

CONSIDERATIONS

Guido Bonatus (c. 1210–c. 1290)

c. 1275

The first is to observe what moves a person to propose or ask a question of an astrologer; where we must take notice of three motions—the first, of the mind, when a man is stirred up in his thoughts and has an intent to enquire; a second, of the superior and celestial bodies, so that they at that time imprint on the thing enquired after what shall become of it; the third, of the free will which disposes him to the very act of enquiring; for although the mind be moved to enquire, 'tis not enough unless the superior bodies sympathize therewith; nor is such motion of the stars enough, unless by the election of his will the person does actually enquire.

The second consideration is (what we hinted at before) the method or manner everyone ought to observe that enquires of an astrologer; which is that when he intends to take an artist's judgment of things past, present, or to come, he should first, with a devout spirit, pray unto the Lord, from Whom proceeds the success of every lawful enterprise, that He would grant him the knowledge of those things of the truth of which he would be resolved. And then let him apply himself to the astrologer with a serious intent of being satisfied in some certain and particular doubt, and this not on trifling occasions, or light sudden emotions, much less on matters base or unlawful, as many ignorant people used to do; but in matters of honest importance, and such as have possessed and disturbed his mind for the space of a day and night or longer; unless in sudden accidents which admit not of delay.¹...

The one-hundred-forty-first is to consider in nativities the gifts and properties bestowed on men by the fixed stars, and how long they continue, together with the reason why they prove not lasting as those which proceed from the planets, since it seems a little probable that they should continue longer than those; of which I do not remember to have met with anything in the Ancients, save only that Ptolemy in his *Centiloquim* says the fixed stars sometimes confer exceeding great benefits; but oftentimes they end will. And Almensa in his *Treatise to the Great King of the Saracens* says that the fixed stars bestow notable gifts, and raise from poverty to happiness and high degree more than any of the seven planets.

Now the reason that the gifts of the fixed stars to men abide with them more than those given by the planets is because the fixed stars being the agents and the men the patients, the subject on which they are to operate are not agreeable to them, nor are born to be able to receive their impression; for it is requisite that there should be sonic conformity and likeness, or agreeableness between the agent and the patient. But the fixed stars are most slow in motion; and consequently in mutation, whence it comes to pass that their impressions require subjects and patients of the same nature; that is to say, such as are the most lasting, and carry a conformity with them to perfect or accomplish their effects. For the revolutions of the fixed stars is finished but in six and thirty thousand years, but the *Viventhipolis*, or life of man, generally exceeds not three revolutions of Saturn; that is to say, the space of ninety years. Very few exceed that age, which bears no conformity or proportion with 36.000 years to complete the effects of the fixed stars' influences. And therefore as an eagle cannot exercise the complement of her flight or power on a fly, nor a stone coming forth do any great execution, no more can the fixed stars complete the effects of their impressions; and therefore their gifts of the good promised by them continue no longer with men because men are of so small a duration, and subject to a swift mutability in respect of their motion.

And upon this is that aphorism grounded that advises to make use of fixed stars in the foundation of cities, but of planets in the erection of houses; because cities are generally of the longest continuance amongst corruptible things, and far more durable than particular houses; for these, in respect of their individuals, do not endure

¹ Those that take this sober course shall find the truth in what they enquire after; but whosoever does otherwise, deceives both themselves and the artist; for a foolish querent may cause a wise respondent to err, which brings a scandal upon art amongst inconsiderable people, whereas the astrologer is not blameable, but the ignorant silly querent. [Lilly's note]

always, whereas cities remain by a successive building and re-building of houses. And therefore though castles are very lasting, yet are they not equal in this respect to cities; so that although we may use the superior planets in elections for building castles, it is better to take fixed stars; yet still because cities are of longer continuance than castles, they are more appropriated to the fixed stars, whose subjects they are. For the impression which a solid thing makes in a more solid thing continues much longer than that which it makes on a less solid thing; and far less in a thing not solid than a thing somewhat solid; and yet less in a very slippery transient thing than in a thing less lubricous or changeable. Hence the impressions which the fixed stars make on cities are more correlative to them in length of time, and accordingly those of castles more durable than those of houses for the same reason proportionally.

