷ in good zodiacal condition.

Section II

The Four *Differentiae* & the Length of Life

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

This matter is central to Natal Astrology and is of greatest seriousness. Unfortunately, it is not dealt with in modern works on genethliology. When astrology is deemed entertainment, serious matters are trivialized or, as in this case, entirely abandoned. 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 not live to fulfill such predictions was considered to be an indication of professional incompetence which, more often 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 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.

The material on monstrous births does not comprise a separate chapter as it does in the *Tetrabiblos*. It is combined with the most basic first *differentia*. This is part of a typically medieval categorization modeled on Aristotle. The medieval teacher of astrology will take us through every aspect of the issue in rigorously logical steps. In fact, in dealing with astrological precepts as confusing (initially) as these, it is actually superior to the arrangement of the corresponding material in Ptolemy. To get the most out of the following section, however, it would be wise for the reader to compare it step by step with the above-cited section of *Tetrabiblos*.

Extract from Bonatti, *Liber Astronomiae* (vide supra), *Tractatus Decimus*, col. 672 – *De Nativitatibus*.

“How, the four *differentia* of Nativities ought to be looked to in order.”

“The first of these will be that of abortions, those born dead or half-dead or who do not live long enough to be nourished.”

“The second [*differentia*] is of those who take nourishment, but in whom life does not last long enough that any sensible utility results.”

“The third [*differentia*] is of those [natives] who take nourishment and live for a month or for years but do not extend past the years of infancy⁴⁸ and if he does survive them still he will not attain to long life.”

“The fourth [*differentia*] is of some of those who take nourishment and life lasts in them until they attain to maturity⁴⁹ and sometimes they attain to old age. And to this [*differentia*] is subordinated the instances of those who attain to very great length of life⁵⁰ and die from old age – although this happens to few.”

Bonatti states that his uncle died in this way suddenly without any apparent cause at 120 years of age. He then proceeds to enumerate the method of delineation in these four *differentia* as follows:

On the First *Differentia*

“Look to the degree of the Ascendant of any nativity you wish and its ruler. Also, the rulers of the triplicity of the degree of the Ascendant, and the other angles and the rulers of their degrees and the luminaries and their rulers.”

“Indeed Aboali (Abu Ali al-Khayyat c.770-835) said that you look to the lord of the triplicity of the Sun, likewise Jupiter, Venus, and the planets diurnal and nocturnal, according as the nativity was diurnal or nocturnal. Look also to the *Part of Fortune* and its lord, similarly the lord of the conjunction or prevention which was before the nativity.”

“Then you will look to the planet which was stronger than the others in the aforesaid places or in some of them and you will see whether there may be one such planet only, or two, or three: and, if it were one only and it were cadent from the Ascendant or only from the angles and any of the malefics were with it impeding it in the same degree, or there were an impeded degree rising, i.e. that any of the malefics may be

⁴⁸ *non transcendunt annos pueritiae* – *pueritia* is youth, childhood, boyhood – but it means infancy here for as we will see Bonatti is referring to the first 3 or 4 years of life.

⁴⁹ *ad iuventutem* – *lit.* youth but is confused with *iuvenis*. A fourfold division is based on the division of the circle into four quadrants. The circle being the entire period of life and each quadrant symbolizing a period in it.

⁵⁰ *decrepitus*

placed in it without any dignity there, or aspect it with a square aspect or an opposition, it signifies that the native will die before he takes any nourishment.”

“You may say likewise if the degrees in which the luminaries are posited are impeded. But Ptolemy seems to have believed something different than the other wise men, although not contrary to their opinion. It was seen by him that when both the luminary whose authority it was⁵¹ and the degree of the Ascendant is impeded and the rulers of the degrees in which the luminaries are receded from the angles, the native will not taste anything until he dies.”

“And he said that the time of death will be when the luminaries arrive at a malefic [place]. However, the other ancients said that when all three of the rulers of triplicity recede from angles; and the luminaries recede; and their rulers; and the [place of the] conjunction or prevention and its ruler, then the native will not taste any food until he dies.”

“[Furthermore, in this case] the native will either not be human or will be one of those who is born with some parts [placed] with others, unnatural signs, such as those who have more members than they ought, or who lack them, or have them transposed. I have seen many such, some of whom lacked arms, some hands, some feet, legs. Some had their knee joints reversed, some lacked eyes: and I saw once one who had three arms and another who had his hip and leg in the place where the arm should be, and another who did not have an anus. And there was a certain fool – a lay surgeon – who desired to make one for him, and he was such a fool that he perforated him below with a knife and so killed him.”

“Similarly there was in my time a certain monster [born] which from the stomach up was two humans and from there down only one, and one that had one head, and below that two bodies.⁵² The native will be either one of those who is born with some brute, as sometimes occurs, as with apes or cats, or the like, or [when] a woman gives birth to a monstrous thing or the native may himself be a brute animal. But if it were thus, and the aforesaid significators [are] all cadent, as has been said, and any of the malefics should impede the ruler of the Ascendant, or the Moon, or Almutem,⁵³ or should afflict the aforesaid places⁵⁴ or

⁵¹ The Sun by day and the Moon by night.

⁵² We are still considering the same astrological configurations.

⁵³ *et aliquis malorum impederit dominum Ascendantis, an aut Luna, vel Almutem super locis praedictis ...*

⁵⁴ *Almutem* – an Arabic term for ruler. Often used loosely, as in Almutem of the Ascendant for ruler of the Ascendant, it can also be used in a specific sense as the ruler of a house or of the entire Chart. It is used in this latter sense later on in this book in the section on the Almutem. Here I think Bonatti is using it for Almutem as he mentions this term once and then switches to Almutem. In general usage unless otherwise qualified through-out all of my works including the courses, use the following distinction: read *Almutem* to be the Almutem of the houses and *Almutem* to be the Almutem of the chart.

the malefic itself be Almutem he will be a fierce animal of the forest not wanting to be associated with others and especially not with men, like a wolf or the like.”

“But if both benefics and malefic planets preside, and especially if Mercury has any dignity in these places he will be one of those which associates with men, as Homer says, such as dogs and similar creatures. My mother, a woman who seemed honest enough told me that in her time a certain woman gave birth to a cat.”

On the Second *Differentia*

“The second *differentia* or *diffinitio*, is so that you look at the rising degree and the other angles and their rulers; the degrees of the luminaries and their rulers, and the rulers of their triplicities, according as to whether the nativity is diurnal or nocturnal, the rulers of the triplicity of the degree of the Ascendant, the *Part of Fortune*, and the conjunction or prevention which preceded the birth, and the rulers of the triplicity in which Jupiter and Venus fall and see the planet which is stronger in these places with the greatest number of dignities.”

“This planet is called the Almudebit. See if it is cadent from the angles, and if any of the malefics rule them, and if there was any longitude between the Almutem and a malefic; it signifies that the native will take some nourishment and that he will live until the Almutem reaches the malefic or the malefic reaches the Almutem corporally or by aspects. As soon as this occurs exactly by degree then it signifies that the native will die after so many days, months, or years.⁵⁵ If the malefic were impeded in an angle, and in a fixed sign, the years will be according to the quantity of degrees of distance which were between the Almutem and the malefic.”

“However, if it were in a succedent house and in a common sign, they will be months. But if in a cadent house and in a mobile sign, days. But if it were in an angle and in a common sign it reduces a sixth part of those years. But if it were in a succedent house and in a mobile sign, it reduces a fourth part of those months. And if it was in the cadent house and in a mobile sign, it lessens a third part of those days. But if a benefic were in an evil place and were in a cadent house in a common sign, it prolongs the days by a sixth part. But if it were in a cadent house and in a fixed sign it prolongs them by a fourth part. If in a cadent house and in a mobile sign it prolongs them by a third part.”

“You may say likewise regarding the degree of the Ascendant, also regarding the degree in which the Moon was then placed, if it is joined to a malefic. And if all those or many of them fall in angles, the native will taste food but will not be nourished.”

“However, if any of the lords of the triplicity of the Ascendant are on the cusp of the Ascendant, the 10th, the 11th or the 5th; or Jupiter or Venus

⁵⁵ *gradu per gradum*

are there, and free from impediments and from the malefics, it signifies nutriment but it has [still] not been determined whether [the life] will be long or short unless according to other testimonies which signify nutrition.⁵⁶”

“And if the aforesaid significators are impeded, look to the lords of the triplicity of the *Part of Fortune* and judge according to their *esse* [condition] and whether⁵⁷ the Sun aspects the part.⁵⁸ You will say likewise regarding the lords of the triplicity of the conjunction or prevention. You are even able to say similarly if the Moon is obsessed⁵⁹ by two malefics, one of which maybe in the 1st and the other in the 7th because in this case the native’s life will be brief.”

When These Things Occur

“In order to know the time and the hour when these things will occur, the degree of the Ascendant ought to be directed to the body of the impeding malefic, to its square aspect or to its opposition, giving a day, month, or year to a degree.”

“After this consider the profections,⁶⁰ giving to every 30 degrees one year according to equal degrees,⁶¹ a month to each two degrees and 30 minutes, and a day to every 5 minutes and an hour to almost every 12 seconds⁶² and when the number is finished then the native will die.”

“And Aomar (‘Umar ibn al-Farrukhan al-Tabari, fl.c. 800) said ‘Look to the benefics and see if at the time of birth they are in the angles or in the places of the best of their dignities or the planet which is more worthy in the degree of the Ascendant or *Part of Fortune*, because this planet signifies, according to the quality of its fortitude⁶³ and debility, that the life of the native lasts so many years, months or days according to the quantity of the donations of that planet’s minor years.’”

“And he said ‘perhaps they would be days as Dorotheus thought. When [all] the lords of the triplicity of the Ascendant, namely, the first, second and third, are cadent⁶⁴ it signifies that the native will not be nourished especially if Saturn in nocturnal Nativities is angular or Mars in diurnal.

⁵⁶ Reading significant for *significat*

⁵⁷ *secundum quod*

⁵⁸ by a major aspect. The minor aspects were unknown, or at least, unused in the Middle Ages.

⁵⁹ obsessed = besieged

⁶⁰ For a fuller discussion see the [Foundation course](#) and the [Advanced papers](#).

⁶¹ i.e. to each degree of longitude in the ecliptic without use of dispositors.

⁶² *et omnibus ferb 12 secundis horam*

⁶³ I take this term to include dignity by zodiacal condition as well as quantitatively i.e. angular, succedent, or cadent and local determination.

⁶⁴ *cum ceciderint domini triplicitatis Ascendantis, primus scilicet, et secundus atque tertius, significat quod natus non nutrietur.*

The hour of death of such a native will be when the profection of years of one comes to the angles of the other, because although the malefic was in the angle (i.e. the first of 7th), when the year comes to any of the angles it arrives at the light of the square aspect of the malefic, and if the native did not die in the first year, then he will at this time.^{65/}”

“And he said, `and it is held in the *Book of Similitudes* (a hermetic text only found in manuscript – presently untranslated) that if there were two Almutem and one of them is impeded the native will die and the other Almutem will not suffice to save him. Similarly if there are three Almutems and one of them is impeded, although the other two may be strong, that the native will survive but his life will not be prolonged.⁶⁶”

“Even if there are four Almutems and one of them was impeded, or two and the others are helpful, the child will last somewhat longer but his life will not be prolonged. If, however, three are impeded although one was strong the native will not live unless a strong benefic aspects the significator of his nativity and even more so if the Moon is impeded and not received. However, if it is [impeded] and received it signifies the prolongation of life with respect of its brevity.⁶⁷”

On the Third *Differentia*

“The third *differentia* or *diffinitio* is that of the native who has no Hyleg or Alcocoden (the Hyleg and the Alcocoden are discussed below) in his nativity, but the ruler of the Ascendant and the luminaries and the rulers of the houses in which they are free from the aforesaid impediments, namely retrogradation, combustion and corporal conjunction with the malefics, and with the rulers of the houses in which the malefics are, even if they are cadent from the angles or from the Ascendant, or they are impeded in the angles, it signifies the period of the native in the world and his nutrition, but does not prolong his life.”

“It hardly ever, or never happens that [his life] is prolonged more than 12 years, but he dies before this – according to the quantity of degrees which are between the ruler of the Ascendant and the angle from which they are cadent.⁶⁸”

⁶⁵ *Et erit hora mortis illius quando profectio alicuius alterius anni pervenerit ad angulos, quia malus cum fuerit in angulo, quando veniet annus ad aliquem angulorum, quod sit ibi lumen quarti aspectus mali, et si non fuerit natus ille mortuus in primo anno, tunc agit quod suum est.* We see here the doctrine of the casting of rays.

⁶⁶ The idea seems to be that either 1) In such a case one would think that the native would survive but nevertheless he will die, or 2) while he survives the immediate affliction, he does not live long there after.

⁶⁷ I do not know what this can mean unless that the native will have a longer short life, whatever that means.

⁶⁸ *a quo ceciderint*

“And Tiberiadis (Omar of Tiberias) said `although the nativity is according to what we said we should defer speaking about such a nativity until the Ascendant completes one circle,⁶⁹ namely of 12 years [giving] to each sign one year, and this on account of the condition of the signifiers.⁷⁰”

“And he said that `as often as the orb measurement of the Ascendant arrives at the bodies of the malefics or the square aspect or the opposition of any of them, there will be fear concerning the native until the Ascendant completes one circle.”

“And he said `and when it will have completed one circle we will direct for him from the Ascendant giving to each degree one year by the ascensions of the region in which the birth occurs the way until the malefics are reached as was said in another *differentia*.”

On the Fourth *Differentia*

“The fourth *differentia* or *diffinitio* is that the native may have a Hyleg and an Alcocoden and the aforesaid signifiers which are free [from impediment] i.e. the degree of the Ascendant and its lord, and the lord of the triplicity of the degree of the Ascendant and of the other angles and their lords and Jupiter or Venus and the lords of the houses in which they are and the planets diurnal and nocturnal, and the Part of Fortune and its lord and similarly the lord of the conjunction or prevention which was before the nativity and the planet which is Almutem in these places.”

Commentary on the Above Four *Differentiae*

This subject is difficult to properly research. The pain of the parents is such that it is difficult to find a way to broach the subject of the astrologer's need for birth data for infants who were short lived or stillborn without offending the parents, causing them to relive their loss, giving the appearance of callousness or worse. In my professional experience, I have occasionally come across pregnancies which ended in stillbirths. I have not seen a great number of these. I can think of one recent example where the birth time is not available (the child died in the mother's womb a month before term). I have seen a few more examples. It is very hard to get reliable data and even more difficult to interview the mother in order to get details of the pregnancy. For this reason, I have only one example of a stillborn child to offer for the first *differentia* and only one example of an infant (who would not nurse and would in all likelihood have died had not the parents access to modern medical facilities) for the second *differentia*.

⁶⁹ *donec perveniat ascendens ad unum orbem* – he refers to protection as will be seen by what follows.

⁷⁰ i.e. their cadent position.

When considering the *differentia* the student should keep in mind that the majority of his clients are likely to be fourth *differentia* figures. Naturally there are no shortage of fourth *differentia* figures and for obvious reasons they are emphasized here. Important research can be done on the first three *differentia* and ought to be. In presenting the first three *differentia*, I am primarily trying to bring forward the full medieval method of predicting the native's longevity. I deem it important to demonstrate that our predecessors attended to this question in considerable detail. In modern practice the first three *differentia* are a specialist interest and of particular importance for medical astrology.

Examination of the First *Differentia*

Let us examine the rule given for the first *differentia*. At first glance it seems, and is, confusing and problematical. The directions given are difficult to follow and it is apparent that we have more than one astrologer's opinion, thereby causing us to wonder who to follow. The number of positions we are asked to consider also grows very quickly to the point where we seem to be at a lottery rather than looking at a Natal Figure.

The confusion stems from the fact that Bonatti has, as usual, sought to include the opinion of every astrologer of note. The attempt is for completeness but the effect is confusing. Furthermore, the methodology is a bit new to many modern astrologers.

Emphasis is placed not only on the sign and its ruler but also on the rulers of the triplicity of the sign in question. Thus, in questions regarding health, life, and other first house considerations, Bonatti's Arabic sources require that not only the Ascendant and its ruler be considered but also the rulers of the triplicity of the Ascendant as supporting causes. This was a favourite feature of the Arabic astrologers. We see it in all their works. Masha'allah, the Egyptian-Jewish astrologer exhibits it in his *Astrological History*.⁷¹ We find it also in Albumasar's works and just about every Arabic source that Bonatti quotes advocates its use. This system was challenged during the Renaissance and Morinus in his *Astrologia Gallica* (*vide infra*) is somewhat disparaging of it. It had, however, been the rule of the day up to that time among astrologers basing their work on the traditional system.

In the following example I will attempt an application of the rule for the first *differentia* to unravel Bonatti's thinking and separate his opinion

⁷¹ See the *Astrological History of Masha'allah*, E.S. Kennedy and David Pingree Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1971

from the additional material he gives. Let us begin by noting that it is universally Bonatti's practice to have the first or the last word. On those few occasions where he breaks this rule he identifies the opinion as his own. He is at times rambling and may mix his opinions with the opinions of others but the above pattern is largely consistent.

Now with regard to the first *differentia* we are reading Bonatti's opinion at the beginning of the section because the end of the section (before he gets into a recitation of what he has seen) is clearly not his. He identifies that opinion as that of "the other ancients."

If we turn to the beginning of the section we find no such appellation until we get to Aboali's opinion. Therefore, the first lines of the section are Bonatti's.

I feel, as usual, that Bonatti's opinion, being the opinion of a practising astrologer and, in a sense, the only person in the book whose opinion we get first hand and based on experience (Bonatti's opinion of the ancients, while valuable, gives their opinions to us second hand) should be our starting point. After all, he had studied the opinions of the ancients and had to an extraordinary degree incorporated them into his practice. When he quotes another opinion it may indicate either that he is unsure of his own ideas or that he reveres the authority of the author he cites. It does not necessarily mean that he wants us to blindly include that opinion in our immediate practice, just to give it some consideration.

Special Note on House Systems

The medieval methods of delineation frequently involve calculation of Almutens, i.e. the strongest planet in a number of positions – the one that gets the most "honours" or "virtues." The examples that follow will give a general outline of this.

Different results obtain according to the house system used. This is because the intermediary houses (those house cusps other than the angles) vary from system to system. In delineating the longevity of the native I incorporate the Whole Sign Houses and the Alchabitius semi-arc house system.

