

Future Experts?
Self-Fashioning and the Image of Astrologers in
the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

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1 Introduction

“Yet astrology is still popular, despite all these devastating claims against it. Why? What weapon do astrologers wield that wipes out all rational and critical claims against them? It turns out their best weapon is us.”¹

Having demonstrated the complete lack of a scientific basis for astrological theories, Philip C. Plait, in his 2002 book “Bad Astronomy”, expressed his visible astonishment at the enduring fascination with astrology.² His statements indicate not only the longevity of the practice but also point to the critical role played by the relationship between astrologer and client. Indeed, although a considerable part of today’s population would undoubtedly agree with Plait and consider astrology a pseudo-science, it is undeniable that astrology is not only still prevalent in society but has experienced a major upswing and refashioning in recent years.³

A decisive factor for this latest revival lies in the successful self-fashioning of astrologers. While more traditional aspects are still part of the astrologer’s profile, they are increasingly integrated into the trend of self-optimisation and self-development – astrologers today present themselves as psychologists, life coaches, matchmakers, or wellness experts who offer tailor-made and individual support for all areas of life.⁴

¹ Philip C. Plait: *Bad Astronomy. Misconceptions and Misuses Revealed, from Astrology to the Moon Landing “Hoax”*, New York 2002, p. 217. Plait contributes this mainly to our own willingness to believe in the possibility of knowing the future. For further discussion of the role that ‘our’ mind plays in the success of forecasts, see Klaus Oschema: *Irren ohne zu scheitern. Warum (spät-)mittelalterliche Astrologen nicht immer Recht haben mussten*, in: Marian Füssel / Frank Rexroth / Inga Schürmann (eds.): *Praktiken und Räume des Wissens. Expertenkulturen in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Göttingen 2019, pp. 145–171. Drawing on insights from the social sciences, Oschema: *ibid.*, p. 165, points to the confirmation bias inherent in human thinking and memory to explain the continued success of medieval astrological predictions. He elaborates that such confirmation bias leads to a greater focus on correct predictions and recognising real or imagined regularities and patterns, while false predictions and inconsistencies are overlooked. In short, our thinking patterns favour the long-term success of predictions about the futures, even if they repeatedly fail to occur as predicted.

² The lack of a scientific basis naturally applies only to the predictive elements, not to the astronomical foundations of astrology.

³ For a discussion of this upswing, especially among millennials, see Christine Smallwood: *Astrology in the Age of Uncertainty*, in: *New Yorker Magazine*, 28/10/2019, URL: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/10/28/astrology-in-the-age-of-uncertainty>, last accessed 02/12/2024. For a more detailed analysis of the popularity in the 21st Century with a particular focus on France, see Arnaud Esquerre: *Prédire. L’astrologie au XXI siècle en France*, Paris 2013. For a discussion, from a social science perspective, of possible reasons why astrology is still taken seriously today, and even considered ‘scientific’ by some people, see Nick Allum: *What Makes Some People Think Astrology Is Scientific?*, in: *Science Communication* 33 (3) (2011), pp. 341–366.

⁴ See, for example, Sophie Clarke: *Should Astrology Be Part Of Your Wellness Survival Kit?*, in: *British Vogue* 05/04/2020, URL: <https://www.vogue.co.uk/beauty/article/astrology-wellness-survival-kit>, last accessed 02/12/2024. One example for such self-fashioning, mentioned in the article, is Jennifer Freed, who calls herself a “psychological astrologer”. For further examples see the list in: Tish Weinstock: *In Need Of Some Spiritual Guidance? These 13 Experts Have The Answer*, in: *British Vogue*, 20/12/2020,

Technology is another facilitating and crucial element in astrology's current rise in popularity. The use of specific astrology apps and social media opens up new opportunities for astrologers to present themselves and market their work.⁵ In addition to drawing on recent technological trends, the role of the astrologer also frequently involves addressing and intervening in current political and social issues – paradigmatic for this is, for example, the astrologer Chani Nicholas, who gained fame primarily as a “social-justice astrologer” on Instagram and, in addition to writing an astrological self-help book that ranked 8th on the New York Times Bestseller list in 2020, has also developed her own app.⁶

Astrologers indeed seem to be true masters at keeping up with the times, spotting trends and using them to their advantage to offer their clients exactly what is in demand at that moment. However, this adaptability is not a new phenomenon. Throughout its long history, astrology has undergone numerous phases of flourishing and decline, but it has never completely disappeared. When exactly astrology will experience another revival depends on the occurrence of certain favourable factors – such as today's trend towards personal development and technological progress – which astrologers can then harness.

A pivotal phase in the history of astrology and the emergence of the role of the astrologer in Western Europe can be identified in the late Middle Ages. Here, too, there were circumstances that proved conducive to the rise of astrology and which, paired with effective self-marketing by practitioners of astrology, led to a ‘golden age’ of astrology, especially in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁷ However, it is important to emphasise that astrology occupied a very different place in the society of the late Middle Ages than it does today. While it was highly controversial even then, astrological considerations were omnipresent and astrology, in conjunction with

URL: <https://www.vogue.co.uk/arts-and-lifestyle/article/best-astrology-experts>, last accessed 02/12/2024. The role of astrologers in matchmaking is indeed a constant that is part of the range of services offered by astrologers today but was also a central element of those provided by medieval and early modern astrologers. For this, see Monica Azzolini: Are the Stars Aligned? Matchmaking and Astrology in Early Modern Italy, in: *Isis* 112 (4) (2021), pp. 766–775.

⁵ The importance of technology for the rise in astrology's popularity is discussed in: Smallwood: Astrology in the Age of Uncertainty; as well as in: Clarke: Should Astrology Be Part Of Your Wellness Survival Kit?

⁶ Ariana Ignéri: Meet the Woman Bringing Social Justice to Astrology, in: *Rolling Stone*, 01/06/2018, URL: <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture-features/meet-the-woman-bringing-social-justice-to-astrology-629153/>, last accessed 02/12/2024. For her book, see Chani Nicholas: *You Were Born for This. Astrology for Radical Self-Acceptance*, New York 2020.

⁷ For a discussion of the extent to which this period can indeed be seen as a ‘golden age’ for astrologers, see Chapter 6.

astronomy, ranked among the disciplines to be taken seriously. References to the influences of heavenly bodies on earthly events – and to the people who were able to predict these – can be found in a wide variety of sources.⁸ The fundamental belief that the stars' movements exerted some influence on terrestrial matters was not questioned in the Middle Ages. Instead, the bone of contention primarily concerned the extent of this influence and whether such predictions were compatible with the Christian faith. Moreover, even if astrological forecasts were considered to be theoretically possible, the question remained: could a person comprehend and know enough about the stars and their effects to make a correct prediction?

In the late Middle Ages, we find an increasing number of scholars who claimed to have the necessary skill set to do exactly that, thus promising a glimpse into the future. The practice of astrology in the Latin West experienced a striking resurgence in the twelfth century, mainly prompted by the (re-)discovery and translation of Greek and Arabic astrological texts. This general rise in the popularity of astrology also led to a greater specialisation of scholars in the discipline from the thirteenth century onwards. Since then, a growing number of scholars devoted themselves more or less exclusively to astrology, defining themselves predominantly through the discipline. They asserted their place in medieval society by offering their services as political advisors to rulers and tried to establish themselves as exemplary scholars within the developing context of university education. Their success depended strongly on the inclination of individual rulers towards astrology and varied considerably according to time and place.

By the fifteenth century astrologers could be found at many Western courts, and astrology had been established as an integral part of the curriculum in many universities. Still, societal and scholarly criticism against astrology never completely vanished during the late Middle Ages. On the contrary, with the increase in astrology's popularity, the criticism only gathered pace. It took on more specific forms, often explicitly aimed at astrologers' personal and professional conduct. The growing presence of astrologers in late medieval society – the actual individuals as much as ideas about them – shows the history of astrology and its practitioners in the late Middle Ages to have been a success.

⁸ For an overview of different types of sources in which predictions of various kinds featured, including several articles specifically on astrology and related practices, see Matthias Heiduk / Klaus Herbers / Hans-Christian Lehner (eds.): *Prognostication in the Medieval World: A Handbook*, 2 vols., Berlin 2021.

In this study, I will explore the background of this late medieval success story, focusing on the astrologers themselves. At the heart of my investigation lies the question of how astrologers could convince a considerable part of the late medieval population that *they* were the ‘future experts’ to whom people should turn. I will argue that the role of the Latin-Christian astrologer only began to take on a more specific form in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries – consciously shaped by the practitioners of astrology themselves. Although references to astrological activity can be found already in the early and high Middle Ages in Western Europe, astrology was usually presented only as one research interest among several – often as part of the several liberal arts – and scholars did not refer to themselves primarily as astrologers. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, however, we increasingly find scholars who not only defined themselves mainly through their astrological practice but who actively reflected on what that activity entailed. These reflections both point to the emergence of a distinctive role for ‘the astrologer’ as well as to conscious attempts by practitioners to create and shape their own ‘professional’ image, thereby asserting their place in medieval society.

The opposition that astrologers faced had a significant impact on this process. Criticism of astrology has a long tradition and can already be found in texts by classical Roman authors such as Cicero; particularly important for the Middle Ages, however, was the disapproving attitude of the Church Fathers, above all in the form of Augustine’s writings against astrology. These traditional arguments were more or less prevalent throughout the Middle Ages but came into renewed prominence with the increasing popularity of astrology in the high and late Middle Ages. Added to this were the arguments and counterarguments transmitted via Arabic astrological texts. Especially from the second half of the fourteenth century onwards, we increasingly find extensive Latin refutations of astrology, written exclusively to refute the discipline and disparage its practitioners.⁹ This proliferation of adversarial writings against astrology in the late Middle Ages further sharpened the profile of astrologers – albeit now from a negative perspective. We can also see that both sides – the astrologers and their opponents – referenced each other’s arguments and tried to refute them. The image of astrologers thus developed through the interplay of self-fashioning and criticism. The

⁹ For an overview of the development of criticism against astrology, see Stefano Rapisarda: Doubts and Criticism on Astrology in Western Traditions from Antiquity to Early Modern Literature, in: Heiduk / Herbers / Lehner (eds.): *Prognostication in the Medieval World*, vol. 2, pp. 752–759.

opposing arguments are considered in this study primarily based on their discussion in the astrologers' self-representations.

By exploring the development of the astrologer's role, this study will also provide insight into a wide variety of related topics, mainly linked to the concept of late medieval experts and expert cultures. These include more general strategies of self-fashioning, discussions about professionalisation, the benefit of scholarly expertise, or the scientific and moral ideals required of scholars. Cultural and religious transmission processes equally played a vital role in how astrologers understood and presented their occupation. Many of their ideas originally stemmed from Greek and Arabic texts and were adapted to contemporary – and, most importantly, Christian – purposes. Furthermore, fundamental philosophical questions appear throughout the study that are inextricably linked to astrology, such as the issue of free will and the role of God or whether a person has the power to influence his or her own destiny.

Astrology and its representatives thus occupied a prominent place in medieval society, linked to various issues. My inquiry centres less on the actual influences of astrologers or their position at a given court or university but on how the idea of 'the astrologer' emerged and was actively shaped by various parties. In this way, I provide a contribution to better understanding the reasons for their successful rise in the late Middle Ages. The analysis of the astrologer's image is not the study of a marginal figure of medieval society, removed from the main social and intellectual currents of the time. Instead, it offers the opportunity to elucidate central tenets of medieval society.

1.1 State of Research

Before the twentieth century, the subject of astrology, especially medieval astrology, was not given any serious consideration by modern historians.¹⁰ Due to the assessment of the subject as merely a pseudo-science, historians often deemed the medieval

¹⁰ The question of what constituted "astrology" in the Middle Ages, whether and how it was distinguished from "astronomy" and the terminology used (both modern and medieval) is addressed in Chapter 1.5.2. In the following chapter, I will give a brief overview of the most important strands of the state of research on late medieval astrology in the Latin West. Literature on more specific aspects will be dealt with separately in the respective chapters. By far the most comprehensive bibliography on the history of Western astrology can be found on the website of the project "Ptolemaeus Arabus et Latinus" (Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften). It includes works on all the aspects discussed below and covers the period from antiquity to the eighteenth century. The list has been compiled under the direction of David Juste and is updated on a regular basis, URL: <https://ptolemaeus.badw.de/astrobibl/start>, last accessed 02/12/2024. For an annotated overview of scholarship on premodern astrology, structured by thematic areas, see H. Darrel Rutkin: *Sapientia Astrologica: Astrology, Magic and Natural Knowledge*, ca. 1250–1800, vol. 1: *Medieval Structures (1250–1500): Conceptual, Institutional, Socio-Political, Theologico-Religious and Cultural* (Archimedes 55), Cham 2019, pp. xlix–lvi.

preoccupation with astrology unworthy of closer study. Since the ubiquity of astrological lore in medieval texts and its association with famous names made it difficult to ignore the discipline completely, researchers tended to dismiss it simply as a sign of the period's 'backwardness' and an expression of the time's penchant for superstition.¹¹ During the twentieth century, this attitude began to change, albeit slowly. Not only did several eminent historians argue explicitly for the central role that astrology had played in medieval 'scientific' thought, emphasising the added value its study could offer to the history of science and philosophy in general,¹² but detailed studies on medieval astrology began to be published as well. Lynn Thorndike's monumental work on "The History of Magic and Experimental Science" occupies the most prominent place in this regard. His eight-volume study, published between 1923 and 1958, contributed significantly to our understanding of medieval astrology – as well as numerous other aspects of intellectual history – and is still considered the standard

¹¹ Richard Lemay: *The True Place of Astrology in Medieval Science and Philosophy: Towards a Definition*, in: Patrick Curry (ed.): *Astrology, Science and Society: Historical Essays*, Woodbridge 1987, pp. 57–73, here, p. 63. Lemay, *ibid.*, p. 57, furthermore discusses various "historical, conceptual, societal and cultural factors" for why the role astrology played in medieval science and philosophy has so far [1987] not been adequately researched. The use of the term "science" for the Middle Ages, especially in connection with astrology, raises some difficulties. However, since the authors mentioned here predominantly consider themselves "historians of science", it is expedient to retain this term here. Chapter 1.5.2. will discuss this terminological issue in more detail.

¹² Lynn Thorndike: *The True Place of Astrology in the History of Science*, in: *Isis* (Chicago) 46 (1955), pp. 273–278; Lemay: *True Place of Astrology*. The slow pace of this development in establishing astrology as a legitimate object of research is shown, among other things, by the fact that Richard Lemay argues for the "true place of astrology in the history of science and philosophy" as late as 1987 under a title almost identical to that of Lynn Thorndike's article from 1955: Lemay: *True Place of Astrology*. See also George Sarton's assessment of a historical zodiac book in a 1950 book review as "a wretched collection of omens, debased astrology and miscellaneous nonsense ultimately derived from Arabic, Greek, Persian and of all the superstitious flotsam of the Near East." George Sarton: *Review of: Ethel S. Drower: The Book of the Zodiac (Sfar Malwasia)*, London 1949, in: *Isis* 41 (3/4) (1950), p. 374. This prompted Otto Neugebauer: *The Study of Wretched Subjects*, in: *Isis* 42 (2) (1951), p. 111, to reply and defend the study of these "wretched subjects". See also Liba Taub: *The Rehabilitation of Wretched Subjects*. *Review of: Tamsyn Barton: Ancient Astrology*, London 1994, and *Tamsyn Barton: Power and Knowledge: Astrology, Physiognomics, and Medicine in the Roman Empire*, Ann Arbor 1994, in: *Early Science and Medicine* 2 (1) (1997), pp. 74–87, in which Taub references Neugebauer's phrase of the "wretched subjects" in her review to show that books like Tamsyn Barton's were still needed to further counteract this image.

reference work on the subject.¹³ Although astrology is not the sole focus of the work, it features prominently in all volumes. Thorndike's study provides a broad overview of the pre-modern history of astrology. It revealed the extent and diversity of astrological sources and constituted the basis for much further research.

Since Thorndike and other historians of science argued in particular for the integral role of astrology within the general scientific outlook of the Middle Ages, subsequent research revolved predominantly around examining the significance of astrology as it pertains to science, philosophy and theology. In this context, astrological theories were a primary object of research, often studied against the background of mathematical-astronomical questions.¹⁴ The research on the theoretical workings of astrology and its 'true place' in the history of science is still ongoing and has received vital new impulses in recent years.¹⁵ The inclusion of research on material culture and the edition of

¹³ Lynn Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols., New York 1923–1958. In the first volume, Lynn Thorndike (*ibid.*, pp. 2–4), explains the outline and objective of his work and emphasises that he considers magic and experimental science to have been closely connected. As he sees magic, under which he also subsumes astrology, as a "mental state" he proposes to examine it "from the standpoint of the history of thought". Even earlier, albeit in much smaller scope, medieval astrology was addressed in: Otto Theodore Wedel: *The Mediaeval Attitude Towards Astrology, Particularly in England* (Yale Studies in English 60), New Haven, Conn. 1920; or as part of the overview by Franz Boll / Carl Bezold: *Sternglaube und Sterndeutung. Die Geschichte und das Wesen der Astrologie*, Leipzig / Berlin 1926 (first edition 1918). At roughly the same time as Thorndike, George Sarton published his three-volume work on the "Introduction to the History of Science" of which the second and third volume address the medieval period: George Sarton: *Introduction to the History of Science*, 3 vols., Baltimore 1927–1948. Although Sarton is much less interested in astrology than Thorndike and addresses it only in passing, he acknowledges astrology's "scientific means" and argues for its value regarding the development of astronomy. Sarton: *Introduction to the History of Science*, vol. 2, p. 760. Elsewhere, however, he also expressed vehement disapproval of astrology. See footnote 12.

¹⁴ On the reading of historical horoscopes, see, for example, Lynn Thorndike: *The Horoscope of Barbarossa's First-Born*, in: *The American Historical Review* 64 (1958/9), pp. 319–322; Emmanuel Pouille: *Horoscopes princiers des XIV^e–XV^e siècles*, in: *Bulletin de la Société nationale des antiquaires de France* (1969), pp. 63–77; John D. North: *Horoscopes and History* (Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts 13), London 1986.

¹⁵ See, for example, Jean-Patrice Boudet: *Les horoscopes princiers dans l'Occident médiéval (XII^e–XV^e siècle)*, in: Clelia Arcelli (ed.): *I saperi nelle corti = Knowledge at Courts* (Micrologus 16), Florence 2008, pp. 373–392; David Juste: *Horoscopic Astrology in Early Medieval Europe (500–1100)*, in: *Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* (ed.): *La conoscenza scientifica nell'Alto Medioevo*: Spoleto, 25 aprile–1 maggio 2019, vol. 1 (Settimane di studio della Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 67), Spoleto 2020, pp. 311–330. See also the "Astra project" which is dedicated to the "study of the history of western astrological doctrines, techniques, and practices from antiquity to the early modern period." It is based at the CIUHCT (Centro Interuniversitário de História das Ciências e da Tecnologia) at the University of Lisbon and was developed in collaboration with the Warburg Institute, University of London, and the IKGf (Internationales Kolleg für Geisteswissenschaftliche Forschung), University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. The principal researcher is Luís Campos Ribeiro (University of Lisbon); the project was co-founded by Helena Avelar (†) (Warburg Institute), and is supported by a range of further scholars. The project includes, among other things, a podcast featuring interviews with leading scholars on various astronomical-astrological topics. URL: <https://theastraproject.org/project/>, last accessed 02/12/2024. See also the ERC funded research project ALFA, based in SYRTE (UMR 8630) at PSL-Observatoire de Paris, which studies the Alfonsine

astrological texts by researchers with the necessary astrological expertise furthermore contributed to the reappraisal of the place of astrology within the history of science.¹⁶ In addition to the more scientific aspects of astrology, its proximity to magic has been explored in more detail, highlighting its fluid role between science and magic.¹⁷

Researchers have also focused on the ramifications of astrology in the areas of philosophy and theology. The prospect of being able to predict future events raised fundamental questions for medieval scholars about free will and the role of God. At the heart of these discussions was the issue of whether people could be held responsible for their actions if the stars predetermined their fate. An unqualified negative reply would contradict the essential Christian premise of reward and punishment in the afterlife based on good and bad deeds in this world. If the stars forced people to act in a certain way, it would absolve them of any responsibility for their sins. Hence, what was at stake here was nothing less than God's omnipotence, influence and justice. For the most part, astrologers did not take a clearly deterministic stance but tried to find a middle way. This essentially granted the stars the power to influence but not compel. Although the issue of free will and astrology had been discussed since antiquity and had constituted one of the main arguments against astrology employed by the Church Fathers, astrology's renewed popularity in the high and late Middle Ages and the new Arabic influences reignited this controversy. The ensuing debates, embedded in the contemporary circumstances of the high and late Middle Ages, represent a further

astronomy of the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries. The principal investigator of the project is Matthieu Husson (CNRS). URL: <https://alfa.hypotheses.org/>, last accessed 02/12/2024.

¹⁶ See, for example, the edition of Henry Bate's astrological work, which includes an explanation of his astrological techniques: Carlos Steel / Steven Vanden Broecke / David Juste / Shlomo Sela (eds.): *The Astrological Autobiography of a Medieval Philosopher: Henry Bate's Nativitas (1280–1281)* (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy. Series 1/17), Leuven 2018, esp. Steven Vanden Broecke: *Basic Elements of Bate's Astrological Technique*, pp. 92–105; or Helena Avelar de Carvalho: *An Astrologer at Work in Late Medieval France. The Notebooks of S. Belle (Time, Astronomy, and Calendars 11)*, Leiden / Boston 2021, who specifically aims to provide an "internalist view of the practice of astrology, as a counterpart to the existing research into astrology's social and cultural impact" (book description). On the importance of astronomical-astrological instruments, see Josefina Rodríguez Arribas / Charles Burnett / Silke Ackermann / Ryan Szpiech (eds.): *Astrolabes in Medieval Cultures (Medieval Encounters 23)*, Leiden / Boston 2019. The technical aspects and workings of medieval instruments in an English monastic context were explored by Seb Falk: *Improving Instruments: Equatoria, Astrolabes, and the Practices of Monastic Astronomy in Late Medieval England*, doctoral dissertation, University of Cambridge 2016. Many of the aspects discussed here were revisited and made accessible to a broader public in his book: *The Light Ages. The Surprising Story of Medieval Science*, New York 2020, in which Seb Falk addressed and explained fundamental ideas about astronomy / astrology and science in general. Recent research on computus equally brought new insights on astrological practice in the Middle Ages, see C. Philipp E. Nothaft: *Scandalous Error. Calendar Reform and Calendrical Astronomy in Medieval Europe*, New York 2018.

¹⁷ For this aspect, see especially Jean-Patrice Boudet: *Entre science et nigromance. Astrologie, divination et magie dans l'Occident médiéval (XII^e–XV^e siècle)* (Publications de la Sorbonne. Série Histoire ancienne et médiévale 83), Paris 2006.

branch of modern research on medieval astrology's 'scientific' status.¹⁸ In this context, the attitudes of influential high- and late-medieval figures towards astrology, such as Peter Abelard († 1142), Albertus Magnus († 1280), and Thomas Aquinas († 1274), received much scholarly attention.¹⁹

A second and related major strand of research on medieval astrology – alongside the question of its place in the history of science – concentrates on the transmission processes of Arabic astrological texts and theories to the Latin West. Many of the Latin translations of Arabic texts produced in the eleventh and especially the twelfth centuries comprised astrological texts, which in some cases became standard textbooks on astrology in late medieval and early modern Europe.²⁰ Research in this area has frequently focused on the circumstances of translations and the selection and adaptation of the texts. The immense influence of the Arabic material, especially the writings of the ninth-century Persian astrologer Abū Ma'shar al-Balkhī (lat. Albumasar), on Latin astrology but also natural philosophy in general, has been shown, for example, by Richard Lemay's influential work from 1962.²¹ In recent years, Charles Burnett and

¹⁸ On the medieval debates, see Marie-Thérèse D'Alverny: *Astrologues et théologiens au XII^e siècle*, in: *Mélanges offerts à M.-D. Chenu* (Bibliothèque thomiste 37), Paris 1967, pp. 31–50; Rutkin: *Sapientia Astrologica*, vol. 1, esp. Part II (= Conceptual Structures [2]: Astrology and Theology / Religion), pp. 173–273; see also: Maria Sorokina: *Les sphères, les astres et les théologiens: L'influence céleste entre science et foi dans les commentaires des Sentences* (v. 1220–v. 1340), 2 vols., Turnhout 2021.

¹⁹ On the attitudes of specific scholars, see, for example: Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny: *Abélard et l'astrologie*, in: René Louis / Jean Jolivet / Jean Châtillon (eds.): *Pierre Abélard et Pierre le Vénérable. Les courants philosophiques, littéraires et artistiques en occident au milieu du XII^e siècle* (Actes et mémoires des colloques internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique 546), Paris 1975, pp. 611–630; Rutkin: *Sapientia Astrologica*, vol. 1, pp. 173–234 (on Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas).

²⁰ For an overview of the translation movement and the interest especially in astrological topics, see Charles Burnett: *Translation and Transmission of Greek and Islamic Science to Latin Christendom*, in: David C. Lindberg / Michael H. Shank (eds.): *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 2: *Medieval Science*, Cambridge 2013, pp. 341–364. Francis J. Carmody provided an early list and description of key Arabic astrological texts that were translated to Latin, see Francis J. Carmody: *Arabic Astronomical and Astrological Sciences in Latin Translation: A Critical Bibliography*, Berkeley, Calif. 1956. For the later reception of such works, especially their integration within the university setting and their enduring popularity, evidenced by their early modern editions, see Chapter 6.3.

²¹ Richard Lemay: *Abū Ma'shar and Latin Aristotelianism in the 12th Century: The Recovery of Aristotle's Natural Philosophy through Arabic Astrology* (American University of Beirut. Publications of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Oriental series 38), Beirut 1962. On the reception of the equally influential Arabic introductory work by Al-Qabisi (lat. Alcabitus), see Margaret Gaida: *Encounters with Alcabitus: Reading Arabic Astrology in Premodern Europe*. PhD dissertation, University of Oklahoma 2017. For the general reception of Arabic works in Europe, see the collected articles by Paul Kunitzsch, in: Paul Kunitzsch (ed.): *The Arabs and the Stars. Texts and Traditions on the Fixed Stars, and their Influence in Medieval Europe* (Variorum Collected Studies Series 307), Northampton 2014. The project "Ptolemaeus Arabus et Latinus", hosted by the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften in Munich and supervised by Dag Nikolaus Hasse (University of Würzburg), is "dedicated to the edition and study of the Arabic and Latin versions of Ptolemy's astronomical and astrological texts and related material" and thus offers numerous starting points for research in this area. URL: <https://ptolemaeus.badw.de/start>, last accessed 02/12/2024. Research on the influence of Arabic sciences on the Latin West in general is

researchers associated with the Warburg Institute in London, in particular, have provided valuable insights into cross-religious collaboration and the importance of Arab astrologers for the evolution of Latin astrology.²² In this thematic context, the attitude of translators and scholars towards the Arabic origin of knowledge was also examined in more detail.²³

The third major strand of research on astrology does not primarily consider the discipline from the perspective of the history of science but concentrates on its cultural and social aspects. Research interest in this area has so far focused predominantly on astrology's role at court. Central questions here revolve around the extent to which rulers were guided in their actions by their belief in astrological predictions and astrologers' exact role at court. Although the actual influence of astrologers on specific decisions of rulers remains difficult or even impossible to prove, in recent years, several monographic case studies on courtly astrology have demonstrated the presence and prominent position of astrologers at various European courts in the late Middle Ages.²⁴

extensive; see, for example, the articles in Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (ed.): *The Impact of Arabic Sciences in Europe and Asia* (Micrologus 24), Florence 2016 (on astrology, in particular: David Juste: *The Impact of Arabic Sources on European Astrology: Some Facts and Numbers*, pp. 173–194); also: Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (ed.): *The Diffusion of the Islamic Sciences in the Western World* (Micrologus 28), Florence 2020.

²² For a list of Burnett's substantial publications: URL: <https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/charles-burnett-list-publications>, last accessed 02/12/2024.

²³ See, for example, José Martínez Gazquez: *The Attitude of the Medieval Latin Translators towards the Arabic Sciences*, Florence 2016, who provides a compilation of prologues to translated Arabic texts. The ambivalent attitude towards Arabic sciences in the Renaissance was examined in: Dag Nikolaus Hasse: *Success and Suppression: Arabic Sciences and Philosophy in the Renaissance* (I Tatti Studies in Italian Renaissance History), Cambridge (MA) 2016 (see especially Chapter 6: "Astrology: Ptolemy against the Arabs", pp. 248–292. Also: Charles Burnett: *The Second Revelation of Arabic Philosophy and Science: 1492–1562*, in: Charles Burnett / Anna Contadini (eds.): *Islam and the Italian Renaissance* (Warburg Institute Colloquia 5), London 1999, pp. 185–198.

²⁴ See Hilary M. Carey: *Courting Disaster: Astrology at the English Court and University in the Later Middle Ages*, New York 1992; Michael A. Ryan: *A Kingdom of Stargazers. Astrology and Authority in the Late Medieval Crown of Aragon*, Ithaca, NY 2011; Rodolfo Signorini: *Fortuna dell'astrologia a Mantova: arte, letteratura, carte d'archivio*, Mantua 2007; Monica Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars. Astrology and Politics in Renaissance Milan*, Cambridge (MA) 2013; Darin Hayton: *The Crown and the Cosmos: Astrology and the Politics of Maximilian I*, Pittsburgh, Pa. 2015. For France, the court of King Charles V in particular has been studied, especially in connection with the writings of Nicole Oresme against astrology. See George W. Coopland: *Nicole Oresme and the Astrologers. A Study of his Livre de Divinations*, Liverpool 1952. However, a monograph on the role of astrology at the court of Charles V, focusing on the astrologers who worked there, such as Pélerin de Prusse or Tommaso de Pizano, has not been written yet. For articles on this, see, for example, Edgar S. Laird: *Astrology at the Court of Charles V of France*, as reflected in Oxford, St. John's College, MS 164, in: *Manuscripta* 34 (1990), pp. 167–176; Jean-Patrice Boudet: *A 'College of Astrology and Medicine'? Charles V, Gervais Chrétien, and the Scientific Manuscripts of Maître Gervais's College*, in: *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 41 (2010), pp. 99–108. Jean-Patrice Boudet has also edited and studied the work of the fifteenth-century astrologer Simon de Phares, who was associated with King Charles VIII – not only in terms of the astrologer's activity itself, but also in terms of the information his work offers about earlier astrologers. Simon de Phares: *Le Recueil des plus celebres astrologues de Simon de Phares*, 2 vols. ed. by Jean-Patrice Boudet, vol. 1: édition critique, vol. 2: présentation et commentaire, Paris 1997–1999.