But bodies of men are more remote from those fixed stars than houses themselves, and so more corruptible; and for that cause their significations apply less to them, or if they happen, abide but little, the significations of the fixed stars being so great and noble, so high and free from corruption and mutability, that they cannot easily take upon them a variable commixture with things quickly corruptible and suddenly changeable, unless it be as oil on water; for though it may enter into it, yet such impression will not long continue, for the fixed lights operate with so much nobleness that by reason of their long distance from those vile, corruptible, changeable bodies, and neighborhood to the Supreme Light, their effects cannot remain in or with them when they are lightly or suddenly changed and corrupted; especially in base people and mean spirits; for they seldom transcend his person to whom they happen, and oftentimes leave him whilst he lives, and that to his damage, so great that good alone can prevent, as I affirm for the most part, though 'tis possible they may sometimes terminate in good and continue long.

As it has sometimes happened that some have lived to the greatest years of the Alcocoaen, of whom I never say but one in my time, who was named Richard, who affirmed himself to have been a courtier under Charles the Great,² King of France, and that he had lived 500 years. At that time there was a report of one that had continued alive ever since our Savior's days called Johan Buttadeus, because he had impolised the Lord as he was led to be crucified, Who said to him, "You shall expect, or wait for me, till I come." The aforesaid Richard I saw at Ravenna in the year 1223, and the said John is said to have passed through Florilivium in his journey to Saint James' at Compostella in the year 1267.

Nor could the significations of the fixed stars be applied, or adhere to men, nor sensibly remain in them unless there were some medium by which they might act upon them, which are the planets, which are secondary agents, as the first are principal. For whenever there are divers actions attributed to several agents, the principal act ought to be referred to the principal agent, which in respect of the effects on corruptible things was the primary cause. And the planets are secondary; for that corruption which those inferiors suffer happens by reason of their too great distance from the incorruptible superiors; yet their effects sometime continue long in nobles, and persons very rich who are apt for empire, magnanimous, and of brave and excellent spirits.

Such as in my time was the Emperor Frederick II,³ who, when he was indigent and in great necessity, was arrived to the Imperial Dignity and brought under his obedience all Apulia, the Kingdom of Sicily, Jerusalem, Crocovia, Italy, and the whole Empire (except Lombardy), subduing all enemies, traitors, and rebels, and remained in that illustrious flourishing condition; yet at last died miserably, being poisoned by his domestics, and all his family extirpated so that scarce any of them remained.

Such another was Eccelino de Romano,⁴ who when he was but mean was far exalted above all other Italians, for he ruled and, as it were, tyrannized over the Marquisate of Treves even to Almaine and Trent, and within four or five miles of Venice, and his tyranny continued twenty-six years; but at last all these glories were overcast with calamity, for when it seemed impossible to suppress him, he fell into the hands of his enemies at a battle in

² Charlemagne (742–814)

³ Frederick II (1194–1250), Holy Roman Emperor (1220–1250)

⁴ Eccelino de Romano (1194–1259)

the country of Mediolanensi apud Cassianum, and died wretched, and all his posterity was destroyed, not one of them remaining.

In the same manner there was one in the Kingdom of Apulia of base descent called Peter de Vinea,⁵ who when he was a scholar at Bononia was forced to beg for his living, and had not bread to eat, yet was made a notary, and after that protonotary of the court of the Emperor Frederick II. He became a judge and climbed to such grandeur that anyone who could obtain the least of his favor was happy; for whatever he did, the Emperor would confirm, but himself would often set aside what had been established by the Emperor, who made him Lord of Apulin; whereby he grew so rich that he had 10.000 pounds of gold, besides other treasures almost inestimable; yet in the end he fell and was reduced to such misery that the Emperor ordered his eyes to be put out, enraged at which, out of mere indignation, he struck out his own against a wall, as it was then commonly reported....

Another being a friar of the Preaching Order, by name John, by nation Vicentinus, was admired as a saint by all the Italians that acknowledged the Roman Church; but I ever thought him an hypocrite; he grew so high that he was reported to have raised eighteen from the dead (though never one of them could be seen), and to cure all diseases, fright devils, etc., yet could I not perceive anybody freed by him, though I made much enquiry into his miracles; however, the whole world seemed to run after him, and he thought himself happy who could get a thread of his cap, which they esteemed equal with the relics of the saints. And in his preaching he would publicly boast that he had converse with Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and angels when he list. By which tricks, the friars of his order at Sononia got more than 20.000 marks. And his power was so great that by his own will he released a soldier as he was going to execution for murder. Nor dared the magistrates deny him, not speak ill of him but myself, who knew all his wheedles and cozenages: for which the rabble, merely out of fear of him, reported me an heretic. In which esteem and pomp he continued above a year, but at last went out like the snuff of a candle, with a stink, his devices and hypocrisy being discovered, so that everybody was ashamed to be seen in his company....

William Lilly, *Anima Astrologiae* (London: B. Harris, 1676):1, 33–34.

⁵ Peter de Vinea (1190–1249)