We need a house system contemporary with these methods and rules that we are exploring and testing. For years I used Placidus exclusively. More recently I have changed to Alchabitius, a house system attested to in medieval practice (refer to the charts of Cardanus in the Appendix to *Considerations and Aphorisms*,⁷² London 2000).

⁷² www.new-library.com/zoller/books

The important point is that whether using Alchabitius or any other quadrant house system, you should also examine the natal chart using the Whole Sign Houses. This is because many of the delineation techniques herein presented predate the Quadrant House systems of which Alchabitius and Placidus are but two examples.

This leads to another fundamental understanding, which must be fully appreciated before success will be found as an astrologer. While it is important to be methodical in the application of the rules given by Bonatti and others it is equally important not to fall into the trap of being overly mechanical. The rules are guidelines rather than strict invariables. This is what makes astrology an Art. For greater detail of this subject please see [Astrology and Wisdom](#).⁷³

There is evidence that the ancient astrology, that is, the Babylonian and perhaps, pre-Babylonian astrology was entirely soul oriented and hence made little or no use of houses (earth). Indian astrology may represent a stage in the development of astrology from this sky based astrology to a system like that of the western astrologer which is sky acting on earth. We make considerable use of the houses whereas the signs suffice for the Vedic astrologer. That Bonatti employs the houses in preference to the purely sky-based approach of Aboali may indicate that Bonatti's work represents a stage where the European astrology was breaking away from the Middle Eastern but had not yet entirely done so. Thus, with the extracts from Bonatti, Aboali's opinion is given as worthy of consideration and careful study.

Comparison and Contrast of *Differentia* 1, 2 and 3

Differentia 1 and 2 are very similar. What distinguishes them is the conditions surrounding the Almuten and Alumdebit, not the tables, which are very similar. In the first *differentia* the Almuten is afflicted. In the second *differentia* the Almudebit is cadent and not immediately afflicted but near to a malefic. In the third *differentia*, the cadent position of the important points listed in the table is what is significant. In all three cases there is no Hyleg.

⁷³ www.new-library.com/zoller/features

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 pm EST. Alchabitius Houses. (see **Figure 1**)

Special Note! The correct setting up of the Almuten Tables is the key to the successful outcome of this technique. These tables require close attention and slow work. You cannot race through this. As it is, you will have to be careful not to make mistakes. If you are hasty you will quickly fall into error. Attend carefully to what you are doing here.

Bonatti begins by suggesting that we find the planet that has the most honours (i.e. points) in the position of the Ascendant, its ruler, the triplicity rulers of the Ascendant, the other angles, their rulers and the luminaries and their rulers. He observes that Aboali substitutes the rulers of the triplicity of the Sun for the rulers of the triplicity of the Ascendant. We are also instructed to include the positions of Jupiter and Venus and the diurnal or nocturnal planets, as the chart is diurnal or nocturnal. We are also told to look at the *Part of Fortune* and its lord and the lord of the conjunction or prevention prior to birth (*syzygy ante nativitatem*). (see **Figure 1A**)

The allotment of points to the planets is as follows:

- 5 points to the ruler by Sign
- 4 points to the ruler by Exaltation
- 3 points to the Triplicity rulers (Dorotheus')
- 2 points to the Term ruler (Ptolemy's)⁷⁴
- 1 point to the Decan ruler.

NB: refer to **Appendix Two: Tables I, III, IV, V & VII** to determine the above rulers.

Figure 1B *Table Showing Assignment of Points* shows the calculations based upon the zodiacal positions identified in **Figure 1A**. Jupiter gets the most honours or points (104) and is therefore “stronger than the others in the aforesaid places,” (i.e. the Almuten we seek). The correct use of the honours and how to calculate them is more fully discussed in the **Foundation** and the **Advanced papers**.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ The Ptolemaic terms used in this work are those from the Robbin's translation of the *Tetrabiblos*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 107. Robbins' carefully cross referenced the table of terms he used with those of several different MSS of Ptolemy's work. In doing so he avoided the discrepancies that appear in other English translations such as those executed by Ashmand.

⁷⁵ see www.new-library.com/zoller/courses & www.new-library.com/zoller/advanced

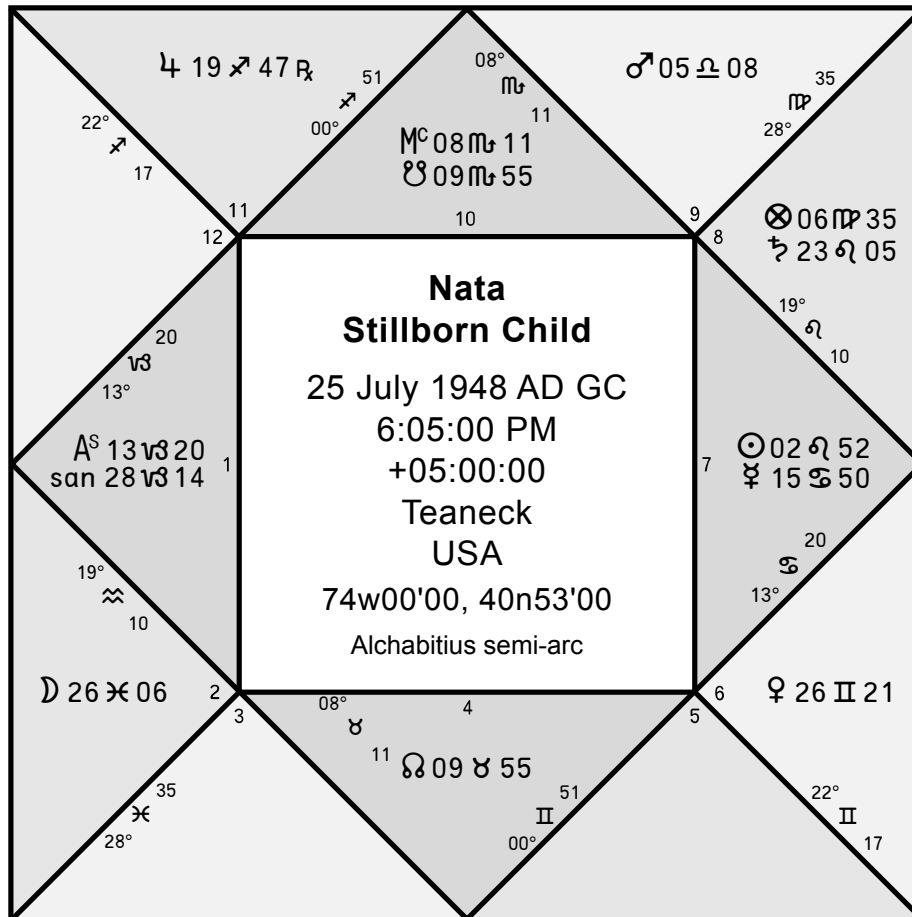


Figure 1
Stillborn Child

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

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° ⅴ	♄	
Ruler of Ascendant – ♃	23° Ⅰ	♀	
Rulers of the Triplicity of the Ascendant (Earth)	♀	26° Ⅱ	♃
	♃	26° Ⅳ	♃
	♂	05° Ⅴ	♃
Seventh House	13° Ⅴ	♃	
Ruler of the Seventh House – ♃	26° Ⅳ	♃	
Fourth House	08° Ⅳ	♃	
Ruler of Fourth House – ♀	26° Ⅱ	♃	
Tenth House	08° Ⅴ	♀	
Ruler of the Tenth House – ♂	05° Ⅴ	♃	
Sun	02° Ⅰ	♄	
Ruler of Sun – ☉	02° Ⅰ	♄	
Moon	26° Ⅳ	♃	
Ruler of Moon – ♄	19° Ⅳ	♃	
Rulers of the Triplicity of the Sun (Fire)	☉	02° Ⅰ	♄
	♄	19° Ⅳ	♃
	♃	23° Ⅰ	♀
Prevention (Full Moon before birth) at 28° ⅴ is ruled by the ♃	23° Ⅰ	♀	
Part of Fortune	06° Ⅴ	♃	
Ruler of the Part of Fortune – ♃	15° Ⅴ	♃	
Jupiter as benefic	19° Ⅳ	♃	
Venus as benefic	26° Ⅱ	♃	
Sun as a diurnal planet	02° Ⅰ	♄	
Jupiter as diurnal planet	19° Ⅳ	♃	
Saturn as diurnal planet	23° Ⅰ	♀	

Figure 1A
Stillborn Child

* For ruler of the terms see **Appendix: Table V**

Table Showing Assignment of Points

DEGREE	☉	☽	♃	♄	♅	♆	♇
13° 13		3		3	4,3,1	2	5
23° 01	5,3			2	1	3	3
26° 11	1		5,3			3	3,2
26° 08		3		4,3	3,1	5	2
05° 01		1	3	5		3	4,3,2
13° 08		5,3	2,1	3	3	4	
26° 08		3		4,3	3,1	5	2
08° 08		4,3	2,1	5,3	3		
26° 11	1		5,3			3	3,2
08° 08		3		3,2	5,3,1		
05° 01		1	3	5		3	4,3,2
02° 01	5,3					3,2	3,1
02° 01	5,3					3,2	3,1
26° 08		3		4,3	3,1	5	2
19° 08	3	1				5,3	3,2
02° 01	5,3					3,2	3,1
19° 08	3	1				5,3	3,2
23° 01	5,3			2	1	3	3
23° 01	5,3			2	1	3	3
06° 08	1	3	5,4,2	3	3		
15° 08		5,3	2,1	3	3	4	
19° 08	3	1				5,3	3,2
26° 11	1		5,3			3	3,2
02° 01	5,3					3,2	3,1
19° 08	3	1				5,3	3,2
23° 01	5,3			2	1	3	3
Totals	80	47	50	64	45	104	92

Figure IB
Stillborn Child

Paraphrasing Bonatti's instructions on the First *differentia* above, we note that the first *differentia* requires that:

1. the Almuten of the important points (listed in **Figure 1A**) be cadent and
2. any of the malefics should impede it in the same degree or
3. an impeded degree (i.e. a degree afflicted by the conjunction, square or opposition of a malefic which has no honor in that degree) rises or
4. the positions of the luminaries are impeded. There are two opinions on this criteria: Ptolemy's and the "other ancients."
 - a. According to Ptolemy: The light of time (i.e. the Sun by day and the Moon by night) is impeded and the rulers of the degrees of the luminaries are cadent ("recede from the angles") and the Ascending degree is impeded.
 - b. According to the "other ancients:" All three of the rulers of triplicity (of the Ascendant or of the light of time⁷⁶) are cadent; and the luminaries are cadent; and their rulers are cadent; and the [place of the] conjunction or prevention and its ruler are cadent.

In relation to **Figure 1, 1A** and **1B** note the following with care:

Jupiter retrograde is cadent by Whole Sign Houses. Rule 1 above is fulfilled.

Of the triplicity rulers of the Ascendant (Venus, Moon and Mars) two out of three planets are cadent by Whole Sign Houses. This conforms to the opinion of the "other ancients," Rule 4b.

The Sun is determined to the 8th house and in the 8th sign from the Ascendant. This constitutes an affliction as the author of life ought to be determined to life, not death. Rule 4a.

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; Saturn (and the Sun again) are in the 8th sign by Whole Sign Houses from the Ascendant; and Jupiter is cadent by Whole Sign Houses and retrograde. Rule 4b. The chart speaks of death rather than life.

The Moon is cadent by Whole Sign Houses. Jupiter, who rules the sign the Moon is in, is retrograde and cadent by Whole Sign Houses. Venus, who rules the Moon's sign by exaltation, is cadent by Whole Sign Houses also. Rule 4b.

⁷⁶ i.e. the Sun by day; the Moon by night.

The prevention (Full Moon) prior to birth fell at 28° Capricorn and is angular, but its ruler, Saturn, falls in the house of death.

There are numerous indicators of this chart being determined toward death from the Quadrant House point of view as well. There the ruler of the Ascendant (Saturn) is in the 8th. The benefics, Jupiter and Venus, are impeded. The Sun is determined towards death through rulership of the 8th. While the Sun is angular, two out of three of the rulers of the Ascendant's triplicity are cadent: Venus in the 6th and Mars in the 9th in detriment.

The important point here is to judge the planets' positions not just by their Quadrant House position but also by their position in Whole Sign Houses. The technique Bonatti is expounding comes from the older Greek astrology before the advent of Quadrant House systems. In this Whole Sign system, the Ascendant is the whole sign rising (Capricorn in **Figure 1**) including the portion thereof in the 12th house. The degree of the Ascendant, the *horoskopos*, is 13° Capricorn. The 2nd house begins at 0° Aquarius, even though it is in the 1st house according to Alchabitius. All of Sagittarius is the 12th house. Jupiter is in the 12th and cadent. The 7th house is Cancer. Leo is the 8th house. The Sun and Saturn, being in Leo are in the 8th house. The Moon, being in Pisces, is in the 3rd house and cadent. At the same time, it is well to not entirely disregard the Quadrant Houses' testimony in favor of the Whole Sign Houses. The Quadrant Houses have proven benefit in concretizing and quantifying the planets' influences. It is best to consider the Whole Sign Houses simultaneously with the Quadrant Houses. This is a complicated practise but nonetheless one which recommends itself. You can read all natal charts in this dual fashion – using a quadrant house system and the Whole Sign system. The latest research and examples demonstrating this is to be found in the lessons on Sign Subdivision and Planets in the Diploma Course.

Does This Chart Have a Hyleg?

Although the Sun appears at first sight to be the Hyleg⁷⁷ (according to Ptolemy's method) by being in the 7th house, in fact, as shown above, it is in the 8th sign from the Ascendant by whole sign and therefore not appropriate to be Hyleg. According to Ptolemy's rules (*Tetrabiblos*, III.10), the Moon is also unqualified to be Hyleg.

There are certain disagreements between Ptolemy and the medieval authorities regarding the identification of the Hyleg. We look at the

⁷⁷ The Medieval method for finding the Hyleg and its significance are discussed below in the discussion of the fourth *differentia*.

medieval method in Section III. For the moment, it is important to see the inappropriateness of the luminaries (the Moon is weak and the Sun is associated with the house of death) as Hyleg according to Ptolemy's method. This should alert you to the possibility that the native may be stillborn or not nourished. Thus, we automatically look to the first *differentia*.

These rules are not being applied mechanically. I am interpreting them and you are expected to do so as well. We cannot but do so as Bonatti occasionally is a bit ambiguous. For instance, in discussing the rules for the first *differentia*, he speaks of considering the triplicity rulers of the degree of the Ascendant. He continues, saying *et ceteros angulos et eorum dominos*. More than once I have been tempted to read this as meaning that we ought to look to the triplicity rulers of the angles, but the accusative case indicates that he is listing separate things: "See the lords of the triplicity of the Ascendant and [also] the other angles and their rulers." I do not understand this to mean, "and their [triplicity] rulers." Others might disagree with my interpretation. Again, regarding Aboali's instruction to include the triplicity rulers of the Sun. In my opinion Aboali urges us to do this because he recognizes the Sun as the source of life and vitality. His inclusion of the triplicity rulers of the Sun is intended to gauge how much vitality the infant will have. Bonatti's language suggests to me that his opinion is that the triplicity rulers are superior in this matter but that it was Aboali's opinion that the triplicity rulers of the Sun were better. To cover all the bases, I have included the triplicity rulers of the Sun in the calculation. The student can make up his own mind whether to use the triplicity rulers of the Ascendant or the Sun, or both as I have in the example. So far, I have seen only a dozen cases of first *differentia* charts and in all cases the triplicity rulers of the Ascendant were weak.

While harboring doubt as to Aboali's triplicity rulers of the Sun, I have nevertheless included his consideration of Jupiter and Venus, whose positions Aboali urges us to consider. Aboali is looking for any benefic life-giving influence in the chart that will give the infant a better chance of survival. Venus and Jupiter, being benefics, foster life. He therefore looks at their positions. I think he's right to do so, so I include them. Likewise I have included Sun, Jupiter and Saturn, the diurnal planets, as this is a diurnal chart. If the figure were nocturnal I would have included the nocturnal planets: Moon, Venus and Mars. Mercury is feminine and nocturnal in this figure (it picks up the nature of whatever it is connected to). It is in the feminine and nocturnal sign Cancer and not closely aspected by any planets, so I have left it out of the calculation.

A note about strength: cadent planets are regarded as incapable of producing what they promise. They are therefore weak. Succedent planets are twice as strong as cadent planets and can bring to pass what

they promise. Angular planets are twice as strong as succedent planets and easily produce what they promise. It is important that the planets indicating life be strong.

When looking at the planets' positions as per Whole Sign Houses, we do not apply the 5-degree rule, which holds that planets within 5 degrees from the cusp of the next house are already active within that house. That kind of delineation is fine for other concerns but in longevity considerations we observe the planets' positions in the signs.

Please note that the method for distinguishing a first *differentia* chart does not rest solely on the identification of a weak Almuten (such as we have found Jupiter to be in this chart). That is Bonatti's preferred method, but he also presents three other opinions: that of certain anonymous "wise men"; Ptolemy; and the opinion of "the other ancients."

The certain anonymous "wise men" asserted that when the degrees of both luminaries are impeded, the infant does not take nourishment. Ptolemy is said to have taught that when "the luminary whose authority it was" (i.e. the Sun in diurnal figures and the Moon in nocturnal ones) and the Ascendant are impeded and the rulers of the luminaries are cadent, the native dies before s/he receives nourishment. Comparison of Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* III.9 (Robbins translation) shows that Bonatti is seriously simplifying Ptolemy's actual opinion.

"The other ancients" held the opinion that when all three rulers of the triplicity (of the Ascendant) are cadent (recede) and also their rulers and the place of the conjunction or prevention prior to birth and its ruler are also cadent, the native dies before tasting food. This last opinion seems to be an extreme scenario. If you see this configuration then you can be sure of a dire situation. I state this on the bases that though I have never seen the exact configuration I have seen close approximations of it. Infant death was the case in every instance.

In a recent case a baby was born with many, but not all, of these considerations. The birth was difficult after a long labour. At first the infant refused to be nursed and grew weak, requiring hospitalisation. The doctors saved its life. If the parents had been living in an isolated region unable to get prompt medical assistance then the child would almost certainly have died. Thus in practise it is recommended that you examine the chart to discover an obvious Hyleg (Sun and Moon in hylegical place) and if absent then check to see if the chart approximates the conditions cited by "the other ancients." If you find them present in the chart then the indication is that the infant will be in danger of not surviving.