However, the extent to which astrologers were renowned, trusted, and sought-after varied considerably and depended heavily on the respective ruler's attitude towards astrology.²⁵

The other two spheres of activity of astrologers – the university and the city – were also studied, albeit to a much lesser extent. The city represents the least researched space of the three, mainly due to the difficulty of finding records of astrological practice in an urban setting before the late fifteenth century.²⁶ Concerning the practice of astrology at universities, Italian universities, especially Bologna, where the institutional establishment of astrology was most advanced, provide the earliest and richest information.²⁷ It is important to emphasise that the different spheres of activity were closely linked, as the university-trained astrologers were subsequently or even simultaneously active at court or in the city.²⁸

²⁵ This was emphasized especially by Hilary M. Carey: *Courting Disaster*, p. 19. It should also be noted that the acceptance and use of astrology varied greatly depending on the geographical context. For more information about the different developments, see Chapter 2.1.

²⁶ See the fascinating find of an early practitioner (b. 1393) in London: Sophie Page: Richard Treythian and the Uses of Astrology in Late Medieval England, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 64 (2001), pp. 193–228. A wealth of information on later practice is provided by the casebooks of the astrologers Simon Forman and Richard Napier and their associates, which were written in London between 1596 and 1634. Their casebooks have been digitally edited as part of a project conducted at the University of Cambridge. Lauren Kassell et al. (eds.): *Casebooks. The Casebooks of Simon Forman and Richard Napier, 1596–1634: A Digital Edition*, URL: <https://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk/>, last accessed 02/12/2024. While these astrologers were active much later than those discussed in this study, their work shows the development of the role of astrologers. For the Italian context, see Elide Casali: *Le spie del cielo. Oroscopi, lunari e almanacchi nell'Italia moderna*, Torino 2003.

²⁷ See Graziella Federici Vescovini: *Astronomia e medicina all'Università di Bologna nel secolo XIV e agli inizi del XV*, in: Pierluigi Battistini / Fabrizio Bònoli / Alessandro Braccesi (eds.): *Seventh Centenary of the Teaching of Astronomy in Bologna 1297–1997*, Bologna 2001, pp. 123–150. A catalogue of lecturers in astrology at the University of Bologna was compiled by Fabrizio Bònoli / Daniela Piliarvu: *I lettori di astronomia presso lo Studio di Bologna dal XII al XX secolo* (Musei e archivi dello studio bolognese 7), Bologna 2001. For an overview of the “institutional, socio-cultural and cultural structures” for universities, cities and courts from 1300–1500, with a focus on Italy, see Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, pp. 367–463. Particularly interesting is the discussion of the “job description” of an astrologer, found in the 1405 statutes of the University of Bologna. *Ibid.*, pp. 391–395. Rutkin (*ibid.*, p. 391, n. 27) points out the research lacuna in this context: “A systematic comparison of astrologers and their practices at different universities and courts over the entire period and throughout Europe would be tremendously interesting.” For a discussion on this rubric see Chapter 2.1.1. For astrology at the University of Paris: Richard Lemay: *The Teaching of Astronomy in Medieval Universities, Principally at Paris in the Fourteenth Century*, in: *Manuscripta* 20 (1976), pp. 197–217; Danielle Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris dans la première moitié du XIVe siècle*, in: Graziella Federici Vescovini / Francesco Barocello (eds.): *Filosofia, scienza e astrologia nel Trecento europeo*. Biagio Pelacani Parmense. *Atti del Ciclo di lezioni “Astrologia, scienza, filosofia e società nel Trecento europeo”*, Parma, 5–6 ottobre 1990 (Percorsi della scienza. Storia, testi, problemi 2), Padova 1992, pp. 121–134. For astrology at the University of Oxford, especially Merton College: Carey: *Courting Disaster*, esp. pp. 58–78.

²⁸ In his article on astrological practice in fifteenth-century Vienna, Michael H. Shank introduced the term “academic consulting” to highlight the role of the “substantive contributions of university expertise to extra-academic political life”. Michael H. Shank: *Academic Consulting in Fifteenth-Century Vienna: The Case of Astrology*, in: Edith Dudley Sylla / Michael Rogers McVaugh (eds.): *Texts and Contexts in Ancient and Medieval Science. Studies on the Occasion of John E. Murdoch's Seventieth Birthday*

The research strands presented, which do not exist in isolation but are interrelated, show the importance of astrology in the Middle Ages and illustrate the multifaceted research approaches that the subject offers. Research on medieval astrology has undeniably made significant progress in recent years. Nevertheless, many astrological texts have not yet been edited, and numerous questions remain unanswered. By shifting the focus to include cultural and social rather than solely scientific questions, more attention has been paid to the people who made use of the discipline – the astrologers and their clients – thus opening up the possibility of new insights into various aspects of medieval life.²⁹ Nevertheless, such case studies on astrology so far primarily examined the attitudes and activities of rulers, addressing, for instance, if and how they availed themselves of astrological expertise. The astrologers' perspective often only played a secondary role. Such foci of interest are not only owed to the preferences of individual historians but may also be accounted for by the source material itself. Many of the astrological texts were written in a highly technical manner and concentrated solely on the prediction itself. While this offers insights into astrological theories and the objects of prediction, such as the ruler or events affecting his rule, we usually learn very little about the person making the prediction.

However, self-reflexive statements by astrologers are frequently found in a specific astrological text genre that has been largely neglected in research on the subject: the introductory works on astrology written especially in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. If such texts were examined, it was mainly in the context of broader studies on individual famous astrologers and focused on their scientific views and their relationship to rulers. The comments on the authors' views of the role of astrologers have so far only been mentioned in passing by researchers as an interesting side note.³⁰ Although the information about the astrologer that can be gleaned from these works remains fragmentary, such texts provide a fruitful starting point for exploring the

(Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 78), Leiden / Boston 1997, pp. 245–270, p. 248 on the use of the term.

²⁹ For articles focussed specifically on the astrologer-client relationship, see Wiebke Deimann / David Juste (eds.): *Astrologers and their Clients in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Archiv für Kulturgeschichte. Beiheft 73), Cologne 2015.

³⁰ See, for example, Lynn Thorndike's study on Michael Scot: *Lynn Thorndike: Michael Scot*, London 1965. On p. 93, he briefly summarises parts of Michael Scot's statements on how an astrologer should act. Michael Scot's detailed remarks on the behaviour of the astrologer in particular were also taken up in slightly more detail by Piero Morpurgo: *Note in margine a un poemetto astrologico presente nei codici del "Liber particularis" di Michele Scotto*, in: *Pluteus* 2 (1984), pp. 5–14; and Lillian Wheeler: *The Third Distinction of Michael Scot's Liber quattuor distinctionum: A Window into the Social World of Astrologers in the Early Thirteenth Century*, MA Dissertation, University of Waterloo, 2012. In both cases, however, the focus was mostly on providing an edition of the relevant text passages.

astrologer's perspective on his own role. By examining representations of various astrologers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in terms of their self-portrayals, I place the figure of the astrologer at the centre of this study. In doing so, I hope to shed more light on the position of astrologers, or rather how astrologers envisioned this position and actively sought to shape their image in society.

1.2 Selection Criteria for the Source Corpus

1.2.1 Source Material

The number of astrological texts produced in the late Middle Ages is vast, encompassing a wide range of different genres. The texts were furthermore written by a variety of scholars, some of whom did not even necessarily see themselves primarily as astrologers but merely had an amateur interest in the subject.³¹ As already mentioned, a significant part of those astrological texts has not yet been edited. This is especially true for the text genre I will focus on in my study: introductions to astrology, which form an important overarching genre alongside more specific astrological writings like nativities or the interpretations of the appearance of a comet.³²

The genre finds its beginnings in Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* (*Quadripartitum*) but was mainly shaped by Arabic writings of the ninth and tenth centuries.³³ The most famous and for the Latin West most influential Arabic introductions to astrology (arab: *Kitāb al-mudkhal*) were written by Abū Ma'shar al-Balkhī (lat. Albumasar) in the ninth century and by al-Qabīṣī (lat. Alcabitius) in the tenth century.³⁴ These introductions

³¹ On the question of the classification as an astrologer, see Chapter 2.2.1.

³² For an overview of more specific writings concerned with the different branches of astrology, see Charles Burnett: *Astral Sciences. Traditions and Practices in the Medieval Western Christian World*, in: Heiduk / Herbers / Lehner (eds.): *Prognostication in the Medieval World*, vol. 1, pp. 485–501, esp. pp. 487–494. He discusses introductions, revolutions, nativities, questions, choices, talismans, medical astrology, and aphorisms.

³³ For an overview of the text genre, see Margaret Gaida: *Introductions to Astrology*, in: Heiduk / Herbers / Lehner (eds.): *Prognostication in the Medieval World*, vol. 2, pp. 814–817; also: Charles Burnett: *Introducing Astrology: Michael Scot's Liber introductorius and Other Introductions*, in: Wiebke Deimann / David Juste (eds.): *Astrologers and their Clients in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (*Archiv für Kulturgeschichte. Beiheft 73*), Cologne 2015, pp. 17–28.

³⁴ Albumasar's "Great Introduction to Astrology" as well as his "Abbreviation" of it and Alcabitius's "Introduction to Astrology" have been edited and translated to English: Abū Ma'shar: *The Great Introduction to Astrology*, 2 vols., vol. 1: *The Arabic Original and English Translation*, ed. and transl. by Charles Burnett / Keiji Yamamoto; vol. 2: *The Greek Version and Glossaries*, ed. by David Pingree, glossaries and indexes by Charles Burnett / Keiji Yamamoto (*Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science* 106,1 / 106,2), Leiden / Boston 2019; Abū Ma'shar: *The Abbreviation of the Introduction to Astrology. Together with the Medieval Latin Translation of Adelard of Bath*, ed. and transl. by Charles Burnett / Keiji Yamamoto / Michio Yano (*Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science* 15), Leiden / Boston 1994; Al-Qabīṣī (Alcabitius): *The Introduction to Astrology. Editions of the Arabic and Latin Texts and an English Translation*, ed. and transl. by Charles Burnett / Keiji Yamamoto / Michio Yano (Warburg

aimed not to present completely new ideas but to provide an entry point for aspiring practitioners by summarising existing knowledge and outlining the basic principles of astrology. As in the case of Albumasar's "Great Introduction", this could also include a justification of astrology, providing its adherents with a helpful toolkit to counter oppositional arguments.³⁵ The introductions of both Albumasar and Alcabitius were translated in the twelfth century and functioned as standard reference works for Latin astrologers.³⁶ Alcabitius' text, in particular, became one of the most popular and widely read astrological works in the Latin West.³⁷ As Margaret Gaida has pointed out, the genre of introductions was particularly well suited to the newly emerging university context, and in addition to drawing on translations of Arabic works, Latin authors, especially in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, also tried their hand at producing their own introductions to astrology.³⁸ These works form the primary corpus of sources for my study.

Due to their compilatory nature, researchers have often disregarded them and even described them as "of little interest" and "disappointing".³⁹ Indeed, the writers of the

Institute Studies and Texts 2), London / Turin 2004. See the respective introductions for more information about the authors.

³⁵ For a short description of these works and examples of further Arabic astrological introductions, see Gaida: *Introductions to Astrology*, p. 815. On the justification of astrology by Albumasar: Jean-Claude Vadet: *Une défense de l'astrologie dans le maḍḥal d'Abū Ma'shar al-Balḥī*, in: *Annales Islamologiques* 5 (1963), pp. 131–180.

³⁶ Albumasars "Abbreviation" was translated by Adelard of Bath; the "Great Introduction" was translated twice, once by John of Seville, then by Hermann of Carinthia. Alcabitius' "Introduction" was equally translated by John of Seville. All translations took place in the first half of the twelfth century. See Gaida: *Introductions to Astrology*, pp. 815–816. The Latin translations of Albumasar's "Abbreviation" and Alcabitius' "Introduction to Astrology" have been edited together with the Arabic original, see footnote 34. Hermann of Carinthia's and John of Seville's translation of Albumasar's "Great Introduction" were edited in: Albumasar: *Liber introductorii maioris ad scientiam judiciorum astrorum*, 9 vols., ed. by Richard Lemay, Naples 1995 (vols. 4–6: John of Seville; vols. 7–8: Hermann of Carinthia). For the role Albumasar's work played for the transmission of Aristotelian natural philosophy before the translation of Aristotle's works, see Lemay: *Abū Ma'shar and Latin Aristotelianism*.

³⁷ In David Juste's survey of "the 50 most popular works available in Latin before c. 1500 A.D", the Latin translation of Alcabitius's introduction ranks first. Juste: *The Impact of Arabic Sources on European Astrology*. See on the reception of the work, especially in the university context: Charles Burnett: *Al-Qabīṣī's Introduction to Astrology: From Courtly Entertainment to University Textbook*, in: Resianne Fontaine et al. (eds.): *Studies in the History of Culture and Science: A Tribute to Gad Freudenthal* (*Studies in Jewish History and Culture*), Leiden 2011, pp. 43–70; also: Gaida: *Encounters with Alcabitius*.

³⁸ Gaida: *Introductions to Astrology*, p. 816; Charles Burnett: *Astrology*, in: Frank A.C. Mantello / Arthur George Rigg (eds.): *Medieval Latin. An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, Washington (DC) 1996, pp. 369–382, here p. 371.

³⁹ See, for example, Keith Snedegar, who voices his assessment of John Ashenden's introductory work to astrology, the *Summa iudicialis*, very explicitly. Keith Snedegar: *John Ashenden and the Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*. With an Edition of Ashenden's *Pronosticationes*, 2 vols., DPhil thesis, University of Oxford 1988, p. 64: "Disappointment is bound to be the reader's first reaction to the *Summa*. For a work of such grand proportions and such intricate design, on the surface it yields so little of interest. Paging through the *Summa* is very much like traversing a wide desert – it is a barren, inhospitable

Latin introductions to astrology frequently explicitly state that they do not see themselves as innovators or even authors of their works but merely as compilers of the currently available astrological knowledge.⁴⁰ Their intended contribution to the astrological discourse was not the introduction of new ideas but rather the collation and coherent organisation of existing knowledge for interested scholars. The astrological introductions can thus be considered part of those centuries' general tendency to produce works that catalogue and systematise current knowledge.⁴¹

However, a closer reading of such sources reveals that they contain valuable information for the historian, particularly regarding the authors' self-image and their understanding of the role of the astrologer in general. They summarise current astrological knowledge and practices considered permissible and of interest to readers at a specific time and place. Furthermore, the scholars who wrote the texts did not simply copy everything they could find on astrology. They carefully chose the text excerpts they considered most pertinent, compared and assessed diverging theories, and strove to present the contents in an easy and accessible way, sometimes also adding personal anecdotes from their own astrological practice to underline their point of view. Those selection and assessment processes allow us to identify the respective writer's preferences and attitudes. Finally, since the writers commented not only on the discipline of astrology itself but also on the role of its practitioners, these texts contain highly instructive nuggets of information for the study of astrologers. Such elaborations on the astrologer's role occurred above all in the prologues, which were often quite long and frequently included a justification for the study of astrology, or they featured as asides throughout the work. Some authors even devoted entire chapters to this topic, specifying in detail what the role of an astrologer was supposed to entail and what behaviour was expected of him.⁴² These descriptions were based on traditional models

landscape, seemingly endless and altogether dead. There are more comfortable roads for the historian-traveller, roads leading to more charming destinations. The *Summa* is a medievalist's Central Asia rather than his Majorca."

⁴⁰ See, for example, John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, prologue, fol. 1^{va}: [...] *quorum omnium sententias et regulas in hoc libro meo intendo compilare nichil de capite proprio pro posse meo addendo nisi ea que ex eorum dictis uidentur sequi nolens omnino in hoc opere auctor sed tantummodo compilator reputari.*

⁴¹ The most notable sign of this is the intensified production of encyclopaedic works, particularly in the thirteenth century, see, for example: Jacques Le Goff: *Pourquoi le XIII^e siècle a-t-il été plus particulièrement un siècle de l'encyclopédisme?*, in: Michelangelo Picone (ed.): *L'enciclopedia medievale. Atti del convegno San Gimignano, 8–10 ottobre 1992*, Ravenna 1994, 1994, pp. 23–40.

⁴² See Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 3, fols. 118^{va}–120^{va} or John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 12, chap. 3, fols. 242^{rb}–243^{vb}.

of the ideal scholar from antiquity. They were also influenced by Arab (and thus predominantly Islamic) role models for astrologers, which had to be adapted to current expectations and the Christian context.

The introductory texts served multiple functions and targeted different potential readers. They provided self-assurance for practising astrologers, guidance for aspiring practitioners, and promotional material to convince potential clients to place their trust in astrologers. Additionally, these texts were a crucial part of the controversial discourse on astrology's value and the role of practitioners, serving as both a reactive and anticipatory defence against attacks on astrologers and their discipline. Their authors thus portrayed themselves as authoritative representatives of their 'professional' group who could provide a comprehensive insight into the activities of an astrologer.

Even focusing exclusively on Latin-Christian introductions to astrology produced in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in specific geographical regions, the number of writings in that time span is still vast, and the introductions are often extensive. However, this is not an obstacle to the analysis, as my aim is not to provide an exhaustive prosopographical survey of the attitudes and activities of all astrologers practising during that time. Instead, I seek to shed more light on the prevailing image of 'the astrologer' in this period by highlighting various facets of this role, illustrated by the accounts of influential writers. I selected a set of texts from the period that contain particularly revealing and detailed statements about the role of astrologers. The choice of authors and their works covers both the geographical scope of the three chosen focal points and the common fields of activity of astrologers during this period, thus providing a representative sample of ideas on the prevailing self-image of astrologers. Mostly, I rely on works by relatively well-known authors since their statements can be better assessed if at least something is known about their working context. This also further ensures representativeness because these texts were popular and known to a wide readership. Additionally, I draw on some lesser-known texts that discuss the astrologer's role in detail, thereby rounding out the picture.

While the actual introductions to astrology are at the centre of my investigation, I also consider texts such as Roger Bacon's *Opus majus* or John of Saxony's commentary on the introduction of Alcabitius, thus adopting a somewhat broader interpretation of the genre. The inclusion of these texts within the framework of my study is justified as

they pursue the same objective, namely, to introduce and explain astrological matters to aspiring astrologers or scholars interested in astrology and, in doing so, also discuss the figure of the astrologer. Moreover, such an approach is necessary and valuable because not all the works discussed here deal with all facets of being an astrologer to the same extent. The representations in the various texts are thus pieces of a puzzle that, when put together, bring the elusive figure of the astrologer into sharper focus. A broader definition of the genre of introductions to astrology will therefore provide a richer view of the way the role of astrologers was presented.

I also apply this more expansive approach to the designation or classification of the authors of the introductions as astrologers. A narrow definition of astrologers only as individuals who practise astrology exclusively and for financial remuneration would qualify very few scholars as astrologers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Indeed, the authors of the introductory works range from such career astrologers as Guido Bonatti, to astrologer-physicians such as Peter of Abano, to polymaths such as Roger Bacon. For the purposes of this study, I understand astrologers to be scholars who practise astrology and whose works promote the discipline and address the role of its practitioners in a positive way.⁴³

Despite the selective nature of the study's source material, the different geographical and temporal developments, and the individual contexts of the authors, which will be taken into account in the respective discussions, it is indeed possible to identify the evolution of a specific role of the Latin-Christian astrologer in these introductions to astrology. The fact that the writers paid attention to this topic at all shows that they had a firm idea of the astrologer's role in society – or rather, that they wanted to create and establish a specific and idealised notion of it. Information on the perceived role of the astrologer is particularly noteworthy and valuable, seeing that we know relatively little about individual astrologers and their conduct during the period. As Klaus Oschema has pointed out, obtaining information on the “performative dimension of the role of astrologers as experts” is extremely difficult.⁴⁴ A close analysis of the introductory works from this – often overlooked – perspective is thus a way to address this challenge.

⁴³ For a more detailed discussion of the classification and designation as astrologers, see Chapter 2.2.1.

⁴⁴ Klaus Oschema: *Heaven Can Tell... Late Medieval Astrologers as Experts – and what they can Teach us about Contemporary Financial Expertise*, in: Chris Jones / Conor Kostick / Klaus Oschema (eds.): *Making the Medieval Relevant: How Medievalists Are Revolutionising the Present* (Das Mittelalter. Beihefte 6), Berlin / Boston 2020, pp. 191–209, here p. 198.

1.2.2 Time Frame and Geographical Focus

The time frame of my study roughly covers the period from the beginning of the thirteenth to the middle of the fourteenth century, which constitutes a key transitional and developmental stage in the history of Latin astrology. This refers not only to the gradual establishment and acceptance of astrology in medieval society but, above all, to the formation of a distinct role of the Latin-Christian astrologer. In the thirteenth century, the core texts of Arabic astrology were already available in translation. Their contents were integrated into the Latin-Christian canon of knowledge and adapted accordingly. A crucial factor contributing to the proliferation of astrology at that time was the emergence of universities. At the same time, astrological expertise was increasingly called upon for political or personal counsel at court.⁴⁵ However, in order to successfully establish themselves in these environments, astrologers had to compete for a place among the ranks of established scholars, presenting their practice as a legitimate and valuable activity in its own right and showing themselves as worthy representatives. In this context, the introductions to astrology were written, reflecting the attempts of astrologers to ‘fashion’ their own role. Although astrology was also practised to some degree in the early and especially the high Middle Ages, it was previously done more as an activity among many, usually as part of the astronomy studies of the quadrivium, and scholars were not regularly identifying primarily as astrologers and discussing their role as such.⁴⁶ It was only when certain factors came together – the influx of Greek and Arabic astrological knowledge, which brought with it ideas about an established role for the astrologer, as well as favourable conditions provided by the court and the university – that the practice of astrology really took off, and a specific form of the Latin-Christian astrologer gradually began to assume a more definitive shape, informed crucially by the self-fashioning of scholars as astrologers. This period, when the initial processes of negotiation and development concerning the

⁴⁵ See Chapter 2.1 for the specific role of astrology at court and at the universities.

⁴⁶ Such statements are not absolute but reflect a tendency and apply only to the Latin West, not to classical antiquity or Arabic regions. On the practice of astrology in the early Middle Ages in the Latin West, see Valerie I.J. Flint: *The Transmission of Astrology in the Early Middle Ages*, in: Viator 21 (1990), pp. 1–27; Juste: *Horoscopic Astrology in Early Medieval Europe (500–1100)*; with a focus on astronomy: Stephen C. McCluskey: *Astronomies and Cultures in Early Medieval Europe*, New York 1998. Beginnings of a self-identification as astrologer and a primary interest in astrology can already be found in the twelfth century, for example, in the works of scholars such as Petrus Alfonsi or Raymond of Marseilles. In their texts, however, the focus is mostly on a justification of astrology or the highlighting their own specific expertise, not on the role of the practitioner in general. See on the two scholars: John Victor Tolan: *Reading God’s Will in the Stars: Petrus Alfonsi and Raymond de Marseille Defend the New Arabic Astrology*, in: *Revista española de filosofía medieval* 7 (2000), pp. 13–30.

astrologer's role were taking place in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, will be the temporal focus of this study.

The earliest work in my study is the introduction to astrology by the Italian astrologer Michael Scot, written in the 1220s. Associated with the court of Frederick II, to whom he even dedicated his work, he represents an early witness to an astrologer's engagement with his own role in a court environment.⁴⁷ The endpoint of my study was slightly more challenging to determine, as the formation of the astrologer's role naturally does not end at a certain point but fluidly takes on different forms and is adapted to the respective circumstances. The thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth century were a time when astrologers were fashioning their 'professional' identities and when we can observe for the first time a thorough preoccupation with the role of the astrologer by scholars who defined themselves as such. However, this process seems to have reached a peak in the second half of the fourteenth century, or rather to have entered a different phase. From this time onwards, an increasing number of detailed works were written that not only refuted astrology but also specifically criticised the behaviour of its practitioners.⁴⁸ This negative backlash suggests that astrologers had, by then, successfully established themselves in some form as figures to be reckoned with in medieval society. The most famous critique of astrology of that time, the *Livre de Divinations*, written by the French scholar Nicole Oresme between 1361 and 1365, will therefore mark the chronological end of my work, while the last introduction to astrology I will discuss was written not too long before, around 1347, by the English astrologer John Ashenden.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ For further information about Michael Scot, see Chapter 2.1.1.

⁴⁸ While there had been oppositional writings against astrology before that, and the traditional critique of classical authors such as Cicero and the Church Fathers, especially that of Augustine, remained present throughout the Middle Ages, from the second half of the fourteenth century onwards we find an increase in writings devoted exclusively to refuting astrology. Moreover, the new critiques reflect contemporary developments and attempt to show the inadmissibility of astrology not only on a religious and scientific level, but also on a social level. Again, of course, this is a tendency and should not be seen in absolute terms. See, for example, C. Philipp E. Nothaft: *Vanitas vanitatum et super omnia vanitas: The Astronomer Heinrich Selder and A Newly Discovered Fourteenth-Century Critique of Astrology*, in: *Erudition and the Republic of Letters* 1 (3) (2016), pp. 261–304. Nothaft discusses the criticism of astrology written in the 1370s by the Swabian astronomer Heinrich Selder, who was probably at one time associated with the University of Paris, and places it in a context with the more famous contemporary anti-astrological works of Nicole Oresme and Heinrich von Langenstein (Henry of Hesse). For the recent edition of the work, see Heinrich Selder: *A Fourteenth-Century Chronologer and Critic of Astrology: Heinrich Selder's Treatise on the Time of the Lord's Annunciation, Nativity, and Passion*, ed. by C. Philipp Nothaft, Oxford 2022.

⁴⁹ For more information about Nicole Oresme, see Chapter 2.1.2; for John Ashenden, see Chapter 2.1.3.

In addition to the opposing writings against astrologers, there were further developments at the end of the fourteenth century and especially in the fifteenth century that point to a new phase in the history of astrologers. In general, a gradual increase in the institutionalisation of astrology is becoming apparent – at court, but especially at the universities. The challenges astrologers faced in their self-fashioning thus took on new forms. Moreover, at the end of the fourteenth century, the Great Western Schism (1378–1417) prompted an increased preoccupation with a possible imminent end of the world, which led to a reassessment of the relationship between astrologers and prophets.⁵⁰ Finally, astrology became increasingly popular and widespread, owing in particular to the media changes in the second half of the fifteenth century, which significantly expanded the astrologers’ fields of activity.⁵¹

In terms of geographical scope, the cases mentioned so far already reflect the areas I am focusing on, as I consider examples from Italy, France, and England. This selection is based on the early establishment of universities in these countries as well as the interest of individual rulers in the practice of astrology. Introductory texts on astrology, in which the authors commented on the astrologer’s role in medieval society, were written during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in all three countries. Furthermore, this geographical axis allows me to illustrate the different acceptance levels of astrology and its practitioners. In Italy, astrologers appeared at courts and universities at an early stage. Yet, this development took place at a slower rate and to a lesser degree in France and even more so in England, where astrology never became a university subject.⁵²

While multiple variables contributed to the divergent local trends, the attitudes of individual rulers towards astrology and the way the discipline was incorporated within the university curriculum were undoubtedly deciding factors. Notwithstanding the disparities, the overall tendency to accept and integrate astrologers into society – and thus the development of a specific image of ‘the astrologer’ – increased throughout those centuries and was first identifiable in Italy before reaching France and England. The choice of Michael Scot’s introductory work, originating from an Italian context, as the chronological beginning of my study, and the work of the English scholar John

⁵⁰ For the discussion of this and the astrologers’ assessments of the relationship between astrology and prophecy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see Chapter 5.3.2.

⁵¹ For the further development of astrological practice in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Chapter 6.

⁵² These varying developments represent trends rather than a monolithic attitude towards astrology or a linear development. The different geographical trajectories are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.1.

Ashenden as the latest example, are paradigmatic of these tendencies in the evolution of the social acceptance of the astrologer.

1.3 Methodological Approach

Having outlined the what, when, and where of my study, I now turn to the how, i.e. my methodology. The texts examined in the following all show a strong bias and are often highly polemical. However, rather than seeing this bias as a disadvantage, I will use it as an opportunity to analyse the image of the astrologer that the authors wanted to convey during the period under study. In my investigation, I follow the approach of the so-called “*Vorstellungsgeschichte*”, proposed by German historian Hans-Werner Goetz in an article from 1979.⁵³ Goetz sees his approach as an important addition to the two main kinds of historiographical analysis – the history of events and the history of structures (“*Ereignis- und Strukturgeschichte*”).⁵⁴ Instead of focusing primarily on uncovering a past ‘reality’, Goetz suggests a shift in perspective. He places the subjective ideas, beliefs, and perceptions of writers at the centre of attention. This is explicitly not done to use these “*Vorstellungen*” to infer underlying historical facts, but the author’s subjective view itself becomes the epistemic goal.⁵⁵

As Goetz points out, the advantage of this approach lies, above all, in the historian’s changed relationship with the sources. For the historian interested in events and structures, the source text merely constitutes a medium that allows him to reconstruct – as far as possible – the historical facts or, in Leopold von Ranke’s dictum, “what actually happened” (“*wie es eigentlich gewesen*”). The medieval writers’ bias and limited knowledge horizon present significant problems here since they must be analysed carefully to identify when and how the individual author distorted the ‘historical reality’. The approach of the “*Vorstellungsgeschichte*” bridges the gap

⁵³ Hans-Werner Goetz: “*Vorstellungsgeschichte*”: Menschliche Vorstellungen und Meinungen als Dimension der Vergangenheit. Bemerkungen zu einem jüngeren Arbeitsfeld der Geschichtswissenschaft als Beitrag zu einer Methodik der Quellenauswertung, in: *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 61 (1979), pp. 253–271. The term can be roughly translated as the “history of imagination”, which, however, evokes a misleading connotation with “fantasy”. While a translation as the “history of ideas” would equally fit in theory, this phrase is already associated with another historical approach. Goetz himself remarks that he decided against using the term “*Ideengeschichte*” to dissociate his approach from “intellectual history”, which concentrates mainly on “great thinkers”. See *ibid.*, p. 256, footnote 12. In order to avoid any confusion, I am using the German term “*Vorstellungsgeschichte*”. For Hans-Werner Goetz’s collected articles on this topic, see Anna Aurast et al. (eds.): *Hans-Werner Goetz: Vorstellungsgeschichte: gesammelte Schriften zu Wahrnehmungen, Deutungen und Vorstellungen im Mittelalter*, Bochum 2007.

⁵⁴ Goetz: *Vorstellungsgeschichte*, p. 257.