Occasionally the chart of a living adult seems to fall into the first, second or third *differentia*. In most of these rare cases closer examination shows that the birth data is wrong, or that the native was saved by modern medicine in circumstances similar to the above example. These survivors are usually marked out further in that they live a life of adversity and obscurity, since such weak charts also fulfill the criteria for professional adversity and what we may term low social standing.

Having said this there have been one of two charts I have examined where the birth data is certain and stands up to rectification and where the native has suffered no great calamity or threat of early death. These are very much the exception to the rule and will at a later date require a more thorough re-examination, but for the majority of cases the rules we are outlining in this section work very well.

Once you have found that a chart is a first *differentia* chart, there is no need to look at the second and third *differentia*. All three *differentia* indicate a delicate infant, one unlikely to survive or one dead at birth. But be wary here. Just as it is pointless to give the parents a rosy picture of a native who is likely to die at birth so to is it pointless and irresponsible to create pain by telling a parent that their child will die. The better course is to defer to the physician and to advise of the danger and perhaps how the parents may better avail themselves of the medical care that may insure the child's survival. Do not pass judgment on such a chart.

Should the chart not be a first *differentia* figure, see if it is a second or third *differentia*, proceeding by following the rules set out above step by step; setting up an Almuten table and calculating the Almudebit.

Second Example: Healthy Individual

Healthy Individual born in Winooski, Vermont, USA on 28 December 1956 at 3:24 am EST. (see **Figure 2**)

It is well to follow the first example with one of an opposite character to see if the figure of someone who has always been healthy would or would not show indications of the first *differentia* sort.

Applying Bonatti's dictum regarding the important places in the horoscope we arrive at the table in **Figure 2A**. You will note that this table (which is for the first *differentia*, just like the one above) looks a bit different than the table for the first example. This is because the figure used in the second example is a nocturnal figure. This means that instead of the triplicity rulers of the Sun, you will find the triplicity rulers of the Moon listed. Also, you will find more nocturnal planets listed. I have included Mercury in the calculation in this case because Mercury is configured with the Moon and Nodes.

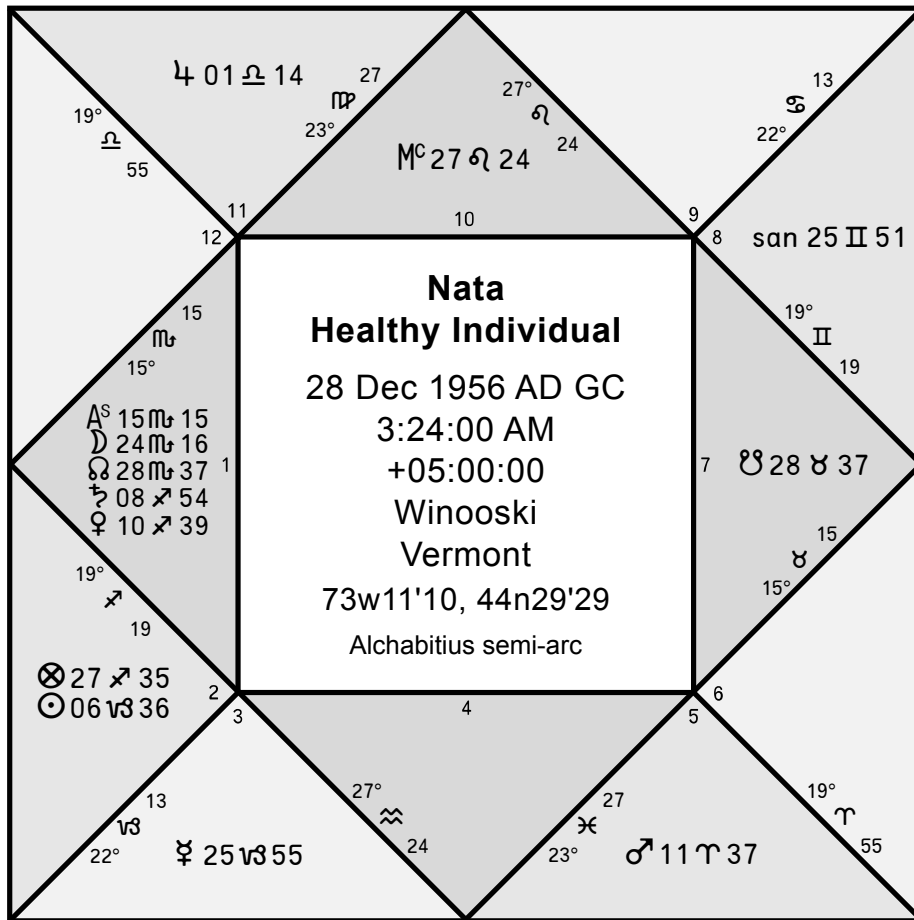


Figure 2
 Healthy Individual

Also, the chart upon which this table is based is different. Please keep in mind that the chart used is not a first *differentia* figure. It is the figure of an healthy person, now 46 years of age. The chart has the Moon as Hyleg in the 1st house. The idea is that this figure ought not to conform to the parameters for the first *differentia*.

The figure is nocturnal. The 8th sign Scorpio is rising and its ruler, Mars, is in the 5th house and in its own sign, Aries. Scorpio is known as a vital sign, its natives cling tenaciously to life. We note immediately the position of the Moon in the Ascendant. The Moon is Hyleg both by Ptolemy's and by Bonatti's Medieval Method. This automatically means the chart is a fourth *differentia* chart regardless of the results of the Almuten calculations (the totals being shown below, with Mars emerging as the Almuten).

By applying the pointing system using the same method as in the first example we arrive at the totals found in **Figure 2B**.

Mars is the winner with Jupiter second. Mars is honor of rulership in its own sign. Mars is an accidental benefic determined to life in a good house, strong and aspected by trine from the benefic Venus in the 1st house.

Once again, for reference, Bonatti's instructions on the First *differentia* requires that:

1. the Almuten of the important points (listed in the table) be cadent and
2. any of the malefics should impede it in the same degree or
3. an impeded degree (ie a degree afflicted by the conjunction, square or opposition of a malefic which has no honor in that degree) rises or
4. the positions of the luminaries are impeded. There are two opinions on this criteria: Ptolemy's and the "other ancients."
 - a. According to Ptolemy: The light of time (i.e. the Sun by day and the Moon by night) is impeded and the rulers of the degrees of the luminaries are cadent ("recede from the angles") and the Ascending degree is impeded.
 - b. According to the "other ancients:" All three of the rulers of triplicity are cadent; and the luminaries are cadent; and their rulers are cadent; and the [place of the] conjunction or prevention and its ruler are cadent.

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	15°♌	♃	
Ruler of Ascendant – ♂	11°♈	♀	
Rulers of the Triplicity of the Ascendant (Water)	♂	11°♈	♀
	♀	10°♊	♀
	♃	24°♌	♀
Seventh House	15°♉	♃	
Ruler of the Seventh House – ♀	10°♊	♀	
Fourth House	27°♋	♂	
Ruler of Fourth House – ♃	08°♊	♀	
Tenth House	27°♈	♂	
Ruler of the Tenth House – ☉	06°♈	♀	
Sun	06°♈	♀	
Ruler of Sun – ♃	08°♊	♀	
Moon	24°♌	♀	
Ruler of Moon – ♂	11°♈	♀	
Rulers of the Triplicity of the Moon (Water)	♂	11°♈	♀
	♀	10°♊	♀
	♃	24°♌	♀
Prevention (Full Moon before birth) at 25° ♀ is ruled by the ♂	25°♈	♂	
Part of Fortune	27°♊	♂	
Ruler of the Part of Fortune – ♃	01°♌	♃	
Jupiter as benefic	01°♌	♃	
Venus as benefic	10°♊	♀	
Venus as a nocturnal planet	10°♊	♀	
Mars as a nocturnal planet	11°♈	♀	
Moon as a nocturnal planet	24°♌	♀	
Mercury as a nocturnal planet	25°♈	♂	

Figure 2A
Healthy Individual

* For ruler of the terms see **Appendix: Table V**

Table Showing Assignment of Points

DEGREE	☉	☽	♃	♀	♂	♄	♅
15°♌	1	3		3	5,3	2	
11°♍	4,3,1			2	5	3	3
11°♍	4,3,1			2	5	3	3
10°♎	3	1		2		5,3	3
24°♌		3	2	3,1	5,3		
15°♎		4,3,1		5,3	3	2	
10°♎	3	1		2		5,3	3
27°♏		1	3		2	3	5,3
08°♎	3		1	2		5,3	3
27°♏	5,3				2,1	3	3
06°♏		3	2	3	4,3	1	5
06°♏		3	2	3	4,3	1	5
08°♎	3		1	2		5,3	3
24°♌		3	2	3,1	5,3		
11°♍	4,3,1			2	5	3	3
11°♍	4,3,1			2	5	3	3
10°♎	3	1		2		5,3	3
24°♌		3	2	3,1	5,3		
25°♏	1	3		3	4,3,2		5
27°♎	3				2	5,3	3,1
01°♏		1	3	5		3	4,3,2
01°♏		1	3	5		3	4,3,2
10°♎	3	1		2		5,3	3
10°♎	3	1		2		5,3	3
11°♍	4,3,1			2	5	3	3
24°♌		3	2	3,1	5,3		
25°♏	1	3		3	4,3,2		5
Totals	75	43	23	73	107	97	89

Figure 2B
Healthy Individual

From the Whole Sign Houses point of view:

1. The Almuten, Mars, is not cadent but rather strong and assisted by a benefic.
2. Mars is not afflicted. The square between the Sun and Mars is ameliorated by their mutual reception of each other. They are in each others exaltation.
3. Does not apply.
4. It is a matter of opinion as to whether the Moon is afflicted by being conjunct the North Node (*Caput draconis*). Bonatti asserts so in his *146 Considerations*⁷⁸ but much of what he says there relates to Horary Astrology. In any event, the triplicity rulers of both luminaries are Venus, Moon and Mars. The Moon and Venus are angular. Mars is succedent.
 - a. According to Ptolemy's opinion, the light of time (the Moon, this is a nocturnal chart) is unafflicted and the Moon's rulers are for the most part strong. Mercury is weak but the rest are strong. The Ascending degree is not afflicted.
 - b. According to the "other ancients" the rulers of the triplicity (of the Ascendant or of the light of time) are not cadent, nor are the rulers of the luminaries cadent. The prevention (Full Moon) before birth (25° Gemini) is not cadent, though its ruler, Mercury, is.

Conclusion

This chart does not conform to the criteria for the first *differentia*. It is not the chart of a weak or nonviable infant. This is what we wanted to see: that a natal figure of an healthy individual does not have the indications of a stillborn.

Example of the Application of the Second *Differentia* Rule

We will now investigate the second *differentia*. Example chart is: Female child born 9 May, 2000, 9:45:14 pm EDT, New Paltz, NY 74w 05; 41n45. (see **Figure 3**)

10° Sagittarius 44' rises. Immediately we see the cluster of planets in the 6th house including the ruler of the Ascendant and all the triplicity rulers of the Ascendant. Note Mars, ruler of the 12th in the 6th, opposing

⁷⁸ www.new-library.com/zoller/books

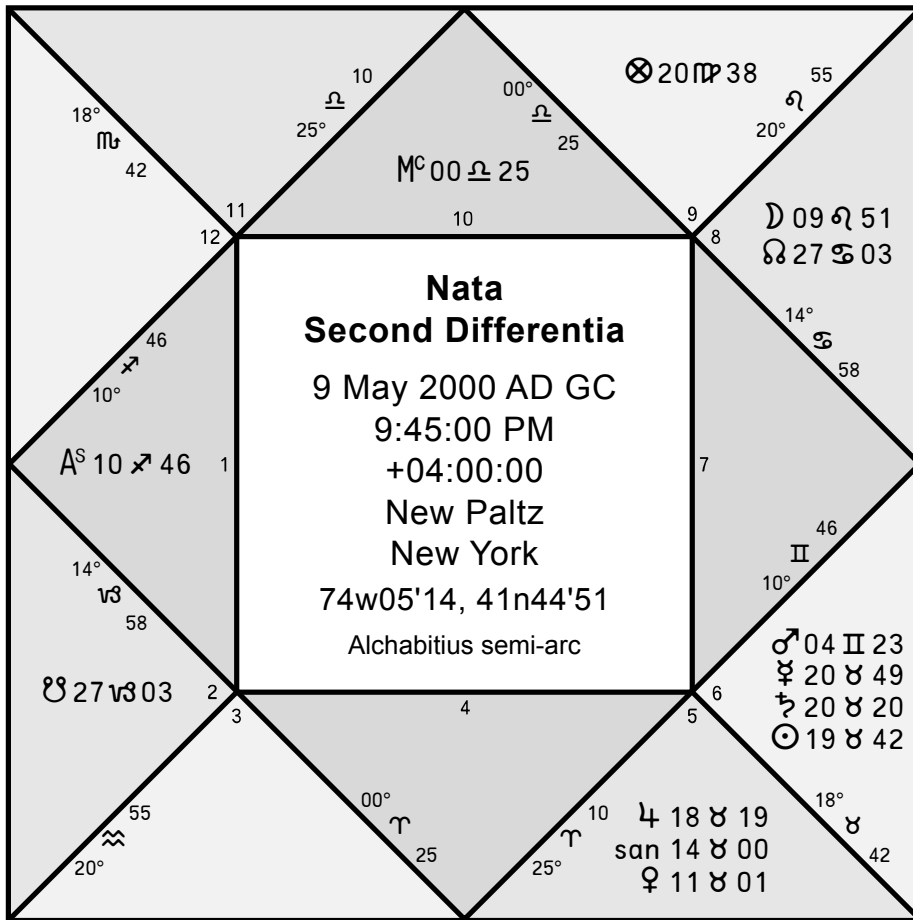


Figure 3
Second Differentia

the Ascendant. The chart has no Hyleg by Ptolemy's rules nor by Bonatti's (see below under discovery of Hyleg). The figure is not a 1st *differentia* figure. The native lives at the time of this writing, as far as I know. However, labor was long. There were concerns about whether the baby would survive birth. After being born, the infant would not nurse. Somehow the physicians got it to do so. Had the birth taken place 100 years ago in the US, or even today in some areas of the world, it would have died.

The requirements for a 2nd *differentia* figure are:

1. See the rising degree (Note: no mention of ruler of the Ascendant)
2. The other angles and their rulers
3. The degrees of the luminaries and their rulers
4. The rulers of their triplicities, according as the nativity is diurnal or nocturnal (in this case the triplicity of the Moon because this figure is nocturnal).
5. The rulers of the triplicity of the degree of the Ascendant (fire).
6. The *Part of Fortune* (20° Virgo)
7. The conjunction or prevention which preceded the birth (in this case, the conjunction, 14° Taurus).
8. The rulers of the triplicity in which Jupiter and Venus fall (earth in both cases).
9. See the planet which is stronger in these places with the greatest number of dignities.”

From these instructions we arrive at the tables shown in **Figure 3A** and **Figure 3B**. Venus is the winner or Amudebit in this case (122 points). According to Whole Sign houses Venus is cadent. According to Quadrant Houses (Alcabitcius) she is succedant. Bonatti asks us to see if the angles are ruled by malefics. With the exception of the 4th house this is not the case but notice that Mars the ruler of the 4th afflicts the Ascendant by opposition in longitude, it is 6 degrees away. The direction of Mars to the descendant would be a potential danger to the native. This direction would have to be done in Oblique Ascension. But Bonatti wants us to note the distance between Venus, the Almudebit, and the malefic Mars in longitude. Bonatti gives us a rather confusing way of estimating the length of life of the native by using this arc between the malefic and the Almudebit and a permutation of signs and houses. We will discuss this below. We should keep in mind that the time measure is not necessarily one year per degree but possibly one day, one month or one year per degree. If we project the Ascendant at the rate of one house per year, we come to a date just before May 9, 2006.

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

IMPORTANT POINT	DEGREE	TERM RULER *	
Ascendant	10° ♁	♀	
Rulers of the Triplicity of the Ascendant (Fire)	♃	18° ♁	♃
	☉	19° ♁	♃
	♅	20° ♁	♃
Seventh House	10° ♀	♃	
Ruler of the Seventh House – ♃	20° ♁	♃	
Fourth House	00° ♀	♃	
Ruler of Fourth House – ♁	04° ♀	♃	
Tenth House	00° ♀	♅	
Ruler of the Tenth House – ♃	10° ♁	♃	
Sun	19° ♁	♃	
Ruler of Sun – ♃	10° ♁	♃	
Moon	09° ♀	♃	
Ruler of Moon – ☉	19° ♁	♃	
Rulers of the Triplicity of the Moon (Fire)	♃	18° ♁	♃
	☉	19° ♁	♃
	♅	20° ♁	♃
Conjunction (New Moon before birth)	14° ♁	♃	
Part of Fortune	20° ♀	♅	
Rulers of the Triplicity of Jupiter (Earth)	♃	09° ♀	♃
	♀	11° ♁	♃
	♁	04° ♀	♃
Rulers of the Triplicity of Venus (Earth)	♃	09° ♀	♃
	♀	11° ♁	♃
	♁	04° ♀	♃

Figure 3A
Second Differentia

* For ruler of the terms see **Appendix: Table V**

Table Showing Assignment of Points

DEGREE	☉	☽	♃	♀	♂	♁	♅
10° ♉	3	1		2		5,3	3
18° ♋		4,3,1		5,3	3	2	
19° ♋		4,3,1		5,3	3	2	
20° ♋		4,3		5,3	3	2	1
10° ♌			5,3		1	3,2	3
20° ♋		4,3		5,3	3	2	1
00° ♍	4,3				5,1	3,2	3
04° ♌			5,3,2			3,1	3
00° ♎		1	3	5		3	4,3,2
10° ♋		4,3,1	2	5,3	3		
19° ♋		4,3,1		5,3	3	2	
10° ♋		4,3,1	2	5,3	3		
09° ♏	5,3		2			3	3,1
19° ♋		4,3,1		5,3	3	2	
18° ♋		4,3,1		5,3	3	2	
19° ♋		4,3,1		5,3	3	2	
20° ♋		4,3		5,3	3	2	1
14° ♋		4,3,1	2	5,3	3		
20° ♏		3	5,4,1	3	3		2
09° ♏	5,3		2			3	3,1
11° ♋		4,3,1	2	5,3	3		
04° ♌			5,3,2			3,1	3
09° ♏	5,3		2			3	3,1
11° ♋		4,3,1	2	5,3	3		
04° ♌			5,3,2			3,1	3
Totals	34	114	67	122	52	60	44

Figure 3B
Second Differentia

The purpose of this table seems largely to be tied up with the timing of the infant's death. The reasoning seems to be that, lacking an Hyleg, the chart automatically indicates a short life. The first *differentia* indicates a still birth. 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 difference between the first and the second *differentiae* is that in the first *differentia* the Almuten of the table is cadent and afflicted. In the second *differentia* the so called Almudebit is not afflicted but near a malefic. The arc between the malefic and the Almudebit supposedly measures the life of the native.