⁵⁵ Goetz: *ibid.*, p. 260, writes that the epistemic goal of “*Vorstellungsgeschichte*” is not to grasp the historical process (history of structures) or the event itself and its background (history of events), but “the person commenting during this event” (“*der kommentierende Mensch in diesem Geschehen*”).

between historian and source by making the subjective view of the writer itself, his “Vorstellungswelt” — his ‘mental imagery’ or rather ‘mindscape’ — the research object.⁵⁶

However, this does not mean that the “Vorstellungen”, an author’s ideas, conceptions, and imaginations, existed independently from historical reality. On the contrary, as Goetz explains, “Vorstellungen” closely interact with historical ‘reality’ since they reflect and influence the author’s actual environment.⁵⁷ “Vorstellungsgeschichte” thus provides us with the subjective view of an author in the framework of his environment, his “processed reality” (“verarbeitete Wirklichkeit”) — his perception of events, but equally of himself and his contemporaries.⁵⁸ As the author, consciously or unconsciously, shares only specific information in his text, we learn what drew the author’s interest and which topics he deemed relevant enough to address in his work.⁵⁹ As Goetz points out, it is furthermore important to note that “Vorstellungen” can and should be considered synchronically as well as diachronically, that is, through the comparison with “Vorstellungen” of other authors at the same time and of authors writing at a later period.⁶⁰ In this way, the specific views of one author can be contextualised within the beliefs of his time — were similar ideas or thoughts also expressed by other authors? — and in regard to their continuation or transformation — how did certain “Vorstellungen” change over time?⁶¹

Goetz developed and implemented his approach primarily concerning historiographical sources. However, the concept of “Vorstellungsgeschichte” can easily be transferred to the field of the history of science and applied to the texts on astrology discussed here. The approach lends itself as a method for the present study, as my research interest explicitly focuses on the — very subjective — way astrologers tried to portray themselves and how this also reflected how they were perceived and described by others, hence “Vorstellungen” about how astrologers should be and act. While the actual activities of astrologers certainly influenced such portrayals, the historical

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 259–260, 266.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 268. About the close relation and interdependence between the history of events, the history of structures and “Vorstellungsgeschichte”, Goetz: *Vorstellungsgeschichte*, pp. 263–264. See also for Goetz’ comments on the relation and mutual influences between “perception, imagination and interpretation” (“Wahrnehmung, Vorstellung, Deutung”): Hans-Werner Goetz: *Wahrnehmungs- und Deutungsmuster als methodisches Problem der Geschichtswissenschaft*, in: *Das Mittelalter* 8 (2) (2003), pp. 23–33, here p. 31.

⁵⁸ Goetz: *Vorstellungsgeschichte*, p. 256.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 265.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 262, 265.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 262, 265.

‘reality’ of astrologers plays only a secondary role in my analysis – it is primarily used to put the authors’ statements in context. Thus, my study does not aim to ascertain the truth or falsehood of the authors’ claims. Instead, it seeks to analyse the claims themselves to understand more about societal ideas circulating about the figure of ‘the astrologer’. Following the approach of the “Vorstellungsgeschichte”, the sources’ bias thus does not pose a problem since the authors’ subjective views themselves become the research objective.

1.4 Thematic Strands

1.4.1 Self-Fashioning

The strong subjectivity of the texts allows us to understand the strategies astrologers used to propagate their respective causes. The endeavour to project a specific image of ‘the astrologer’ – as a figure that can be attributed with distinct characteristics and modes of behaviour – can be understood in the sense of Stephen Greenblatt’s “self-fashioning”.⁶² Greenblatt detected an “increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process” in the early modern society of the sixteenth century.⁶³ While Greenblatt’s study focuses on literary figures of the English Renaissance, this “manipulable, artful process” of fashioning “a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving”⁶⁴ can also be observed in other contexts. In 2013, for example, Richard Kirwan utilised the concept of “self-fashioning” in an edited volume concerning various aspects of “scholarly self-fashioning and community in the early modern university”.⁶⁵ In 2015, a collective volume edited by Laura Delbrugge addressed processes of self-fashioning in relation to identity in medieval and modern Iberia.⁶⁶ Delbrugge, in particular, emphasises in her introduction that the desire to shape one’s ‘image’ – how one is seen by others – is not limited to a specific time period but should be considered

⁶² The literary historian Stephen Greenblatt first devised his concept of “self-fashioning” in his work *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Chicago 1980.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Richard Kirwan (ed.): *Scholarly Self-fashioning and Community in the Early Modern University*, Farnham 2013.

⁶⁶ Laura Delbrugge (ed.): *Self-fashioning and Assumptions of Identity in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia (The Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World 59)*, Leiden / Boston 2015.

“fundamental human nature”.⁶⁷ As such, Delbrugge urges researchers to explore how the concept of self-fashioning might be applied to “other cultural and historical *milieu*”.⁶⁸

While the contributions in Delbrugge’s volume address self-fashioning in a wide range of contexts in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, the articles in Kirwan’s book focus on scholarly self-fashioning in the context of the early modern university. In his introduction, Kirwan points toward the unstable perception of ‘the scholar’ in early modern society. Consequently, he detects a great eagerness “to fix the social rank of this diverse group”, which results in what he calls an “exercise in impression management”.⁶⁹

Kirwan also raises the question of whether and when scholars perceived themselves as a coherent social group at all.⁷⁰ He pinpoints this development to the early modern period when individuals increasingly began to define themselves in terms of their affiliation to groups.⁷¹ As a decisive factor for this, Kirwan identifies the growing degree of professionalisation of scholars, linked to their recruitment into the “bureaucracies of Renaissance republics and monarchies”.⁷² He states that while the group of scholars “struggled to define itself in the Middle Ages”, it “had found its voice by the dawn of the early modern period.”⁷³ In addition to the analysis of collective self-fashioning, Kirwan also emphasises the importance of exploring the self-fashioning of the individual, and how the two levels of collective and individual self-fashioning interacted.⁷⁴

The struggle for scholarly self-definition identified by Kirwan for the medieval period has been productively explored for a specific group by Jana-Madlen Schütte in

⁶⁷ Laura Delbrugge: Introduction, in: ead. (ed.): *Self-fashioning and Assumptions*, pp. 1–17, here p. 3. However, she also concurs with Greenblatt that during the English Renaissance there seems to have a greater interest in doing this. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Her collective volume thus presents a first step in this direction.

⁶⁹ Richard Kirwan: Introduction. *Scholarly Self-Fashioning and the Cultural History of Universities*, in: id. (ed.): *Scholarly Self-fashioning and Community in the Early Modern University*, Farnham 2013, pp. 1–20, here p. 1.

⁷⁰ By ‘scholars’ Kirwan understands the group affiliated with the university, i.e. “professors, students and peripatetic or cosmopolitan scholars.” *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4: He points out that “scholarly experience and knowledge” constituted only part of the elements which defined one’s identity, but that the reliance on them as defining characteristics took on greater importance in the early modern period. For the perception of astrologers as a group, see below.

⁷² *Ibid.*; see also p. 1, where he states that the “struggle for social power was waged via a battle for public image.”

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8–11.

her study of medieval medical practitioners.⁷⁵ In her work, Schütte touches on many aspects of self-fashioning and related phenomena. Schütte places the competitive environment that prevailed for medical practitioners at the centre of her analysis. Due to the fierce competition in the “medical market” (“dem medizinischen Markt”),⁷⁶ medical practitioners had to display a specific *habitus* to present themselves as scholars and trustworthy authorities.⁷⁷ Following Pierre Bourdieu’s notion, she defines *habitus* as “a system of patterns of thought, perception and actions that results from the internalisation of social conditions of existence, and influences the formation of individual behaviours.”⁷⁸ Understood in this way, a scholar’s *habitus* was strongly socially conditioned. In order to suggest a greater ability of individual scholars to create and shape their role, Schütte combines Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* with Greenblatt’s concept of “self-fashioning”.⁷⁹ Consequently, she considers both social conditioning as well as individual agency as important factors that influenced the behaviour and self-presentation of late medieval medical practitioners.⁸⁰ Similar to Kirwan, Schütte also points towards different types of self-fashioning. She distinguishes between the collective “self-staging” of medical practitioners, for example, as members of the medical faculty, and the self-fashioning of individual medical practitioners as exceptionally gifted or learned.⁸¹

Schütte’s approach of combining the concepts of Bourdieu’s *habitus* and Greenblatt’s “self-fashioning” by considering both the societal framework and

⁷⁵ Jana-Madlen Schütte: *Medizin im Konflikt: Fakultäten, Märkte und Experten in deutschen Universitätsstädten des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts*, Leiden / Boston 2017. For a study on the self-fashioning of physicians in the seventeenth century see Michael Stolberg: *Zwischen Identitätsbildung und Selbstinszenierung. Ärztliches Self-Fashioning in der Frühen Neuzeit*, in: Dagmar Freist (ed.): *Diskurse – Körper – Artefakte. Historische Praxeologie in der Frühneuzeitforschung (Praktiken der Subjektivierung 4)*, Bielefeld 2015, pp. 33–55.

⁷⁶ For the definition of a “medical market”: Schütte: *Medizin im Konflikt*, pp. 12–14.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18: „ein System von Denk-, Wahrnehmungs- und Handlungsmustern, das aus der Verinnerlichung gesellschaftlicher Existenzbedingungen resultiert und Einfluss auf die Gestaltung individuellen Verhaltens nimmt“. See Pierre Bourdieu: *Sozialer Sinn. Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft* (Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 1066), Frankfurt (Main) 1993, p. 112: „[Habitus] als subjektives, aber nichtindividuelles System verinnerlichter Strukturen, gemeinsamer Wahrnehmung-, Denk- und Handlungsschemata [...], welche Vorbedingung für jede Objektivierung und Wahrnehmung sind und die objektive Abstimmung der Praktiken und die Einheitlichkeit der Weltanschauung mit der vollkommenen Personenungebundenheit und Substituierbarkeit der Praktiken und Einzelanschauungen begründen.“

⁷⁹ Schütte: *Medizin im Konflikt*, p. 18

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20. Schütte explicitly avoids using the term “collective self-fashioning”, but distinguishes between the “collective staging” (“kollektiver Inszenierung”) and individual “self-fashioning” (“self-fashioning einzelner Ärzte”) to emphasise the different levels. She refers for this to Kirwan’s finding that many scholars were more interested in highlighting their affiliation to the class of scholars than to stress their individual exceptional identity. Cf. Kirwan: *Introduction*, p. 9.

conscious self-fashioning as crucial for the emergence of a specific role provides an ideal frame of reference for my investigation. Indeed, in the case of astrologers, an interplay between adherence to social norms and an effort to actively shape one's role can equally be identified. For one, in the texts written by astrologers, we can observe their purposeful attempt to create their own niche within the scholarly community – endowed with specific characteristics, skills and behaviours distinct from other groups. However, the astrologers' depictions of themselves were also strongly governed by societal standards. While astrologers occasionally pushed the boundaries of what was deemed acceptable and often portrayed their occupation as so extraordinary that it bordered on the impossible, secret or forbidden, they were also keen to emphasise that their activity remained firmly within societal precepts. They took great care to portray astrologers as exemplary in every respect, conforming to the ideal of a Christian scholar, both morally and intellectually. Frequently, astrologers depicted the representatives of their occupation as even exceeding the usual requirements of scholars, for example, when describing the impeccable morals required of practitioners. In their accounts, we also see the different levels of self-fashioning, collective and individual. On the one hand, the authors sought to present – and in this way, create – the image of astrologers as a community. On the other hand, they also highlighted their individual expertise and their exceptional personal aptitude for the discipline.

1.4.2 Groups

In the context of these considerations, the question arises as to the extent to which astrologers can be defined as a social group at all and how this may have influenced their self-fashioning. Again, we can draw from Schütte's study in this regard. She discussed this question for the case of medical practitioners and asked whether the membership of a closed social group constituted a prerequisite of collective self-fashioning.⁸² Schütte draws in her analysis on the definition of social groups in the Middle Ages proposed by Otto Gerhard Oexle in an article from 1998, which in turn is based on the considerations of the sociologist Leopold von Wiese.⁸³ According to Oexle, a social group must fulfil four conditions to be considered as such: first, there must be specific rules and norms; second, the group must distinguish itself from other groups; third, a social group must have an internal organisation; fourth, it must exist

⁸² Schütte: *Medizin im Konflikt*, p. 20.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

over a continuous period of time.⁸⁴ While Schütte regards medical faculties and the barber surgeons' or barbers' guilds as social groups based on this definition,⁸⁵ the question of whether astrologers can be construed as a social group according to these defining conditions is more difficult to answer.

As Kirwan has asserted for the definition of the "scholar" in the Middle Ages,⁸⁶ I argue that the astrologers struggled to define themselves – as a group and as individual representatives of this group. However, I suggest that it was precisely this struggle that prompted the astrologers' preoccupation with their 'professional' identity. The role of astrologers – with fixed character traits and predefined codes of conduct – only began to take a more definite shape in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. One strategy they employed to portray their occupation as legitimate and venerable was to create a group identity. This happened through the deliberate efforts of astrologers to create a distinct identity for themselves and to emphasise their membership to a specific group of practitioners. In fact, as I will show, three of the characteristics of a group, as defined by Oexle, can be discerned in how astrologers were portrayed in the introductions to astrology. First, they depicted the community of astrologers as a multitude of exceptional scholars who collected and expanded astrological knowledge over a long period of time; second, they explicitly defined clear rules and regulations for the members of their art; third, they pointed out differences between their own activity and those of other groups, such as physicians, theologians, magicians, diviners, and prophets. Oexle emphasises that the existence of rules of conduct and the temporal duration are particularly important elements in the formation of groups, which makes it remarkable that it is precisely these points to which astrologers devoted much attention.⁸⁷

One defining group characteristic, however, cannot be found in the texts, i.e. internal organisation.⁸⁸ There are several explanations for this, most importantly, the lack of permanent institutionalisation of the occupation of astrologers. While some universities

⁸⁴ Otto Gerhard Oexle: Soziale Gruppen in der Ständegesellschaft: Lebensformen des Mittelalters und ihre historischen Wirkungen, in: Otto Gerhard Oexle / Andrea von Hülsen-Esch (eds.): Die Repräsentation der Gruppen, Göttingen 1998, pp. 9–44, here p. 17.

⁸⁵ Schütte: Medizin im Konflikt, p. 20.

⁸⁶ Kirwan: Introduction, p. 3.

⁸⁷ Oexle: Soziale Gruppen in der Ständegesellschaft, p. 17.

⁸⁸ One could potentially interpret discussions about different astrological authorities as an indication of a classification system, i.e. which author should be trusted most for which theory. However, since there are no clear allocations of roles and references are only made to past authorities, it rather seems that this characteristic is missing for astrologers.

established chairs specifically for astrology, no official collective associations of astrologers, such as colleges, guilds or similar, existed that would have warranted the development of more differentiated internal organisational structures.⁸⁹ Moreover, astrologers do not even seem to have had any aspirations to introduce internal differentiation. This indifference points to a crucial aspect of the astrologers' self-image, which will become more apparent in the following chapters. Whereas the internal organisation of a group involves the division of labour and practical cooperation, the astrologer was presented as a holistic advisor for all situations in life who gives concrete advice in individual consultations. While the other factors of defining a group thus strengthen the legitimacy of the individual astrologer, internal differentiation would rather mean the surrender of competencies of the individual.

It is important to note that both Oexle and Schütte apply the constitutive characteristics of a group to the factual circumstances. However, this is not the focus of the present study. Instead, following the ideas of the "Vorstellungsgeschichte", I am interested in how the areas pointed out by Oexle are reflected in the textual self-fashioning of astrologers and thus are used to depict an aspirational image of the astrologer's role. The attributes of a social group mentioned by Oexle thus still form the basic framework of my investigation, but only insofar as the astrologers reflect them in their writings. The real conditions are taken into account wherever necessary but are only of secondary importance for this study.

1.4.3 Experts

Another designation which can, as I argue, be applied to astrologers – individually and as a group – is that of "expert".⁹⁰ The notion of experts in the Middle Ages – and the question of whether the term should be used for this period at all – has been explored in depth, especially by the DFG Research Training Group 1507 "Expert Cultures from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century", based at the University of Göttingen from 2009 to 2018.⁹¹ In an article from 2012, one of the Research Training Group's senior

⁸⁹ On the fields of activities of astrologers and the extent to which their activity was institutionalised in different geographical contexts, see Chapter 2.1.

⁹⁰ I thus follow the assessment of Klaus Oschema, who has addressed the applicability of the concept of 'experts' to late medieval astrologers in several articles. See, for example, Oschema: *Irren ohne zu scheitern*, esp. p. 154; Oschema: *Heaven Can Tell*, esp. pp. 195–196.

⁹¹ Numerous publications resulted from this project. The edited volumes, in particular, shed light on different aspects of this topic. See, for example, Björn Reich / Frank Rexroth / Matthias Roick (eds.): *Wissen, maßgeschneidert: Experten und Expertenkulturen im Europa der Vormoderne* (Historische Zeitschrift. Beihefte, NF 57), Munich 2012; Frank Rexroth / Teresa Schröder-Stapper (eds): *Experten*,

researchers, Frank Rexroth, presented key ideas on the definition of medieval experts.⁹² As a fundamental condition for the emergence of experts, he points toward the increasing social relevance of specialised knowledge in the high and late Middle Ages, which became established in newly developing social institutions. Expert knowledge, he argues, is based on the notion of a kind of “knowledge division of labour” (“wissensmäßige Arbeitsteiligkeit”), i.e. specific knowledge being delegated to experts who are expected to manage and use it for the benefit of society.⁹³ Furthermore, Rexroth stresses that there was not unanimous acceptance of experts, but indeed growing scepticism against this distribution of knowledge and the general complexity of the system. However, this scepticism against experts and the trust in the system, Rexroth suggests, formed a reciprocal relationship.⁹⁴

Rexroth furthermore explains that it was not primarily the actual body of knowledge a person possessed that made someone an expert. Instead, he emphasises the constitutive role of social interactions. An expert, he writes, is a “social role type characterised by the promise of apposite knowledge in a particular communication

Wissen, Symbole. Performanz und Medialität vormoderner Wissenskulturen (Historische Zeitschrift. Beihefte, NF 71), Berlin / Boston 2018; Marian Füssel / Antje Kuhle / Michael Stolz (eds.): Höfe und Experten. Relationen von Macht und Wissen in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit, Göttingen 2018; Marian Füssel / Frank Rexroth / Inga Schürmann (eds.): Praktiken und Räume des Wissens. Expertenkulturen in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Göttingen 2019. In the latter volume, Eric H. Ash: What is an Early Modern Expert? And why does it matter?, in: *ibid.*, pp. 69–88, discusses in detail whether the use of the term is anachronistic for the pre-modern period and what advantages and disadvantages its employment presents. Particularly useful for the question of whether astrologers can be classified as ‘experts’ is also the aforementioned doctoral thesis on medical practitioners by Jana Schütte, as certain parallels can be drawn and physicians often simultaneously served as astrologers. See Schütte: *Medizin im Konflikt*, esp. pp. 23–28. For a list of publications stemming from the research group’s projects up to 2018, see URL: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/publications/532456.html>, last accessed 02/12/2024. On the figure of the expert and the role of expertise: Société des historiens médiévistes de l’enseignement supérieur public (ed.): *Experts et expertise au Moyen Âge. Consilium quaeritur a perito*, Paris 2012, here on astrological expertise: Jean-Patrice Boudet: Expertise et contre-expertise. La consultation astrologique de Robert de Mauvoisin, archevêque d’Aix, en septembre 1316, in: *ibid.*, pp. 99–113. In the context of experts and expertise in premodern times, the focus has often also been on the lexical field of *expertus* and *experientia* in the sense of experience, see on this: Thomas Bénatouïl / Isabelle Draelants (eds.): *Expertus sum. L’expérience par les sens dans la philosophie naturelle médiévale. Actes du colloque international de Pont-à-Mousson (5–7 février 2009)* (Micrologus’ Library 40), Florence 2011. The importance of experience for astrologers is further discussed throughout this study, see especially Chapter 4.1.2.

⁹² Frank Rexroth: Systemvertrauen und Expertenskepsis. Die Utopie vom maßgeschneiderten Wissen in den Kulturen des 12. bis 16. Jahrhunderts, in: Reich / Rexroth / Roick (eds.): *Wissen, maßgeschneidert*, pp. 12–44. The definition of an expert given here by Rexroth was used as a basis for the further research of the DFG Research Training Group and I therefore draw on his explanations in my considerations about whether astrologer can be classified as experts.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.

situation.”⁹⁵ Being an expert is thus less a fixed state of being than a process created through interaction. Such interactions manifest in specific communication situations, which, according to Rexroth, are based on three principles: first, there is the purposeful consultation of people with specialised knowledge or particular skills, compensating for someone else’s lack of knowledge. Second, this expertise must be recognised as relevant and helpful beyond singular instances. Third, the knowledge is passed on within the context of social institutions.⁹⁶ The analysis of these communication situations and how they are shaped, both by the attributions of expertise by others to the person considered an expert and by the expert’s self-fashioning, are at the core of the Research Group’s investigation of medieval experts.⁹⁷

Consequently, does this understanding of an ‘expert’ apply to astrologers? If we consider the descriptions of astrologers in the introductory texts, we recognise certain key aspects mentioned by Rexroth. Astrologers are portrayed here as learned scholars, offering specialist knowledge useful in solving problems or challenges for someone who lacks the necessary skills or knowledge. Furthermore, the writers often go into much detail about the appropriate conduct of an astrologer, i.e. they describe their *habitus* in different types of communication situations. The institutional embedding of astrological expertise is more challenging to assess and depends strongly on the geographical setting.⁹⁸ While a general tendency toward an increasing institutionalisation of astrology at court, at the university and even in the city can be identified, this takes on more pronounced forms in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁹⁹

However, the occasional lack of a clear institutional affiliation of astrologers in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries does not prevent using the term ‘expert’ to describe the astrologers studied here.¹⁰⁰ Rather, it aligns with the assumption that astrologers deliberately attempted to stage themselves as experts in their texts precisely because they had not yet fully established an expert status in real life. Astrologers in the

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 22: „Unter einem Experten verstehen wir im Rahmen unserer Forschungen einen sozialen Rollentypus, der sich durch die Verheißung passgenauen Wissens in einer bestimmten Kommunikationssituation auszeichnet.“

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

⁹⁷ See also the Research Group’s statements on the key terms “knowledge”, “experts”, and “expert cultures”: URL: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/the+group/100303.html>, last accessed 02/12/2024.

⁹⁸ See Chapter 2.1.

⁹⁹ For the development in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Chapter 6.1.

¹⁰⁰ The astrologers studied here are in all cases connected in some way with a court or university, but it is often not clear whether this is primarily due to their function as astrologers or whether they were serving in some other capacity and only practised astrology in addition.

thirteenth and fourteenth centuries can thus be considered ‘experts in the making’. The title I chose for the study (“future experts”) reflects this and can be interpreted in two ways. First, since the specialised knowledge the astrologers provided referred primarily to the future, they can be seen as experts for the future. Second, since the astrologers had not yet established themselves as experts in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries but aimed to do so, they can equally be seen as future, i.e. prospective experts.

As with the definition of groups, my aim here is not to identify the extent to which astrologers succeeded in establishing themselves as experts in reality. Instead, I am examining how they attempted to achieve such success and how they envisioned their role. While it is difficult to assess the exact position and influence of astrologers in medieval society, we can certainly discern the emergence of specific images of their role – the successful creation of these images of ‘the astrologer’ is, therefore, the focus of my study. Drawing on a combination of ideas from “Vorstellungsgeschichte”, self-fashioning, and the definition of groups and experts makes such an analysis possible.

1.5 Structure and Terminology

1.5.1 Structure

Finally, how do I proceed to explore the self-fashioning of astrologers? Overall, the study is divided into seven chapters. Following the explanations of the fundamental principles of my approach in the introduction, the second chapter will focus on the practice of astrology as a ‘professional’ activity. This involves, in a first step, a closer look at the geographically different developments concerning the fields of activity of astrologers in order to be able to classify the authors studied here accordingly and to take the different circumstances into account appropriately when analysing the individual texts. In a second step, I will turn to the issue of the designation of scholars as astrologers. I will primarily address whether the scholars studied here called themselves astrologers or were perceived as such and to what extent the use of the term ‘astrologer’ for scholars in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is justified at all.

The following part of the study (Chapters 3 to 5) is structured according to the three characteristics of groups described by Oexle that can be identified in the astrologers’ texts: duration over time, the establishment of a code of conduct and the differentiation from other groups. Chapter 3 explores how astrologers created a group identity by emphasising the long duration of their community. As a way of highlighting the long

tradition of astrological practice and the large community of practitioners, they told the story of the origins and development of astrology and thus created their own kind of *memoria*. While the astrologers drew on long-established versions of the origins of astrology, they also incorporated new elements and modified these narratives to deploy them as arguments for their contemporary and individual purposes. The chapter analyses these different approaches to instrumentalising the history of astrology to determine how they were used to shape the image of the astrologer on the basis of various case studies. Chapter 4 focuses on how astrologers defined the rules of conduct for their practice. This aspect represented a particularly pressing concern for astrologers due to the controversies surrounding their discipline and consequently encompassed a wide range of issues. Astrologers were faced with the challenge of demonstrating their legitimacy by upholding conventional scholarly ideals while at the same time setting themselves apart by displaying unique qualities. Chapter 5 is devoted to the attempts of astrologers to distinguish themselves from other groups. Here, the precarious balance between integration and demarcation becomes even more apparent. On the one hand, astrologers tried to carve out a niche for themselves and therefore had to distinguish their activity from others. On the other hand, they had to show that their discipline was legitimate and on a par with others. This chapter, therefore, focuses on the comparisons that astrologers made with representatives of groups most relevant to them – either to show similarities with their own activity or to highlight the differences.

In Chapter 6, I will round off my analysis by discussing whether the astrologers' attempts to establish themselves in society and to create a specific image of themselves can be considered successful. I will also address the extent to which the introductory works can be deemed influential in this regard. Finally, Chapter 7 contains concluding reflections on the study, a summary of the main findings and an outlook on further research approaches that may follow from the insights gained here.

1.5.2 Terminology

Before turning to the accounts of individual astrologers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it is necessary to briefly address the use of certain key terms. This primarily concerns the definition of “astrology” and its distinction from “astronomy”.¹⁰¹ There is a clear differentiation in the use of the words today: Astronomy refers to the study of the heavenly bodies, astrology to the interpretation of their movements regarding their

¹⁰¹ Further terminological issues are highlighted and addressed at the relevant points in the study.

influence on human affairs – the first is recognised as a science, the second is not. In the Middle Ages, however, the situation was more complicated. Although the Latin equivalents *astrologia* and *astronomia* suggest the same distinction, the terms were often used interchangeably.¹⁰² This does not mean medieval scholars did not differentiate between predictive (astrological) and descriptive (astronomical) subject matter.¹⁰³ They frequently discussed the different branches connected with studying the heavenly bodies. In some cases, the divisions they drew followed more or less our modern understanding of astrology and astronomy; in others, however, the categorisation was undertaken according to different criteria, and further subcategories were introduced. Moreover, *astrologia* and *astronomia* were seen as two sides of the same coin and closely intertwined.

Despite the diverging and inconsistent uses of the terms *astrologia* and *astronomia*, one early medieval definition is worthwhile mentioning here since it exemplifies medieval attitudes and was used as a reference work throughout the Middle Ages. It comes from the seventh-century scholar Isidore of Seville (†636), who addresses the issue in his encyclopaedic work, the *Etymologiae*.¹⁰⁴ According to Isidore, the subject area of *astronomia* encompasses “the revolution of the sky, the rising, the setting and the movements of the stars, and how and why the constellations received their names.”¹⁰⁵ *Astrologia*, then, he continues, is divided into two parts: one natural (*naturalis*), the other superstitious (*superstitiosa*). It is natural, writes Isidore, if it is concerned with the “course of the sun and moon or the specific positions of the stars

¹⁰² For an overview of the medieval definitions of the subject and the use of the terms, see Burnett: *Astrology*; Mariken Teeuwen: *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages* (Études sur le vocabulaire du Moyen Âge 10), Turnhout 2003, pp. 372–373; Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, vol. 1, pp. xxv–xxxiii. H. Darrel Rutkin: *Understanding the History of Astrology (and Magic) Accurately: Methodological Reflections on Terminology and Anachronism*, in: *Philosophical Readings* 7 (1) (2015), pp. 42–54, here p. 48, cautions against both “terminological and conceptual anachronism” which could result from careless use of the terms in historical research.

¹⁰³ See on this John D. North: *Astronomy and Astrology*, in: David C. Lindberg / Michael H. Shank (eds.): *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 2: *Medieval Science*, Cambridge 2013, pp. 456–484, here p. 458.

¹⁰⁴ On Isidore of Seville’s concept of *astrologia* / *astronomia*: Jacques Fontaine: *Isidore de Séville et l’astrologie*, in: *Revue des études latines* 31 (1953), pp. 271–300; Max Lejbowicz: *Théorie et pratique astronomiques chez Isidore de Séville*, in: Christian Wenin (ed.): *L’homme et son univers au Moyen Âge. Actes du septième congrès international de philosophie médiévale* (30 août–4 septembre 1982) (*Philosophes médiévaux* 27), vol. 2, Louvain-la-Neuve 1986, pp. 622–630; also: Max Lejbowicz: *Les antécédents de la distinction isidorienne astrologia / astronomia*, in: Bernard Ribémont (ed.): *Observer, lire, écrire le ciel au Moyen-Âge. Actes du Colloque d’Orléans* (22–23 avril 1989) (*Sapiencia* 1), Paris 1991, pp. 173–212.