Determining the Length of Life in a Second *Differentia* Figure

In what follows, the thrust of what Bonatti has to say is largely involved with timing when the infant will die. His remarks seem to indicate several systems of arriving at this information. The first involves finding the distance between the Almudebit/Almuten. Bonatti's instructions on timing are neither clear nor complete. I attempt to reconstruct what he must have meant below but I am unsatisfied with what he says and with my own attempted reconstruction. As I said above, in practice I try to find an obvious Hyleg in the natal chart. If I find one, I pass over the consideration of the first three *differentia*. As an aside it is also to be assumed that the birth data that the client hands you is of someone who is alive. Occasionally there is doubt, but it's a safe generalization.

Actually, it often seems in practice as if there are reverberations of effects. Whatever happens on the first day of life has an echo during the first month and the first year. But Bonatti implies that we can be more precise than this and that we can distinguish a death so many days, months or years after birth using a certain permuted scheme.

The method for determining which it will be, i.e. days, months or years, appears to depend upon the position of the malefic. Bonatti's presentation of the method is not as clear as we could wish, but the gist of what he says is that we have two instruments for answering this question.

One is the malefic's position in an angular, a succedent, or a cadent house. In the first case, we get years, in the second, months and in the third, days. Secondly, we find that as the malefic is in a cardinal, fixed or mutable sign it diminishes the time given by the arc of longitude by a given fraction. In a fixed sign and an angular house there will be no diminution. That is, the timing will be the number of years indicated by the number of degrees in the arc.

In angular houses and common signs (mutable signs) such a malefic will diminish life by a sixth of the given arc. In succedent houses and

mobile signs the fraction will be minus a quarter and in cadent houses and mobile signs the fraction will be minus a third of the arc.

Bonatti does not give us all the possibilities it seems. We wonder what happens in angular houses and mobile signs, cadent houses and fixed signs, succedent houses and fixed signs, cadent houses and common signs and succedent houses and common signs.

Speculation leads me to arrange the following **Table A** as an attempt to fill in the gaps. I can only suggest that application of the rules in a sufficient number of examples will tell if there is any value in this arrangement. If we can get the paradigm down we would apply it to the arc between the malefic and the Almudebit.

House	Sign	Years*
Cadent	Fixed	$(-\frac{1}{4})$
Succedent	Fixed	$(-\frac{1}{6})$
Angular	Fixed	= arc
Cadent	Common	$(-\frac{1}{3})$
Succedent	Common	$(-\frac{1}{4})$
Angular	Common	$-\frac{1}{6}$
Cadent	Mobile	$-\frac{1}{3}$
Succedent	Mobile	$(-\frac{1}{4})$
Angular	Mobile	$(-\frac{1}{6})$

Table A
Malefics Diminish Years

**Fractions in parentheses are speculative.*

Bonatti gives only three possibilities for the effects of “Benefic planets in evil places.” (see **Table B**)

House	Sign	Years
Cadent	Mobile	$+\frac{1}{3}$
Cadent	Fixed	$+\frac{1}{4}$
Cadent	Common	$+\frac{1}{6}$

Table B
Benefics Increase Years

Insofar as he only mentions benefic planets in cadent houses and since the Almudebit being in a cadent house is the central issue in the application of the second *differentia*, I take it he intended to tell us that if the Almudebit were a benefic it would tend to lengthen the life somewhat. If this interpretation is correct, we would be seeing the malefic shorten the life at the same time that the benefic attempted to lengthen it.

Examination of the Third Differentia

Bonatti has not yet discussed how the Hyleg is found or what the Alcocoden is and so this section may seem rather confusing to those unaccustomed to using either.

The Hyleg is the “Giver of Life” or that planet which fortifies the native and which when afflicted by transit, direction or in a return indicates a threat to the health and life of the native. There are a number of differing opinions as to how to identify the Hyleg. We address this in the next section. Ptolemy discusses the matter in the third book of the *Tetrabiblos* under *Prorogation*. In that section, he also gives a method of determining the length of life which, though it be termed *Prorogation* in the *Tetrabiblos*, is actually what we would call Primary Direction.

The term Alcocoden is Persian in origin. It means the “Head or Lord of the House.” It is not found in Ptolemy and this occasioned the Renaissance humanist enemies of astrology to attack it as an unfounded [Arab addition](#).⁷⁹ I shall have more to say regarding the Alcocoden doctrine in Section III. Here it is necessary to say only that the Alcocoden is, like the Hyleg, one of the planets in the natal figure. It was considered to give the measure of the life of the individual in so many years and months. Like the Hyleg, there are a number of ways of finding it. Essentially it is tied to the Hyleg. If the figure has no Hyleg, it also has no Alcocoden.

The following must be read in connection with the later section on the Discovery of the Hyleg. No example need be given at this point since the material is really quite clear once the section on the Hyleg is understood.

⁷⁹ see *Arabic Astrology* at www.new-library.com/zoller/features for a further examination of this.

Examination of the Fourth Differentia

The same thing may be said of the discussion of the fourth *differentia*. What is outstanding about the fourth *differentia*, is that it shows in a wretchedly Boccaccian⁸⁰ way how miserable life was at the time when Bonatti wrote.

Bonatti says in his introduction to the section (see translation above) that people who fall into the fourth *differentia* “attain to maturity and sometimes they attain old age” and that only a very few did die of old age. Such were the times in which our author lived and practiced his art. No wonder, therefore, that he was experienced in the delineation of infant death, various fatalities, war and disease. These were all around him. Furthermore he was, himself, right in the thick of it. Being a military adviser to Count Montefeltro in his war against the Pope, Bonatti must have seen more than his share of misery and death. But perhaps it is all for the good since without his experience it would have been impossible for him to pass on to posterity the astrological *dicta*, which comprise the *Liber Astronomiae* and the art would be so much the poorer for it.

Special Note Comparing the Sun Sign and the Ascendant:

In the for-going you will have noticed special attention given to the Ascendant. It should therefore be made clear here that, unlike the popular Sun Sign Astrology, serious astrology recognizes the greater importance of the Ascendant than the Sun sign. “What’s your sign?” meaning “What month were you born in?” is a harmless question at parties where you are trying to “break the ice.” In such cases “What’s your sign?” asks “In what zodiacal sign was your Sun on the day you were born?” For serious astrology this question is next to meaningless as the Sun is not necessarily a significator of the native, whereas the Ascendant, signifying the native’s body and determining all the other planets’ positions, is.

⁸⁰ Giovanni Boccaccio 1313-1375. Italian writer. His *Decameron* (1353) depicted life during the Black Plague.

Section III

The Length of Life: the Hyleg and Alcocoden

On the Hyleg

The doctrine of the Hyleg is found in Book 3, chapter 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 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 by saying – as the sages frequently did – 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. 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 this is, in part, found 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.⁸¹ 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.

⁸¹ 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.

Ptolemy's exposition of the doctrine held that there were five places which were fit to be hylegical. These were the 1st, 11th, 10th, 9th and 7th houses. Should one of the four possible Prorogators be placed in one of these positions it could be the prorogator or Hyleg.

Ptolemy gave rules by which the selection was to be made (see *Tetrabiblos* III.10 and **Appendix One** at the end of this work). The four Prorogators (or potential Hylegs) were, in his view, the Sun, Moon, Ascendant, and the Part of Fortune. Should neither the Sun nor the Moon be hylegical (in the prorogatory place), then one was to select the planet with the most honours (dignities as discussed above) in the position of the Sun, the position of the Moon, that of the New Moon preceding birth and the Ascendant. Such a planet would have to have honour in at least three of these places if not more; the total number of honours always being a maximum of five. The addition of *this* planet increased the number of possible Prorogators to five and the role of the antecedent New Moon came to have an important, though ill-defined role. The reason why Ptolemy's hylegeical places were the 1st, 11th, 10th, 9th and 7th houses was that these positions are above the earth and in aspect to the Ascendant. The Ascendant represented the body of the native and his life. By Whole Sign Houses, the hylegeical places represent the conjunction, sextile, square, trine and opposition respectively to the Ascendant.

Ptolemy's rules for the discovery of the Hyleg went through considerable modification by the Arabs, as we shall see in the following. Even in the ancient world there seems to have been much difference of opinion. For example we do not see the same approach to the *Length of Life* question in Firmicus Maternus.

On the Alcocoden

The Alcocoden was a planet in the natal figure which was supposed to indicate the number of years of an individual's life. Just as with the Hyleg, there were, in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, a number of ways of locating it.

Bonatti's method is clear and, as if to make working with the section easier on the reader, he has stated his method twice, the second time more fully and clearly. It is necessary that the reader becomes familiar with the doctrine as it appears in Bonatti's work.

I have been working with this doctrine now for 20 years. I am convinced that it was intended as an approximation of the length of the native's life rather than as a precise measure of life. The precise determination of the length of life requires the application of Ptolemy's Prorogation Method (*Tetrabiblos* III.10), i.e. of the Primary Direction of the *Apheta* (killing

point) to the *Anaereta* (Hyleg). Ptolemy's exposition of this method is less than lucid (at least in the English translations produced thus far) and it appears that the Greek text also contains ambiguities as astrologers since the second century AD have felt it necessary to develop their own interpretation of his mathematical method. Alchabitius presented an interpretation which Bonatti prefers (though it is not clear if he understood it completely). Campanus, Regiomontanus, Cardanus, Morinus, Placidus and others all gave opinions as to what Ptolemy meant.

The problem is exacerbated by the fact that mathematical jargon differs with each of these authors. For instance, Ptolemy's 2nd century mathematical language differs from Alchabitius' 10th century language or Placidus' 17th century approach. In order to break through this mathematical Babel, the astrologer must understand the spherical geometry involved and the application of proportion in trigonometry. The vagaries in Ptolemy's text impede this. As a result there has been considerable disagreement over the correct method of Primary Directing. In my opinion, Alchabitius got it right and Placidus' *Primum Mobile* contains a 17th century presentation of what Alchabitius said. Therefore Placidus's method, at least for directing *in zodiaco*, is the approach to use for directing the killing point to the Hyleg.

However, there remain two problems yet to be solved before the accurate calculation of the native's life can be done. We need first to ascertain the correct Hyleg and we need to correctly identify the killing point. The material presented in this section will help in the first case. Bonatti's method is given for discovering the Hyleg. It ought to be compared with Ptolemy's method. Actually, neither man was the author of the respective methods. They merely reported someone else's work. Ptolemy cites as his source an anonymous authority referred to as "the ancient." Bonatti's method is compiled from several Arabic and Greek sources (including Ptolemy). The problem of identifying the killing point is something I am investigating (as at January 2001) and hope to publish on in the not too distant future.

With regard to the Alcocoden doctrine we may say that the popularity of the *Liber Astronomiae* and the reputation of the authors whose work it rests upon ensured its wide dissemination and the application of its doctrines. That this was the method commonly used throughout the Middle Ages both in the Middle East and in Europe is beyond doubt. It is therefore worth careful consideration even if it is only an approximation.

The section from Bonatti which follows is lengthy. I start my commentary after Bonatti's discussion of Primary Directions and his section on the number of malefics and benefics.

It may be noted that Morinus's doctrine of accidental benefics and malefics in the Book XXI of *Astrologia Gallica* (1661) is supported by Bonatti's text. Bonatti discusses situations in which a naturally benefic planet may have bad effects and a naturally malefic planet may have good ones. As my comments will assume a familiarity with Morinus's doctrine, the reader may wish to refer to those works of Morinus available in English.⁸²

On the Discovery of the Hyleg and Alcocoden

Extract from Bonatti, *Liber Astronomiae* (vide supra), Tractatus X, col. 675.

“The discovery of this matter is thus: You seek the Hyleg in diurnal Nativities from the Sun which, if you discover in the first, eleventh, or tenth house will be suitable to accept as the Hyleg whether he is in a masculine or in a feminine sign. But if he is outside these places and in the 7th, 8th, or 9th and in a masculine sign he should [still] be considered as the Hyleg.”

“Aomar said, ‘Remember that the Sun and any other place which is employed as Hyleg is not able to be Hyleg unless the rulers of the houses, exaltations, triplicities, terms or faces aspect it as was seen by Aboali concerning the rulers of the faces. However, if the rulers of any of those dignities do not aspect it, the Sun will not be suitable as Hyleg nor will the lord of any of these dignities be.’

‘You will say likewise regarding the Moon in the day or at night; and the Part of Fortune and the rising degree and the degree of conjunction or prevention. Again, if the Sun is not fit to be Hyleg, take the Moon as Hyleg, and if you discover her in an angle or in a succedent house and in a feminine sign and any of the rulers of the four (*sic*)⁸³ aforesaid dignities aspect her, she is fit for this purpose so that she may be Hyleg.’

⁸² The Morinus System of Horoscope Interpretation: *Astrologia Gallica*, Book XXI trans. and edited by Richard S. Baldwin, American Federation of Astrologers, Inc. 1974. See also *Astrosynthesis* trans. Lucy Little, Zoltan Mason, Emerald Books, 1974. The former is a straightforward scholarly translation from the original Latin. The latter, a translation from the French is, perhaps a more workable presentation by astrologers for teaching astrology.

⁸³ Aboali omitted the decan as being weak.

‘And if the nativity is preventional⁸⁴ then the Hyleg must be sought from the Part of Fortune. If, however, it is conjunctional⁸⁵ seek the Hyleg from the ascending degree which will signify it [the Hyleg], if any of the aforesaid signifiers or the Moon aspect it [i.e. ascending degree]. It is preferred to the Part of Fortune when it is thus. If, however, none of them aspect it [i.e. the ascending degree], it will not signify the Hyleg. But if the ascending degree is not then with the Hyleg, look to the Part of Fortune which, if it is with the Hyleg⁸⁶ or with the degree of the Ascendant of the nativity it will be Hyleg, however, if not it will not be. But if neither of these are able to be Hyleg, seek the Hyleg from the degree of the conjunction if the nativity is conjunctional or from the degree of the prevention, if it were preventional.’ Aomar has been seen to desire that it be sought from the degree in which the Moon was at the time of prevention in this case.”

“But again if none of the aforementioned signifiers aspect the degrees of the aforesaid then the Hyleg will be frustrated and the life of the native will be of short duration. And if any of them aspect that degree, that planet which aspects is called the Alcocoden or giver of years.”

“If all the aforementioned signifiers aspect that degree such as the ruler of the house and the ruler of the exaltation, and the ruler of the term, and the ruler of the triplicity, that one which is closer to the degree by aspect or by conjunction will be the Alcocoden or giver of years, whether the aspect is before or after.⁸⁷”

“If, however, all aspect equally, that one is called Alcocoden who is stronger in its own place, and will have equal dignity that is to say only one.⁸⁸ If, however, any of them has more dignities than the others, it is said to be stronger than the others and ought to be preferred to the others provided that it aspects the aforesaid degree, even if there were a smaller distance between the degree of the Hyleg and that other of the signifiers which has but one dignity in the hylegical degree.”

On the Determination of the Length of Life of the Native

“After you have determined the Hyleg and the Alcocoden, you are able to determine the number of years of the native’s life.”

“Concerning his life you are able to accurately know⁸⁹ whether his future will be long or short, or wholesome or full of dangers. Regarding his accidents – will they be good or evil; [and you may know] his prosperities and adversities.”

⁸⁴ That is if the full Moon was the syzygy preceding the birth.

⁸⁵ The new Moon being the syzygy preceding birth

⁸⁶ i.e. in a hylegical place.

⁸⁷ e.g. the planet aspected is at 0° Aries. The aspect in question can fall at 1° Aries or 29° Pisces

⁸⁸ *scilicet unum tantum* – perhaps even if only one.

⁸⁹ *poterit certificari*

“The Hyleg signifies the source of life⁹⁰ but the Alcocoden signifies the number of its years. This is because the condition of life is received from the Hyleg but the allotting of years from the Alcocoden. However neither of these suffice for the giving of life to the native without the other, just as a man, by himself, does not suffice for generating, so neither does a woman by herself, alone, suffice for conceiving or bearing. Indeed one is not able to bring forth without the other. The Hyleg gives life formally, the Alcocoden gives it effectively.⁹¹”

Again Regarding the Determination of the Years of the Native

“Consider the disposition of the Hyleg and the Alcocoden and you will see how many years have been allotted to the native.⁹² You will see indeed, if years are given to him by the Alcocoden or by another [planet] as sometimes happens.”

“Because if they are given by the Alcocoden, what you should do will be plain. But if they are given to him by another you will see whether the years of the Alcocoden are equal to the lesser, middle, greater or greatest [years] which occur to very few or not many.⁹³ And you will see in which of those years the Hyleg may come to the bodies of the malefics or to the places where they were in the nativity or to the square aspect of them or the opposition or to *cauda draconis* or to the degree in which it was in the nativity or to the square aspect of the place in which the Moon was in the nativity or to the opposition of it giving to each degree according to the degree of the region one year and unless a benefic projects its rays to the term in which the Hyleg arrives to the [place of the] impending malefic, it signifies that the native will die in that year or month or day, indeed in the hour in which the arrival⁹⁴ of the Hyleg to the aforesaid places or to any one of them is perfected.”

“But if the aforesaid years were not equal to the years of the Alcocoden nor alike in any respect, and the Hyleg comes to an impending malefic as was said, or to the aforesaid places without the aspect of any of the benefics the native will be oppressed with a very strong impediment so that as it were there will be great fear for him lest he be in peril and he himself likewise will fear that he may die. Ultimately however, he will escape unless he is harmed by mistake⁹⁵ but if a benefic projects its rays to the Hyleg, the native will then be oppressed but there will not be then such doubting regarding him [and his eventual release from the danger].

⁹⁰ *radicem vitae*

⁹¹ Here we see two of Aristotle’s four causes from his *Metaphysics* and *Physics*.

⁹² The first clause of this sentence is unnecessary, “*Cum autem perceperis annos nati et eorum numerum,*”

⁹³ *quod paucissimis devenit ad hoc aut parum minores.*

⁹⁴ *adventus*

⁹⁵ *nisi periclitetur forte per errorem.* – or perhaps – unless he is harmed by [his own] error.

On the Diversity of Opinions Which Exists Regarding the Hyleg

“There was a diversity of opinion among the wise regarding the Hyleg, although not contrariety. For instance it was seen by Ptolemy that the Hyleg might not be sought in the eighth because the Ascendant does not have any assistance in that [house], and it is a dark place and does not aspect the Ascendant.”

“In the ninth however, it is otherwise because it is of the triplicity of the Ascendant and of the same nature⁹⁶ and because it is the Sun’s joy⁹⁷ and the Sun is the foundation of the ninth. But if the Sun were in the ninth, in some nativities, and otherwise well disposed, the native will be of good life, similarly honest and of good durability.”

“But Dorotheus felt that the Hyleg ought not to be sought from the eighth house nor from the seventh unless it was in a masculine sign. And he said that if the Sun were in these two houses, it is not fit to be Hyleg in feminine signs because its strength is debilitated in these and it is made effeminate. And it was seen by him that the Sun might be Hyleg in nocturnal nativities in places opposite to those masculine signs.”

“But Ptolemy made no mention of the sex of the signs for which reason it seems to me convenient that you preserve the opinion of Dorotheus, if you are able – it is safer, however the opinion of Ptolemy ought not to be thrown out. If however, the Sun were not in masculine signs in the aforesaid places in diurnal nativities he would not be fit to be Hyleg. Then it will be appropriate that you seek the Hyleg from the Moon. If you find her in any of the angles on succedent houses she will be fit to be Hyleg nor will you care what the sex of the signs are, i.e. whether they are masculine or feminine. Although in the nativities of women it will be more useful in a feminine sign and in the nativities of men in a masculine sign. And in this all agree, that the Moon may be fit to be Hyleg in the third because the third is the joy of the Moon and the Moon is the foundation of the third.”

“However regarding the ninth house there was diversity among them. It was seen by Dorotheus as not certain that the Moon was able to be Hyleg in this place because she is impeded there. But in Ptolemy it is seen that she may be able to be Hyleg in the ninth but it is necessary that she be in a feminine sign.⁹⁸”

“And Aomar said `that if the Moon were not in these places and the nativity were conjunctual, the Hyleg is sought from the ascending

⁹⁶ assuming Whole Sign Houses are used.

⁹⁷ The Sun’s Joy, a minor dignity (not as one of the honours which are the major dignities five in number – as discussed above), is in the 9th house. The joys of the planets are discussed in the **Advanced** papers (www.new-library.com/zoller/advanced). Bonatti seems to use the term *foundation* as a synonym for joy.

⁹⁸ c.f. *Tetrabiblos* III. 10. (ibid)

degree of the nativity. But if it were preventional, it is sought from the *Part of Fortune*, which is called the *Ascendant of the Moon*, and in this case you put aside the ascending degree [of the nativity].”

“And the wise preferred the *Part of Fortune* in the prevention because the part of the Moon which we see then has the full amount of its light and rules the entire night.⁹⁹ However in conjunctival nativities it [i.e. Hyleg] ought to be taken¹⁰⁰ from the Ascendant because the Moon is then deprived of all its light. But if the Hyleg is sought from the *Part of Fortune* and it [i.e. *Part of Fortune*] signified it, and it were in the angles, or in succedent houses, you will not care whether it is in a masculine or feminine sign. But if you seek it from the Ascendant of the nativity and the Ascendant is not impeded, it may be Hyleg even if the Part of Fortune is not there.”

“And Aomar said `that you will not care whether it is cadent from the angles or not, because the Ascendant itself will be an angle.´ And he said `that there is nothing in this, which is to be feared as a result of these hylegical places falling in good or bad places with regard to profection. It is possible that the aforementioned places may be in places of growth or of decreases the Ascendant does not cease to be in profection.´”

“And he said, `But if the Sun or Moon or *Part of Fortune* or Ascendant do not suffice to be Hyleg, look to the conjunction or prevention which were before the birth, and should the Sun, Moon, ruler of the Ascendant or any of the benefics [in conjunction or prevention] aspect any of the aforesaid places [i.e. Sun, Moon, *Part of Fortune* or Ascendant] and be in an angle or succedent house it will be the Hyleg and you will not care if it is in a masculine or feminine sign.´¹⁰¹”

On the Knowing of the Alcocoden

“And when you know the Hyleg and you desire to know the Alcocoden, which is called the divisor, you will consider the four above mentioned significators, i.e. the ruler of the house [sign] in which the Hyleg was, the ruler of the exaltation, the ruler of the term and the ruler of the triplicity and whichever of these you find more fit, make that one Alcocoden.”

“Begin from the ruler of term. If you find that he projects his rays to the term [where the Hyleg is placed] make him Alcocoden. But if you find that he does not, then look to the ruler of the house [sc. sign] and work with him – just as with the ruler of the term, after this, the ruler of the exaltation, finally the ruler of the triplicity.”

⁹⁹ i.e. the Moon rises as the Sun sets and sets as it rises thus the Moon is visible during the whole night which is not the case at any other phase.

¹⁰⁰ reading *accipiendum* for *incipiendum*.

¹⁰¹ I have had to paraphrase this section. The Latin is very confusing - *Et dixit non est in eo aliquid quaerendum quod timetur de esse aliorum locorum Ylem, ex profectu scilicet aut in profectu.*

“But if you find that none of these is fit to be the Alcocoden, use lastly the lord of the face [decan] although its signification is weak. And you may understand that this is if their dignity were the same and equal that is of each of them.”

“However, if they all aspect equally and one of them has more dignities than another, he who has two is preferred to another having only one and he who has three is preferred to another having two and may be called stronger. If however they were all equally strong in dignities or testimonies, that one is preferred who was in an angle or in a succedent house.”

“But if they were all in an angle or in a succedent house, that one is called stronger who was nearer the cusp of the angle or of the succedent house. But if they were equal in fortitude and dignity in the place of the Hyleg, and they were equally [strong] in an angle or succedent house that one is preferred who was in his own dignity to another who was peregrine or in a lesser dignity than he. But if all were equally equal in the above mentioned fortitudes, that one is preferred who is nearer to the Sun provided that he be not *combust* either by zodiacal condition or mundane.¹⁰²”

“And if the Sun were on the oriental line,¹⁰³ it is preferred to other significators. And if any of the planets were in the Ascendant or in the tenth or distant from the line of the cusp, more than three degrees before or more than five behind, make him participator with the Hyleg whether he has dignity there or not but if he has dignity there he will be stronger than another who was placed outside the aforesaid places, although their dignity may be equal.”

“And even if they are not equal, if the absent planet has one dignity or even two more than he, that one who is present will be stronger in the aforesaid places as I said. However, if he has no dignity there, his participation will be weak and contributing little.”

“And if any of the three planets were oriental and in *Zamini* of the Sun or before their second station, or after it by a space which it is able to cover in seven days, and has any dignity in the place of the Hyleg and were otherwise well disposed, the Hyleg and the Alcocoden will be able to be sought from it, unless the lord of the term of the degree of the Hyleg works to the contrary.”

“And it has been seen by Ptolemy that an aspect may be one fortitude of a planet in Hyleg and Alcocoden; and that a planet which has three dignities, although it does not aspect, may be stronger than that planet which has only one and aspects: nor moreover does he contradict those philosophers who said that he who has one [fortitude] will be stronger if he were present in the aforesaid places because he understood this of those aspecting and not of those present in those places.”

¹⁰² *tam ortu cosmico quam eliaco.*

¹⁰³ The cusp of the Ascendant presumably.

“And he [Ptolemy] said `that that planet is more worthy so that it may rule which has more dignities in the Ascendant, and in the places of the luminaries and in the *Part of Fortune* or in the degree of conjunction or prevention which preceded the nativity.’”

“And he said `that if there were any planet which had dignity in three or four places or indeed in two, we constitute him Almutem over the nativity.’”

On Knowing the Length of the Life of the Native

“After this we look to the place of this Almutem for knowing the years of the native. If the Almutem were oriental and in an angle and along with this it were in its Aym and it were in any of the aforementioned dignities which are house, exaltation, triplicity and face, [in which is seen from the face]¹⁰⁴ and if it were in the Ascendant or in the tenth and in his own Aym, he will give his major years.”

“And Abohaly¹⁰⁵ said `that if the Sun were Hyleg and were in Aries or Leo, and none of the rulers of his five dignities aspected him, he will be Hyleg and Alcocoden. It will be similar regarding the Moon when she is in Taurus or Cancer in the aforesaid conditions.’”

“And Ptolemy said, `if however it¹⁰⁶ were oriental and in a succedent house and especially in the eleventh, and in any of its aforesaid dignities, and were free from impediments, it will give its middle years. But if it were in cadent houses, although in other ways free it will then give its minor years. But if it were cadent, and were otherwise impeded, for instance retrograde, or in opposition to any of its own houses,¹⁰⁷ or to its exaltation,¹⁰⁸ or if it were peregrine, or obsessed by two malefics, it will then give in place of those years, months or perhaps it will give in place of months, weeks.¹⁰⁹ But if it were *combust* with any of the aforementioned impediments, it will signify and will give in place of those years, hours or it will signify at most, days.’”

¹⁰⁴ *ut quibus videtur de facie*. This is a parenthetical tangential remark which does not bear directly on the matter.

¹⁰⁵ variously, Aboali, Aboaly, Albohaly, etc. This is Masha'allah's student, Abu 'Ali Al-Khayyat (c.770-835 AD), known to those intimate with him as Abu 'Ali Yahya ibn Ghalib and as Isma'il ibn Muhammad. He was one of the leading astrologers of his day. He wrote an *Introduction to Astrology*; works on horary astrology, political works on forms of governments, *On the Revolution of Years of Nativities* (we would call these figures Solar Returns), a scientific work on the prism, and a work called *The Rod of Gold*. According to James Holden, only his horary work, *On Questions*, and his *The Judgements of Nativities* survive in Arabic. The latter was translated into Latin by Plato of Tivoli in 1136; and by John of Seville in 1153.

¹⁰⁶ The almutem.

¹⁰⁷ sc. signs – a planet so placed is said to be in its detriment.

¹⁰⁸ i.e. in fall.

¹⁰⁹ *hebdomas*

“Aboaly [Aboali] considered all the angles equal in giving major years, and all the succedent houses in giving middle years, but the cadent houses in giving minor years.”

When the Planets Add Years

“But after you identify the Alcocoden which is called the giver of years, see whether it is aspected by any of the planets or were joined corporally to one.”

“You will see whether the planet to which it is joined, or which aspect it, is a benefic, and by what aspect it is aspected. Because if [the aspecting planet] aspects it [the Alcocoden] with a trine or a sextile and were a benefic and were strong and fortunate, it will add its minor years to it¹¹⁰ and so many months as are equal to his¹¹¹ middle years.”

“However, if he did not receive him, with the aforesaid conditions, he will add his minor years to him [i.e. the years given by the Alcocoden] and moreover, as many days as his¹¹² major years. You will say likewise if he receives him with a square aspect or an opposition. However, if that fortune which aspects the Alcocoden were impeded, it will add months equal to the number of its minor years.”

When the Planets Diminish the Years

“But if the aspecting planet were a malefic and aspects him with a square or an opposition or were corporally joined to him, he diminishes the years given by the Alcocoden according to the number his [i.e. the malefic’s] minor [years].”

“However, if he were fortunate¹¹³ and strong, he diminishes the number of years given by the Alcocoden by one third part of his minor years.¹¹⁴ Mars is of greater danger¹¹⁵ than the other of the malefics [i.e. Saturn], Mercury is changeable because if he were with planets who add years,¹¹⁶ he adds years to the native according to the number of his minor years (refer to **Table VIII** Years of the Planets, Appendix Two). But if he were with planets who diminish¹¹⁷ he diminishes by the same number.¹¹⁸”

¹¹⁰ i.e. the years given by the Alcocoden

¹¹¹ the aspecting planets’

¹¹² reading *receptit* for *receptunt* as on the last line of this page.

¹¹³ in good zodiacal condition

¹¹⁴ This should read by a third part of his minor years.

¹¹⁵ *maioris nocumenti quam*

¹¹⁶ *cum augentibus*

¹¹⁷ *cum minuentibus*

¹¹⁸ i.e. by as many years as his minor years – although since Mercury may be afflicted as well – look to see if he is giving months or days in accordance with the rules given above.

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 signifiers.”

“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.”¹¹⁹

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*.

On the Direction of Degrees to Planets in Order to Know the Accidents of the Native

“After you have discovered the number of years of the life of the native, which is signified by the Alcocoden and you desire to know the accidents of the native or his being,¹²⁰ direct his Hyleg to the rays of the malefics i.e. the square aspect, the opposition and the corporal conjunction in one sign and also the trine or sextile aspect of them, and you will give one year to each degree of distance which is between them all the way to the completion of the conjunction of them exactly to the minute, according to the degrees of the region. And to every five minutes one month and to every minute six days and to every 25 thirds one hour. And see when the Hyleg reaches the rays of the malefics or to the degree in which they were at the time of birth or their rays, because if the Hyleg were then signifier or the Alcocoden were evilly disposed, the accidents of the native will be aggravated and horrible things will occur.”

“But if the Hyleg comes to any of the malefics, or to any of the aforesaid feared places; and none of the benefics projects its rays to those places; and it were the last year of years of the native which have been given to him by the Alcocoden; the native will die in that year, and in that month and in that day and in that hour and from such a death as was signified for him by the giver of years in his nativity, if he lived as long as he was supposed to [that is, that this was not prevented by an accidental

¹¹⁹ See Bonatti’s discussion of the fourth house (relating to the father) in the *Second Tractus* of Bonatti at www.new-library.com/zoller/books.

¹²⁰ *de ipsius esse*

death as happens often] and all the more certainly and strongly and infallibly¹²¹ if that malefic should impede the ruler of the Ascendant of the nativity and the ruler of the Ascendant of the revolution of that year and the ruler of profection of the same [year] or if it [i.e. the malefic] and the other malefic should impede all the aforesaid signifiers.”

“And there will then be but one remedy, only one, which is: that if that malefic were in greater latitude, or in lesser latitude than the Hyleg, so that they do not obstruct each other *recto diametro*, so that there may be a deviation of one from the other more than one degree unless it were, by chance, a divine miracle. But if there were a deviation of them, as I said, he will not die unless perhaps by a fault of errors or if it happens by the force of nature, he will be threatened however by a danger similar to death.”

“Employ those fixed stars which are of the Nature of that impeding malefic in their latitudes, just as you employ the impeding malefic.¹²² And do not make your direction unless you first take notice the latitudes of the planets and the fixed stars as I said. In these years however, when the Hyleg arrives at the aforesaid places without the projection of the rays of any of the benefics, the being¹²³ of the native be oppressed and adverse; horrible things will happen to him, however they will not be dangerous.”

“But if the fortunes project their rays to that place the native will not be impeded with a grave impediment. And as often as the Hyleg comes to the benefics or to the places in which they were, or to the places in which their rays were, at the time of birth without the projection of any of the rays of any malefic, so many times will fortunate circumstances and pleasing things happen to him.”

“If however a malefic projects his rays to him, he takes away from that goodness. However he doesn’t take away much but rather in accordance, more or less, with how he [i.e. the malefic] is disposed.¹²⁴ Similarly, as often as the Hyleg comes to the malefics or to the places in which the malefics were or their rays at the time of birth, without the projection of the rays of any of the benefics, so many times contrary and horrible things happen to him and his being¹²⁵ will be aggravated.”

¹²¹ taking *fortius*, *certius*, *infallibilis* as adverbs modifying *moriatur* in the line translated above as “the native will die in that year”.

¹²² In other words, the same rules apply to those fixed stars which are of the same nature as the impeding malefic. You proceed in the same way.

¹²³ *esse*

¹²⁴ *tamen secundum magis et minus iuxta illud quod ipsa fuerit dispositus. ipsa = mala planeta*. The given is the degree of goodness bestowed by the benefic place – the diminution of the goodness is by the malefic. How much he takes is a function of his zodiacal condition.

¹²⁵ *esse*

“But if a benefic projects its rays to the aforesaid place, it takes away from the evil of those malefics in conformity with how it is disposed. But if the Hyleg comes to an impeding malefic at the time of birth¹²⁶ or to any of its aspects, and the malefic does not receive him [i.e. the Hyleg] with a perfect reception, and the malefic itself is impeded, it signifies the death of the native in that year, just as is said elsewhere.”

“That all the planets are givers of years but they are not all preservers of them simply, on the contrary, sometimes they are destroyers for instance naturally or by accident, similarly with *Caput* and *Cauda draconis* [Head and Tail of the Dragon].

All the Planets Are Givers of Years

“All the planets are givers of years however each according to a different succession¹²⁷ and even *Caput* and *Cauda draconis*.¹²⁸”

“But not all [the planets] are custodians or preservers of years simply. Indeed some of them are naturally destroyers, namely Saturn, Mars, *Caput* and *Cauda draconis*. And, indeed, there are some other destroyers besides the aforesaid, although not naturally¹²⁹ but rather by accident, and these are thirteen so that all the destroyers are seventeen, that is, the four mentioned above who kill by their very nature and those thirteen who kill by accident; some by times, some by the position of places i.e. relative position.”

“For the Sun kills by corporal conjunction and by its square aspect, and by its opposition. Similarly the Moon kills by its corporal conjunction with the Sun, whether she is Hyleg or not, unless she were in *Zamini Solis*, and when it is in the Sun’s square aspect or opposition.”

“The Moon kills when it reaches the degree of the Ascendant without the aspect of a benefic if she were Hyleg in the nativity and the same degree were rising in the revolution [of the year], then the native will die, because she is inimical to his Ascendant on account of the diversity of nature between them [i.e. between the Moon and the Ascendant].