¹⁰⁵ Isidore of Seville: *Etymologiae* [*Isidori Hispalensis episcopi Etymologiarvm sive originvm libri XX*], 2 vols., ed. by Wallace M. Lindsay, Oxford 1911, vol. 1, book 3, chap. 27: *Inter Astronomiam autem et Astrologiam aliquid differt. Nam Astronomia caeli conversionem, ortus, obitus motusque siderum continet, vel qua ex causa ita vocentur.*

according to the seasons.”¹⁰⁶ The superstitious part is practised by *mathematici*,¹⁰⁷ who “assign the twelve signs of the heaven to individual parts of the soul or body, and try to predict the births and characters of men by the course of the stars.”¹⁰⁸ Isidore of Seville’s account thus establishes a division between a descriptive and predictive discipline – *astronomia* and *astrologia* – but also points to a subdivision within *astrologia* which differentiates between a licit and an illicit kind of *astrologia*, depending on whether the predictions refer to human affairs. The concept of Isidore’s definition remained highly influential throughout the Middle Ages and constituted the basis for most later considerations of the subject. However, his interpretation was often adapted and expanded according to the interests of the respective author, and the terms *astrologia* and *astronomia* were frequently reversed in meaning or used interchangeably.¹⁰⁹

The terminology and definition of astrology in the Middle Ages were not constant or uniform but were subject to the preferences of individual scholars and underwent changes. While Isidore’s distinction between astronomy and astrology was often used as a starting point for defining the disciplines in later treatises, it was, in particular, the Arabic texts on astrology that brought new impulses from the eleventh and twelfth centuries onwards. Translating astrological texts from Arabic posed various challenges

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.: *Astrologia vero partim naturalis, partim superstitiosa est. Naturalis, dum exequitur solis et lunae cursus, vel stellarum certas temporum stationes.*

¹⁰⁷ The term *mathematicus* was frequently used in classical Latin. While it continued to be used occasionally throughout the Middle Ages, it was gradually replaced by the terms *astrologus* or *astronomus*. See Burnett: *Astrology*, p. 376; also: Teeuwen: *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages*, pp. 355–357, p. 373. Isidore goes into more detail about the various practitioners of this kind of astrology in the eighth book of his *Etymologiae*, where he writes about the Church and its schools (*De ecclesia et sectis*). He establishes a taxonomy of different categories of *magi*, among which he includes astrologers. Concerning practitioners who predict the future by means of the stars he distinguishes between *astrologi*, *genethliaci*, *mathematici*, *magi*, and *horoscopi*. Isidore of Seville: *Etymologiae*, vol. 1, ed. Lindsay, book 8, chap. 9. For a discussion of this taxonomy, see William E. Klingshirn: *Isidore of Seville’s Taxonomy of Magicians and Diviners*, in: *Traditio* 58 (2003), pp. 59–90. Klingshirn argues that Isidore’s exhaustive taxonomy of *magi* may represent more the residues of the ancient period – and Isidore’s reliance on its sources – than a reflection of contemporary practices. In other contemporary sources, Klingshirn indeed finds a “reluctance to assign these [i.e. the listed practices] to specific figures. He assumes that this could be due to an “increasing scarcity of some kinds of highly specialized diviners by the end of the sixth century.” Klingshirn: *Isidore of Seville’s Taxonomy*, p. 80.

¹⁰⁸ Isidore of Seville: *Etymologiae*, vol. 1, ed. Lindsay, book 3, chap. 27: *Superstitiosa vero est illa quam mathematici sequuntur, qui in stellis auguriantur, quique etiam duodecim caeli signa per singula animae vel corporis membra disponunt, siderumque cursu nativitates hominum et mores praedicare conantur.*

¹⁰⁹ Teeuwen: *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages*, p. 372. The twelfth-century philosopher and translator Dominicus Gundissalinus, for example, references in his *De divisione philosophiae* explicitly Isidore of Seville’s definition but exchanges the terms *astrologia* and *astronomia*. See Dominicus Gundissalinus: *De divisione philosophiae / Über die Einteilung der Philosophie*, ed. by Alexander Fidora / Dorothee Werner (Herders Bibliothek der Philosophie des Mittelalters 11), Freiburg / Basel / Vienna 2007, pp. 230–232.

to Latin authors. This concerned the terminology used – they had to find suitable Latin terms for new astrological concepts – as well as the introduction of new theories and classifications.¹¹⁰ A formative phrase newly introduced for astrology was *scientia iudiciorum astrorum* (“the science of the judgements of the stars”), which constitutes a direct translation of the Arabic term.¹¹¹ However, the expression did not entirely substitute *astrologia* / *astronomia*. Rather it represented a further addition to describe the predictive part of the discipline. Furthermore, there were variations of this without reference to judgements, for example, *scientia astrorum* (“the science of the stars”), which might denote the study of the stars in general or refer only to predictive or descriptive aspects of it.¹¹²

A thirteenth-century example of the confluence of Latin and Arabic traditions in terms of terminology and categorisation, and the inconsistencies that this entailed, is provided by the *Speculum astronomiae*, attributed to Albertus Magnus († 1280).¹¹³ The author differentiates between descriptive and predictive aspects and subsumes both under *astronomia*. For the predictive part, he additionally gives the term *scientia iudiciorum astrorum*.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, drawing from classifications based on Greek and Arabic texts, he describes the different subcategories of this discipline, encompassing revolutions (*revolutiones*), nativities (*nativitates*), interrogations (*interrogationes*), elections (*electiones*), and the making of images (*imagines*).¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ For the direct influence of Arabic on the Latin terminology as well as on the structure of Latin astrological works, see Burnett: *Astrology*, pp. 376–378.

¹¹¹ Burnett: *Astrology*, p. 372. It occurred in different variations, for example: *scientia iudiciaria*, *iudicia*, *ars iudicialis*. For the Arabic terminology (*‘ilm* [or *ṣinā‘at*] *aḥkām al-nujūm*) see Charles Burnett: *Astrology*, in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed. (2007), URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_0162, last accessed 02/12/2024.

¹¹² Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, pp. 22–23, uses *scientia astrorum* or the “science of the stars” as an umbrella term to denote both astrology and astronomy. He concedes that while the term was not used widely as a classificatory heading, the “theoretical conception of an umbrella science of the stars did exist.” *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹¹³ For a discussion of the work’s context and the question of Albertus Magnus’ authorship (including an edition and translation of the work), see Paola Zambelli: *The Speculum astronomiae and its enigma. Astrology, Theology and Science in Albertus Magnus and his Contemporaries* (Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science 135), Dordrecht / Boston / London 1992. For a more recent overview of the research: Jeremiah M.G. Hackett: *Albert the Great and the Speculum astronomiae: The State of Research at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, in: Irven M. Resnick (ed.): *A Companion to Albert the Great: Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences* (Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition 38), Leiden / Boston 2013, pp. 437–450.

¹¹⁴ Albertus Magnus: *Speculum Astronomiae*, ed. and transl. by Paola Zambelli et al., in: Zambelli: *The Speculum Astronomiae and its Enigma*, pp. 208–273, here chap. 1, p. 208: *Duae sunt magnae sapientiae et utraque nomine astronomiae censetur*. *Ibid.*, p. 218: *Secunda magna sapientia, quae similiter astronomia dicitur, est scientia iudiciorum astrorum*, [...].

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, chap. 4, p. 222. For a description and explanation of Albertus Magnus’ categories: Burnett: *Astrology*, pp. 375–376, who adds to this list the important area of medical astrology, which Albertus Magnus did not include in his classification.

Overall, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, several terms were used for the predictive side of the study of the heavenly bodies. Still, they did not necessarily connote precisely the same subject and are often used inconsistently. Moreover, the discipline is further subdivided, resulting in the introduction of additional terms. Given this lack of uniformity coupled with anachronistic contemporary associations with the terms, it is challenging to find suitable English translations. For clarity and comprehensibility, I have decided on “astrology” as the umbrella term in my study, even if other expressions (*astronomia*, *scientia astrorum* or similar) are also used in the texts examined here. Since the texts I discuss are primarily concerned with interpreting the movement of celestial bodies to derive interpretations for the past, present or future, the overarching use of “astrology” – with its contemporary connotations – seems most fitting. The specific medieval vocabulary used is highlighted in cases where the authors themselves elaborate on the distinction between the terms or concepts. The difficulty in distinguishing between astronomy and astrology terminologically extends naturally also to the designation of the practitioners (*astrologus*, *astronomus*, *mathematicus*).¹¹⁶ Here, too, I have chosen the label “astrologer” to emphasise the interpretative aspect of the activity. The question of who I include as an “astrologer” in this study will be discussed in Chapter 2.2.1.

¹¹⁶ See footnote 107 on the medieval use of the term *mathematicus*.

2 Astrology as a ‘Professional’ Activity

The following chapter will examine the extent to which astrology was practised as a professional activity in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and whether the scholars studied here can be understood as members of a ‘professional group’ of astrologers. I will approach those questions from two perspectives. Firstly, the focus will be on the factual conditions and circumstances under which the astrologers discussed here operated. In particular, the geographical location where astrologers worked entailed different opportunities, tasks, and challenges, which will be briefly outlined here. Secondly, the conceptual identification of the scholars as astrologers – both as individuals and as a group – will be addressed. The primary concern is the extent to which the scholars studied here can be identified as astrologers from a modern perspective, whether this was done in the late Middle Ages and the extent to which the scholars themselves did so. Those explorations of the activity and concept of astrologers provide the foundation for an informed understanding of how and why astrologers fashioned their role in their introductory works in the way they did.

2.1 Late Medieval Astrologers and Where to Find Them – Fields of Activity

When examining late medieval astrologers, the first question to be answered is where we actually find astrologers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The term “fields of activity” is used in the following chapter to describe astrologers’ geographical and institutional placement. For the present study, this refers to the countries of England, France, and Italy and the institutions of the university, the court and, in the case of Italy, the city. Depending on various factors, the demands placed on astrologers and the circumstances under which they practised could take on very different forms. In her work on astrology in late medieval England, Hilary M. Carey identifies three favourable conditions which she believes were necessary for astrology to flourish and which can be taken as general indicators of the state of development of astrology in the three countries studied here. She lists first, “the availability of books, instruments and astronomical tables to supply the technical demands of astrologers”; second, “a sympathetic intellectual environment to provide training in the science of the stars”; and

third, “a good supply of tolerant patrons ready to accept the services of the astrologers”.¹¹⁷

Since the astrologers studied here operated in different geographical and institutional contexts, those conditions were met to varying degrees. Although the individual circumstances of specific astrologers should not be overlooked either, certain overarching tendencies in astrological practice can be discerned in the three geographical focus areas of the study in terms of the degree to which the conditions mentioned by Carey were fulfilled. Those tendencies and different starting points of astrologers naturally played a significant role in how the astrologers approached their self-fashioning. It is, therefore, imperative not to disregard these disparities but to ensure that they are sufficiently taken into account. While they will be consistently factored into the analyses of the individual chapters, in order to assess them adequately, the following subchapters will outline the prevailing attitudes and major developments characteristic of each country concerning the practice of astrology and situate the featured astrologers in their respective contexts. This approach allows for a more accurate assessment of the astrologers’ statements about the role of the astrologer – both in the framework of larger developments and in relation to their individual circumstances.

2.1.1 Italy – Setting the Pace Through Selective Patronage, Local Power Structures, and the University System

In Italy, increased astrological activity can be traced from the early thirteenth century onwards, and the Italian attitude towards astrology can, to some extent, be considered a precursor to subsequent developments in France and England. Indeed, all three of the favourable conditions Carey mentioned for astrology to flourish – the availability of the necessary material, a conducive intellectual environment and patrons interested in the services of astrologers – were met. Specifically, three distinctive Italian developments in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries facilitated the fulfilment of these conditions and fostered a particular affinity for astrology and the promotion of astrologers: firstly, the pace-setting patronage of astrologers by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II at his Sicilian court; secondly, the localised power structures of the city-states peculiar to Northern Italy; thirdly, the early inclusion of astrology in the arts and medicine

¹¹⁷ Carey: *Courting Disaster*, p. 36.

curriculum at the flourishing Italian universities. Those three developments have decisively shaped the fields of activity of astrologers and will be briefly outlined below.

The controversial figure of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II († 1250) has long fascinated researchers.¹¹⁸ The contested nature of his reign, especially with regard to his disputes with the papacy, resulted in numerous legends surrounding the emperor in the Middle Ages and beyond, which were further fuelled by his interest in Arabic knowledge and, in particular, astrology.¹¹⁹ Although accounts about Frederick II were often strongly biased and embellished to portray him either in a favourable or unfavourable light, his Sicilian court can undoubtedly be seen as an influential catalyst for the transfer of knowledge from the Arabic world and astrological practice.¹²⁰ Among the scholars he gathered at his court, two astrologers are known by name – Michael Scot and Theodore of Antioch – who benefited from his patronage.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ As reference works on Frederick II, see Olaf B. Rader: *Friedrich II.: Der Sizilianer auf dem Kaiserthron. Eine Biographie*, Munich 2010; Wolfgang Stürner: *Friedrich II., 1194–1250*, third revised edition, Darmstadt 2009; David Abulafia: *Frederick II. A Medieval Emperor*, New York / Oxford 1992 (first published London 1988); Ernst Kantorowicz: *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite*, 2 vols., seventh revised edition, Berlin 1994.

¹¹⁹ For a collective analysis of the various accounts about Frederick II in medieval historiography, see Andrea Sommerlechner: *Stupor Mundi? Kaiser Friedrich II. und die mittelalterliche Geschichtsschreibung* (Publikationen des Historischen Instituts beim Österreichischen Kulturinstitut in Rom 1,11), Vienna 1999; about his contemporary and later reception see also: Hubert Houben: *Kaiser Friedrich II. (1194–1250). Herrscher, Mensch, Mythos* (Kohlhammer-Urban-Taschenbücher 618), Stuttgart 2008, pp. 175–228.

¹²⁰ For his court as a setting for cultural and knowledge transfer, see Johannes Fried / Gundula Grebner (eds.): *Kulturtransfer und Hofgesellschaft im Mittelalter: Wissenskultur am sizilianischen und kastilischen Hof im 13. Jahrhundert* (Wissenskultur und gesellschaftlicher Wandel 15), Berlin 2008 (on astrology, in particular, see the articles by Silke Ackermann: *Habent sua fata libelli* – Michael Scot and the transmission of knowledge between the courts of Europe, pp. 273–284; and Gundula Grebner: *Der Liber Nemroth, die Fragen Friedrichs II. an Michael Scotus und die Redaktion des Liber Particularis*, pp. 285–298). In the collected volume, the court of Frederick II is discussed together with the Castilian court of Alfonso X, “the Wise”, who was equally known for his interest in science, including astrology, and his patronage of scholars. For Frederick’s interest in various sciences, see also the articles in: Véronique Pasche et al. (eds.): *Le scienze alla corte di Federico II / Sciences at the Court of Frederick II* (Micrologus 2), Turnhout 1994 (on astrology see especially the articles in the work by Stefano Caroti: *L’astrologia nell’età di Federico II*, pp. 57–73; and Charles Burnett: *Michael Scot and the Transmission of Scientific Culture from Toledo to Bologna via the Court of Frederick II Hohenstaufen*, pp. 101–125). Still fundamental on Frederick’s scientific interests is also the account by Charles Homer Haskins: *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*, Cambridge (MA) 1924, pp. 242–271 (“Science at the Court of the Emperor Frederick” = revised from an article in *The American Historical Review* 27 [1922], pp. 669–694).

¹²¹ See Haskins: *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*, pp. 242–271 (on Theodore of Antioch, in particular: pp. 246–248). Haskins (*ibid.*, p. 258) emphasises that in the historiographical tradition especially the enemies of Frederick II claimed that he had had a whole host of astrologers in his retinue. For Theodore of Antioch, see Charles Burnett: *Master Theodore, Frederick II’s Philosopher*, in: *Centro Italiano di Studi sul Basso Medioevo* (ed.): *Federico II e le nuove culture. Atti del XXXI Convegno storico internazionale*, Todi, 9–12 ottobre 1994, Spoleto 1995, pp. 225–285. Burnett (*ibid.*, p. 227) points out that Theodore is only mentioned as an astrologer in Rolandino of Padua’s chronicle and is otherwise referred to as a *philosophus*. Furthermore, no astrological writings of him are extant. Nevertheless,

The more famous of them was Michael Scot († c. 1235), whose work will feature prominently in this study.¹²² While Michael Scot also produced translations of Arabic texts on natural philosophy, his main interest and activity seem to have been astrology.¹²³ This becomes apparent from the thematic focus of his main work, the *Liber introductorius*, a comprehensive introductory work on astrology, which he dedicated to Frederick II and in which he repeatedly referred to himself explicitly as “Frederick’s astrologer”.¹²⁴ Although this self-designation does not necessarily imply that Michael Scot held a firmly defined position as an “official court astrologer”,¹²⁵ it at least shows that he claimed such a role for himself. In his *Liber introductorius*, Michael Scot sets out the principles of the discipline that an aspiring astrologer has to learn and, in addition to the theoretical foundations, provides concrete instructions on who could become an astrologer and how one has to conduct oneself when carrying out the activity.¹²⁶

Overall, Frederick’s predilection for astrology and especially Michael Scot’s activities as an astrologer at his court represent instrumental factors in the rise of astrology in Italy. The production of one of the first introductions to astrology in Latin contributed to the circulation of key introductory principles, providing an entry point for aspiring astrologers.¹²⁷ However, it was, above all, the fact that there was a consulting

Haskins (Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science, p. 247) considers it likely that Theodore succeeded Michael Scot as Frederick’s “court astrologer”.

¹²² Still fundamental for Michael Scot are the accounts by Haskins: Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science, pp. 272–298; and Thorndike: Michael Scot; see also the chapter about Michael Scot in Lynn Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 2, pp. 307–337. For a more recent overview, see Piero Morpurgo: Michele Scoto, in: Enciclopedia fridericiana 2005, online: URL: http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/michele-scoto_%28Federiciana%29/, last accessed: 02/12/2024.

¹²³ For a list and commentary on Michael Scot’s works, see Haskins: Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science, pp. 277–284; on his translation activities: Burnett: Michael Scot and the Transmission of Scientific Culture, pp. 101–126.

¹²⁴ He also writes that he composed it “at his [i.e. Frederick’s] request”. Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. by Glenn M. Edwards, PhD dissertation, University of Southern California 1978, p. 1: *Incipit prohemium libri introductori quem edidit Michael Scottus, astrologus Frederici imperatoris Romanorum semper augusti, quem ad eius preces [...] composuit [...]*. He repeats this self-designation in the preface to the second book of his work, the *Liber Particularis*, and at the end of the third book of his work, the *Liber Physonomie*. Michael Scot: *Liber particularis*, ed. by Oleg Voskoboynikov, in: *Liber particularis, Liber physonomie* (Micrologus’ Library 93), Florence 2019, pp. 63–269, p. 63; Michael Scot: *Liber physonomie*, ed. by Oleg Voskoboynikov, in: *Liber particularis, Liber physonomie* (Micrologus’ Library 93), Florence 2019, pp. 271–385, p. 385.

¹²⁵ Haskins: Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science, p. 245, refers to Michael Scot as such.

¹²⁶ He explicitly names the intended readership of his work at the beginning: It was written as an easy introduction to astrology for beginners (“scholars who are still novices and poor in understanding”). Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 1: [...] *quem [...] in astronomia leviter composuit propter scolares novicios et pauperes intellectui, [...]*.

¹²⁷ The dissemination and popularity of the manuscripts of the *Liber introductorius* testify to this influence. The *Liber introductorius* was indeed ranked 27th in the list of the 50 most popular astrological works in Latin before 1500, which David Juste compiled based on data from the “Catalogus

astrologer at the imperial court and the subsequent stories revolving around the relationship between the emperor and his astrologer that carried weight. Although there is no evidence of explicit emulation of this model, it can be assumed that the image of the powerful ruler and his influential astrological advisor, perpetuated by the historiographical tradition – in both a positive and negative sense – and evoked by Michael Scot himself in his text, left a lasting impression and influenced the attitudes of more local rulers.¹²⁸

Indeed, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, we find numerous examples of other Italian potentates also seeking the advice of astrologers. This indicates the second element that enabled an early rise of astrology, namely the more localised power structures in northern Italy in the form of city-states and principalities.¹²⁹ During the thirteenth century, most Italian city-states increasingly began to be dominated by a group of political and military leaders, the *signori*.¹³⁰ At the beginning of this development stood Frederick II's political and military lieutenants – among which some seem to have enlisted the service of one or even several astrologers.¹³¹ The connection to Frederick II suggests that his patronage of astrologers significantly influenced how other potentates perceived the role of astrologers in the political sphere. Arguably the most infamous of the *signori* was Ezzelino III da Romano († 1259), Frederick II's son-

Astrologicorum Latinorum". See Juste: *The Impact of Arabic Sources on European Astrology*, p. 177. On this see also Chapter 6.3.

¹²⁸ On the stories about Frederick and Michael Scot, see Stefano Rapisarda: *Pratiche divinatorie alla curia fridericiana. Note e meno note testimonianze latine e volgari*, in: Jean-Patrice Boudet / Martine Ostorero / Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (eds.): *De Frédéric à Rodolphe II: astrologie, divination et magie dans les cours (XIII^e–XVII^e siècle)* (Micrologus' Library 85), Florence 2017, pp. 3–36; Matthias Heiduk: *Der "Ketzerkaiser" und sein "Hofmagier": Mythenbildung um Friedrich II. und Michael Scotus in Legenden Geschichtsschreibung*, in: Volker Herzner (ed.): *Mythos Staufer. In memoriam Dankwart Leistikow. Akten der 5. Landauer Staufertagung 1.–3. Juli 2005* (Veröffentlichungen der Pfälzischen Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften in Speyer 105), Speyer 2010, pp. 27–40.

¹²⁹ For the fifteenth century, the activity of astrologers at the Milanese court of the Sforza dukes has been studied in detail by Monica Azzolini. See Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars. For the practise of astrology at Mantua* see Signorini: *Fortuna dell'astrologia*.

¹³⁰ The signorial rule represented a kind of reconfiguration of monarchical power at a local level and constituted a hybrid between courtly and urban fields of activity for astrologers. See Trevor Dean, Trevor: *The Rise of the "signori"*, in: Abulafia, David (ed.): *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 5: c. 1198–c. 1300, Cambridge 1999, pp. 458–478, p. 458.

¹³¹ For example, a list of consultations by the astrologer Gerard of Sabbionetta, active in the 1250s and 1260s in Bologna, has survived, in which he answers questions regarding the future posed by, among others, the *signori* Uberto II Pallavicino († 1269), and Buoso da Dovara († after 1282). Gerard of Sabbionetta: *Iudicia super multis quaestionibus et certis nativitatibus*, BAV, Vat. Lat. 4083, fols. 3^r–37^r. The text by Gerard of Sabbionetta has so far received almost no attention from modern scholars. The only somewhat more extensive discussion of the text was made by Baldassare Boncompagni: *Della vita e delle opere di Gherardo Cremonese, traduttore del secolo duodecimo, e di Gherardo da Sabbionetta, astronomo del secolo decimoterzo*, Rome 1851, pp. 72–76. Haskins: *Studies in Mediaeval Science*, p. 257, footnote 86, mentions the text.

in-law, who was said to have retained a veritable advisory board of astrologers.¹³² Among them was the famous Guido Bonatti († before 1298), who worked not only for Ezzelino but put his astrological skills also at the service of a range of other Italian lords.¹³³ Guido Bonatti appears to have advised his respective patrons on important decisions, especially regarding the planning and execution of military operations.¹³⁴ Like Michael Scot, he produced a large-scale introduction on astrology, in which he recounts his experiences as an astrologer for various rulers and offers us an insight into his view of the role of the astrologer.¹³⁵ His work will, therefore, likewise form an integral part of this study.

In addition to Guido Bonatti, who was undoubtedly the most famous and prolific astrologer commissioned by local potentates, there are further references to other less well-known astrologers who were active in this way. An informative example is the astrologer Bartholomew of Parma (active 1280/86–1297/8), who wrote introductions to astrology and geomancy that he dedicated to members of the Genoese patrician family of the Fieschi.¹³⁶ Although the exact nature of the relationship between the Fieschi and

¹³² Haskins: *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*, p. 258. On Ezzelino's interest in astrology: Nancy G. Siraisi: *Arts and Sciences at Padua. The Studium of Padua before 1350* (*Studies and Texts* 25), Toronto 1973, pp. 78–8; Manlio Pastore Stocchi: *Ezzelino e l'astrologia*, in: Giorgio Cracco (ed.): *Nuovi studi ezzeliani* (*Nuovi studi storici* 21), vol. 2, Rome 1992, pp. 509–522; Gerd Mentgen: *Astrologie und Öffentlichkeit im Mittelalter*, Stuttgart 2005, pp. 189–192.

¹³³ The work by Baldassare Boncompagni is still valuable for information on Guido Bonatti's biography: Baldassare Boncompagni: *Della vita e delle opere di Guido Bonatti. Astrologo et astronomo del secolo decimoterzo*, Rome 1851. See also Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, pp. 825–835; Cesare Vasoli: *L'astrologo forlivese Guido Bonatti*, in: *Atti del convegno internazionale di studi danteschi. A cura del Comune di Ravenna e della Società Dantesca Italiana* (Ravenna, 10-12 settembre 1971) (*Studi danteschi*), Ravenna 1979, pp. 239–260; Bònoli / Piliarvu: *I lettori di astronomia*, pp. 39–43; Mentgen: *Astrologie und Öffentlichkeit im Mittelalter*, pp. 189–191; Boudet: *Entre science et nigromance*, pp. 83–85; Marie-Thérèse D'Alverny: *Dante et les astrologues de son temps*, in: *Bulletin de la Société d'Etudes Dantesques du Centre Universitaire Méditerranéen* 19 (1970), pp. 3–15; Stefano Caroti: *L'astrologia in Italia* (*Quest'Italia* 53), Rome 1983, pp. 141–158. Bònoli / Piliarvu: *I lettori di astronomia*, pp. 39–40, list Guido Bonatti's astrological employment for Ezzelino III da Romano in 1259; for Guido Novello I from the family of the Conti Guidi di Bagno-Raggiolo in 1260 and 1261; for Guido I da Montefeltro in 1276 and 1282; for his employment as an astrologer, see also Mentgen: *Astrologie und Öffentlichkeit*, pp. 189–190; Boudet: *Entre science et nigromance*, p. 83.

¹³⁴ Bònoli / Piliarvu: *I lettori di astronomia*, p. 40.

¹³⁵ Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae* [Gvidonis Bonati Foroliviensis Mathematici De Astronomia Tractatus X vniuersum quod ad iudiciariam rationem Natiuitatum, Aeris, Tempestatum, attinet, comprehendentes. Adiectus est Cl. Ptolemaei liber Fructus, cum commentarijs Georgij Trapezuntij], printed by Jakob Kündig, Basel 1550. For the popularity of the work as seen through the numerous extant manuscripts, printed editions, and even translations into several languages, see Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, p. 827, who on pp. 839–840 also provides a partial list of manuscripts of the *Liber astronomiae*. There still does not exist a modern edition of the work but parts of it have been translated into English by Benjamin Dykes: *Guido Bonatti: Book of Astronomy*, transl. by Benjamin Dykes, 7 vols., Minneapolis 2007, reprinted 2010.

¹³⁶ The Fieschi gained influence in the city during the thirteenth century. On the Fieschi, see Giovanna Petti Balbi: *Fieschi, Familie*, in: *LexMA* 4 (1989), cols. 436–437. On Bartholomew of Parma see the articles in: Pierluigi Battistini / Fabrizio Bònoli / Alessandro Braccisi (eds.): *Seventh Centenary of the*

Bartholomew of Parma is not known, his dedications at least suggest some kind of – desired or realised – patronage. However, the astrological works of Bartholomew of Parma also bear witness to another field of activity for astrologers since they show that he also taught astrology at the University of Bologna between 1280/1286 and 1297.¹³⁷ This introduces the third element that played a decisive role in the early success and integration of astrologers into Italian society, namely the specific orientation of the

Teaching of Astronomy in Bologna 1297–1997 (Proceedings of the Meeting Held in Bologna at the Accademia delle Scienze on June 21st 1997), Bologna 2001, especially Silke Ackermann: Bartholomew of Parma, Michael Scot and the Set of New Constellations in Bartholomew's *Brevilogium de fructu totius astronomie*, in: *ibid.*, pp. 77–98 (for the dedications and his connections to the Fieschi family pp. 80–81); Charles Burnett: *Partim de suo et partim de alieno*. Bartholomew of Parma, the Astrological Texts in MS Bernkastel-Kues, Hospitalsbibliothek, and Michael Scot, in: *ibid.*, pp. 37–76. Both Ackermann and Burnett identified considerable similarities between the works of Michael Scot and Bartholomew of Parma. However, due to the complicated textual transmission of Michael Scot's works and the lack of editions, it has not yet been possible to reach a conclusive assessment regarding mutual borrowings. See also Burnett: Michael Scot and the Transmission of Scientific Culture, esp. pp. 111–115. While Burnett (*Ibid.*, p. 114), suggests that the long version of Michael Scot's *Liber quatuor distinctionum* and *Liber particularis* may have been edited by Bartholomew of Parma, Silke Ackermann: Bartolomeo da Parma, p. 93, considers it more likely that Bartholomew of Parma inserted parts of the *Liber introductorius* into his own treatises. On earlier works on Bartholomew of Parma, see Enrice Narducci: Intorno al "Tractatus sphaerae" di Bartolomeo da Parma, astronomo del secolo XIII e ad altri scritti del medesimo autore, in: *Bullettino di bibliografia e di storia delle scienze matematiche e fisiche* 17 (1884), pp. 1–42; Pierre Duhem: *Le système du monde. Histoire des doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic*, vol. 4, Paris 1954, pp. 210–229; for an overview of his life and work: Bruno Nardi: Bartolomeo da Parma, in: *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 6 (1964), URL: [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bartolomeo-da-parma_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bartolomeo-da-parma_(Dizionario-Biografico)/), last accessed 02/12/2024; Humbertus L. Busard: Bartholom(a)eus v. Parma, Astrologe, in: *LexMA* 1 (1980), col. 1496; Bònoli / Piliarvu: I lettori di astronomia, pp. 46–49; Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, pp. 835–838, includes a discussion of Bartholomew of Parma within the chapter on Guido Bonatti. However, he exclusively treats his work on geomancy. Researchers have often passed rather unfavourable verdicts on Bartholomew of Parma's works, see Duhem: *Le système du monde*, vol. 4, p. 222, who characterises him as a "verbose fool" ("verbeux imbécile"), unworthy of further attention; similarly Nardi: Bartolomeo da Parma. Interestingly, part of the reason for at least Nardi's negative assessment seems to have been caused by Bartholomew's particularly astrological approach to celestial phenomena. The final evaluation by Bònoli and Piliarvu (*I lettori di astronomia*, p. 48) is also not particularly flattering: "Probabilmente Bartolomeo fu uno studioso del XIII secolo, interessato sia all'astrologia che all'astronomia, strettamente legato alla cultura del suo tempo, ma privo di originalità e di intuizioni innovative."

¹³⁷ Bònoli / Piliarvu: *I lettori di astronomia*, p. 47, state the time span as 1280–1297, which is based on Bartholomew's dated works. It should be noted, however, that although his first known text, the *Liber de occultis*, is dated 1280, a connection to Bologna can only be found in the works he wrote between 1286 and 1297. See Ackermann: Bartholomew of Parma, Michael Scot and the Set of New Constellations, p. 79. He has in fact been regarded as the first official lecturer of astrology at the University of Bologna. In 1997 the University of Bologna even organised an international conference in Bartholomew of Parma's honour to commemorate the publication of his main astrological work, the *Tractatus Sphaerae*, seven hundred years ago, thus marking 1297 as the *terminus a quo* for the teaching of astrology-astronomy at the university. The proceedings of the conference were published in: Battistini / Bònoli / Braccesi (eds.): Battistini / Bònoli / Braccesi (eds.): *Seventh Centenary of the Teaching of Astronomy in Bologna 1297–1997*. For the decision to take 1297 as start date: Alessandro Braccesi: Braccesi, Alessandro: Una lettura del *Tractatus Sphaerae* di Bartolomeo da Parma, in: Battistini, Pierluigi / Bònoli, Fabrizio / Braccesi, Alessandro (eds.): *Seventh Centenary of the Teaching of Astronomy in Bologna 1297–1997* (Proceedings of the Meeting Held in Bologna at the Accademia delle Scienze on June 21st 1997), Bologna 2001, pp. 9–16, p. 9. Burnett: *Partim de suo et partim de alieno*, p. 70, however, is sceptical of Bartholomew's teaching activity at Bologna – the evidence for which he considers "scanty" and which is based solely on references in Bartholomew's own texts.