¹²⁶ *hora nativitatis*

¹²⁷ The idea seems to be that each of the planets gives a different number of years and a planet may rule a particular period of life as well, though the order will vary. For instance, the allotment of years to terms, *Firdar*, the Ages of Man etc., in which each planet not only rules the years attributed to it but is thought to actually give them. It is useful to remember that the foundation of Astrology is the ancient Chaldean polytheism and that even when the art enters the Christian monotheistic world and takes on the appropriate philosophical or theological garment it of necessity remains basically polytheistic in its metaphysics and this must creep through from time to time in the writings of those like Bonatti who are thoroughly familiar with the fact.

¹²⁸ which are thought to be generally malefic in nature. However this is due, as we saw above, to the confusion emanating from the Arab transmission of astrological knowledge regarding the nature and use of these points.

¹²⁹ That is not intrinsically, or by their nature.

The Ascendant indeed is friendly to the Sun and is of the nature of heat and day. And the Moon is inimical to the Ascendant, friendly to its nadir, that is, the seventh [house], and it is of the nature of cold and night: and they are oppressed in turn.”

“But *Caput draconis* and *Cauda draconis* kill on account of their stricture in the section of the circle, when the Hyleg is joined to either of them in the nativity or in the revolution unless at that time the fortunes aspect the degree.”

“And understand this likewise concerning the degree which was of the 12th house [cusp] namely at the time of birth, or the 6th or 8th. Similarly, they make *cor tauri*, and *cor scorpionis* destroyers on account of the superabundance of conquering heat¹³⁰ in them.”

“Mercury, indeed, kills when corporally joined to any of the malefics or in their square aspect or in their opposition without a perfect reception or without the aspect of any benefic, when he were in the degree which was rising at the time of birth or were himself Hyleg, or were in the square aspect of the Hyleg or in its opposition. But not when he was with the benefics.”

“Even the Hyleg kills if it is joined with the Ascendant of the nativity. You are able to say this likewise of the Moon if it is joined with that degree and even more so if the planet whose degree you calculate¹³¹ to the Hyleg at the time of birth were evilly disposed.¹³²”

“Certain other degrees kill which you direct¹³³ to the Hyleg if they are evilly disposed. Where Aomar said, ‘and when there were perfect direction in the end of a sign with half of the lesser years of the Alcocoden or of the middle or greater years (refer to **Table VIII**), it kills.’¹³⁴”

“And he said, ‘and when the disposition is changed from the Hyleg out of a term of a malefic and into the term of [another] malefic; in that entrance of that malefic, it kills.’”

“And he said ‘And remember that it was observed by Ptolemy that the Moon is always directed to the rays of the malefics and the benefics in order to know the condition¹³⁵ of the body in health or in infirmity and the condition¹³⁶ of the mother. And the *Part of Fortune* [is directed] in

¹³⁰ *propter superfluum adundantiam caloris in eis vincentis.*

¹³¹ *duxeris – duco – calculate.*

¹³² That is if in the nativity you direct this planet to the Hyleg.

¹³³ *duxeris – duco – Here: direct.*

¹³⁴ *Et dixit, et cum mutatur dispositio ab Hyleg ex Termino mali in Terminum mali, in ipso intoitu ipsius mali interfecit.*

¹³⁵ *esse*

¹³⁶ *esse*

order to know about the acquisitions of the natives, namely his wealth or poverty. And the Sun for knowing the condition¹³⁷ of the father, or of the authority.¹³⁸ The *Medium Coeli* [is directed] in order to know the condition¹³⁹ of his rule or his profession.’”

“And he said `that it was observed by him that the direction of the degree of the *Medium Coeli* was by ascensions of the right circle.¹⁴⁰”

“Again, it was observed by him and all others that in order to know the conditions of the native we direct from the rising degree according to the divisions of the terms to the rays of the benefics and malefics so that if the divisor, or dispositor were a benefic it will signify health and safety of the body and a good condition¹⁴¹ of it, according to the condition of the dispositor¹⁴² and it will be of greater or better condition¹⁴³ and of better complexion if they may be antecedent to it.¹⁴⁴”

“And this happens in kings, and wealthy men and great men more than in lesser men and paupers or vile and mediocre men. And so much the better or stronger, if the rays of any of the benefics are present. And the better the condition¹⁴⁵ of the benefic, the better the condition of the native.”

“If however the divisor or the dispositor were a malefic and the division¹⁴⁶ were discovered [to be] in the rays of some other malefic it signifies the evil condition¹⁴⁷ of the native in that division or disposition. It signifies, indeed, infirmities and disorder of the complexion of his body, according to his [i.e. the malefics] disposition and the worse his condition¹⁴⁸ is the more grave the disposition of the native at that time and so much the worse if the rays of the other malefic are present.”

“But if the divisor or dispositor were a malefic and the rays of the benefics were present, or if the divisor were a benefic and the rays of a malefic were present the condition¹⁴⁹ of the native will be mediocre,

¹³⁷ *esse*

¹³⁸ *regni* — literally kingship, but here of wider application.

¹³⁹ *esse*

¹⁴⁰ that is by right ascensions.

¹⁴¹ *esse*

¹⁴² *significabit in divisione seu dispositione sanitatem atque in colunitatem corpororis et eius bonum esse, cuiuscunque conditionis ipse fuerit.*

¹⁴³ *esse*

¹⁴⁴ that is if the dispositor apply to the rays of the planets.

¹⁴⁵ *esse*

¹⁴⁶ We are dealing again with the division of time according to Terms although the reasoning here applies to all forms of prognostics.

¹⁴⁷ *malum esse*

¹⁴⁸ *esse*

¹⁴⁹ *esse*

that is, sometimes the native will be healthy and sometimes infirm, one time wealthy and at another a pauper, sometimes with many possessions and at another time lacking, sometimes giving away and at other times acquiring, sometimes ordering his own affairs, sometimes destroying or laying them waste, sometimes greedy in not retaining, sometimes in not spending. However, if that planet being benefic were impeded, his condition will incline toward prosperity. But if that planet being a malefic were well disposed his condition¹⁵⁰ will incline more toward prosperity than adversity.¹⁵¹”

On the Science of Directing the Rays of the Planets to the Hyleg

“When you desire to direct the degree of a planet to the Hyleg so that you may know the life of the native and his condition¹⁵² during the whole period of his life, and his disposition with his accidents, see whether the Sun is the Hyleg or the Moon or any of the other planets or degrees. Because it is fitting that you attend to the disposition of the rays of the planets and their projection to the Hyleg and that you see in what place or in what degree it [the Hyleg] was by equal degrees and their minutes.”

“When you have done this, see which of the planets projects its rays to that by whatever aspect or by opposition, by equal degrees according to the ascensions of the region and those are called the rays of that planet. Then we ought to see in what degree of the sign it [the planet] is, and reduce these [degrees] into degrees of ascension, and this [i.e. the result] is called the degree of the body of the planet. You will find the Ascendant and the other houses according to the ascension of the region [in which the birth was].”

“This is the method used by many of the ancients especially those who followed in the footsteps of Dorotheus who was one of the few earlier [ones] who studied this matter. Moreover, this was not contrary to the opinion of Ptolemy although perhaps it seems somewhat diverse from it but it was an easier method and because of this there were many of the ancients [who] followed these steps.”

“An example of this is as follows: It is posited that the Hyleg is in the 17th degree of Leo and the planet whose direction you intend to make is in the 28th degree of Pisces. The 17th degree of Leo in which the Hyleg is, ought to be directed to the 28th degree of Virgo to the rays of the aforesaid planet whether a benefic or a malefic, provided that benefic may then be a killing planet, which sometimes happens. Then

¹⁵⁰ esse

¹⁵¹ *Si autem illa fortuna fuerit impedita, declinabit esse suum ad latus prosperitatis. Si vero ille malus fuerit bene dispositus, declinabit esse suum plus ad latus prosperitatis quam adversitatis.*

¹⁵² esse

you subtract the ascensions, which are in right degrees¹⁵³ [i.e. Right Ascension] of the Hyleg from the ascensions of 28 degrees of Virgo [in Right Ascension], where the opposition of the killing planet is and the degrees, which remain, are equal to the years of the native absolutely, which are 41.¹⁵⁴”

“Similarly you will see if any of the adding planets adds years or if any of the subtracting planets subtracts anything from the year arrived at¹⁵⁵ and according to this you will judge the number of the years of the natives life, concerning which I will tell you below when direction of the planets according to terms is treated.¹⁵⁶”

“But Aomar said that Ptolemy used another method but it was not contrary to this although it seemed diverse from it, it seemed more difficult to some. I say that Ptolemy’s intention was according to the disposition of the lords of the terms, and according to the division of their disposition in them.”

“Indeed he said `that all the rays are gathered in the cusp of the earth and that they are one thing. And that it is necessary for us to know the diversity of the rays according to the site of the place [of birth] beginning to calculate¹⁵⁷ the rays by the longitude of the planets from the angles by the ascensions of the city in which we were and by Right Ascensions.¹⁵⁸”¹⁵⁹

“`And when you have done so and you have adjusted the places of the planets, you direct the Hyleg and the ascending degree, according to these longitudes as has been said. And when you see that the direction comes to the benefics, judge good. And when you see that it comes to the malefics judge the contrary according as you see their condition¹⁶⁰ and their dignities or debilities¹⁶¹ and their benefits or the contrary and this if the Hyleg were from the tenth all the way to the seventh according to the order of the signs.’”

¹⁵³ *Tunc minues ascensiones quae sunt in directo gradus.*

¹⁵⁴ Bonatti is confusing ecliptical longitude with Right and Oblique Ascension

¹⁵⁵ i.e. 41

¹⁵⁶ This is contained in ***Tools and Techniques Book II: Astrological Prediction by Direction and the Subdivision of Signs*** (www.new-library.com/zoller/books).

¹⁵⁷ *operari*

¹⁵⁸ *et per ascensionis circuli directi*

¹⁵⁹ This and the following two paragraphs have been ascribed to Ptolemy however it is unclear if this is correct. Bonatti may be quoting Aomar who is citing what is supposed to be Ptolemy’s opinion, or he may be reciting Aomar’s opinion. We can’t turn to the Greek text of Ptolemy to compare it with what is said since Bonatti was using Latin translations of Arabic texts, which adulterated, modified and interpreted Ptolemy. This entire section shows the problems associated with the interpretation of Ptolemy.

¹⁶⁰ *esse*

¹⁶¹ *fortitudines vel debilitates*

“However, if it were between the seventh and the tenth, they are done in reverse order, namely against the order of the signs by taking the ascensions of the degree of the Hyleg from the ascensions of the degree of the malefic, if it were in the aforesaid places toward which we directed although some seem to prefer something else.”

“And concerning *Caput draconis* understand likewise. That is, if you direct the Hyleg to *Caput draconis* whatever the Hyleg may be, whether the degree of the Ascendant, or the degree of the Moon or another, direct it retrograde against the order of the signs by taking the ascensions of the degree of *Caput draconis* from the ascensions of the Hyleg.”

“But for *Cauda draconis* direct according to the order of the signs, as I told you above. According to the number of degrees, you will give years. And when the Hyleg comes to the western degree¹⁶² or to a degree of a malefic who was between the tenth [house] and the seventh [house] to which you directed the degree of the Hyleg, then the native will die unless at that time a strong benefic aspects that degree with a trine or sextile aspect, and with reception because then it will not kill but the native will be endangered with a danger similar to death and, if he will not control himself then with the proper regimen, will die even though the error may be minor.”

On the Number of Malefics and Benefics

“The ancient wise men said that the malefics were four. However it seems to me that seven can be so called, because although they had said that there were four, nevertheless they seem to have excluded some. Whence I say that these are able to be seven: two naturally as Saturn and Mars, two accidentally as Sol and Mercury, one by unfortunate conditions¹⁶³ as Luna, and two locally as *Caput* and *Cauda draconis*. Indeed¹⁶⁴ when the Sun is joined with Mars corporally or in his opposition or square aspect without a perfect reception. And Mercury when *combust* or in the aforesaid aspects with or without reception. And the Moon when unfortunate as had been said in the chapter¹⁶⁵ on impediments of the Moon.”

¹⁶² i.e. The cusp of the seventh house.

¹⁶³ *Per infortunium*, literally by misfortune – Bonatti refers to adverse Zodiacal State, such as when the Sun or Mercury are with the malefics or determined to an evil house. In *Tractatus Quintus – 146 Considerations* (www.new-library.com/zoller/books) Bonatti lists 17 ways in which the Moon is adversely affected, and of these, the adverse aspects of malefics is only one of these ways. But Bonatti himself refers us below.

¹⁶⁴ Bonatti now gives examples.

¹⁶⁵ See Consideration Number 5 in *146 Considerations and Selected Aphorisms* (www.new-library.com/zoller/books).

“Tiberiadis said, `when these were congregated over Venus without the aspect of the benefics, then the native will be “*spadus*.” But if the first ruler of the triplicity of Venus were strong it is helpful for this, however without it he will suffer this and being laborious [as well] will lack sustenance all the days of his life. But when *Caput draconis* is with malefics and similarly *Cauda* with benefics they are also malefics.”

“But the benefics are eight. That is four naturally as Jupiter, Sol, Venus, and Luna; two accidentally as Mercury when with these whether joined corporally to any of them, or in their trine or sextile aspect with reception or without it, or in their square or opposition with a perfect reception, and if none of the malefics impede him without reception.”

“And Mars and Saturn when both are perfectly conjoined corporally which is when they are in the same minute in the sign,¹⁶⁶ or the exaltation of either of them, or in two of their minor dignities or even if there were between them five minutes or less, with Mars applying to Saturn in other places, however they are not made benefics unless they are received by a benefic, but their malice is hidden.”

“On account of this it has been said that of the two malefics joined at the same time, they make one a benefic. Two locally as when *Caput draconis* is with benefics it increases their benefic influence and *Cauda* with malefics decreasing theirs.¹⁶⁷”

“And benefics are so called because they aid the work of the virtues and operations of nature.¹⁶⁸ And on account of this Jupiter and Venus are called benefics because they always do this each of them according to their own nature. And Saturn and Mars are called malefics naturally because each of these by his own nature always excels in harming and impeding the works of the virtues and operations of nature.

“But some consider them either malefics or benefics. And know that it is said by envious and ignorant men that all exterior good things are the goods of fortune or chance but they do not see because they are ignorant of what others know, and they like neither wise men nor science because they like nothing unless it is known.”

¹⁶⁶ *in domo*

¹⁶⁷ I have expanded the translation to give all of which the Latin implies. *duo vero localiter, ut caput cum fortunis augmentando, et cauda cum malis dimuendo*, which is a bit terse and cryptic. Astrological tradition states that the nodes of the Moon are two ends of a stream of Lunar energy, one node increasing influences and one decreasing. Thus, for instance, the *Cauda*, which decreases, may be locally benefic if it decreases the malice of the malefics.

¹⁶⁸ The benefics foster life, i.e. aids the operations of nature: Venus by urging to love, pleasure and copulation; Jupiter by providing abundantly the good things of the world: food, drink and wealth. But Venus and Jupiter also have moral benefits. Jupiter engenders openness and freedom from constraint, whereby we feel less inclined to do evil through revenge while Venus, inculcating a love of beauty leads us to harmonious relations with each other.

Comments on the Hyleg

In the above we are told that we should attempt to make the Sun Hyleg in a diurnal figure, or, if this is not possible, due to the Sun's position, then to take the Moon as a second choice "in the day or at night."

In **Figure 4**, which I will use as an example for this matter and for the matter of the Alcocoden, the Moon is Hyleg.

The native very nearly died from pneumonia just before 2 years old and would have were it not for the "iron lung" (a device which enabled him to breathe). It should be pointed out that the astrologer will run into numerous such cases where a native with an Hyleg nevertheless confronts life threatening situations due illness and other reasons. Such threats to the life may come through universal causes, such as epidemics, or from the apparently delicate health of the native as here.

Now this brings up an interesting question which I will merely raise here without trying to answer for now: 'Is the fact that the native survived this assault just before 2 years old exclusively a matter of his good "luck" to have been born in a country and time when the technology needed to help him was available?' If so, are we saying that having an Hyleg increases merely the native's physical strength, or is something even more intangible and unquantifiable, yet real and all pervasive? My teacher back in the 1970's, before I knew enough to ask him what he meant, used to say that the Moon as Hyleg fortified the constitution while the Sun as Hyleg fortified the vitality. If we say that a 4th differentia figure differs from a 1st, 2nd or 3rd differentia figure by virtue of having an Hyleg, what exactly does that Hyleg do? It looks to me as though it is benefiting the native of **Figure 4**, not only fortifying his constitution, but by affecting the world he lives in to the point of providing needed hardware (the "iron lung").

As you can see, there are a number of issues raised by this question which preclude any attempt to answer it here. I wanted to mention it to the reader, however, in order that he or she may think about it. At a future time and place we can address it more pointedly.

In **Figure 4** we note that the Sun is in the 12th house by Whole Sign Houses. While there was considerable "Diversity of opinion but not Contrariety" among the ancients as to precisely how to locate the Hyleg, nevertheless none amongst those cited by Bonatti authorises a 12th house Sun as Hyleg. Personally I reject a 12th house Hyleg in my practice and I disregard eighth house Suns as Hylegs as well. Bonatti is careful to suggest that, with regard to the matter of masculine signs versus feminine signs that Ptolemy's opinion ought not to be thrown out. I think the same is true of his general approach to the Hyleg. Here

again only very large numbers of horoscopes in which the life spans and health of the natives is established, will categorically decide this matter. A number of people, including myself, are looking at this issue but no conclusions have been drawn yet. It is wise, when reckoning longevity, to consider both Ptolemy's method for finding the Hyleg as well as the Medieval method and judge between them which you think is more likely to be the more effective "Giver of Life."

Since the Moon is Hyleg in **Figure 4**, we can use it to check the native's health. On November 6, 1947 the Ascendant was directed to the conjunction of the Moon as Hyleg. The native was deathly ill at this time. Bonatti tells us that the Hyleg kills when directed to the Ascendant in a nativity. It came close to doing so. Why did it fail to kill the native? The answer may lie in the fact that a benefic, Venus (17° Sagittarius 58), aspects the Ascendant (12° Pisces) widely by square aspect. Any aspect of a benefic is salutary. Yet note Venus' rulership of the 8th house.