Italian universities, which led to the fulfilment of the first two conditions mentioned by Carey: the availability of astrological material and a conducive intellectual environment that fostered astrological training.

In Italy, particularly with the establishment of the University of Bologna, we can observe an altogether early development of the university system.¹³⁸ Regarding the integration of astrology into the university, it is significant that at Bologna and other Italian universities, the faculty of arts and the faculty of medicine – the two faculties where astrological content was primarily taught – formed a combined entity.¹³⁹ Unfortunately, for Bologna – the oldest and most influential Italian university – the earliest surviving statutes for this joint faculty date only from 1405.¹⁴⁰ While these statutes thus naturally do not precisely reflect the earlier conditions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they constitute, in all probability, a formalised culmination of prior developments and are, therefore, nevertheless valuable for this study.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ It is difficult to state an exact date for the foundation of the University of Bologna as it gradually developed from the famous law schools of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The actual founding period of the university is usually assumed to have been at the end of the twelfth century. See Jacques Verger: *Patterns*, in: Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (ed.): *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. 1: *Universities in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1992, pp. 35–74, here pp. 47–49. On the University of Bologna's development see also Paul F. Grendler: *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance*, Baltimore / London 2002, pp. 3–21.

¹³⁹ This was not the case for French or English universities, where we find two separate faculties of arts and medicine. Federici Vescovini: *Astronomia e medicina all'Università di Bologna nel secolo XIV e agli inizi del XV*, pp. 123–124; see also for a discussion of the teaching of astrology at the Italian universities of Bologna, Padua, and Ferrara: Rutkin: *Sapientia Astrologica*, vol. 1, pp. 385–418. On the University of Padua, in particular, see Siraisi: *Arts, and Sciences at Padua*, esp. pp. 77–94. For the University of Pavia, see Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars*, pp. 29–50, who by studying the notebook of the Genoese physician and astrologer Giovanni Battista Boerio, a student at Pavia, has brought to light further important insights into the teaching of astrology at the University of Pavia in the fifteenth century that went beyond the official curriculum.

¹⁴⁰ *Statuti delle università e dei collegi dello Studio bolognese*, ed. by Carlo Malagola, Bologna 1888, pp. 213–321. For a closer analysis of the statutes, see Graziella Federici Vescovini: *I programmi degli insegnamenti del collegio di medicina, filosofia e astrologia, dello statuto dell'Università di Bologna del 1405*, in: Hamesse, Jacqueline (ed.): *Roma, magistra mundi. Itineraria culturae medievalis. Mélanges offerts au Père L. E. Boyle à l'occasion de son 75e anniversaire*, vol. 1 (*Textes et études du Moyen Âge* 10,1) Louvain-la-Neuve 1998, pp. 193–223; Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars*, esp. pp. 27–28; Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, vol. 1, pp. 388–391; Alexandre Tur: *Hora introitus solis in Arietem: Les prédictions astrologiques annuelles latines dans l'Europe du XVe siècle (1405-1484)*, PhD dissertation Université d'Orléans 2018, pp. 282–286. The foundation of the University of Bologna had a determining influence on later Italian university foundations. For the influence of Bologna on Padua, see Siraisi: *Arts and Sciences at Padua*, p. 151; Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, vol. 1, p. 407. Rutkin (*Sapientia astrologica*, vol. 1, p. 415) equally points to the function of Bologna and Padua as role models regarding the organisation of studies for later university foundations such as the University of Ferrara. Overall, Rutkin (*Sapientia astrologica*, vol. 1, p. 418), finds the “disciplinary patterns” of the Italian universities of Bologna, Padua and Ferrara to be “strikingly similar” and therefore considers it likely that similar patterns can be assumed also for other universities. It is therefore justifiable to use the University of Bologna as a basis for the study of early astrological practice in Italian universities.

¹⁴¹ Nancy G. Siraisi: *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine. An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice*, Chicago / London 1990, p. 71, supposes for medicine that “the Bologna statutes probably formalize arrangements made in the late thirteenth century” and Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, vol. 1. p.

As particularly H. Darrel Rutkin has pointed out, the statutes of 1405 show that astrology at that time was firmly integrated into the curriculum. Astrological content occurred within each of the three disciplines that constituted the multi-year curriculum of arts and medicine, i.e. mathematics, natural philosophy, and medicine.¹⁴² The close connection to medicine is particularly noteworthy here. There was not only considerable overlap in the subject matter between medicine and astrology but also in terms of practitioners, as it was not unusual for a scholar to practise simultaneously as a physician as well as an astrologer.¹⁴³

While the curriculum demonstrates the interconnectedness between astrology, medicine, mathematics, and natural philosophy, there is also evidence of differentiation between the fields. The most pronounced focus on astrology is manifest in the four-year course on mathematics, which was called *astrologia* and aimed specifically at providing astrological training, as seen by the reading requirements.¹⁴⁴ This process of differentiation between disciplines pertained not only to the subject but also to the astrologer's role. The most explicit manifestation of this emerges in rubric 60 of the statutes, which contains what Rutkin calls a “job description” for a university astrologer, specifying what the “doctor elected or to be elected by the university to lecture on astrology” had to do to receive his salary from the university. The university astrologer's task encompassed the provision of free astrological judgements for university students, the preparation of a general annual judgement (*iudicium anni*), as well as lectures, disputes, and a *de quodlibet* on astrology.¹⁴⁵

388, refers to this statement in his discussion of astrological learning at Italian Universities. Equally, Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars*, p. 28, n. 34, points towards earlier manuscripts which contained many of the required reading listed in the statutes and therefore assumes that the reading list “was probably the result of consolidation of the university curriculum.”

¹⁴² H. Darrel Rutkin: *Astrology*, in: Lorraine Daston / Katharine Park (eds.): *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 3: *Early Modern Science*, Cambridge 2006, pp. 541–561, here pp. 545–546; Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, vol. 1, pp. 388–391. The curriculum of the faculty of arts and medicine at Bologna with the required reading for all three tracks is listed under one rubric: *Statuti delle università e dei collegi dello Studio bolognese*, ed. Malagola, rubrica 78, pp. 274–277.

¹⁴³ This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.1.

¹⁴⁴ While in the first two years, the students mainly acquired preparatory arithmetical, geometrical and astronomical basic knowledge, in the third year, the emphasis shifted to genuinely astrological content with the required study of Alcabitius' introductory textbook, the *Liber introductorius*, and the (pseudo-)Ptolemaic *Centiloquium* with its commentary by Haly. This direction of learning was continued and expanded in the fourth year through the study of Ptolemy's *Quadripartitus*, the third book of his *Almagest* and finally William of England's *De urina non visa*. *Statuti delle università e dei collegi dello Studio bolognese*, ed. Malagola, rubrica 78, p. 276.

¹⁴⁵ *Statuti delle università e dei collegi dello Studio bolognese*, ed. Malagola, rubrica 60, p. 264; Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, vol. 1, pp. 391–394. For a discussion of the rubric and specifically the genre of the annual forecasts, called *iudicium anni*, *tacuinum* or *practica*, which gained momentum particularly in the fifteenth century, see Albano Sorbelli: *Il “Tacuinus” dell'Università di Bologna e le sue prime edizioni*,

The Bolognese statutes from 1405 show that at least at the beginning of the fifteenth century, astrology was firmly integrated into the curriculum of the University of Bologna and that a specialised occupation of a university astrologer with defined responsibilities and characteristics had begun to emerge.¹⁴⁶ While it is unclear to what extent these requirements were already in place in the previous centuries and whether they may have been in part specific to the University of Bologna, the statutes indicate the trajectory of development.

As valuable as the statutes are as a point of reference, they merely reflect the official regulations of the universities and allow only a limited insight into the earlier conditions and actual fields of activity of the astrologers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. However, if one looks beyond the statutes and turns instead to individual astrologers, one can indeed find earlier examples of astrological scholars associated with Italian universities. This approach was used, for example, by Nancy Siraisi in the case of the University of Padua and by Monica Azzolini for the University of Pavia.¹⁴⁷ A helpful resource for prosopographical research into astrological practice at the University of Bologna is also the compilation of the university's lecturers of astrology by Fabrizio Bònoli and Daniela Piliarvu, whose survey ranges from the twelfth to the twentieth century.¹⁴⁸

For this study, the university astrologers who have produced their own writings are particularly valuable. Two prominent figures whose texts will be examined in more detail here were Peter of Abano (†1315/16), who taught philosophy, astrology, and

in: Gutenberg-Jahrbuch 13 (1938), pp. 109–114; Tur: *Hora introitus solis in Arietem*, esp. pp. 282–286; Klaus Oschema: *Bilder von Europa im Mittelalter* (Mittelalter-Forschungen 43), Ostfildern 2013, pp. 415–428; Green: *Printing and Prophecy*, pp. 109–130.

¹⁴⁶ This does not exclude the possibility of practising as an astrologer and a physician simultaneously, but merely to express the fact that specific roles and fields of activity have become established for astrologers.

¹⁴⁷ See Siraisi: *Arts and Sciences at Padua*, p. 11; Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars*, esp. p. 25.

¹⁴⁸ Bònoli / Piliarvu: *I lettori di astronomia*. Since for the early cases, particularly the twelfth to the early fourteenth century, Bònoli and Piliarvu often draw on information found in repertories from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, some of the statements about the astrologers should be viewed with a certain degree of scepticism. For the texts used by them: *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21. They employ the term “astronomia” as umbrella term in their title, but often switch within their study – following the terminology used in the sources. They already associate six astrologers with Bologna for the thirteenth century and, more or less certainly, with the university. However, in the fourteenth century, those numbers increase significantly – Bònoli and Piliarvu record for this century as many as forty astrology lecturers. See *ibid.*, pp. 36–51 (thirteenth century), pp. 54–90 (fourteenth century). Moreover, not only the numbers of astrologers were on the rise, but the connections of astrologers to the university also rest on a more reliable source base. Bònoli and Piliarvu: *ibid.*, p. 21, use the university's *rotuli*, which mention the names of lecturers of the different subjects, as their primary point of reference for compiling their survey. The earliest *rotuli* date back to 1370/71 and a systematic compilation does not begin until 1438. For the transcription of the *rotuli* starting in 1384, see *I rotuli dei lettori, legisti e artisti dello studio Bolognese dal 1384 al 1799*, 3 vols., vol. 1, ed. by Umberto Dallari, Bologna 1888.

medicine at the University of Padua from 1306 to 1315/16, and Cecco d'Ascoli (Francesco Stabili, †1327), who held the chair of astrology at the University of Bologna from 1322 to 1325.¹⁴⁹ Those scholars epitomise the growing self-confidence and self-claimed prestige of university astrologers, which they articulate in their introductory works. They are also paradigmatic of the growing link between astrology and medicine, which was formalised in the later statutes.¹⁵⁰ Peter of Abano in particular, who was as much a physician and philosopher as he was an astrologer, stands out in this respect.¹⁵¹ However, their texts, in which they passionately advocate the necessity of astrology for medical concerns, equally testify to the fact that this intertwining of astrology and medicine was still controversial. Moreover, their biographies also show that a more forceful opposition against astrology and its practitioners began to emerge. Both scholars came into conflict with the Church. While in the case of Peter of Abano, it is not clear whether he was merely accused of heresy or also convicted, things definitively did not end well for Cecco d'Ascoli, who was burned at the stake in Florence in 1327.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ On Peter of Abano's biography and works, see Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, vol. 1, pp. 408–412; Graziella Federici Vescovini: *Introduzione*, in: Peter of Abano: *Il 'Lucidator Dubitabilium Astronomiae' di Pietro d'Abano. Opere scientifiche inedite*, ed. Graziella Federici Vescovini, Padova 1988, pp. 17–52; Siraisi: *Arts and Sciences at Padua*, pp. 81–88; Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, pp. 874–947. For more recent contributions, see the articles in the two collective volumes: Jean-Patrice Boudet / Franck Collard / Nicolas Weill-Parot (eds.): *Médecine, astrologie et magie entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance: autour de Pietro d'Abano* (Micrologus' library 50), Florence 2013; and Pieter de Leemans / Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen (eds.): *Between Text and Tradition. Pietro d'Abano and the Reception of Pseudo-Aristotle's "Problemata Physica" in the Middle Ages* (Mediaevalia Lovaniensia 46), Leuven 2016. Specifically on Peter of Abano's astrological views: Graziella Federici Vescovini: *Peter of Abano and Astrology*, in: Patrick Curry (ed.): *Astrology, Science and Society. Historical Essays*, Woodbridge 1987, pp. 19–39; ead.: *La place privilégiée de l'astronomie-astrologie dans l'encyclopédie des sciences théoriques de Pierre d'Abano*, in: Burkhard Mojsisch / Olaf Pluta (eds.): *Historia Philosophiae Medii Aevi. Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Kurt Flasch zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, vol. 1, Amsterdam 1991, pp. 259–269; Fabio Seller: *Scientia astrorum. La fondazione epistemologica dell'astrologia in Pietro d'Abano* (Incipit 4), Naples 2009. On Cecco d'Ascoli, see Bònoli / Piliarvu: *I lettori di astronomia*, pp. 61–64; Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, pp. 948–968; Antonio Rigon (ed.): *Cecco d'Ascoli. Cultura scienza e politica nell'Italia del Trecento. Atti del convegno di studio svoltosi in occasione della XVII edizione del Premio internazionale Ascoli Piceno: Ascoli Piceno, Palazzo dei Capitani, 2–3 dicembre 2005*, Rome 2007.

¹⁵⁰ See Chapter 5.1 for their views on the relationship between astrology and medicine.

¹⁵¹ For the University of Padua, H. Darrel Rutkin: *Sapientia Astrologica*, p. 409, indeed suggests that Peter of Abano “inaugurated a new stage in the Italian university tradition of closely integrating astrological study with both natural philosophy and medicine.”

¹⁵² For the accounts of the accusations and trials against Peter of Abano, see Federici Vescovini: *Introduzione*, in: Peter of Abano: *Il 'Lucidator Dubitabilium Astronomiae'*, pp. 28–30; Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, pp. 938–947 (= appendix viii). For the background of Cecco d'Ascoli's conviction, see Graziella Federici Vescovini: *Medioevo magico. La magia tra religione e scienza nei secoli XIII e XIV*, Turin 2008, pp. 288–292; Massimo Giansante: *La condanna di Cecco d'Ascoli: fra astrologia e pauperismo*, in: Antonio Rigon (ed.): *Cecco d'Ascoli. Cultura scienza e politica nell'Italia del trecento*, Rome 2007, pp. 183–200; Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, pp. 950–955.

In summary, astrologers established themselves early in Italian society. The three conditions for the flourishing of astrology named by Carey – the availability of astrological material, a favourable intellectual environment, and the interest of patrons in astrologers – were all increasingly fulfilled. This development was not exclusively but decisively shaped by the three factors outlined above: Firstly, the pace-setting patronage of astrologers by Frederick II, which not only advanced astrological studies and supplied new materials but also fostered the image of the astrologer as a trustworthy political advisor; secondly, the northern Italian structure of the city-states and principalities which presented astrologers with manifold opportunities to offer their services to potentates interested in astrology; thirdly, the orientation and organisation of the universities, which firmly integrated astrology into the established curricula, but also led – especially in connection with medicine – to the creation of specific courses and assignments for astrologers and thus to a conducive intellectual environment for astrological training, which also fostered the production of new textbooks and learning materials. In Italy, therefore, we can identify the court, the city-states and, especially from the fourteenth century onwards, the university as fields of activity for astrologers. However, it is important to bear in mind that those fields of activity should not be regarded as strictly separated from each other but were relatively permeable in Italy so that astrologers were often active in both the university setting and as advisors for patrons. Moreover, since all astrologers discussed here have had some form of university training, this provides a connection to this field in any case, irrespective of where they subsequently practised.

2.1.2 France – University Disputes and Professional Networks

In France, the integration of astrology and its practitioners into society occurred later and more slowly than in Italy. Several contributing factors can be identified for this. Unlike in Italy, no influential ruler in France provided patronage to astrologers on the same level as Frederick II until the second half of the fourteenth century.¹⁵³ There was also not the same abundance of local rulers who enlisted the expertise of famous astrologers as personal advisors.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, despite the equally early formation of

¹⁵³ In France, it was above all the patronage of King Charles V (r. 1364 to 1380) that prompted the employment of astrologers at court and fostered the study of astrology at the University of Paris. See below for more information.

¹⁵⁴ This is not to say that there are no indications of astrological counselling of local potentates, only that less examples are known. See, for example, the high-profile case of the Archbishop of Aix, Robert de Mauvoisin. In the context of the trial against him in 1317–1318, requested by Pope John XXII, it becomes

universities in France, the discipline of astrology appears to have been integrated into the curriculum much more cautiously than at Italian universities. One possible reason for this was the predominance of the University of Paris with its pronounced focus on theology. Its powerful theological faculty and the generally heated atmosphere in Paris in the thirteenth century strongly influenced attitudes towards astrology.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, the fact that the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Medicine in Paris constituted two separate entities may also have led to a later integration of astrology into the curriculum than in Italy since no synergy effects took place.¹⁵⁶ Consequently, two of the favourable conditions for astrology mentioned by Carey – the conducive intellectual environment for astrological instruction and the existence of a multitude of patrons interested in astrology – were not met to the same extent as in Italy.

This does not mean, however, that there was no astrological activity in France before the second half of the fourteenth century. The disputes in Paris in the thirteenth century, which culminated in the condemnations of certain propositions in 1270 and 1277, took place primarily as a reaction to the transmission of Aristotle's works on natural philosophy and metaphysics.¹⁵⁷ Within the framework of these discussions, however, the validity of astrological predictions was also questioned, which points to a heightened concern with astrological topics – albeit from the perspective of astrology's opponents.¹⁵⁸ The dismissive official stance on astrology, evident in the prohibitions,

clear that the archbishop had indeed used the services of at least two astrologers. For this case, see Jean-Patrice Boudet / Julien Théry-Astruc: *Le procès de Jean XXII contre l'archevêque d'Aix Robert de Mauvoisin (1317–1318). Astrologie, arts prohibés et politique*, in: Michelle Fournié (ed.): *Jean XXII et le Midi (Cahiers de Fanjeaux 45)*, Toulouse 2012, pp. 159–235 (including an edition of the relevant documents: pp. 198–207).

¹⁵⁵ On the role of the Faculty of Theology, see William Courtenay: *The Parisian Faculty of Theology in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries*, in: Jan A. Aertsen/ Kent jr. Emery / Andreas Speer (eds.): *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277: Philosophie und Theologie an der Universität von Paris im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts. Studien und Texte (Miscellanea mediaevalia 28)*, Berlin / New York 2001, pp. 233–247.

¹⁵⁶ While the faculty of medicine was founded already at the beginning of the thirteenth century and its first statutes date from 1270 and 1274, we have little information about the faculty from this century. The faculty only became more prominent from the first half of the fourteenth century. See Jacquot: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, p. 122.

¹⁵⁷ Roland Hissette provided the fundamental study on the subject of the condemnations of 1277. See Roland Hissette: *Enquête sur les 219 articles condamnés à Paris le 7 mars 1277 (Philosophes médiévaux 22)*, Louvain 1977. Since then, much research has been done on the condemnations and the controversies surrounding them. For an overview with particular focus on their impact, see Kent jr. Emery / Andreas Speer: *After the Condemnation of 1277. New Evidence, New Perspectives, and Ground for New Interpretations*, in: Aertsen / Emery / Speer (eds.): *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277*, pp. 1–19. Kurt Flasch produced an edition with a German translation and a detailed commentary of the condemnations of 1277: *Aufklärung im Mittelalter? Die Verurteilung von 1277. Das Dokument des Bischofs von Paris*, ed. and transl. by Kurt Flasch (*Excerpta classica* 6), Mainz 1989.

¹⁵⁸ Although astrology as a discipline was not explicitly condemned in the theses, several of them concerned astrological issues. For a discussion of the condemnations with respect to their astrological

was probably at least partly responsible for the lack of specific information on astrological teaching in the early university statutes.¹⁵⁹ For information on astrological activity in Paris, we are, therefore, even more dependent on the writings of individual scholars than in Italy.¹⁶⁰

In the 1260s to 1300s, i.e. the apogee of the controversies, we can indeed identify several scholars associated with the University of Paris who showed a pronounced interest in astrology.¹⁶¹ In this context, a remarkable difference to the Italian scholars becomes apparent. While the Italian astrologers seem to have mainly worked independently, the astrologers at the University of Paris were in greater exchange with each other. An example is the scholar Henry Bate (*1246, † after 1310), who studied at the University of Paris from c. 1260 to 1271.¹⁶² A recent comprehensive study of his life and work showed that Henry Bate was part of a vibrant community of scholars interested in the discipline who discussed their research and sometimes cooperated with

content, see Boudet: *Entre science et nigromance*, pp. 251–258. Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, pp. 709–712, provides a list of those theses that dealt with astrology. For the role astrological issues played in the disputes leading up to the condemnation, see also: Jeremiah M.G. Hackett: *Aristotle, Astrologia, and Controversy at the University of Paris (1266–1274)*, in: John H. van Engen (ed.): *Learning Institutionalized. Teaching in the Medieval University*, Notre Dame, Ind., 2000, pp. 69–110.

¹⁵⁹ The only indications of teachings that may have included astrology are a general reference to the *quadrivium* in the curriculum of the faculty of arts, outlined by the papal legate Robert de Curzon in 1215 (CUP [Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis], 4 vols., ed. by Heinrich Denifle / Emile Chatelain, Paris 1889–1897, vol. 1, no. 20, p. 78), and the inclusion of Aristotle's *De celo et mundo* and the first book of his *Meteorology* in the reading list in the statutes of the faculty of arts from 1255 (CUP, vol. 1, ed. Denifle / Chatelain, no. 246, p. 278). The way quadrivial arts featured in the universities of the thirteenth century, with a focus on Paris, was analysed by Pearl Kibre: *The Quadrivium in the Thirteenth Century Universities (with Special Reference to Paris)*, in: *Arts libéraux et philosophie au Moyen Âge. IV^e Congrès international de philosophie médiévale*, Montréal / Paris 1969, pp. 175–192, esp. pp. 187–190 (on astronomy). The teaching of astrology at the university of Paris was discussed by Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*; and Lemay: *The Teaching of Astronomy in Medieval Universities*. Lemay: *ibid.*, p. 200, points to a request made in 1358 to the English Nation by Robert le Normand to lecture on (Pseudo-)Ptolemy's *Centiloquium* and his *Quadripartitum* as the first mention of distinctively astrologically oriented books in official university documents. See *Auctarium Chartularii Universitatis parisiensis: Liber procuratorum nationis Anglicanae (Alemanniae) in universitate parisiensis*, vol. 1, ed. by Heinrich Denifle / Emile Chatelain, Paris 1894, p. 226.

¹⁶⁰ Both Kibre (*The Quadrivium in the Thirteenth Century Universities*, p. 176) and Lemay (*The Teaching of Astronomy in Medieval Universities*, p. 204) emphasise the necessity to look beyond the university statutes for information on early astrological activity. Lemay (*ibid.*, p. 204) equally points out that the statutes often “only formalize situations that have prevailed for some time among members of the academic community”.

¹⁶¹ David Juste: *Bate's Nativitas in Context*, in: Carlos Steel et al. (eds): *The Astrological Autobiography of a Medieval Philosopher: Henry Bate's Nativitas (1280–1281)* (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy. Series 1/17), Leuven 2018, pp. 65–85, p. 68, has even referred to Paris as “one of the most vibrant centres for astronomical and astrological studies in Europe” in the second half of the thirteenth century.

¹⁶² For his biography, see Carlos Steel / Steven Vanden Broecke: *A Portrait of Henry Bate*, in: Steel et al. (eds): *The Astrological Autobiography of a Medieval Philosopher*, pp. 31–43.

each other.¹⁶³ Even after leaving Paris and pursuing an ecclesiastical career in his hometown Mechelen, Henry Bate seems to have stayed in contact with the astrologically-minded scholars in Paris and kept abreast of their research.¹⁶⁴

In fact, he wrote his main astrological works only after he had left Paris.¹⁶⁵ Of particular interest for his self-conception is his *Nativitas* (written in 1280/81), in which he expounds his own birth horoscope and the consequences of it for his life.¹⁶⁶ Although the text is not an introduction to astrology in the strict sense, Henry Bate uses his nativity as an example to explain and introduce astrological principles to the interested reader. His “astrological autobiography” can thus justifiably be subsumed under this umbrella term and will serve as a further reference point in this study. In addition, it offers the opportunity to examine to what extent the desirable or necessary qualities of an astrologer described in the other introductions to astrology are reflected in this more personal self-description of an astrologer who was part of an astrologically interested community at the University of Paris. Henry Bate was, moreover, active as a translator and produced several translations of astrological texts by Abraham Ibn Ezra (c. 1089–c.

¹⁶³ Steel et al. (eds.): *The Astrological Autobiography of a Medieval Philosopher*, for the scholarly community interested in astrology active at Paris, see especially Juste: Bate’s *Nativitas* in Context, pp. 68–79. David Juste has emphasised particularly Henry Bate’s possible connection to Peter of Limoges (* c. 1240, † c. 1306), who functioned as dean of the faculty of medicine from 1267 to 1270. See Juste: Bate’s *Nativitas* in Context, pp. 70–74. Other scholars interested in astrology with whom Henry Bate may have come into contact during his time in Paris in the 1260s were Roger Bacon (* c. 1220, † after 1292) and Giles of Lessines (* c. 1235, † c. 1304). Juste: Bate’s *Nativitas* in Context, p. 75.

¹⁶⁴ For Henry Bate’s life after leaving Paris: Steel / Vanden Broecke: *A Portrait of Henry Bate*, pp. 34–37. In this context, Steel and Vanden Broecke also point out that Henry Bate apparently had powerful patrons, such as Guy of Avesnes, the brother of John II of Avesnes, the count of Hainaut, and others. However, this patronage does not seem to have been specifically related to his astrological activities or to have involved any direct astrological counsel for the patrons. For the 1280s and 1290s, Juste (Bate’s *Nativitas* in Context, p. 75) lists several scholars interested in the astrology connected to the University of Paris. Among them: Franco of Poland, William of Saint-Cloud, John of Sicily, Peter of Dacia, Peter of Saint-Omer, Bernard of Verdun, Peter of Abano and an anonymous author of a commentary on the canons of the Toledan Tables. See Juste: Bate’s *Nativitas* in Context, p. 75, n. 215 for literature on the individual scholars. While much of the interest of these scholars focused on astronomical issues, we do find a preoccupation with judicial astrology as well. William of Saint-Cloud, for example, also produced his *Nativitas* in 1285, which was likely modelled after Henry Bate’s work: Juste: Bate’s *Nativitas* in Context, pp. 77–79.

¹⁶⁵ For a list and short summary of his works, see David Juste: Bate’s *Astrological and Astronomical Works*, in: Steel et al. (eds.): *The Astrological Autobiography of a Medieval Philosopher*, pp. 44–54. The dates of the works range from 1274–1292.

¹⁶⁶ On the *Nativitas*: Steven Vanden Broecke: Bate’s *Nativitas*. The Earliest Known Astrological Autobiography, in: Steel et al. (eds.): *The Astrological Autobiography of a Medieval Philosopher*, pp. 55–64.

1161).¹⁶⁷ In this way, he participated in making additional astrological works available and usable for astrologers.

In the 1320s, the preoccupation with astrology at the University of Paris gained new momentum with the introduction of the Alfonsine Tables. These astronomical tables for calculating the position of planets relative to the fixed stars had originally been commissioned by Alfonso X in 1272 to replace the Toledan Tables hitherto used. Parisian scholars studied the tables extensively and wrote several commentaries, which contributed to improving the technical foundations of astrological predictions and led to widespread use of the tables.¹⁶⁸ One of the most influential of those commentators at Paris was John of Saxony, who originally came from Magdeburg, but spent most of his career in Paris (c. 1323–1355).¹⁶⁹ In addition to his astronomical interests, John of Saxony was also concerned with astrological topics. His seminal work in this regard was a commentary on Alcabitius’ “Introduction to Astrology”, written in 1331, in which he discusses at length the value of astrology and the role of its practitioners. The work became one of the standard university textbooks on astrology, and John of Saxony’s commentary will be analysed as part of the Latin introductory works of astrology.¹⁷⁰ Like Henry Bate, John of Saxony contributed significantly to making fundamental astrological material accessible to astrologers. In addition, he adapted ideas about astrology and astrologers from texts by non-Latin and non-Christian authors to his own beliefs and context. He further illustrates the professional networking of Parisian scholars, which had been observable in the 1260s. For one, this manifested itself in collaborations – John of Saxony worked closely with his teacher John of Linières; for

¹⁶⁷ See Shlomo Sela: Bate and Abraham Ibn Ezra, in: Steel et al. (eds): *The Astrological Autobiography of a Medieval Philosopher*, pp. 86–91, for the process of those translations and the role Henry Bate played in the transmission of Hebrew learning to the Latin West.

¹⁶⁸ Confusingly, the Parisian commentators were all called John: John Vimond, John of Murs, John of Lignères and John of Saxony, John of Montfort, and John of Genoa. For an edition and description of the Alfonsine Tables, see *The Alfonsine Tables of Toledo*, ed. by José Chabás / Bernard R. Goldstein (Archimedes 8), Dordrecht 2003. Chabás / Goldstein: *ibid.*, pp. 243–289, also discuss its reception and adaptation in Paris (for the list of scholars called John: p. 249). For a short overview of the main characteristics of the tables see North: *Astronomy and Astrology*, pp. 468–470. Particularly on the discussions surrounding their introduction, see Nothaft: *Scandalous Error*, pp. 189–204. Since 2017, the ERC project ALFA, based in Paris, is devoted to studying all aspects related to Alfonsine astronomy. See, for example, the collective volume that was prepared within the framework of the project: Richard Kremer / Mathieu Husson / José Chabás (eds.): *Alfonsine Astronomy: The Written Record (Alfonsine Astronomy: Studies and Sources 1)*, Turnhout 2022.

¹⁶⁹ For an account on John of Saxony’s life and works, see Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 253–267.