By virtue of being Lady of the 8th, Venus comes close to being dubbed an Accidental Malefic. If Venus were an Accidental Malefic, I should have to deem the Ascendant afflicted by her. Early death would be expected for the native. The reason we may hesitate to identify her as such is that, strictly speaking to be an Accidental Malefic, the benefic in question must be both in poor zodiacal state and determined (either by position or rulership) to an evil house. Although Venus may be suspect here due to her rulership of the 8th she retains her benefic status. I judge that the Ascendant is not afflicted by her. The native was especially ill from birth to 5 years of age. The direction and its effect confirm the Moon as Hyleg.

All of this emphasis on the Hyleg is not intended to imply that nothing adverse will occur to the native unless the Hyleg is afflicted. On the contrary, the angular planets, especially those with honour in the Ascendant and the Ascendant, itself, when afflicted by malefics (or even by benefics accidentally malefic) can point to serious illnesses or difficulties of various sorts. However (theoretically), the life of the native will not be threatened unless the Hyleg and/or the Ascendant are also afflicted around the same time. Bonatti, expounding the doctrine of the Alcocoden, affirms that, even then, when the Hyleg is afflicted, the native will survive unless that affliction occurs around the end of the time allotted by the Alcocoden. Thus, should the Alcocoden give, let us say, Mars's greater (or major) years (66 years – refer to **Table VIII** in **Appendix Two**), any directions afflicting the Hyleg or Ascendant before that time would, theoretically, not prove fatal. However, the closer such directions come to the 66th year of the native, the more concern we would have for him or her.

It would seem that the doctrine of the Hyleg bears out and that threats to the health are indeed shown by afflictions to the Hyleg. However, it should be remembered that afflictions to the Ascendant may also show dangers to the health of the native.

Thus while both the Ascendant and the Hyleg are associated with health; and while both must be closely scrutinized in this regard, differences are nonetheless observed in their respective significations. The Ascendant is directed for knowing the accidents of the native. Such an accident may be that he gets ill at a certain point in life. On the other hand, the Hyleg is directed for knowing the health and life of the native. The doctrine of the Hyleg is an important doctrine in practice. It has been used by most traditional astrologers and continues to be used by them to this day. Astrologers should now be aware of these “new” insights which will better able them to determine if their methods need to be modified or not according to the opinions in the text and also to determine whether or not these opinions are confirmed by experience.

Comments On the Alcocoden

Bonatti tells us that for there to be an Alcocoden, one of the rulers of the Hyleg must aspect the Hyleg. The aspecting ruler may then be the Alcocoden. He instructs us to see if the ruler of the term aspects the Hyleg. If it does not then we are to look to the ruler of the house (by which he means sign) and if this fails to aspect the Hyleg then he directs us to look to the ruler of the sign by exaltation. Should this too fail to aspect the Hyleg, we are then to take the ruler of the triplicity.

In **Figure 4** the Moon is Hyleg. The Ascendant is at 12° Pisces 39 which is in the Ptolemaic term of Jupiter who also happens to rule the sign. We note that Jupiter is in Scorpio and can be said to aspect the Hyleg by sign. However, you will see that Venus, ruler of Pisces by exaltation, and also diurnal ruler of the triplicity, aspects the Moon more closely. Thus there can be no question of any other ruler of the triplicity being Alcocoden since the other ruler, Mars, does not aspect the Hyleg and the Moon *is the* Hyleg. Therefore Venus is Alcocoden. We take Venus over Jupiter because she is in an angle and is in closer aspect to the Moon. Venus is also the Almuten of the Moon’s position.

Having determined that Venus is the Alcocoden we must now analyse her condition. Bonatti tells us that if the Alcocoden, which he now refers to as Almuten or ruler, is in any of several honours it will give its major years (see **Table VIII, Appendix Two**). The actual list he gives is lengthy. He speaks of it being oriental, a masculine planet in a masculine sign, and above the earth, but a feminine planet in a feminine sign below the earth etc. However, the fundamental key to the application of this rule

is, I believe, the issue of angular, succedent, and cadent positions of the planet in question. This rule is modified by the relative strength of the planets and their essential and accidental dignities. Even the rule that the rulers of the degree of the Hyleg must aspect it may be waived if there is a strong enough Almuten. It is very difficult to find a planet having all the characteristics Bonatti gives; so difficult in fact, that to attempt to work this way would be to ultimately throw out the entire business as impractical. However, if we reflect that a planet may be strengthened in a number of ways and all these ways are to be considered, then, we have a procedure with which to begin to work.

Bonatti's requirements divide into two major approaches. Firstly, considerations of the sky, e.g. orientality (which here means that a major planet rises before the Sun, while a minor planet rises after the Sun), Aym, and the dignity (rulership, exaltation, triplicity, term and face [or decan]) these are all listed in **Appendix Two**. Secondly, considerations of the Earth e.g. angular, succedent or cadent house position.

In practice we want to know first, "What is the house position of the Alcocoden?" Next, we need to know its zodiacal or celestial state. Finally we need to know how much "virtue" the planet candidate for the Alcocoden has in the place of the Hyleg. A planet becomes Alcocoden in a given degree by ruling the degree of the Hyleg, by aspecting the degree of the Hyleg, by having "honor" or "dignity" in the degree of the Hyleg and being itself "strong" both essentially (as per its relationship with the sign it is in) and accidentally.

Therefore, on the basis of the foregoing, assuming we have identified the Alcocoden, when we see it angular we will want to give the major years to it. When we see it succedent we will give it the middle years. When we see it cadent, we will want to give it the minor years. Hence in this case we will follow the opinion of Aboaly, which Bonatti gives last. But we will also attend to its zodiacal state and to the level of its honor in the place of the Hyleg.

Afflictions to the Alcocoden will undoubtedly be important considerations. In the section on "When the Planets Diminish the Years" (above) and in the preceding section "When the Planets add Years" we see Bonatti's working theory at the basis of this issue. Thus afflictions to the Alcocoden by the malefics aspecting by square or an opposition or corporally conjunct diminish the number of years given by the Alcocoden by the minor years of the afflicting malefic, assuming equal strength of the malefic and the Alcocoden. When the malefic is in good zodiacal state (the same as celestial state, Morinus's cosmic state), however, as Bonatti says, he will take away only one third of his minor years.

The Question of the Influence of the Modern Planets

In the earlier edition of this work I discussed the pros and cons of using the modern planets with the Alcocoden method. I made some suggestions of years for each of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto. Over the years it became clear that it was a mistake to try to fit the modern planets into this Medieval Technique. I now disregard them in longevity calculations involving the Alcocoden Technique and urge others to do the same. They were not part of the Western Predictive Tradition of Astrology and have no rulerships or years.

Metaphysical and Scholarly Aspects of the Alcocoden Doctrine

In Bonatti's instructions we have a clear indication that the medieval astrologer believed in accidents and accidental death and that this could kill one before his or her "time." Certainly, this doctrine touches upon the metaphysical relation of astrology to the soul as does the matter of the Alcocoden which has the astrologer discovering the "giver of years" – a factor which is part of the inner workings of the soul.

In regard to this latter aspect the Italian scholar C.A. Nallino published an essay on the *Colcodia* of Avicenna and Tommaso Campanella, entitled *La "Colcodea" d'Avicennae T. Campanella* in the *Giornale Crittico della Filosofia Italiana* #6 1925 pp 84 -91¹⁶⁹ in which he speculates that the curious word *Colocodea* found in Campanella's¹⁷⁰ *De sensu rerum et Magia* (Frankfort 1620, Parigi 1637) and in his *Metaphysica* (Parigi 1638, Vol. IV of the *Opera*) is Campanella's astrological understanding of Avicenna's¹⁷¹ "active intelligence" or *intelligentia activa*, a sublunary intelligence, the last of the "separated intelligences" in descending order from the first intelligence created directly by God, which is responsible for the distribution of forms to our spirits, on the one hand and matter,

¹⁶⁹ My thanks to Dr. Richard Lemay of City College New York for bringing this article to my attention.

¹⁷⁰ Campanella Tommaso, originally Giovanni Domenico (1568-1639), Italian philosopher, born at Stilo Calabria; opponent of scholasticism? and Aristotelian logic. Dominican Monk (from c.1583); studied at Naples and Cosenza; taught at Rome and Naples; imprisoned (1599-1626) on charges of heresy and conspiracy against Spanish rule; forced to flee to France (1634); protégé of Louis XIII and Richelieu, known especially for his *Civitas Solis* ("City of the Sun") written during imprisonment, a description of a utopian state similar to that of Plato's Republic. His works, over 80 in all, also include *Philosophia Sensibus Demonstrata* (1591), *De Sensu Rerum et Magia* (1620), *Philosophia Epilogistica Realis* (printed with *Civitas Solis*, 1623), and *Atheismus Triumphatus*(1636), — *Webster's Biographical Dictionary*, E. C. Merriam Co., Springfield, Mass. 1980. For Campanella's place in the history of magic see *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, D.P. Walker, Warburg Institute, University of London, 1958. For an important discussion of Campanella's place in the Hermetic tradition and the politics of revolution in Renaissance Europe see *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* by Frances Yates, University of Chicago Press, 1964.

¹⁷¹ Avicenna (abu -`Ali al Husayn ibn Sina – in Arabic), 980-1037. Arab physician and philosopher, born in a village near Bokhara. Studied at Bokhara; received court position (997); travelled in Khwarazm (Khiva) and Persia; made vizier at Buyid court of Hamadan; compelled by soldiers to resign; imprisoned, but escaped to Isfahan; court physician (1024); travelled widely. He wrote about 100 works; his greatest, *The Canon*, a system of medicine, long regarded in the Orient as a textbook of great authority (often translated, first by Gerard of Cremona, 12th century); also wrote works on theology, metaphysics, logic, mathematics, etc. His philosophy (Avicennism) is based on Aristotle but includes Neoplatonic ideas. — *Webster's Biographical Dictionary*.

variably prepared by natural agents, on the other hand. It would seem therefore that, in Avicenna's view, this sublunary active intelligence would play the central role in the incarnation of the soul.

Campanella disagrees with Avicenna's opinion but Nallino wonders what the source is for Campanella's use of the word *Colcodea* for Avicenna's "active intelligence." He relates that the doctrine of the "active intelligence" had great renown through the Middle Ages in Europe. Albertus Magnus and Aquinas cite it and dispute it often. Since Albertus was contemporary with Bonatti and since the doctrine of the active intelligence had entered Europe along with the "New Science" of the twelfth century it is certain that Bonatti was familiar with it. Nallino goes on to say that neither in Arab sources nor in Hebrew sources is there anything like a *Colcodea*. The source of the *Colcodea* was therefore somewhere else. Nallino finds it in the writings of Augustine Nifo¹⁷² and Marc Anthony Zimara.¹⁷³

In 1497, says Nallino, Nifo published in Venice, for the first time, the metaphysical side of the *Destructio destructionum* of the Arabic philosopher Averroes,¹⁷⁴ accompanied by long commentaries composed

¹⁷² Agostino Nifo (Augustinus Niphus – in Latin) 1473? - 1538. Italian philosopher; renounced Averroism in favour of orthodoxy; commissioned by Leo X to answer Pomponazzi's *De Immortalitate Animi* (1518). Among his works are *De Infinitate Primi Motoris Quaestio* (1504).

¹⁷³ Marc Anthony Zimara, 1470 - 1532? Born of poor parents at Galatina. Studied at Padua. Taught philosophy at Padua for a year or so before returning to his native city. Helped to defend Naples against overlordship of Ferdinando Castriotto in 1522. In 1523 he lectured publically on theology at Naples in San Lorenzo Maggiore, then taught at Padua from 1525 to 1528. He composed Aristotelian Commentaries and in 1539 there appeared posthumously *Theoremata Marci Antoni Zimarae Sancti Petrinatis ... seu memorabilium propositionum limitationes. Cum additionibus ab ipso authore post primum impressionem factis quas sub hoc signo * noviter reperiens, Venetiis apud Octav. Scotum, 1539*. In 1552 was published *Tabula et dilucidatum in dictis Aristotelis et Averrois*, Venetiis, in fol. also in 1557. In 1564 2 vol. in fol. entitled: *Tabula et dilucidationes in dicta Aristotelis et Averrois recognita et expurgata*, Venetiis. There is also a magical work bearing Zimara's name. It is entitled: *Antrum magico-medicum* 1625 – a second volume was published in 1625 — *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol. VI, Lynn Thorndike, Columbia University Press, NY 1941, pp. 599-602.

¹⁷⁴ Averroës, frequently known as ibn-Rushd' (abu-al-Walid Muhammad ibn-Ahmad ibn-Rushd). 1126-1198. Spanish-Arabian philosopher and physician, born Cordoba. Lived in Morocco for several years (from 1153); cadí of Seville (1169) and later of Cordoba; sent by caliphs on important missions; suspected by Al-Mansur and interned (1195); died in Morocco. Wrote many treatises on jurisprudence, astronomy, grammar and medicine; his greatest works, commentaries on Aristotle. Had more influence on succeeding Jewish and Christian thought than on Arabian; his philosophy, developed as Averroism, does not differ greatly from later Christian Scholasticism.

between 1494-1497. These were then reprinted a number of times sometimes together with Aristotelian works. Nifo *Comments on disputatio IX*, dub.2 which reads:

“We say that this is according to the opinion of certain philosophers who think that the giver of the forms of inanimate bodies and of souls (*dans formarum corporum inanimatorum et animarum*) is a separated substance or intellect or separated soul (*anima separata*)... and this is similar to the opinion of Plato regarding forms separated from matter; and that this opinion had been expressed by Avicenna and those Saracen philosophers who followed him who assert the opinion of those who say that a body causes heat and coldness in another body, that is, the acting body for them is a super celestial body but that thing which gives substantial forms, especially souls, is without a doubt a separate being (*ens separatum*), which is called the ‘giver of forms’.”

Nallino tells us that at the end of the last line of this section, Nifo has added “*arabice tamen colcodea*” or “in the Arabic, however, *Colcodea*.” In a number of other places he supports this interpretation by stating, for instance that this “giver of form,” now the *Colcodea*, is the “mover of the spheres” and the “soul.” For Nifo, Nallino tells us, *Colcodea* would be the Arabic name of the “giver of form” imagined by Avicenna, or rather the active intellect as it gives form to the substance of the sub lunar world. He repeats the same identification several years later in another work.¹⁷⁵

Nallino continues, “the term *Colcodea* almost certainly passed from Nifo to Marc Anthony Zimara, who published in 1508 at Venice his famous *Solutiones contradictionum in dictis Averrois*. This work was printed more often than the works of Averroes himself. Zimara repeats Nifo’s identification by saying in connection with the Twelfth Book of *The Metaphysics*, comm. 38: ‘But you may equally say... that it is called the giver of forms or colcodea’.”

One isolated appearance of the word *colcodea* in a Hebrew book is undoubtedly due to Nifo and Zimara according to Nallino. In 1539, a learned Jew, Iechiel Nissin ben Samuel of Pisa wrote the *Minhat gen’ôt* (“Offerings of Zeal”), a short treatise on the relationship between philosophy and religion published (in German) in Berlin in 1898 by D. Kaufmann. In this work, on page 36, he recalls in Hebrew letters the term *qolqôdê’âh* as “Giver of form.” The learned publisher asks in vain whence it comes and what it really means. It lacks any Hebrew etymology or acceptable form and is nowhere to be found in other Hebrew literature.

¹⁷⁵ *Eutycki Augustini Niphi Philothei Suessani Metaphysicarum Disputationum de cidarium*, Venetiis 1521, lib. I, dip. XII (fol. 83r, col. I)

Finally Nallino concludes that this term is the Alcocoden, a word of Persian origin. He derives it from “*kadkudah*,” meaning “the head of the House” with the Arabic article “al” prefixed to it. The term, found by Western translators in Arabic books was corrupted to *alcochoden*, *alchocoden*, *alcocodes*, *alcocodeus*, etc (as we saw in the *Infusion of Sperm* treatise by Andalo di Negro). In these forms it passed to the astrologers of the Renaissance (in part through Bonatti’s *Liber Astronomia*), and so it was that Pico della Mirandola could maintain absolutely in his diatribe against astrology, *In Astrologiam*, that the Arabic doctrine of the Alcocoden was unknown to Ptolemy (and by implication to all of the ancients.)

Nallino rightly continues by saying that the Arab astrological term *al-kadkhudahiyah* comes from the Greek “ruler of the nativity.” As Alcocoden or some variation thereof the term recurs in the Latin translation of Abu Ma’shar’s works. Hence we find it in Bonatti for whom Abu Ma’shar is a major source.

Thus, in Nallino’s opinion, Nifo or an unknown someone before him, was responsible for the initial confusion of the *colcodea* with the Avicennian “giver of Forms.” Nallino, who has found marginal notes making such an evaluation believes it possible that Nifo, perhaps, came across such marginalia and considered it a piece of good fortune to have had this connection made for him.

Campanella then took a liking to the strange and rare term and lavishly uses it in his writings whenever he wishes to compare his own cosmological system to that of Avicenna. Nifo and Zimara, it seems, limited to their use of the term to those aspects of Avicenna’s “active intelligence” which are associated with the “giving of form.” Campanella, on the other hand, thoroughly confused the two ideas for his own purposes.

Such is Nallino’s contribution to this matter. It represents the very best of academic scholarship and research. By investigating the idiosyncratic use of a peculiar word, Nallino has uncovered for us the fact that the Renaissance metaphysicians were relating the astrological Alcocoden, or “giver of years” to the “active intelligence” or “giver of forms” of Avicenna. Giuseppe Bezza’s recent article *Astrological Considerations on the Length of Life in Hellenistic, Persian and Arabic Astrology* in *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol 2, No.2, Autumn/Winter 1998 (published in England) explores the relationship of the Almutem, Alcocoden and Hyleg in the natal chart as signifiers of spiritual factors in the native’s soul.

The equation, as made by Nallino between the Alcocoden and the Giver of Forms may not be as unfounded as it might seem. In Indian esoteric philosophy, there is a similar doctrine which points to limited, separate

intelligence, which is responsible for the ordering of souls and bodies in just the same way that Avicenna's active intellect does.

According to this doctrine, (as related by Harish Johari, the Indian artist and philosopher during a series of lectures given in New York, December 1980): Out of *Brahman*, the Unenergised Consciousness, comes *Ishwara*, Energized Consciousness or energy finding its expression in time. *Ishwara* is usually considered to be the Indian equivalent of the Judeo-Christian God. From *Ishwara* comes Conscious Energy or *Mulaprakriti*. This causes the Universe. It does this because inherent within it are the three *Guna*, *Rajas* (reflection of consciousness or action), *Tamas* (absorption of consciousness or inactivity) and *Sattwa* (the conducting of consciousness).