¹⁷⁰ On John of Saxony’s commentary on Alcabitius’ “Introduction to Astrology” and the establishment of both works as “set texts”, see Burnett: *Al-Qabīṣī’s Introduction to Astrology*, pp. 52–59. Burnett assumes that both texts were part of the Parisian university curriculum, *ibid.*, p. 59. On the reception of Alcabitius’ introductory text, see Gaida: *Encounters with Alcabitius*.

another, it becomes evident in the unfolding disputes over the adaptation and use of the Alfonsine tables.¹⁷¹

The case of another Parisian astrologer of the time, Geoffrey of Meaux (active between 1315 and 1348), reveals the different directions these discussions could take.¹⁷² Although the evidence for his connections to the University of Paris is somewhat tenuous, Geoffrey of Meaux seems to have been part of the community of Parisian scholars interested in astrology.¹⁷³ This becomes evident, among other things, from a heated epistolary controversy about the value of astrology between an anonymous scribe and the Parisian scholar Jean de Jandun, provoked by a *iudicium* by Geoffrey of Meaux.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 254–259. Thorndike describes their time as “heart-free days of intellectual cooperation and fellowship” (ibid., p. 259). As further evidence for even international close intellectual cooperations, he points to the circulation of a manuscript with John of Linières’s canons on astronomical tables, which are accompanied by a note tracing the manuscript from Paris to Milan to Bologna in the period from 1321 to 1344 (ibid., p. 260). The note can be found in BU, MS. Lat. 1369 [2614], fols. 1^r–8^v, here fol. 8^v: *Explicit canon super tabula magistri Iohannis acta parisiis Anno christi 1321 et comunicata mediolan. per magistrum Marxilium de Padua magistro Symoni de moronis 1327 die 17^o nouembris, deinde comunicata fratri augustino 1337 die 17 nouembris deinde comunicata de este 1343 die 27 marcii deinde comunicata mihi Bonio 1344 die iouis 18 marcii*. For the disputes over the tables, see Nothaft: *Scandalous Error*, pp. 189–204.

¹⁷² For his life and works, see Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 281–293, pp. 715–717; Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, pp. 124–127; Pierre Charon: *Note sur Geoffroy de Meaux, médecin et astrologue du XIV^e siècle*, in: *Bulletin de la Société Historique de Meaux et sa Région* 7 (2010), pp. 101–114; Olga Weijers: *Le travail intellectuel à la Faculté des arts de Paris. Textes et maîtres (ca. 1200–1500)*, vol. 3: *Répertoire des noms commençant par G* (*Studia artistarum* 6), Turnhout 1998, pp. 65–66; C. Philipp E. Nothaft: *Glorious Science or “Dead Dog”? Jean de Jandun and the Quarrel over Astrology in Fourteenth-Century Paris*, in: *Vivarium* 57 (2019), pp. 51–101, here pp. 54–57.

¹⁷³ Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 282–284, identifies several possible indications for Geoffrey of Meaux’s connection to the university and points, in particular, to his inclusion among the forty masters and bachelors of arts and medicine appointed at Paris to examine the *Ars brevis* of Raymond Lull in 1310. This, in combination with the medical orientation of his texts, Thorndike argues, “makes it well nigh certain that he took his degree both in arts and medicine” (Ibid., p. 282). While Thorndike (Ibid., p. 283) considers it possible that Geoffrey of Meaux also taught at the university, Jacquart (*Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, p. 127, p. 134) lists various reasons why she finds this unlikely.

¹⁷⁴ Jean de Jandun not only came to the defence of Geoffrey of Meaux but of the entire discipline of astrology – his letter, in turn, led to a biting critique of astrology by the anonymous scholar to whom Geoffrey had addressed his *Iudicium* in the first place. Geoffrey of Meaux’s initial *iudicium* is unfortunately not extant but the anti-astrological response by the anonymous scholar has survived in one manuscript. Jean de Jandun’s remarks are known solely because they have been incorporated into this work. Nothaft: *Glorious Science or “Dead Dog”?*, provides the first in-depth discussion of the controversy and also an edition of the texts. Previously, it has only been discussed by Hartwig, Otto: *Henricus de Langenstein dictus de Hassia. Zwei Untersuchungen über das Leben und die Schriften Heinrichs von Langenstein*, Marburg 1857, pp. 27–30; and Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 282–283. Geoffrey of Meaux also commented on the Alfonsine tables, the use of which he rejected, which shows his involvement with the current astrological discussions of his time. See Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, p. 284; José, Chabás / Bernard R. Goldstein: *The Legacy of Alfonsine Astronomy*, in: *The Alfonsine Tables of Toledo*, ed. by José Chabás / Bernard R. Goldstein (*Archimedes* 8), Dordrecht 2003, pp. 243–306, here pp. 246–247; Nothaft: *Scandalous Error*, pp. 190–191.

However, the example of Geoffrey of Meaux is particularly informative because his activity points to the growing interest in medical astrology as well as the beginning of the employment of astrologers at court. His preoccupation with medicine is reflected in his writings, which include an introductory work on medical astrology, and in his function as a royal physician in 1326 for the French king Charles IV.¹⁷⁵ While it is unclear whether the king also drew on the astrological expertise of Geoffrey of Meaux, the employment of a scholar with such a primary interest in astrology at least suggests that such skills were valued at court.¹⁷⁶ Geoffrey of Meaux's connection to both university and court may even foreshadow the subsequent convergence of the medical faculty and the royal court, which took place from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards.¹⁷⁷ A decisive impetus for this development was the outbreak of the plague in 1348, which prompted the French king Philip VI to turn to the university's medical experts.¹⁷⁸ The Black Death furthermore encouraged scholars' recourse to astrological theories.¹⁷⁹ After the disease's first occurrence, numerous scholars wrote treatises on its astrological origin or tried to predict its future developments.¹⁸⁰

In the 1360s, the establishment and promotion of astrologers in France significantly advanced under Charles V's rule (1364–1380). Charles V's interest in astrology and his patronage of astrologers have already received much attention from modern researchers.¹⁸¹ It is particularly intriguing that Charles V employed astrologers at his

¹⁷⁵ Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 281–282; Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, p. 124.

¹⁷⁶ Geoffrey of Meaux's interest in astrology is evident in all his texts. Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, p. 124, remarks that we can detect astrological interest even in prior royal physicians such as in Arnoul de Quinquempoix, physician to Philip the Fair, Louis X, Philip V and Charles IV, or Robert le Fèvre, physician to Philip the Fair.

¹⁷⁷ Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, p. 127, has identified a radical change at this point and notes that while there were no master regents of the medical faculty among the royal physicians before the middle of the fourteenth century, from then on, it became the norm to recruit royal physicians from this group. She states that "[...], en cette première moitié du XIV^e siècle, la cour du roi de France et la Faculté de médecine forment deux mondes qui semblent s'ignorer."

¹⁷⁸ In 1348, the French king Philip VI commissioned the Parisian faculty of medicine to prepare a report on the causes of the plague and possible countermeasures. This can be seen as the first specific evidence of the convergence between the royal court and the Faculty of Medicine. See Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, p. 123, takes therefore this date as a *terminus ad quem* for her analysis on the earlier practice of medicine and astrology at Paris.

¹⁷⁹ The conjunction between Jupiter, Saturn and Mars in 1345 was seen as a possible reason and sign for the outbreak of the plague in 1348. Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, p. 123.

¹⁸⁰ Geoffrey of Meaux also wrote a treatise, which retrospectively explained the plague's effects in different areas. Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, p. 283–284. See on the plague tractates of 1348–1350: Anna M. Campbell: *The Black Death and Men of Learning*, New York 1931; Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 294–324 (particularly on John de Murs' writings).

¹⁸¹ For an overview, see Joan Cadden: *Charles V, Nicole Oresme, and Christine de Pizan: Unities and Uses of Knowledge in Fourteenth-Century France*, in: Edith D. Sylla / Michael R. McVaugh (eds.): *Texts*

court and seems to have been interested in the subject but equally surrounded himself with opponents of astrology. The most famous among the latter was undoubtedly Nicole Oresme, who argued vociferously against astrologers as royal advisers.¹⁸² The very existence of such opposition testifies to the presence and influence of astrologers at the royal court. However, we can also identify certain court astrologers of Charles V, such as Thomas de Pizan or Pèlerin de Prusse.¹⁸³ The image of Charles V as a strong advocate of astrology was formed in particular through the writings of Thomas de Pizan's famous daughter, Christine, and by the account of the astrologer Simon de Phares, written a century later.¹⁸⁴ According to the statements of Simon de Phares, Charles V was involved in the foundation of a college of astrology and medicine in 1371, which he endowed with a collection of astrological books and instruments.¹⁸⁵

and Contexts in Ancient and Medieval Science. Studies on the Occasion of John E. Murdoch's Seventieth Birthday (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 78), Leiden / New York / Cologne 1997, pp. 208–244. See also: François Autrand: Charles V, le Sage, Paris 1994, esp. pp. 742–747; Steven Vanden Broecke: Astrology and Politics, in: Brendan Dooley (ed.): A Companion to Astrology in the Renaissance (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 49), Leiden / Boston 2013, pp. 193–232, here pp. 207–214; Carey: Courting Disaster, pp. 106–116; Laird: Astrology at the Court of Charles V; and especially the numerous publications on the topic by Jean-Patrice Boudet, for example: Jean-Patrice Boudet: Charles V, Gervais Chrétien et les manuscrits scientifiques du collège de Maître Gervais, in: Médiévales 52 (2007), pp. 15–38; Boudet: A 'College of Astrology and Medicine'?, in: Joëlle Ducos / Michèle Goyens (eds.): Traduire au XIV^e siècle. Évrart de Conty et la vie intellectuelle à la cour de Charles V (Colloques, congrès et conférences, science du langage 16), Paris (2015), pp. 379–402; Jean-Patrice Boudet: Des savoirs en question sous le règne de Charles V: sorcellerie et astrologie dans le Songe de pestilence, in: Dominique Boutet / Joëlle Ducos (eds.): Savoirs et fiction au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance (Cultures et civilisations médiévales 64), Paris 2015, pp. 335–346.

¹⁸² On Nicole Oresme's stance on astrology: Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 3, pp. 398–423; Coopland: Nicole Oresme and the Astrologers; Stefano Caroti: La critica contro l'astrologia di Nicole Oresme e la sua influenza nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento, in: Memorie della Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche (Atti dell'Accademia nazionale dei Lincei 371) 8 (23) (1979), pp. 545–685; Stefano Caroti: Nicole Oresme's Polemic against Astrology in his 'Quodlibeta', in: Patrick Curry (ed.): Astrology, Science and Society. Historical Essays, Woodbridge 1987, pp. 75–93.

¹⁸³ On Thomas de Pizan: Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 3, pp. 611–627; on Pèlerin de Prusse: Edgar Laird / Robert Fischer: Introduction, in: Pèlerin de Prusse: Pratique de astralabe [Pèlerin de Prusse on the Astrolabe], ed. and transl. by Edgar Laird / Robert Fischer (Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies 127), New York 1995, pp. 1–29. Jean-Patrice Boudet: Astrologie et politique dans la crise du milieu du XIV^e siècle. Le livre des elections universelles des douzes maisons de Pèlerin de Prusse, in: Danielle Jacquart / Danièle James-Raoul / Olivier Soutet (eds.): Par les mots et les textes. Mélanges de langue, de littérature et d'histoire des sciences médiévales offerts à Claude Thomasset (Travaux de stylistique et linguistique française. Études linguistiques), Paris 2005, pp. 83–104.

¹⁸⁴ Edgar Laird: Christine de Pizan and Controversy Concerning Star-Study in the Court of Charles V, in: Allegorica. A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Literature 18 (1997), pp. 21–30; Jean-Patrice Boudet: Simon de Phares: Le Recueil des plus celebres astrologues, vol. 2, pp. 242–254.

¹⁸⁵ Lemay: The Teaching of Astronomy in Medieval Universities, pp. 201–202. However, as Jean-Patrice Boudet could show, Simon de Phares seems to have exaggerated the focus on astrology as the college was primarily dedicated to theological studies. Boudet: A 'College of Astrology and Medicine'?. Lemay: The Teaching of Astronomy in Medieval Universities, p. 202, assumes an earlier establishment of the college between 1362 and 1370 and points out that the curriculum of studies for the license in art was modified in 1366 to include the reading of "some books in mathematics" (*aliquos libros mathematicos*). See CUP,

While the accounts of both Christine de Pizan and Simon de Phares were strongly influenced by personal motives, which likely resulted in an overemphasis of Charles' predilection for astrology, a heightened interest in astrology at court can certainly be determined. However, it is unclear whether Charles V surrounded himself with astrologers to receive practical advice or whether their employment at court primarily served symbolic purposes.¹⁸⁶ The court of Charles V serves as the chronological endpoint of my study – as a time when astrologers had emerged more prominently on the scene, and their role was vigorously debated.

In summary, we find evidence of heightened interest in astrology in France from the second half of the thirteenth century onwards – attested through clusters of astrologically-minded scholars at the University of Paris. However, this pursuit seems to have taken place largely independently of the official curriculum, which was strongly influenced by the disputes between the faculty of arts and the faculty of theology over Aristotle's writings and the role of philosophy. With the introduction of the Alfonsine tables in the 1320s, we see a second surge of interest in astrology, initially geared towards astronomical matters. Here again, scholars worked collaboratively, and the focus increasingly shifted to astrological topics. The occurrence of the plague in 1348 led to the convergence between the court and the university and an intensified connection between medicine and astrology. As a result, astrological practice expanded, and new fields of activity became available to the astrologer. A culmination of these developments can be seen most notably through the court of Charles V, who employed multiple astrologers at his court and equally promoted astrological research in the university context. The three conditions for the flourishing of astrology mentioned by Carey – the availability of astrological material, a conducive intellectual environment for astrological training and interested patrons supporting astrologers – therefore emerged only gradually in France from the second half of the thirteenth century onwards. Still, tendencies in this direction are undoubtedly discernible.

vol. 3, ed. Denifle / Chatelain, no. 1319, p. 145. Lemay takes this to include astrological books and suggests that the college's foundation may have influenced this change in the official curriculum. Boudet: A College of Astrology and Medicine?, p. 107, who considers 1371 as the college's foundation date, warns against overstating the importance of astrology at the college. However, he points towards the creation of two fellowships of *scholares regis* in 1377, which he suggests were aimed at the inclusion of astronomy-astrology in the Parisian university *cursus*, but also in order to "convert it into a 'licit science', controlled both by the King and the Church.

¹⁸⁶ On the symbolic use of astrology and the patronage of learned men to strengthen royal authority, see Cadden: Charles V, Nicole Oresme, and Christine de Pizan, esp. pp. 234–243.

2.1.3 England – Late Beginnings and Individual Interests

The third geographical focus of the study is England. Here, the development and integration of astrology and its practitioners unfolded differently than in Italy or France, and consequently, the working conditions and opportunities offered to astrologers were also distinct. The role astrology played in late-medieval England has been analysed in detail in the abovementioned study by Hilary M. Carey.¹⁸⁷ Carey's research explores how astrology featured at the English universities and royal court during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁸⁸ Overall, she concludes from her case studies that astrology was taken up more slowly and less enthusiastically in England than in Italy or France.¹⁸⁹ From the mid-fourteenth century, however, she notes a tentative but growing interest in astrology in England, both at the university and at the royal court. She attributes this to the gradual fulfilment of the three conditions she believes were necessary for astrology to flourish: the availability of astrological material, a conducive intellectual environment for astrological training, and the existence of willing patrons to support astrologers.¹⁹⁰

Her finding that astrology was adopted later and more tentatively at the English court and universities than in Italy or France is surprising considering the state of affairs in England in the twelfth century. English scholars such as Adelard of Bath († in or after 1150), Robert of Ketton (*fl.* 1141–1157) or Daniel of Morley († in or after 1210) were indeed at the forefront of searching, translating, and adapting Arabic scientific texts. Those scholars often advocated emphatically not only for the added value of Arabic works in general but for that of astrology in particular.¹⁹¹ They also brought their newly

¹⁸⁷ Carey: *Courting Disaster*.

¹⁸⁸ While Carey also devotes one chapter on astrology at university (Chapter 4), the main part of her book (Chapters 5–9) concerns the attitudes of late medieval English kings towards astrology. The time frame of her study is accordingly determined by the respective royal times of rule, spanning the reigns from Edward III (†1377) to Henry VI (†1471) (with a brief outlook to Henry VII [†1509]). Although Carey is thus concerned mainly with developments taking place towards the end of the period studied here or immediately afterwards, she integrates her findings within the broader development from the twelfth century onwards. See for this Carey: *Courting Disaster*, Chapter 2: “The Royal Art: Astrology before 1376”, pp. 25–36.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10, pp. 19–20. Carey nevertheless detects similar developments at a later stage and states that “the English court and university can be seen as a microcosm of the European experience.”

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19, p. 36.

¹⁹¹ Haskins: *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*, pp. 113–129 (Chapter 6: “The Introduction of Arabic Science Into England”); Theodore Silverstein: Daniel of Morley, English Cosmogenist and Student of Arabic Science, in: *Mediaeval Studies* 10 (1948), pp. 179–196; Dorothee Metlitzki: *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*, New Haven, Conn., 1977, esp. pp. 13–40; Charles Burnett: *Advertising the New Science of the Stars circa 1120–50*, in: Françoise Gasparri (ed.): *Le XII^e siècle. Mutations et renouveau en France dans la première moitié du XII^e siècle (Cahiers du Léopard d’Or 3)*, Paris 1994, pp. 147–157; Charles Burnett: Adelard of Bath and the Arabs, in: Charles Burnett (ed.): *Arabic into Latin in*

obtained knowledge and books – which they had acquired in Spain or southern Italy – back to England.¹⁹² In the case of Adelard of Bath, there even existed connections to the English royal family.¹⁹³ In addition, we also find references to the practice of astrology at court during this period in complaints against it – well-known, for example, are the comments made by John of Salisbury in his *Policraticus* (written c. 1159).¹⁹⁴ However, while John of Salisbury devotes an entire book of his treatise to caution against the promises of practitioners of magic, astrology and other occult sciences, we do not learn anything specific about the people allegedly offering these services at court. As Carey has pointed out, it could very well be that John of Salisbury relied predominantly on stock literary figures.¹⁹⁵ Although it is thus difficult to gauge the extent of the actual astrological practice in twelfth-century England, there was definitively an increased interest in it as a part of the new Arabic knowledge. However, this interest did not seem to find fertile ground in England in the following century, for astrological practice appears not to have gained much traction at court or university until the fourteenth century.¹⁹⁶ The underlying reasons for this are not clear and are certainly due to a number of circumstances.¹⁹⁷

the Middle Ages. The Translators and Their Intellectual and Social Context (Variorum Collected Studies Series 939), Farnham / Burlington 2009, pp. 89–107.

¹⁹² Daniel of Morley explicitly mentions that he returned to England from Spain with a “precious collection of books”. Daniel of Morley: *Philosophia*, ed. by Gregor Maurach, in: *Mittelateinisches Jahrbuch* 14 (1979), pp. 204–255, p. 212: *Vocatus vero tandem ab amicis et invitatus, ut ab Hyspania redirem, cum pretiosa multitudine librorum in Angliam veni*.

¹⁹³ Charles Burnett: *The Introduction of Arabic Learning into England* (The Panizzi Lectures 1996), London 1997, pp. 31–60 (= “The Education of Henry II”).

¹⁹⁴ John of Salisbury: *Policraticus*, ed. by Katharine S. B. Keats-Rohan (CCCM 118), Turnhout 1993, book 2, pp. 71–171. For a further discussion, see Stefan Seit: *Die Kunst, die Wahrheit in den Sternen zu lesen. Astrologie, Divination und die ars coniectoris bei Johannes von Salisbury*, in: Georg Wieland / Cora Dietl (eds.): *Ars und scientia im Mittelalter und der frühen Neuzeit. Ergebnisse interdisziplinärer Forschung. Georg Wieland zum 65. Geburtstag*, Tübingen / Basel 2002, pp. 77–96.

¹⁹⁵ Considering the contemporary interest of English scholars in new Arabic materials on astrology, John of Salisbury’s complaint against different types of diviners at court thus probably rather arose as a warning against possible future developments than a reflection of reality. Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 28–30.

¹⁹⁶ We do find scattered references to astrological consultation at court, see, for example, Roger of Wendover’s account about how in 1226, King Henry III received astrological counsel by a master William of Pierrepont (*Willelmus de Perepund*) who was *in arte peritus astronomiae*. Roger of Wendover / Matthew Paris: *Chronica majora* [Matthaei Parisiensis, monachi sancti Albani, *Chronica majora*], vol. 3, ed. by Henry R. Luard, (Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores 57,3) London 1876, p. 111. However, no major writings by well-known astrologers such as those of Michael Scot and Guido Bonatti for Italy or Henry Bate for France are extant for this period.

¹⁹⁷ As a cause for the generally slower and less profound integration of astrology in England Carey (*Courting Disaster*, p. 20) suggests that it was possibly due to the “innate principle of moderation which affected the English character” or maybe “the result of a less fully developed sense of fashion”.

In terms of the role that astrology played at English universities, the starting conditions were similar to those in Paris.¹⁹⁸ Oxford, in particular, belonged to the very first wave of university foundations and established itself as a prominent institution over the thirteenth century.¹⁹⁹ Like Paris, it had an influential theological faculty, while the medical faculty – which was distinct from the faculty of arts – developed more slowly.²⁰⁰ Finally, there occurred – albeit with different characteristics and starting predominantly from 1277 – a series of condemnations revolving around the relationship between theology and philosophy.²⁰¹ However, in contrast to Paris, there seems to have been no particular increase in interest in astrology among university scholars in thirteenth-century Oxford.

This is not to say that there was no interest in it at all. One outstanding thirteenth-century scholar who argued fervently in favour of astrology – emphasising the benefits its use could have for Christianity – was Roger Bacon († c. 1292).²⁰² However, it also becomes clear from his writings that the conditions Carey considered necessary for astrology to flourish were not sufficiently satisfied – at least in Roger Bacon’s opinion: He complains about insufficient means, especially books and instruments; he deplores the disdain and rejection of astrology among Latin scholars; and finally, he also

¹⁹⁸ On the influence of the early university of Paris on Oxford see Hastings Rashdall / Frederick M. Powicke / Alfred B. Emden: *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*. A New Edition, 3 vols., Oxford 1936, vol. 3, p. 49. On the relation between the Universities of Paris and Oxford: Verger: *Patterns*, p. 52; Monika Asztalos: *The Faculty of Theology*, in: Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (ed.): *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. 1: *Universities in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1992, pp. 409–441, here p. 414.

¹⁹⁹ On the early development of the University of Oxford: Jeremy I. Catto (ed.): *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 1: *The Early Oxford Schools*, Oxford 1984.

²⁰⁰ Vern L. Bullough: *Medical Study at Mediaeval Oxford*, in: Vern L. Bullough (ed.): *Universities, Medicine and Science in the Medieval West* (Variorum Collected Studies Series 781), Aldershot / Burlington 2004, pp. 600–612, p. 600, states that the statutory references to medicine can only be found in the fourteenth century.

²⁰¹ Andrew E. Larsen: *The School of Heretics. Academic Condemnation at the University of Oxford, 1277–1409* (Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance 40), Leiden / Boston 2011.

²⁰² On Roger Bacon’s stance towards astrology, see Jeremiah M. G. Hackett: *Roger Bacon on Astronomy-Astrology. The Sources of the scientia experimentalis*, in: id. (ed.): *Roger Bacon and the Sciences. Commemorative Essays* (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 57), Leiden 1997, pp. 175–198; Andrew G. Molland: *Roger Bacon’s De laudibus mathematicae. A Preliminary Study*, in: Edith D. Sylla / Michael R. McVaugh (eds.): *Texts and Contexts in Ancient and Medieval Science. Studies on the Occasion of John E. Murdoch’s Seventieth Birthday* (Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 78), Leiden / Boston 1997, pp. 68–83; H. Darrel Rutkin: *An Idealized Astrological Courtier at a 13th Century Papal and Royal Court. The Case of Roger Bacon*, in: Jean-Patrice Boudet / Martine Ostorero / Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (eds.): *De Frédéric II à Rodolphe II. Astrologie, divination et magie dans les cours (XIII^e–XVII^e siècle)* (Micrologus’ Library 85), Florence 2017, pp. 53–70. See on Roger Bacon’s life and work in general, including his views on astrology: Amanda Power: *Roger Bacon and the Defence of Christendom* (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 4,84), Cambridge (MA) 2013.

unsuccessfully tried through his works to obtain the support of powerful patrons.²⁰³ Roger Bacon's case no doubt encompasses many peculiarities that shaped his writings. Influential for his views were, among others, his affiliation with the Franciscan Order and his studies not only in Oxford but also in Paris.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, astrology was only one of the disciplines he considered a vital part of his envisioned programme for reforming education, outlined in his *Opus maius* (written c. 1266–1267). Nevertheless, his writings reveal an increased interest in astrology by a scholar active at the University of Oxford in the thirteenth century. Although his *Opus maius* is not an introduction to astrology in the strict sense, it shares similar characteristics and provides valuable information about the role of astrologers, as described by an English scholar who was highly supportive of astrology and propagated its practice. For this reason, Roger Bacon's work will also be included in the analysis of this study.

Whereas the case of Roger Bacon suggests that the general conditions for the practice of astrology were not yet particularly favourable in the thirteenth century, this gradually changed in the fourteenth century. Evidence of this is the growing preoccupation with astrology by scholars at Oxford University, more specifically at Merton College (founded in 1264). This college had achieved great renown in the first half of the fourteenth century for its scholars' contributions to mathematics and logic.²⁰⁵ While these "Oxford calculators" do not appear to have been particularly interested in astrology, the general inclination towards mathematical topics paved the way for another group. In the 1330s and 1340s, there were several scholars, most of them fellows at Merton College, who were involved in astrology and even worked together on astrological-astronomical projects.²⁰⁶ The most notable of them was John Ashenden

²⁰³ For the way Roger Bacon tried to portray himself as a "astrologically-informed political counsellor-courtier" on the basis of the depiction of Aristotle and Alexander in the (pseudo-Aristotelian) *Secretum secretorum*, see Rutkin: An Idealized Astrological Courtier. After the failed attempt to secure Pope Clement's IV's support – thwarted by the pope's death in 1268 – Roger Bacon may have directed his efforts towards the English King Henry III († 1272) and his successor Edward I († 1307). This at least suggested by Steven J. Williams and H. Darrel Rutkin, who speculate that Roger Bacon produced his edition of the *Secretum secretorum* for the English kings. See Steven J. Williams: Roger Bacon and His Edition of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum Secretorum*, in: *Speculum* 69 (1994), pp. 57–73, here p. 67; Rutkin: An Idealized Astrological Courtier, p. 53.

²⁰⁴ On his life and career: Jeremiah M. G. Hackett: Roger Bacon. His Life, Career and Works, in: Hackett (ed.): Roger Bacon and the Sciences, pp. 9–23.

²⁰⁵ Edith D. Sylla: The Oxford Calculators, in: Norman Kretzmann et al. (eds.): *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy from the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism 1100–1600*, Cambridge 1982, pp. 540–563.

²⁰⁶ The core members of this informal group included Simon Bredon, John Ashenden, William Rede, Reginald Lambourne, and William Merle. See Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 58–78; Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, esp. pp. 5–17 (with a focus on John Ashenden).

(fl. 1336–1365). He composed an extensive introductory work to astrology, the *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi* (completed in 1347/48), and several shorter treatises on specific eclipses, conjunctions, and weather predictions (encompassing the period from 1345 to 1374).²⁰⁷ In his introduction to astrology, he also discusses what constituted an astrologer for him and how he should behave.²⁰⁸

While the Merton astrologers had a common interest in astrology, their skills and focus areas differed. A testimony to their various pursuits and collaboration is the composite manuscript Digby 176, in which several texts by the group members were compiled.²⁰⁹ Their main areas of study were astronomical calculations, medical issues and meteorology.²¹⁰ From the example of this manuscript and other testimonies, we can see that the Merton scholars supported each other by exchanging knowledge as well as astrological instruments.²¹¹ Consequently, at least the first two requirements Carey had stated as conditions for the success of astrological practice were fulfilled, namely the necessary means and a nourishing intellectual environment. Among the Merton scholars, however, it was only John Ashenden who was primarily interested in judicial astrology. Moreover, despite the growing interest, astrological studies were not officially incorporated into the university curriculum. The astrological pursuits at

²⁰⁷ For a list of the manuscripts of his writings: Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 188–191.

²⁰⁸ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225. John Ashenden's deliberations are discussed in detail in several of the following chapters of this study, see in particular Chapter 4.2.2.

²⁰⁹ BLO, MS. Digby 176. The manuscript was compiled by William Rede, who also contributed several of his own writings. More on the history and composition of the manuscript: Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 65–72. Apart from texts by the Merton astrologers, the manuscript also contains a text by Geoffrey of Meaux on astrological causes and effects of the Black Death (Geoffrey of Meaux: *Treatise on the Black Death*, BLO, MS. Digby 176, fols. 25^r–9^v), in which he refers to the longitude of Oxford (Ibid., fol. 26^v and 17^v). This could potentially suggest connections between astrologers at Paris and Oxford. While Geoffrey of Meaux discusses events from 1345, we do not know when exactly he wrote this treatise. For a recent discussion of the text, see Jean-Patrice Boudet / Laure Miolo: *Alfonsine Astronomy and Astrology in Fourteenth-Century Oxford: The Case of MS Bodleian Library Digby 176*, in: Kremer / Husson / Chabás (eds.): *Alfonsine Astronomy*, pp. 57–105. See also Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 64–77; Snedegar: *John Ashenden and the Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, pp. 55–59; Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 283–2.

²¹⁰ Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 72–73, emphasised that “the innocuous business of weather prediction” seems to have been the focus of most English astrologers. Two of the Merton astrologers were especially known for their work in this area: William Merle and Reginald Lambourne. Beginning with the Merton circle, however, Carey notes also a slow turn towards annual predictions and individual judgements. On William Merle: Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 141–145; on Reginald Lambourne: Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 69–72.

²¹¹ The index of Digby MS 176, for example, states that William Rede performed the calculations for several of John Ashenden's treatises. See BLO, MS. Digby 176, fol. 1^v. Carey: *Courting Disaster*, p. 66, does not interpret this to mean that John Ashenden lacked the required competence. Rather she suggests that the scholars formed “a mutually advantageous collaboration” by playing to their respective strengths. On the books and instruments that were bequeathed by these scholars to Merton college (or each other). See *ibid.*, pp. 62–63.

Merton College took place on an informal scale without official support.²¹² Whether the practice of astrology flourished in England thus seems to have been strongly dependent on the interest and commitment of individual scholars.

This also applies to the presence of astrologers at court and potential patronage. John Ashenden may have been trying to attract the attention of a powerful patron and bridge the gap between academic astrology and courtly counselling. In contrast to his fellow Mertonians interested in astrology, he addressed political concerns in his texts, especially in the context of the military operations of the Hundred Years' War. Whether this meant that he intended to offer his services as an astrological advisor to the English King Edward III († 1377) or whether he was merely concerned with contemporary events is unknown.²¹³ What is certain is that – regardless of John Ashenden's intentions – he received no official support from Edward III. As Hilary M. Carey could show, there is some evidence of interest in astrological matters at Edward III's court, most notably the production of a royal copy of the *Secretum secretorum*. However, Carey also puts the significance of this into perspective, pointing out that the chosen contents of this copy are highly selective and focus on combat and chivalry rather than astrology.²¹⁴ Moreover, Edward III's employment of the chaplain Thomas Bradwardine († 1349) rather indicates a dismissive attitude towards astrology in the court environment. Bradwardine repeatedly argued against astrology in his writings. Particularly intriguing are his statements in his *Sermo epinicius*, written for the celebration of the English victory at Crécy in 1346 and delivered shortly afterwards before Edward III and his nobles. Here, he lists seven misconceptions about the sources of victory, which include astrologers who would attribute victory to the influence of the stars rather than God. Carey sees in this sermon an indication that Bradwardine regarded astrology as a serious contemporary threat. However, she also points out that we do not know how closely Bradwardine was associated with the king or what influence he had

²¹² It is important to keep in mind that the Merton astrologers did not constitute an official association, but merely an informal group. Members were linked by their affiliation to Merton College, their common field of interest and friendship.

²¹³ Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 85–91, discusses John Ashenden's political predictions and the question of his possible connection to the court in detail. See also Snedegar: *John Ashenden and the Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, pp. 185–215. While Carey: *Courting Disaster*, p. 90, speculates that John Ashenden may at least have been trying to attract Edward III's attention through his texts, Snedegar (*John Ashenden and the Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, p. 212) does not think it likely that "career motives" have influenced John Ashenden's writings.

²¹⁴ Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 79–80.

on his views of astrology.²¹⁵ Overall, Carey comes to the conclusion that astrology was largely ignored at Edward III's court.²¹⁶

It may have been this lack of official support that led to there being little evidence of further astrological research at Oxford University after the dispersal of the Merton astrologers.²¹⁷ In the field of court astrology, however, Carey was able to show a slow but growing interest in the discipline at the court of Edward III's successor Richard II († 1399) and particularly in the fifteenth century at the courts of Henry V († 1422) and Henry VI († 1471).²¹⁸ She also highlights the reign of Henry VII († 1509) as a significant transitional period in the history of English astrology. Astrologers were employed at Henry VII's court mostly in a dual capacity as royal physician-astrologers. Carey sees particularly this growing connection between astrology and medicine as marking the end of medieval English astrology and the beginning of Renaissance astrology.²¹⁹ Remarkably, the physician-astrologers under Henry VII all came from Italy or received their training there. This reflects the excellent reputation of Italian universities for astrological-medical training but also shows that even in the sixteenth century English universities apparently could not offer such expertise. Around the same time, we can also observe a greater popularisation of astrology and, especially in England, the city became an important field of activity for astrologers. Part of the reason that we find a growing number of astrologers in England primarily in the city is

²¹⁵ On Thomas Bradwardine, his general writings and the *Sermo epinicius*, see Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 82–85; also Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, pp. 230–248. For a discussion and edition of his sermon see also: Heiko A. Oberman / James A. Weisheipl: The *Sermo Epinicius* Ascribed to Thomas Bradwardine (1346), in: *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 25 (1958), pp. 295–329.

²¹⁶ Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 79–91 (= Chapter 5: “Astrology Ignored. The Court of Edward III”).

²¹⁷ With a view towards the acceptance of astrology at English universities throughout the entire Middle Ages, Carey (*ibid.*, p. 52), states that “almost certainly, astrology never achieved the same level of acceptance in England that it was accorded in the universities of Italy, Germany, and France.”

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 92–153. For the outline of her argument and the overall development of astrology at court in late-medieval England, see *ibid.*, pp. 21–24. The testimonies of astrological activity at the court of Richard II mostly either derive from opposing historiographical accounts that portray him as a tyrant fond of occult sciences, or later sources, such as the description in Simon de Phares' *Recueil*, which almost certainly overemphasised the reliance of Richard II on astrologers. Carey: *Ibid.*, p. 96, considers it likely that Richard II was swept up in the “universal English craze for political prophecies”. For astrology at the court of Richard II, see *ibid.*, pp. 92–116.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 163. She lists John Argentine, John Baptista Boerio [Giovanni Battista Boerio] and William Parron as “members of this new class of royal retainer.” Fascinating information on John Baptista Boerio, especially his previous studies at the University of Pavia, can be found in his notebook which has been discussed by Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars*, pp. 29–50. See on William Parron: Charles A. J. Armstrong: *An Italian Astrologer at the Court of Henry VII*, in: Ernest F. Jacob (ed.): *Italian Renaissance Studies. A Tribute to the Late Cecilia M. Ady*, London 1966, pp. 433–454.

presumably that astrologers in England never had the same employment opportunities in the university context as in Italy or France.²²⁰

In conclusion, despite an initial wave of interest in astrological texts in twelfth-century England, astrology was pursued hesitantly throughout the late Middle Ages in England. In the thirteenth and especially in the fourteenth century, sporadic interest is discernible, mainly among scholars at Oxford University, but this took place without any official framework or reflection in the curriculum. There is little evidence of scholars who focused explicitly on astrological matters – those who did, Carey characterises “either as idiosyncratic individuals, beginners whose main interests probably lay elsewhere, or as displaying extreme theological caution in the limits they would allow to the practice of their art.”²²¹ Compared to France and Italy, astrological studies in England were subdued. They mainly took the shape of academic endeavours by university scholars, although occasional, albeit unsuccessful, attempts to bridge the gap between university and court can be seen in such figures as Roger Bacon or John Ashenden. Official association and employment of astrologers at court, however, did not occur until the fifteenth century.

This brief overview of astrologers’ geographical and institutional fields of activity in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries has highlighted the main developments in Italy, France, and England. The “Introductions to Astrology” were written in the context of those diverse circumstances and thus naturally reflect their differences, whilst also being informed by the authors’ personal circumstances and idiosyncratic views. However, despite the differences between the texts, an intention to establish a distinctive role for astrologers is evident in all of them. The authors sought to highlight the societal need for astrologers, explain what such activity entailed and, most importantly, define what constitutes an astrologer and how he should behave. In short, from the perspective of their own environment and experiences, the writers fashioned a role for astrologers in general and, by extension, for themselves. Their approaches to the representation of astrologers share many common features that can be categorised within the framework of the three constituent elements of a group, namely its continuity over time, the rules governing its practitioners and its distinction from other groups. Such a general correspondence in the descriptions of the role of astrologers is chiefly due to two factors. Firstly, the different geographical and temporal developments and emphases

²²⁰ For this development, see Chapter 6.1.

²²¹ Carey: *Courting Disaster*, p. 93.

outlined above represent only tendencies and took place in exchange with each other. Geographical boundaries, especially in intellectual history, should not be regarded as absolute – both exchanges in terms of people as well as texts ensured cross-fertilisation. The integration of Geoffrey of Meaux's texts into the Oxford composite manuscript Digby 176, or the presence of the Italian Thomas of Pizan at the French court of Charles V are clear indications of international links or at least of the employment of texts and people across geographical borders in the fourteenth century.²²² The second connecting factor is that the authors based their representations largely on the same foundational astrological Greek and Arabic texts and thus shared a similar starting point for their own deliberations of how an astrologer should be and behave.

2.2 Identification as Astrologer – Between Individuality and Group Affiliation

Before analysing the different ways in which the authors studied here fashioned specific role models for astrologers, it is necessary to consider how they identified themselves or were identified by others to assess their point of view adequately. The following subchapter will therefore examine the authors' identities both as individual astrologers and as members of a group. In a first step, I will determine whether the authors studied here should be referred to as astrologers at all, both on the basis of their self-identification as well as their identification as such by others. In a second step, I will briefly discuss the extent to which astrologers can, in my opinion, be considered a group based on the findings from the examination of the fields of activity and the authors' identification as astrologers.

2.2.1 Classification as 'Astrologer'

The formation of specific scholarly identities in the late Middle Ages was decisively influenced by the founding of universities in the thirteenth century, which led to the institutionalisation of certain subjects and thus enabled specialisation and professionalisation.²²³ For scholars of the higher faculties – theology, law and medicine

²²² The recruitment of Italian scholars to northern European courts for their astrological expertise becomes more even frequent in the fifteenth century. See footnote 219 for the employment of Italian scholars – or scholars trained in Italy – at the English court.

²²³ For the role of universities in this process, see Vern L. Bullough: Achievement, Professionalization and the University, in: Jozef Ijsewijn / Jacques Paquet (eds.): *The Universities in the Late Middle Ages / Les universités à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Mediaevalia Lovaniensia 6), Louvain 1978, pp. 497–510, esp. pp. 505–508.

– and to a certain extent also of the Faculty of Arts, the evolution of their own group identity and a primary self-identification as a member of such a specialised professional group can be clearly traced.²²⁴ In the case of the identification as astrologer, however, matters were more complicated. This was primarily due to the ambiguous institutional affiliation of astrologers. As I have shown in chapter 2.1., permanent chairs of astrology were only established in Italy, and even there, the study of astrology was closely intertwined with that of arts and medicine. In France and England, meanwhile, astrological research and writing took place merely as a special interest of individuals, either within the framework of their *artes* studies or as an extracurricular pursuit. The situation was similar at court. Although scholars can be shown to have advised rulers astrologically, no firmly established position as court astrologer existed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²²⁵ The employment of astrologers at court instead appears to have relied on the individual interest of the ruler and the abilities and successful self-fashioning of the scholar. The lack of a distinct institutionalised role for the astrologer raises the question of who should be considered an astrologer in the first place. What factors must be fulfilled to classify a scholar as an astrologer, and to what extent was this done by different parties in the late Middle Ages? Ultimately, is it even justified to use the term astrologer already for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries?

The most obvious way to determine whether someone should be classified as an astrologer is to look at their self-identification. An example of a straightforward self-representation as an astrologer is that of Michael Scot, who repeatedly describes himself

²²⁴ For physicians, see Vern L. Bullough: The Emergence of Medicine as a Profession, in: Bullough (ed.): Universities, Medicine and Science, pp. 605–610; Schütte: Medizin im Konflikt. For lawyers: James A. Brundage: The Medieval Advocate's Profession, in: Law and History Review 6 (2) (1988), pp. 439–464; Thomas Wetzstein: Der Jurist. Bemerkungen zu den distinktiven Merkmalen eines mittelalterlichen Gelehrtenstandes, in: Frank Rexroth (ed.): Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der Gelehrten im späten Mittelalter (Vorträge und Forschungen 73), Ostfildern 2010, pp. 243–296. For Theologians, see Ian P. Wei: The Self-Image of the Masters of Theology at the University of Paris in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries, in: The Journal of Ecclesiastical History 46 (1995), pp. 398–431; also: Ian P. Wei: Intellectual Culture in Medieval Paris: Theologians and the University; c. 1100–1330, Cambridge 2012, esp. pp. 174–184. For artists / philosophers, see Marcel Bubert: Kreative Gegensätze: Der Streit um den Nutzen der Philosophie an der mittelalterlichen Pariser Universität (Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance 55), Leiden 2019, esp. pp. 55–276. For the visual representation of groups of scholars: Andrea von Hülsen-Esch: Gelehrte im Bild: Repräsentation, Darstellung und Wahrnehmung einer sozialen Gruppe im Mittelalter (Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 201), Göttingen 2006.

²²⁵ In France, we see the beginnings of a more institutionalised role for astrologers at court and university under the reign of Charles V. For the further development and limitations in this respect, i.e. to what extent the role of astrologers at court or university can be considered to have ever been firmly established, see footnote 185 and especially Chapter 6.1.

as Frederick II's *astrologus* in his *Liber introductorius*.²²⁶ Although it should be kept in mind that his self-designation as an astrologer does not necessarily reflect the actual circumstances, i.e. whether or not he held a permanent or firmly defined position as an astrologer at court, it does show his claim to this role and his self-representation as such, which is the crucial aspect in the context of this study. However, while such a direct self-identification as *astrologus* became more widespread in the fifteenth century, it was not yet common in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, so Michael Scot rather represents an exception.²²⁷ In the astrological texts studied here, the more general term *magister* or simply the name of the author was frequently used instead.²²⁸

In some later manuscripts and prints, the authors are occasionally referred to as *astrologus* in the *incipit* or *explicit* of their texts. However, those references are not written in the first person singular ("I am an astrologer") but in the third person singular. Furthermore, such a denomination is often only found in one manuscript of the respective text. It is therefore doubtful that these descriptions stem from the authors themselves. More likely, they are later additions by copyists of the manuscript, which further supports the assumption that the designation as *astrologus* only became more common over time. It thus also shows that the authors discussed here were at least categorized as astrologers by others.²²⁹

²²⁶ See footnote 124.

²²⁷ For the increasing prevalence of *astrologus*, see Burnett: *Astrology*, p. 376. The use of terms such as *mathematicus* or more specific expressions such as *genethliacus* or *horoscopus*, which were more common in Roman antiquity, although never as a self-description, declined in the Middle Ages. For the distinction and designation of different practitioners of divinatory arts, including astrology, in Late Antiquity, see Klingshirn: Isidore of Seville's Taxonomy of Magicians and Diviners.

²²⁸ See, for example, Bartholomew of Parma: *Breviloquium de fructu totius astronomiae*. Prologo, ed. by Enrico Narducci, in: *Intorno al Tractatus sphaerae di Bartolomeo da Parma, astronomo del secolo XIII*, ed. ad altri scritti del medesimo autore, in: *Bullettino di bibliografia e di storia delle scienze matematiche e fisiche* 17 (1884), pp. 32–36. p. 32: *Incipit brevilquium magistri Bartholomei natione parmensis, compilatum et confirmatum per prudentes viros de fructu totius astronomie*.

²²⁹ Bartholomew of Parma, for example, is presented as *magister* in all of his works, except in a sixteenth-century manuscript which twice refers to him as an astrologer. Bartholomew of Parma: *Verba collecta*, BSB, Clm 489, fols. 1^r–60^r, here fol. 1^r: *Incipit Prologus Libri Geomantiae editi a magistro Bartholomaeo Parmensi astrologo*. [...] *Hoc quidem opus est Bartholomaei astrologi Natione Parmensis*, [...]. In the case of Cecco d'Ascoli, the description as astrologer found in the *explicit* in one of the manuscripts of his *L'Acerba* was certainly added by a later copyist, since it is written in Italian and contains information about Cecco's death. See Cecco d'Ascoli [Francesco Stabili]: *Acerba etas* [L'Acerba], ed. by Marco Albertazzi, Lavis (Trento) 2016, p. 422: *Finisce il libro della Acerba compilata per lo maestro Cecho D'ascoli 'strologo del Re Ruberto il quale venne in Firenze per astrologo del duca di Calavria et in Firenze morì*. Such a later ascription as astrologer can also be found for John Ashenden in a printed edition who in earlier manuscripts is only referred to as *magister* or by name. Here, John Ashenden is even described as "the most skilful astrologer" and as "having the pre-eminence among the more recent astrologers". John Ashenden [Johannes Eschuid]: *Summa astrologiae iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, printed Johannes Lucilius Santritter for Franciscus Bollanus, Venice 1489, Ad lectorem: [...] *Iohannis Eschuid astrologi peritissimi exemplaria interirent*. [...] *Est autor recentior sed qui inter recentiores astrologos obtineat principatum*.

The closest to Michael Scot's self-description as an astrologer are those of the Italian university lecturers on astrology. Although Cecco d'Ascoli or Peter of Abano do not describe themselves as *astrologi*, they identify themselves by their occupation, i.e. as lecturers in astrology. The commentary by Cecco d'Ascoli on the introductory work of Alcabitus, for example, begins with the statement, written in the third person, that the text was composed by Cecco d'Ascoli, who was "elected reader at the University of Bologna" (*electus per Uniuersitatem Bononie ad legendum*).²³⁰ It is not certain whether this *incipit* was written by Cecco d'Ascoli himself or added later, and although the subject of the commentary suggests that he taught astrology, this is not explicitly stated here. However, in his commentary on the *Sphaera* of John of Sacrobosco, Cecco d'Ascoli declares that he would not discuss the corruption and generation of the elements in detail, since his intention was to lecture on astrology, for which he had been chosen, and not philosophy.²³¹ Peter of Abano does not refer to himself as a professor of astrology in his *Lucidator* or in his *Conciliator*. However, he identifies himself as "professor of the art of medicine, philosophy and astrology" (*artis medicine, philosophie et astrologie professor*) in his will.²³²

As Paul F. Grendler could show from the surviving *rotuli* of Italian universities, it indeed appears to have been the norm for a lecturer to teach more than one subject.²³³ Even in Italy, therefore, we do not see scholars working exclusively as astrologers at the university. Although neither Cecco d'Ascoli nor Peter of Abano thus describe themselves directly as astrologers, and astrology does not seem to have been the only subject they taught, their examples nevertheless show that the activity of teaching astrology, and consequently the identity as astrologer, is at least part of the authors' self-representation.²³⁴ Unlike in the case of Michael Scot, whose claim that he was Frederick II's astrologer is difficult to verify and does not imply a fixed position, the

²³⁰ Cecco d'Ascoli: Commentary on Alcabitus' *Liber introductorius* [Il Commento inedito di Cecco d'Ascoli all'Alcabizzo], ed. by Giuseppe Boffito, in: *La Bibliofilia* 5 (11/12) (1904), pp. 333–350, here p. 335.

²³¹ Cecco d'Ascoli: Commentary on John of Sacrobosco's *Sphere*, ed. by Lynn Thorndike, in: *The Sphere of Sacrobosco and Its Commentators*, Chicago 1949, pp. 344–411, here p. 344, p. 348: *In ista vero lectione non dilato spiritum meum, quia intendo legere astrologiam ad quam electus sum et non philosophiam*.

²³² See *Monumenti della Università di Padova (1222–1318)*, ed. by Andrea Gloria, Venice 1884, no. 642, pp. 77–78, here p. 77.

²³³ Grendler: *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance*, p. 416 (for Padua), p. 419 (for Bologna).

²³⁴ See footnote 230. The differentiation from or comparison with other roles and occupations, particularly regarding the practice of medicine, plays an important role for many of the authors discussed here and is examined in more detail in Chapter 5.

designations used by Cecco d'Ascoli and Peter of Abano furthermore denote professional and defined roles.

However, the authors' self-representation as astrologers can also be seen in the introductory texts by means other than reference to an official position or institutional affiliation. An example of this can be found in the prologue to Henry Bate's *Nativitas*. He voices his concerns about making an astrological judgement on his own nativity because this would carry the risk of him being unduly influenced by his feelings, which would potentially make him a "corrupt and unsuitable judge" (*prauus iudex et iniustus*). To underline this, he explains that a physician who is ill would for this reason always consult other physicians for his treatment instead of carrying it out himself.²³⁵ Henry Bate nevertheless sets about the task of interpreting his nativity, arguing that he would use the opinions of philosophers as "other judges" (*alii iudices*) as a guarantee of objective judgement and would look at his nativity as if at the "business of another stranger" (*negotium alterius extranei*).²³⁶ Those statements, especially his comparison with physicians, show that he portrayed himself – at least for the purposes of his astrological text – as an astrologer, described here as an astrological "judge" (*iudex*).

A later passage shows that Henry Bate does not apply his classification as an astrologer merely to the singular activity of interpreting his nativity but that he presents himself as ideally suited for the activity of astrology in general. He explains that his nativity would imply, among other things, a preoccupation with the "celestial regions" and a natural aptitude for "the calculations for interpreting the course of the stars".²³⁷ In other words, he was 'born' to practise astrology.²³⁸

It is important to note, however, that Henry Bate is writing here about his inclination and aptitude for astrological tasks; he is not applying this directly to the profession or role of the astrologer. Furthermore, he explains that the described celestial constellations at the time of his birth would also enable him to perform other activities, such as those of an overseer of business, a master of the liberal arts, a successful orator

²³⁵ Henry Bate: *Nativitas*, ed. Steel et al., chap. 1, p. 127: [...] *unde medici egrotantes inducunt ad se ipsos alios medicos tamquam non potentes iudicare quod uerum, quia iudicant de propriis, et in passionibus existentes; eapropter memetipsum iudicaturus de propriis inquam accidentibus et euentibus timeo ne prauus iudex inueniar et iniustus*; [...].

²³⁶ Ibid., chap. 1, pp. 127–128: [...] *quocirca inducam ad meipsum alios iudices, puta philosophos ueritatis amatores cum sententiis suis et iudiciis scripto commendatis*. [...] *Hac igitur conditione informatus astrologie pretorium aggredi temptabo, natiuitatis proprie et reuolutionum eius negotium alterius extranei fore reputando*; [...].

²³⁷ Ibid., chap. 4.3.1, p. 158: [...] *quod facit [...] celestibus regionibus occupatos aut peritis computationibus interpretantes siderum cursus*.

²³⁸ On the question of whether an astrologer must have an innate aptitude for astrology, see Chapter 4.1.1.

or a physician.²³⁹ Astrology therefore seems to have been just one area for which he was suited on the basis of his horoscope. Indeed, given the actual circumstances of Henry Bate's life at the time of his writing, his pursuit of astrology seems to have been more of an intellectual pastime, or at best an additional skill to add to his résumé, rather than a full-time occupation.²⁴⁰ However, the fact that he reflects on his own role as an astrological 'judge' and emphasises his inclination towards the discipline shows that the practice of astrology and thus the temporary or partial assumption of the role of astrologer was at least one element of how he chose to present himself. In Henry Bate's case, the identification as an astrologer is evident, therefore, mainly from the description of his actions.

The self-presentation as an astrologer is also expressed in other ways in the introductory texts. Most important in this context is the emphasis on one's own astrological competence and the claim to be the successor of famous astrological scholars. Thus, Guido Bonatti, for example, does not explicitly describe himself as an *astrologus*, but as someone who has "pursued astrology somewhat" and "examined many works of [his] predecessors" in this field.²⁴¹ Throughout his work, he repeatedly emphasises that he is following "in the footsteps" (*secundum uestigia*) of his predecessors who specialised in astrology and thus includes himself in this 'group' of expert astrologers.²⁴² Furthermore, he underlines his competence as an astrologer by comparing and evaluating the various theories and, in some cases, drawing on his practical experience as an astrologer, although without ever directly referring to himself as such.²⁴³

²³⁹ Henry Bate: *Nativitas*, ed. Steel et al., p. 158: *Facit etiam negotiationibus prepositos et liberalium artium publicos magistros, facit oratores eloquentie splendore fulgentes aut medicos cunctorum testimoniis adornatos.*

²⁴⁰ See above Chapter 2.1.2. The modern editors of his *Nativitas* indeed refer to him in their title not as an astrologer but as a philosopher: "An Astrological Autobiography of a Medieval Philosopher". See Henry Bate: *Nativitas*, ed. Steel et al.,

²⁴¹ The preface is not extant in the print from 1550 but was printed by Boncompagni: *Della vita e delle opere di Guido Bonatti*, p. 79, who refers to a print edition of Guido Bonatti's work from 1491: *Ego igitur, Guido bonatus de Forliuio cum aliquid in astronomie studuissem, et multa opera nostrorum predecessorum inspexissem, [...]*.

²⁴² See, for example, Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 2, col. 20: *Dicam ergo secundum uestigia uenerabilium praedecessorum nostrorum, [...], qui in hac scientia studuerunt.*

²⁴³ He often mentions his own astrological practice, for example when his astrological considerations revealed to him a conspiracy to assassinate the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, which "none of his astrologers discovered." *Ibid.*, treatise 5, consideratio 58, col. 182: *[...] nullus suorum astrologorum inuenit hoc, [...]*. He also directly compares the opinions of astrological authorities such as Ptolemy and Sahl ibn Bishr and explains his own assessment of their theories. *Ibid.*, treatise 5, consideratio 59, col. 182: *Ptolemaeus uero uidetur uelle innuere, licet non dicat expresse, quod [...]. Zael uoluit extrahere dubium, ne illa multa elongatio Planetarum ab angulo, impediret negotium. Ptolemaeus uidetur uelle, a quo*

The authors' own placement in a long line of astrologers – or at least scholars concerned with astrology – is evident in all introductory works and will be addressed in more detail in chapter 3 regarding the narratives describing the origins of astrology. The strong emphasis on this aspect is partly due to the genre studied here, which inherently involves compiling information from authoritative astrological texts. John Ashenden, for example, goes so far as to write that he is not to be understood as the “author” (*auctor*) of his work but merely as a “compiler” (*compilator*).²⁴⁴ Nevertheless, John Ashenden, like most other writers of introductory works to astrology, also repeatedly stresses how difficult it is to navigate the multitude of astrological texts. His aim, therefore, is to provide aspiring astrologers with a simple overview and explanation of the most important – and correct – information contained in the authoritative texts.²⁴⁵ Their competence in astrology – as someone who knows and understands the relevant

ego non dissentio, quod [...]. Mihi autem uidetur, nec credo in cassum, quod [...]. He further explains in which fields each authority provided the best explanations. Ibid., treatise 5, *consideratio* 99, col. 191: [...] *et est haec res ardua et difficilis, atque subtilissime inquisitionis et illud fuit causa quare antiqui nostri, non intromiserunt se de hoc quoniam erit labor ualde magnus, praeter quod honorandissimus ille praedecessor Albumasar in omnibus imitandus, dixit in de plus, quam dixissent caeteri astrologi. Et ego inueni eius iudicia, tam particularia quam reuolutoria, prae caeteris aliis efficaciora, et etiam attentiora, licet Ptolemaeus qui fuit dilucidator huius scientie in uniuersalibus iudiciis, caeteris astrologis inuentus fuerit attentior.*

²⁴⁴ John Ashenden uses this reliance on his predecessors as a defence against possible critics, i.e. if they wish to attack someone, they should attack the astrological authorities and not him. John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, prologue, fol. 2^{va}: [...] *siquis igitur tales inuidi detractores hoc opusculum meum uoluerunt maliciose impugnare, impugnent primo ptholomeum et dorotheum messahalam, et alkyndum, aomar et albumasar iafar et sergis, hermetem trismegistum, haly abenragel et haly medicum, zael et iulium fermicum linconiensem et hermannum et alios astrologos quam plurimos quorum omnium sententias et regulas in hoc libro meo intendo compilare nichil de capite proprio pro posse meo addendo nisi ea que ex eorum dictis uidentur sequi nolens omnino in hoc opere auctor sed tantummodo compilator reputari.*

²⁴⁵ John Ashenden even goes so far as to call for the burning of what he considers useless books on astrology. He also points out the ambiguities and conflicting opinions in astrological works, but promises to compile and reduce “the opinions, thoughts, and rules of other astrologers” in the best order he can in his *Summa* “for the common benefit of students in this discipline”. Ibid., fol. 2^{ra}: *Tercium uero quod me ab isto scribendi studio dubia trepidacione reuocat et retardat est librorum astronomie et contrariarum opinionum astrologorum onerosa multitudo, tot enim sunt libri eius inutiles et tot auctores imperiti qui regulas supersticiosas et uanas inconsultis antiquis astrologis prenominais cotidie multiplicant et inexperti ad iudicandum temere procedunt quod ipsam scientiam clarissimam turpiter dehonestant et suis monstruosis iudiciis miserabiliter diffamant. Utinam ergo omnes tales auctores ab actu scribendi in ista facultate forent suspensi et omnes eorum libri combusti, [...]. Set in antiquorum libris tot ambiguitates et tot contrarias opiniones inuenio tot eciam materias difficiles de aeris mutatione perpendo [...], set aliorum astrologorum opiniones et sententias ac regulas tam uniuersales quam particulares intendo meliori ordine quo potero ad communem utilitatem in hac scientia studentium in quondam summam redigere.* In the following paragraph, he also goes through the leading astrological authorities one by one, explaining that while they provide important insights, they all leave out certain aspects that are important to astrologers. Ibid., fols. 2^{ra}–2^{rb}: *Maxima uero causa quare hoc opus aggressus sum est ista quam monstrabo. Multi namque astrologi antiqui et moderni multa et aria de temperie aeris et de hiis que contingunt in mundo documenta scribunt et modum pronosticandi docent sed inter omnes nullum inuenio quin in suis libris omittunt aliqua que in huius iudiciis forent necessaria et iudicantibus multipliciter poterunt ualere.* For a discussion about the difficulty of astrology, see Chapter 4.2.

texts – is highlighted in this way, and the author is presented as an astrological expert. Another noteworthy observation is that the term *astrologus* is used frequently in the introductions to astrology when describing practitioners – both in reference to an imagined collective of astrologers and to the behaviour of individuals.²⁴⁶ Thus, the authors perceive and present the practitioners of their discipline explicitly as *astrologi*.

In conclusion, what can be gleaned from the self-designation or self-representation of the authors studied here? Even if the above examples merely indicate tendencies, it is evident that although the authors seldom describe themselves as *astrologi* or similar, they portray themselves as experts in astrology. This does not necessarily imply that they presented themselves exclusively as astrologers or did so in every situation in life. They identify others, however, as astrologers, implying that such a category existed and they would be part of such a group. Whether the practice of astrology was only part of their identity or served as their primary identification undoubtedly also relied heavily on the context of the individual authors. Depending on the field of activity and the individual environment, the overlaps with other roles of identification, for example, as physicians or theologians, varied, and so did their self-representations.

Concerning the self-fashioning of scholars in general, Richard Kirwan has pointed out that “scholarly experience and knowledge [...] could be part of a broader palette of characteristics that were components in the formation of an individual’s social identity.” He observes the tendency in the early modern period for scholars to increasingly define themselves primarily through their academic qualifications.²⁴⁷ Similar developments can be seen in the self-identification of scholars as astrologers in the late Middle Ages and early modern period. Their astrological activity was initially part of a “broader palette of characteristics” in their social identity but increasingly became their primary – or at least an important – form of identification. In this respect, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries represent a transitional period, and the manifestations of self-identification as an astrologer vary accordingly.

Examining the self-representations of scholars as astrologers is one – and for this study, the decisive – way of determining who can be subsumed under this term. Another approach is to consider the descriptions of scholars as astrologers by others, which I will

²⁴⁶ For the reference to astrologers as a collective, see, for example, Henry Bate: *Nativitas*, ed. Steel et al., chap. 4.3.2, p. 168: [...], *cui concordat tota cohors astrologorum*. [...], *in quo etiam consentiunt astrologi omnes unanimiter*. For references to the individual practitioners as *astrologi*, see, for example: Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 3, fol. 118^{va}: *Omnis astrologus dignus laude et honore* [...].