These three *Guna* are continuously struggling with each other for dominance and as a result of this struggle arises *Vikriti*, disharmony or distortion. As long as there was Harmony or Equipoise, there was no manifestation, no universe. Evolution begins through the distortion of the equilibrium of the *Guna*. This distortion is reflected, that is turned downwards and gives rise to *Buddhi* or Cosmic Discrimination. From *Buddhi* arises *Ahamkara*, which means the Vessel or Vehicle of *Aham* or the Universal Affirmation of Being "I AM," the seat of which is in *Ishwara* but whose origin is in *Brahman*.¹⁷⁶

Ahamkara here is the universal *Ahamkara* although the same process is evident in individual human beings as well. *Ahamkara* also reflects the *Guna*. Its *Sattwica* aspect gives rise to mind; its *Rajasica* aspect gives rise to the five organs of sense: taste, touch, smell, hearing and sight, and five organs of action: speech, hands, feet, excretion, and generation. Its *Tamasica* aspect gives rise to the five *Tanmatras* or senses that are the roots of the elements: sound, touch, sight, taste and smell. From these arise the five elements or: space, air, fire, water and earth.

In both individual human beings and in the world as a whole, *Buddhi*, *Manas*, *Chitta* and *Ahamkara* taken together form the *Antahkarana*. *Buddhi* is intellect. In some circles it is spoken of as Discrimination. *Manas* is Mind as it is closely connected closely with the sense organs. *Chitta* is referred to variously as the underlying substance of the soul and as the Self in us, the nature of which is *Satchidananda* or Knowledge, or Truth Consciousness and Bliss.

¹⁷⁶ *Aham* (Sanskrit) = *Eheieh* (Hebrew). The name, *Eheieh Asher Eheieh* translatable as "I am that I am," or better "I will be what I am" connotes the process of the I AM becoming what IS. The Ark of the Covenant is the container of the I AM. Exodus 3 equates *Eheieh Asher Eheieh*, *Elohim* and *Tetragrammaton*.

When *Sat* (truth) is taken away by *Maya* (illusion), *Ananda* (Bliss) is lost and we are said to fall into misery. It is also the repository of all past experience, which is said to be etched or held in the *Chitta*. Again, *Buddhi*, viewing the forms, being impressions made by past experiences both in this life time and in previous lives (including such things as the genetic memory, race, the collective unconscious and individual sympathies and antipathies) discriminates according to same and different and thereby notifies us of the nature of our surroundings and experiences.

Finally *Ahamkara* is, in us and in the world, the Ego. It is the identification of the *Aham* or “I AM” with something. This something can be simple like a stone or complex like a man. In both is “I AM.” It is the form that differs.

It would seem as though Avicenna was approaching a similar point of view, for his “active intellect” or “giver of forms” seems to fulfil a role similar to that of *Ahamkara* in the Indian system. For the *Ahamkara*, or Ego, gives rise to Manifestation by creating mind (*Manas*), sense and the elements. *Ahamkara* is superior to the elemental world since it causes that world yet it is a separated “intellect” the last in a chain which begins with the “first intelligence created directly by God (*Mulaprakriti*) which is responsible for the distribution of forms to our spirits on the one hand and to matter, variably formed by natural agents” (via the ordering effect of *Ahamkara* on both the Mind and on elemental matter), on the other.

Avicenna’s philosophical bias was essentially Aristotelian and Neoplatonic. It is possible, though not necessary for the argument, that through the Arab contact with India, Avicenna became influenced by Indian philosophy and metaphysics. For our purposes, however, it seems clear that there are striking similarities in both systems and the astrologers of the medieval and perhaps the more ancient periods did not miss this.¹⁷⁷

We see the astrologers employing an Alcocoden to determine the length of life or, more precisely, the length of the manifestation of the physical form. According to the Indian system, the Ego or *Ahamkara* creates the physical form. It must therefore be dissolved by it as well. This *Ahamkara* determines the physical body and is also responsible for determining the time and place of the incarnation or birth. This it does on the basis of similarity. It chooses a time and place that are similar to its needs.

¹⁷⁷ The similarity of this account with Jacob Boehme’s explanation of the Trinitarian view of the Creation, and likewise the similarity of the cosmology found in the kabbalistic *Sepher Yetzirah*, also impresses us.

The natal figure is a diagram of the heavens at the time and place of birth. In other words, the natal figure reflects the *Ahamkara* or Ego. This is why we as astrologers can say that the native will like this or that or that s/he looks like this or that or that s/he will marry on this or that day etc.

The natal figure is a diagram of the *Ahamkara*, not the *Ahamkara* of a given moment in time, but of all the permutations and development of that *Ahamkara* or Ego during the course of its present embodiment. In so far as this embodiment reflects the *Sanskritic* impressions of the past, the natal figure is a diagram of the *Sanskara* of that Ego.

Astrologers, in seeking the “giver of years” in the natal figure, did nothing more than to look for that aspect of the *Ahamkara* which allots such years. This is what the metaphysician of the Renaissance and perhaps the unknown predecessor(s) of Nifo, were seeking and, according to my thinking, they were looking in exactly the right place.

Whether this aspect of the Alcocoden doctrine will ever be established by academic scholarship remains to be seen, but Bezza’s article (above) suggests that it will be documented. Modern scholarship likes to make its conclusions on the basis of hard evidence in the form of documents. Most of what appears above will seem interesting speculation to such scholars, and so it is, but it is reasonable speculation nonetheless. What it does, if we can accept it, is to show the relation of the Alcocoden doctrine to what may be called the underlying metaphysics of astrology.

It shows that such metaphysics was understood in the Renaissance and Middle Ages in Europe and that it bears relation to Neoplatonic and Indian metaphysical systems. Moreover, it shows that astrology is essentially applied metaphysics and when practised correctly cannot and should not be mistaken for mere fortune telling.

It also shows that it is properly the tool of the philosopher, for by means of astrology metaphysical principles are made observable and easily studied.

Finally, it shows that these metaphysical principles are the bedrock of all philosophical and scientific endeavour. And that those astrologers who become studied and skilled in their practice can only do so by paying due attention to these metaphysical principles and so if earnest they are lead to discover them.

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*.

**Appendix One:
Methods for Discovering the Hyleg**

Ptolemy's Method for Finding the Hyleg ex: *Tetrabiblos* III, 10

There are 5 hylegeical places (i.e. places in which the Hyleg must be found):

1. The Ascendant (defined as 5° above the ascending degree to 25° below)
2. The 11th house
3. The 10th house
4. The 9th house
5. The 7th house

Prefer the 10th first, then the 1st, then the 11th, then the 9th, then and the 7th. That is, the 10th house is the strongest place; the 7th the weakest. This becomes important should you have a chart, where both the Sun and Moon or other potential Hylegs are in hylegeical places. For instance, **Figure 4** has the Sun in the 11th house (Alchabitius) and the Moon in the rising sign. Thus, as you will see momentarily, there are two potential Hylegs which raises the question Which one do we take? The answer is, we take the stronger one. 10th first, 1st next (then 11th, 9th, 7th). We would take the Moon over the Sun. Note: when were using Whole Sign Houses, as Bonatti suggests in his early tractates, the Sun in **Figure 4** at 4° Aquarius would be in the 12th sign/house from the Ascendant (Pisces) and hence unacceptable as Hyleg which reinforces the reckoning of the Moon as Hyleg.

There are 4 potential categories for Hyleg: Sun, Moon, Ascendant, Part of Fortune & the rulers of these places.

1. By day, take the Sun if in a hylegeical place (i.e. rising, in the 11th house, 10th house, 9th house or the 7th house). If not, take Moon. If the Moon cannot be taken, then take the planet which has the most dignities in the position of the Sun, the conjunction of the luminaries prior to the birth, and the Ascendant, according to rulership, exaltation, triplicity, term and aspect.

Special Note: the last dignity is aspect; not decan. This is the Greek tradition, not the Medieval tradition. The latter holds decan or face to be the last dignity. Students of Greek astrology who read Greek assert that the Arabs mistranslated the Greek word *phasis*, which if I understand them aright, can mean appearance or face as well as phase and aspect, thereby corrupting the pristine Greek dignity of aspect into face (which the Arabs took to mean decan). So far as it goes, this seems to explain the use of the word “face” but not why face was equated to decan.

Mistranslation might have been responsible for the words used but the decans could not have been mistaken for aspects, nor

vice versa. There seems to be more to this than mere mistranslation. Certainly though, for the Greeks the fifth dignity was aspect (i.e. the 8 Ptolemaic aspects) and for the Medieval astrologers (following the Arabs) the fifth dignity was face/decan. What seems important here is what the Medieval astrologers *did*, rather than what philosophers and linguists *speculate*. This is a practical course that deals with techniques that are proven to work thus, we follow the Arabic/Medieval tradition. The fifth dignity is face/decan.

2. By Night, take the Moon, then the Sun, then the Planet having the greatest number of dignities in the place of the Moon, the prevention prior to birth, and the Part of Fortune.
3. Should no planet have even one honour in all these positions and the figure is conjunctual the Ascendant becomes Hyleg. If preventional, the Part of Fortune.
4. If both luminaries are in hylegeical positions or the ruler of the “proper sect” (i.e. of the diurnal planets in diurnal figures and nocturnal planets in nocturnal figures), take the luminary in the place of the greatest authority.
5. Take the ruler of the figure (*Almutem figuris*) when it is more strongly placed than either luminary as in 4 and has dignity in both sects (nocturnal and diurnal planets).

Summary of the Medieval Method for Discovering the Hyleg ex: Bonatti, *Liber Astronomiae*

1. In diurnal figures, take the Sun if he is in the 1st, 11th, or 10th house whether he is in a masculine sign or a feminine sign.
2. If the Sun is not in the 1st, 11th, or 10th but in the 7th, 8th or 9th take him as Hyleg only if he is in a masculine sign.
3. According to Aomar neither the Sun nor any other planet may be Hyleg unless one of its dispositors by rulership, exaltation, triplicity, term or face (decan) aspect it.
4. Should the Sun be unacceptable as Hyleg, look to the Moon by day or night provided she is in a feminine sign and not cadent. Also at least one of the aforesaid dispositors must aspect her.
5. If the figure is preventional (native born after a Full Moon and before a New Moon) the Hyleg must be sought from the Part of Fortune, provided one of the aforesaid dispositors aspect it.
6. If the figure is conjunctional (native born after a New Moon and before a Full Moon), seek the Hyleg from the Ascendant provided one of the aforesaid dispositors aspect it.
7. If the Ascendant is not Hyleg, the Part of Fortune will be if:
 - a) it is with a planet which could be Hyleg or
 - b) it is conjunct the Ascendant (as it would be at New Moon.)
8. If none of these can be Hyleg, the Hyleg will be the degree of the conjunction of the luminaries prior to birth if the figure is conjunctional. We are told that Aomar wanted the Hyleg under these circumstances to be the Moon's position at the Full Moon prior to the birth.
9. If none of the aforesaid dispositors aspect the degree chosen the life of the native will be short.
10. If the Sun cannot be Hyleg take the Moon if she is angular or succedent, whether her sign is feminine or masculine. Bonatti inclines to feminine ones for women, masculine ones for men.
11. It is acceptable, according to Bonatti for the Moon to be Hyleg when in the 3rd house.
12. Dorotheus was uncertain as to whether the Moon could be Hyleg when in the 9th, but Ptolemy allowed this if the Moon were in a feminine sign.
13. If the Sun, Moon, Part of Fortune or Ascendant cannot be Hyleg, take the degree of the conjunction or prevention prior to birth provided the Sun, Moon, Ascendant, Part of Fortune or any of the benefics aspect that degree from an angular or succedent house.⁷ In this case the gender of the sign is not important.

Appendix Two: Diagrams and Tables

♄	Saturn
♃	Jupiter
♂	Mars
☉	Sun
♀	Venus
☿	Mercury
☾	Moon
♊	N. Node
♋	S. Node

Planets

Masculine Planets	☉ ♄ ♃ ♂ ¹	☿ either
Feminine Planets	☾ ♀	☿ either
Diurnal Planets	☉ ♃ ♄	☿ either
Nocturnal Planets	☾ ♀ ♂	☿ either
Benefics	☉ ² ♃ ♀	☾ waxing
Malefics	♄ ♂	☾ waning
Common	☿	

Attributes of the Planets

¹ Some ancient and medieval authorities class Mars as a feminine planet.

² The Sun's heat, when excessive, makes it malefic.

5	Rulership
4	Exaltation
3	Triplicity
2	Term
1	Face (or Decan)

Table I
Essential Dignities

Peregrine	Planet has neither Dignity nor Debility
Detriment	Planet in Sign Opposite to one it rules
Fall	Planet in Sign Opposite to one it is exalted in

Table II
Essential Debilities

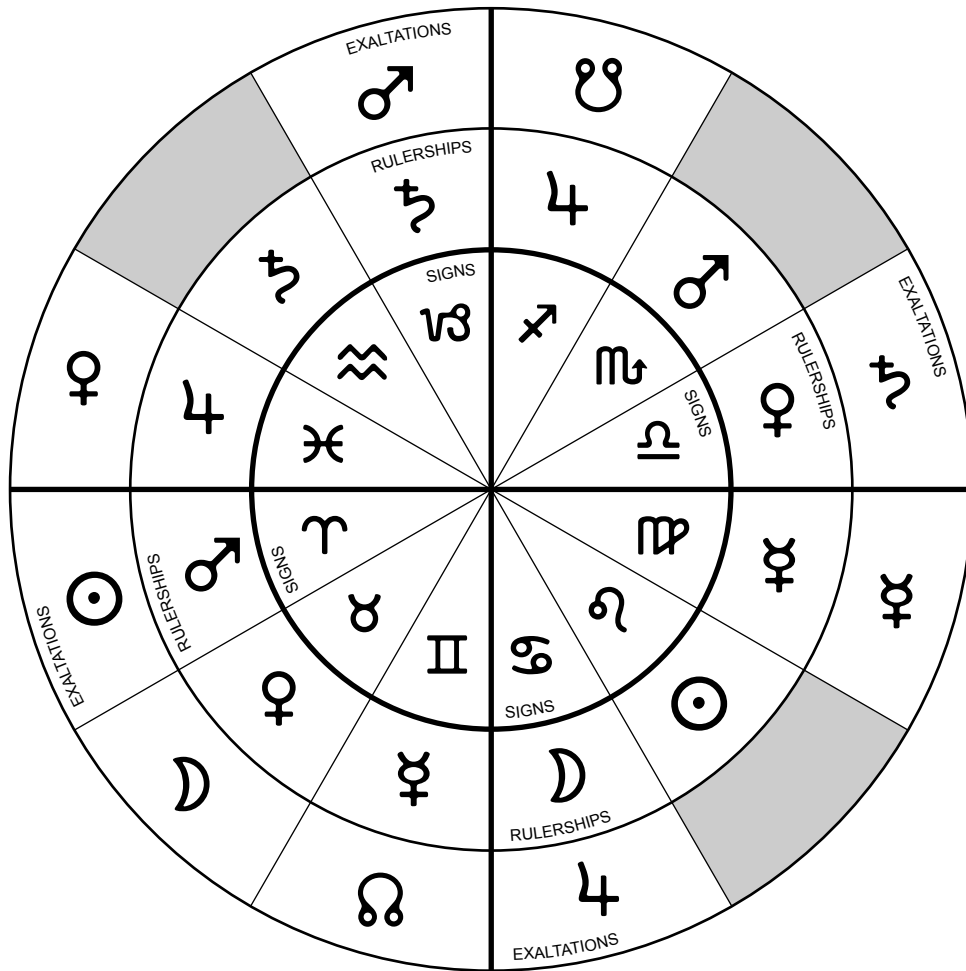


Table III
Rulerships and Exaltations

Element	Diurnal	Nocturnal	Participating
Fire	☉	♂	♃
Air	♃	♀	♁
Water	♀	♂	☾
Earth	♀	☾	♂

Table IV
Triplcities

♈	♋6	♌8	♍7	♎5	♏4
♉	♌8	♍7	♎7	♏2	♐6
♊	♍7	♋6	♌7	♎6	♏4
♋	♎6	♋7	♍7	♌7	♏3
♌	♋6	♍7	♏6	♌6	♎5
♍	♍7	♌6	♋5	♏6	♎6
♎	♏6	♌5	♍5	♋8	♎6
♏	♎6	♌7	♋8	♍6	♏3
♐	♋8	♌6	♍5	♏6	♎5
♑	♌6	♍6	♋7	♏6	♎5
♒	♏6	♍6	♌8	♋5	♎5
♓	♌8	♋6	♍6	♎5	♏5

Table V
Ptolemy's Terms

Ⲁ	Ⲙ6	♀6	Ⲛ8	♂5	ⲗ5
ⲁ	♀8	Ⲛ6	Ⲙ8	ⲗ5	♂3
Ⲃ	Ⲛ6	Ⲙ6	♀5	♂7	ⲗ6
ⲃ	♂7	♀6	Ⲛ6	Ⲙ7	ⲗ4
Ⲅ	Ⲙ6	♀5	ⲗ7	Ⲛ6	♂6
ⲅ	Ⲛ7	♀10	Ⲙ4	♂7	ⲗ2
Ⲇ	ⲗ6	Ⲛ8	Ⲙ7	♀7	♂2
ⲇ	♂7	♀4	Ⲛ8	Ⲙ5	ⲗ6
Ⲉ	Ⲙ12	♀5	Ⲛ4	ⲗ5	♂4
ⲉ	Ⲛ7	Ⲙ7	♀8	ⲗ4	♂4
Ⲋ	Ⲛ7	♀6	Ⲙ7	♂5	ⲗ5
ⲋ	♀12	Ⲙ4	Ⲛ3	♂9	ⲗ2

Table VI
Egyptian Terms

	MINOR	MEDIA	MAJOR	MAXIMA
♄	30	43.5	57	256
♃	12	45.5	79	426
♂	15	40.5	66	284
☉	19	69.5	120	1461
♀	8	45	82	1151
♆	20	48	76	461
♅	25	66.5	108	520

Table VIII
Years of the Planets