²⁴⁷ Kirwan: Introduction, p. 4.

briefly discuss in the following section. This external perspective on who was perceived as an astrologer, combined with the authors' self-representations, was an essential factor in the development of a more distinct image of astrologers.²⁴⁸

Apart from the prefaces or incipits that were later added to the works of astrologers and in which they are referred to as *astrologi*,²⁴⁹ such references to at least some of the scholars studied here can also be found in historiographic and literary sources. They naturally occur especially for the most famous and controversial scholars. Michael Scot, Guido Bonatti and Cecco d'Ascoli, for example, are all mentioned as *astrologi* in various contemporary and later accounts. References to Michael Scot and Guido Bonatti as astrologers can be found, for example, in the chronicle of Salimbene de Adam († c. 1290). However, while Michael Scot is portrayed very positively as a *bonus astrologus*, Guido Bonatti is described as lacking skills, and Salimbene merely writes that Guido Bonatti himself "claimed to be a philosopher and astrologer" (*qui se philosophum et astrologum esse dicebat*).²⁵⁰ Most famously, Michael Scot and Guido Bonatti are also mentioned by Dante Alighieri († 1321) in his *Commedia*, who places them in the eighth circle of hell with diviners and magicians but does not describe them directly as astrologers.²⁵¹ In Benvenuto da Imola's († 1388) commentary on the *Commedia*, however, both Michael Scot and Guido Bonatti are described as *astrologi*, and their activities as such are further discussed.²⁵² Probably drawing on this account, Filippo Villani († c. 1405) likewise discusses Guido Bonatti as an astrologer in a work on the history of Florence and its illustrious citizens, published in 1381–1382.²⁵³ Filippo Villani's famous uncle, Giovanni Villani († 1348), mentions in his *Nuova Cronica*, among others, Cecco d'Ascoli, whom he describes as the "astrologer of the duke" (*astrolago del duca*), i.e. of Charles, duke of Calabria († 1328).²⁵⁴ Although such stories about famous practitioners of astrology were often heavily embellished and influenced

²⁴⁸ Frank Rexroth has emphasised this interplay in connection with the definition of an expert. A scholar would only become an expert through "communicative situations" ("Kommunikationssituationen") in which ascriptions by others and self-fashioning were mutually dependent. See footnote 95. The emergence of the image of the astrologer was subject to similar conditions.

²⁴⁹ See footnote 229.

²⁵⁰ Salimbene de Adam: *Cronica*, ed. by Giuseppe Scalia, 2 vols. (CCCM 125/1; 125A/2), Turnhout 1998; 1999, here vol. 1, p. 252 (Guido Bonatti); vol. 2, p. 541 (Michael Scot).

²⁵¹ See Dante Alighieri: *Commedia*, vol. 1: *Inferno*, ed. by Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, Milan ⁸2008, canto XX, ll. 115–118, p. 615.

²⁵² See Benvenuto da Imola [Benevenuti de Rambaldis de Imola]: *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam*, 5 vols., vol. 2, ed. by Jacobo P. Lacaia, Florence 1887, pp. 88–91.

²⁵³ See on this: Talbot R. Selby: Filippo Villani and his 'Vita' of Guido Bonatti, in: *Renaissance News* 11 (4) (1958), pp. 243–248.

²⁵⁴ Giovanni Villani: *Nuova Cronica*, 3 vols., ed. Giovanni Porta (Biblioteca di scrittori italiani), Parma 1990–1991, vol. 2, book 11, chap. 41, p. 570.

by the author's personal attitude to astrology as well as the desired addressee and objective of the text, the descriptions of these scholars as astrologers, especially in historiographical texts of roughly the same period, shows that they were indeed perceived as such.

A particularly noteworthy late medieval source, though one to be treated with caution, which contains a wealth of references to scholars as astrologers is the *Recueil des plus célèbres astrologues*, written between 1494 and 1498 by Simon de Phares. In his work, Simon de Phares, a practising astrologer himself, lists scholars throughout history who supposedly have been engaged with astrology and refers to them as *astrologiens*.²⁵⁵ In his enumeration, all of the scholars studied here are included and referred to as astrologers.²⁵⁶ While his work provides valuable information about which scholars in history might have practised astrology, his attributions must be approached with great scepticism when it comes to the question of who actually practised astrology in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Apart from the fact that he wrote more than 100 years after the scholars discussed here, he composed his work with the very specific aim of absolving himself of the condemnations directed against him as an astrologer by proving the validity and usefulness of astrology through a prosopographical catalogue of earlier practitioners.²⁵⁷ As Jean-Patrice Boudet has shown, this led to numerous false ascriptions – many of the scholars labelled astrologers by Simon de Phares were probably or even definitely not concerned with astrology. Simon de Phares also integrated mythological or biblical figures as well as names of scholars whose very existence cannot be proven. Boudet notes that for three-fifths of those listed by Simon de Phares as astrologers from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, there is no evidence of their existence, let alone records of their astrological activity.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ The work was originally entitled *Elucidaire* and was to consist of three parts: the enumeration of famous astrologers of the past, an account of celestial influences and astrology, and an overview of the magical and divinatory arts. The second and third parts were either not completed or have not survived. Boudet: Simon de Phares: *Le Recueil des plus célèbres astrologues*, vol. 2, pp. 9–10. As Boudet points out, instead of the term *astrologue*, Simon de Phares mainly uses the term *astrologien* – for himself and the scholars he discusses – which refers to someone who devotes himself both to the study of the course of the stars and to their influence. See *ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁵⁶ For an index of scholars listed in Simon de Phares' work, see *ibid.*, pp. 407–491; for a chronological list of potential astrologers named by Simon de Phares, see *ibid.*, pp. 218–229.

²⁵⁷ On the accusations against him, see *ibid.*, pp. 85–120.

²⁵⁸ Jean-Patrice Boudet: *Les astrologues européens et la genèse de l'État moderne (XII^e–XVII^e siècle)*. Une première approche, in: Jean-Philippe Genet / Günther Lottes (eds.): *L'état moderne et les élites, XIII^e–XVIII^e siècles. Apports et limites de la méthode prosopographique*. Actes du colloque international CNRS-Paris I, 16–19 octobre 1991 (Université de Paris I. Histoire moderne 36), Paris 1996, pp. 421–433, accessed online, URL: <https://books.openedition.org/psorbonne/65667?lang=de>, last accessed 02/12/2024, paragraph 12.

Nevertheless, Simon de Phares' account provides a starting point to further pursue his suggestions for practising astrologers and to corroborate his information about them through other sources. More importantly for this study, however, his work offers a fifteenth-century astrologer's view of the members of his group. The fact that he not only referred to himself as an astrologer but devoted an entire book to portray a multitude of scholars as such shows that by the end of the fifteenth century, the role of the astrologer had already taken on more distinct and recognisable characteristics that Simon de Phares could draw on and with which he identified.

Finally, the writings against astrology should also be briefly mentioned in the context of the external view of astrologers, as they played a central role in the emergence of a more distinct image of the astrologer. Particularly from the end of the period under study here, namely the second half of the fourteenth century, treatises were composed specifically against astrology.²⁵⁹ A famous example for this are the writings against astrology by Nicole Oresme written in the 1360s, in which he directly addresses the role propagated by astrologers and the strategies of their self-fashioning.²⁶⁰ The appearance of such treatises presents the culmination of a development. That such attacks occurred even at an earlier stage is evident in the astrologers' focus on responding to criticism in their introductory works. Overall, the increasing production of specific oppositional writings towards the end of the fourteenth century indicates that astrologers were gradually perceived as members of a distinct group with specific characteristics.

The descriptions of astrologers by themselves and others show that although there is a development towards a consolidated concept of an astrologer, this emerged only gradually in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The scholars studied here were indeed active as astrologers to very different degrees. If the definition of an astrologer was strictly that of someone who was exclusively engaged in putting his astrological-predictive skills at the service of a ruler, client or an institution and received monetary remuneration for this, very few scholars of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries would fall into this category. While Guido Bonatti, for example, could be counted among them and is indeed often referred to as the first 'professional' astrologer, the application of this classification would already be more difficult for a scholar like Peter of Abano

²⁵⁹ For this later development, see Chapter 6.2

²⁶⁰ For a discussion of his stance towards astrology and an edition of his *Livre de Divinacions* and his *Tractatus contra judicarios astronomos*, see Coopland: Nicole Oresme and the Astrologers. His specific views will be further discussed in the relevant sections below.

because of his work as a physician.²⁶¹ People like Henry Bate, who probably pursued astrology more as a pastime, would fall out of this category altogether.

Such considerations about the definition of an astrologer are, of course, absolutely valid. However, it is useful to expand the definition of astrologers in the context of this study. My aim here is not to demonstrate that the occupation was already firmly established in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries nor that practising astrology necessarily precluded pursuing other activities as well. Rather, I am interested in the beginnings and early development of the occupation. A more fluid nature of the definition of the astrologer during this developmental phase is consequently to be expected. Yet, it is precisely this fluidity and the inclusion of perspectives of people who can only loosely be understood as astrologers that offer the possibility of gaining insights into the beginnings and background of the development of the astrologer's later role.

For the purposes of this study, therefore, I will define astrologers as scholars who showed a strong interest in judicial astrology, practised it themselves, wrote texts that were primarily or largely concerned with introducing interested readers to astrology, and who explicitly and approvingly addressed the role of astrologers in their writings. In short, they engaged with astrology from a practitioner's perspective – be it in the capacity of an amateur astrologer or a 'professional' astrologer in the narrower sense. The scholars included under this definition as astrologers endeavoured to create a specific image of the astrologer that did not necessarily correspond to their daily activity in reality and partly did not even exist in this precise form yet. Nevertheless, as active advocates of the discipline, they saw this idealised image as at least part of their own identity. The way they envisioned this role can be seen in the context of the three themes that will be explored in this study, namely the narrative of the history of the discipline and its practitioners, the rules of conduct for practitioners, and the comparison of the role of the astrologer with other related occupations.

²⁶¹ Guido Bonatti is indeed named as one of the rare cases of a "professional astrologer" by Boudet: *Les astrologues européens*, paragraph 18. Burnett: *Partim de suo et partim de alieno*, p. 70 equally classifies Bonatti's *Liber astronomiae* as "a manual [...] for professional astrologers". For the increasing professionalisation of astrologers from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries onwards, see Elide Casali: *Le spie del cielo. Oroscopi, lunari e almanacchi nell'Italia moderna*, Torino 2003, pp. 5–34; Mario Biagioli: *The Social Status of Italian Mathematicians 1450–1600*, in: *History of Science* 27 (1989), pp. 41–95; Robert S. Westman: *The Astronomer's Role in the Sixteenth Century. A Preliminary Study*, in: *History of Science* 18 (1980), pp. 105–147.

2.2.2 Astrologers as a ‘Group’

Having established that the authors studied here can justifiably be referred to as astrologers, the question remains whether they can be considered a coherent group and to what extent they presented themselves as such. As outlined in chapter 1.2.3., I draw for this study on Otto Gerhard Oexle’s definition of groups, which encompasses the duration over time, the existence of a code of conduct, demarcation from other groups and internal organisation. However, based on the findings from the research into the fields of activity of astrologers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it becomes clear that the factual circumstances do not support the view that astrologers of this period fulfilled the conditions for such a group. Although rudiments of institutionalised group formation can already be identified among astrologers during the period under study, for example, in the establishment of chairs of astrology at Italian universities, there is no evidence that those professors of astrology acted collectively as a group. The collaborations between astrological scholars in Paris or Oxford mentioned above, were either student-teacher relationships or academic friendships rather than official and institutionalised groups. The same applies to astrologers in the service of rulers. Although there are occasional references to a ruler employing several astrologers, this does not appear to have been a fixed collective of astrologers working together but individuals serving the ruler more or less independently.²⁶² In short, the astrologers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries neither acted collectively as a group nor were they recognised or institutionally established as such. On the contrary, they seem to have mostly worked alone in their daily practice. However, if we consider not only the factual existence but also the theoretical and informal conception of groups, an analysis of astrologers as a group deserves further attention. For although there is no evidence that astrologers acted collectively as a group, there are certainly indications in their texts that they understood themselves as such or at least portrayed themselves as members of an astrological community – even without a formalised structure. Those descriptions might correspond to the actual state of affairs, but they do not have to.

In their texts, there are two approaches to how astrologers depict themselves as a group. Firstly, there are frequent references in the introductory texts to the multitude of practitioners on whose collective opinions the authors rely. Those references are often

²⁶² Those references seem to come mainly from texts with an anti-astrological point of view and appear to have been used chiefly in a polemic way to discredit the ruler. For examples, see Haskins: *Studies in Mediaval Science*, p. 258.

made in very general terms and mainly serve to support the author's own claims.²⁶³ This does not mean that the authors present astrologers as consistently agreeing. On the contrary, as described above, differing opinions of astrologers are often addressed and weighed against each other. However, the references to the existence of a multitude of practitioners show that the authors wanted to portray themselves as part of a larger group. This concern becomes even more evident through the insertion of detailed narratives of the discipline's origins and development, in which the focus is primarily on its famous practitioners. As a result, the continuous existence of the practice of astrology and, thus, a community of astrologers over time is highlighted. Such a community did not consist of a group of astrologers practising together at the same time but rather of a group extending over time, whose members advanced the discipline individually by building on the knowledge of their predecessors. Consequently, this type of group representation can be assigned, in a slightly modified reading, to the first defining feature of groups mentioned by Oexle, namely the duration over time.

In addition to emphasising the collective advancement of the discipline over time, astrologers also presented themselves as a group in another way. Namely, the authors describe in detail which characteristics astrologers must exhibit. They thus depict astrologers as representatives of a distinct group whose members are defined by certain behaviours and character traits. This group's identity is equally established by distinguishing it from other groups of scholars. The representation of astrologers in the astrological introductory texts thus shows that astrologers understood themselves – at least conceptually – as a group since three of Oexle's characteristics of a group can be identified to a certain extent. However, the authors were less concerned with emphasising collective activities than with defining what constitutes an astrologer – as a representative of a particular group. Invoking the existence of such a group served

²⁶³ See, for example, Henry Bate: *Nativitas*, ed. Steel et al., chap. 4.3.2, p. 168, who references the agreement of “the entire cohort of astrologers” (*cui etiam concordat tota cohors astrologorum*); or Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, 2 vols. and supplementary volume, ed. by John H. Bridges, Oxford 1897, here vol. 1, part 4, p. 246, who emphasises that “true mathematicians and astronomers or astrologers” agreed in their rejection of astral necessity in contingent matters: [...] *manifestum est quod veri mathematici et astronomi seu astrologi, [...] non ponunt necessitatem et infallibile iudicium in rebus contingentibus de futura*. Also, *ibid.*, p. 254, when he points to the “opinions of the astrologers” in regard to the interpretation of conjunctions for the rise and fall of religions: *Quanto igitur planius et plenius possum ad praesens, recitabo sententias mathematicorum in quibus auctores concordant*. Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 2, part 1, col. 20, emphasises that he intends to follow in the footsteps of his “venerable predecessors”, some of whom he specifically lists, while also pointing out that there were even more, thus creating a sense of group identity: *Dicam ergo secundum uestigia uenerabilium praedecessorum nostrorum, ea quae huic operi utilia esse uidebuntur, rememorans eorum sententias, scilicet Ptolemaei, Hermetis, Iaphar, Thebit, Alchabicii, Alcaiat, Alchindi, Alenzedego, Messalae, Adilae, Iergis, Albenait, Aardimon, Arestali, et aliorum, qui in hac scientia studuerunt, [...]*

primarily as an argument to establish and legitimise the role of the individual astrologer. The introductory texts repeatedly reveal an interplay between the presentation of astrologers as exceptional individual scholars and their inclusion in a group. The following chapters will examine how exactly the astrologers presented themselves – as individual scholars and members of this group of astrologers.

3 Creating *memoria* – Astrology’s Origin Story

A common way to bolster group identity is to highlight that the group has existed for a long time and can count famous representatives among its members. This is precisely what the astrologers on which this study focuses did in their texts. They continuously referred to past practitioners, stressed the importance of drawing on their findings, and in some cases, even construed elaborate origin stories of astrology. However, those stories exhibit several peculiarities that elucidate how the authors intended to portray the figure of the astrologer. In the following chapter, the role they ascribed to the astrologer via the narratives of the history of astrology will be examined in more detail.

Before taking a closer look at some exemplary narratives, it is essential to differentiate between the historical development of astrology, and the depiction of this development by different authors. The actual origins and progression of the study of astrology are challenging to reconstruct. This is partly due to the heterogeneity of the discipline – what falls within the definition of ‘astrology’ differed significantly according to time, place, and point of view.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, astrology – as it was practised in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Europe – has been subject to numerous cultural, political, and religious influences, making it hard to discern a linear development.²⁶⁵ While the discipline’s various changes naturally influenced descriptions of its history, the narratives predominantly focused on mythical or legendary events and figures and only marginally incorporated real developments. The reason for this lies in the fact that the objective of most authors who included an origin story of astrology in their texts was not to accurately describe historical processes. Instead, they aimed to portray the discipline and its representatives in a certain way. In the case of advocates of astrology, this meant bestowing legitimacy and respectability to the practice by associating it with certain famous practitioners, to reveal a large and long-standing tradition of upstanding astrologers of impeccable character. Through the narration of the history of the discipline, the authors commemorated past practitioners

²⁶⁴ For the definition and the use of different terms for ‘astrology’, see Chapter 1.5.2.

²⁶⁵ The roots of astrological studies can be traced back as far as to fifth-century B.C. Babylon, from where the oldest surviving horoscope originates. Late-medieval Latin astrology was based on theories which had been developed in Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and particularly Arabic and Persian works, which themselves had been shaped by Eastern traditions from China and India. For the development of the study of astrology, see John D. North / Bartel L. van der Waerden.: *Astrologie, I. Ursprünge*, in: *LexMA* 1 (1980), cols. 1135–1136; see also David Pingree: *Astrologie II/1. Antike und Mittelalter*, in: *TRE* 1 (1979), pp. 281–288.

and endowed astrologers with their own genealogy, thus ultimately practising a form of scholarly *memoria*.²⁶⁶

The need to create a collective historical tradition of astrology was strongly influenced by the criticism levelled at astrologers. Recounting a venerable history provided an opportunity to rebut several of the critics' arguments. An argument raised frequently by the critics of astrology was that astrological predictions were not feasible as one lifetime would not suffice to record and understand the meaning of certain recurring celestial phenomena.²⁶⁷ Highlighting astrology's long history and the ways astrological knowledge had been transmitted and enhanced throughout the generations, i.e. the cumulative knowledge acquired by astrologers across time, therefore functioned as a counter-argument.²⁶⁸ The presentation of venerable and respected astrologers from the past also allowed for the creation of a specific, curated image of astrologers. Astrology's advocates could ascribe certain character traits and behaviours to the ideal astrologer, challenging – and pre-emptively addressing – their opponents' negative portrayals in turn.

While the overall objective in telling astrology's history was the same for all astrologers – to show the discipline's and its practitioners' legitimacy by emphasising shared roots – individual depictions differed. This applies not only to the content of the narrative but also to the extent to which astrology's past was addressed – ranging from detailed narratives to brief remarks. Nevertheless, the significance of building on the findings of earlier astrologers is in some way regularly emphasised. References to earlier authorities are, of course, nothing unusual in medieval texts *per se*. In the astrologers' cases, however, those authorities were embedded in narratives about the

²⁶⁶ Otto Gerhard Oexle defines medieval *memoria* as the “overcoming of death and oblivion through ‘memory’ and ‘remembrance’” (“die Überwindung des Todes und des Vergessens durch ‘Gedächtnis’ und ‘Erinnerung’”). Since Oexle regards “every record referring to history” as a memorial tradition, the astrologers' accounts can indeed be understood as practising *memoria*. Otto Gerhard Oexle: *Memoria, Memorialüberlieferung*, in: *LexMA* 6 (1993), cols. 510–513.

²⁶⁷ See, for example, John of Saxony: *Commentary [Alcabitii ad magisterium iudiciorum astrorum Isagoge: Commentario Ioannis Saxonij declarata]*, printed by Simon de Colines, Paris 1521, fol. 32^r, who reproduces the list of arguments against astrology put forward by Albumasar. For the original argument, see Abū Ma'shar: *The Great Introduction to Astrology*, vol. 1, ed. and transl. Burnett / Yamamoto, part 1, chap. 5, pp. 128–129.

²⁶⁸ Already Cicero explained that astrologers would claim as an argument for their extensive knowledge about the heavens that the Babylonians had observed the heavens for 470,000 years. Marcus Tullius Cicero: *Über die Wahrsagung / De divinatione*, Lateinisch-deutsch, ed., transl. and explained by Christoph Schaublin, Berlin ³2013, book 2, p. 224: *Nam quod aiunt quadringenta septuaginta milia annorum in periclitandis experiundisque pueris, quicumque essent nati, Babylonios posuisse, fallunt*. For a discussion of “experience” and cumulative knowledge as a prerequisite for an astrologer, see Chapter 4.1.2.

process of development of the discipline. They also, crucially, served as an argument in the justification strategy for the discipline and its representatives. By analysing different narrative versions of this history, it is possible to identify which aspects were considered particularly important by an author, and how this varied according to the writer's circumstances. The aim of this chapter is thus to show how and why astrologers used specific narratives about their discipline's past and what consequences this had for their representation as members of this group. Their choice of 'founding fathers' and the character traits the authors attributed to these figures provide valuable information about the image they wanted to convey of the ideal astrologer.

Whereas the rising popularity of astrology in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries triggered a renewed interest in the subject and its roots, certain narratives about the origin of astrology had already been established in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Those narratives provided the basis for subsequent accounts; they remained points of reference throughout the entire medieval period. Late medieval astrologers, therefore, had to come to terms with those traditional narratives. More so, they had to incorporate them, at least in part, even if they had previously been used to portray astrology in a negative light. However, instead of seeing this as an obstacle, the astrologers interpreted and expanded elements of the established versions of the history of astrology to suit their own agenda. It is important to note that many of the protagonists described as instrumental in the founding or development of the discipline were famous biblical or mythical characters who were also discussed in other contexts, such as in philosophical, theological, or political discourses, which influenced the figures' portrayals in the stories about the history of astrology in turn.

In order to understand how late medieval astrologers engaged with those various traditions and influences and used them for their own purposes, I will first provide a brief overview of some of the most influential earlier currents and developments in describing the history of astrology. After this, I will turn to two remarkably detailed versions of such origin stories written by astrologers (subchapters 3.2.1 and 3.2.2). Their narratives exemplify how astrologers employed their discipline's history to create a specific type of group identity and portray astrology and its practitioners in a certain way.

Chapter 3.3 then turns to more external views on the history of astrology, which provide further explanations as to why astrologers presented their discipline's history in the way they did. First, the focus will be on the integration of the biblical Magi into the

astrologers' accounts – or rather, the lack thereof. Although the Magi seem to be ideal role models for astrologers at first glance, they do not appear in the narratives of astrologers in this way. As I posit, this was primarily owed to their portrayal and the discussions surrounding their assessment in other sources of the time. The possible reasons for the omission – and what it reveals about the aspects considered significant to astrologers in choosing their past identification figures – are discussed in subchapter 3.3.1. The last subchapter (3.3.2) finally examines one of the opposing portrayals of the discipline's history on the basis of an anti-astrological treatise, the *Livre de Divinacions*, written by the French scholar Nicole Oresme († 1382). Nicole Oresme directly confronts the astrologers' strategy of invoking a long tradition of famous representatives to prove the legitimacy of the discipline, thus showing that the astrologers' accounts of their discipline's history were indeed acknowledged, taken seriously, and debated. Since the role image of astrologers has developed in the interplay between their own positive and external negative portrayals, the inclusion of the opposing side ultimately allows for a deeper understanding of the emergence of the astrologer's image.

3.1 Foundations and Influences for Late-Medieval Origin Stories of Astrology

The core elements of most medieval accounts on the development of the study of astrology can be found in the “Jewish Antiquities” (*Antiquitates Iudaicae*) of the Romano-Jewish historian Flavius Josephus († c. 95).²⁶⁹ Josephus integrated astrology's origin into the biblical genealogy and not only described its invention but also its further history of transmission. He explains that the descendants of Adam's third son Seth first “discovered the science of heavenly bodies and their orderly array.”²⁷⁰ Seth's descendants also took measures to ensure that their discoveries would not be lost to future generations by inscribing their findings on a brick and a stone pillar to prevent them from being destroyed by the Flood or a fire that had been predicted by Adam.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ More on the medieval reception of Flavius Josephus' works in the Middle Ages: Franz Brunhölzl: Josephus im Mittelalter, in: LexMA 5 (1991), cols. 634–635. For a discussion of the topic of astrology / astronomy in Josephus' work, see Annette Yoshiko Reed: Abraham as Chaldean Scientist and Father of the Jews: Josephus, Ant. 1.154–168, and the Greco-Roman Discourse About Astronomy/Astrology, in: Journal of the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period 35 (2) (2004), pp. 119–158.

²⁷⁰ Flavius Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, 9 vols., vol. 4: Books 1–4, ed and transl. by H. St. J. Thackeray (The Loeb Classical Library 242), Cambridge (MA) 1930, reprinted 1961, book I.ii.3, p. 32 (Greek), p. 33 (English translation). He does not specify who among Seth's descendants were meant by this.

²⁷¹ Josephus tell us that Adam had predicted that the world would either be destroyed by fire or by a deluge of water – the inscriptions on two different kinds of pillars would thus ensure the survival of the

The next reference to the discipline can be found in Josephus' text when he explains one of the reasons for the longevity of Noah and the previous patriarchs.²⁷² According to Josephus, God granted them an extraordinarily long life span "to promote the utility of their discoveries in astronomy and geometry."²⁷³ He moreover states that "they could have predicted nothing with certainty had they not lived for 600 years, that being the complete period of the great year."²⁷⁴ Finally, he describes how this knowledge was passed on: Abraham taught astronomy as well as arithmetic to the Egyptians, who, before this, had been completely "ignorant of these sciences" which thus "travelled from the Chaldeans into Egypt, whence they passed to the Greeks."²⁷⁵

The basic framework of Josephus' account was incorporated in most medieval descriptions of the history of astrology. However, it was often slightly changed, and further details or stories were added. This was done, for example, by Isidore of Seville († 636) in his influential *Etymologiae*.²⁷⁶ In the third book (*De mathematica*) of this encyclopaedia, Isidore explores in detail the study of astronomy (*astronomia*) and, under this heading, also discusses its inventors (*De inventoribus eius*) and its most famous teachers (*De institutoribus eius*).²⁷⁷ Instead of deciding on a fixed origin story, Isidore lists several possibilities. These, however, encompass mostly the same figures or groups named by Flavius Josephus: he mentions the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, and

knowledge in both cases. Josephus: *Jewish Antiquities*, vol. 4, ed. and transl. Thackeray, book I.ii.3, p. 32 (Greek), p. 33 (English translation).

²⁷² See on the medieval discussion about this topic: Joseph Ziegler: *Why Did the Patriarchs Live so Long? On the Role of the Bible in the Discourse on Longevity around 1300*, in: Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (ed.): *Longevity and Immortality. Europe – Islam – Asia* (Micrologus 26), Florence 2018, pp. 79–112.

²⁷³ Josephus: *Jewish Antiquities*, vol. 4, ed. and transl. Thackeray, book I.iii.9, p. 50 (Greek), p. 51 (English translation). Josephus here uses the term *ἀστρονομία* ("astronomy"). However, as with the Latin equivalents *astrologia* and *astronomia*, the Greek terms *ἀστρονομία* ("astronomy") and *ἀστρολογία* ("astrology") were often used interchangeably. In some manuscripts of the "Jewish Antiquities" we also find the term *ἀστρολογία*. See for this: Yoshiko Reed: *Abraham as Chaldean Scientist*, p. 122, footnote 5; p. 133. On astrology/astronomy in ancient Greece and Rome, see Tamsyn Barton: *Ancient Astrology* (Sciences of Antiquity), London / New York 1994, esp. pp. 32–85. On the stance towards astrology during early Christendom: Tim Hegedus: *Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology* (Patristic Studies 6), New York 2007.

²⁷⁴ Josephus: *Jewish Antiquities*, vol. 4, ed. and transl. Thackeray, book I.iii.9, p. 50 (Greek), p. 51 (English translation). The reference to a "great year" is likely based on the Babylonian writer Berosus (3rd century BC) who divided world history into periods of 3600, 600 and 60 years. See for this the annotation in Josephus: *Jewish Antiquities*, vol. 4, ed. and transl. Thackeray, p. 51. On the Babylonian Great Year as presented by Berosus: Godefroid de Callataÿ: *Annus Platonicus: A Study of World Cycles in Greek, Latin and Arabic Sources* (Publications de l'Institut orientaliste de Louvain), Louvain 1996, pp. 66–68.

²⁷⁵ Josephus: *Jewish Antiquities*, vol. 4, ed. and transl. Thackeray, book I.ii.2, p. 82 (Greek), p. 83 (English translation).

²⁷⁶ The *Etymologiae* were used as a work of reference throughout the Middle Ages. For different aspects of Isidore's influence and works, see Andrew T. Fear / Jaimie Wood (eds.): *A Companion to Isidore of Seville* (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 87), Leiden / Boston 2019.

²⁷⁷ Isidore of Seville: *Etymologiae*, vol. 1, ed. Lindsay, book 3, chap. 25 (*De inventoribus eius*); and chap. 26 (*De institutoribus eius*).

Abraham.²⁷⁸ In addition, Isidore also states that the Greeks thought Atlas to be the inventor of *astronomia* and emphasises Ptolemy's contribution to the discipline.²⁷⁹ Besides his discussion of astronomy/astrology in the third book on *mathematica*, Isidore also addresses the field and its representatives in the eighth book on *magi*.²⁸⁰ Here, he lists various types of magicians, magical diviners and also astrologers. Although he does not comment on astrology's origin in this instance, he mentions the biblical Magi, whose activity he identifies as a turning point in the history of astrology. These "interpreters of the stars" (*stellarum interpretes*), Isidore recounts, had predicted the birth of Christ. However, the art of interpreting the stars was only permitted up to this event, and its practitioners were henceforth called *mathematici*.²⁸¹ Isidore thus again includes astrology in the biblical history of salvation but brands its contemporary use as illicit – at least as far as the interpretation of nativities is concerned.

Although the characters or groups mentioned so far continued to be part of the narrative, two colourful figures were often added to this mix, or even replaced the earlier protagonists in the high and late Middle Ages. These were Jonitus, Noah's

²⁷⁸ Isidore at first seems to differentiate between the invention of *astronomia* and *astrologia* as he states that *astronomia* was first discovered by the Egyptians, while *astrologia* and the study of horoscopes was first taught by the Chaldeans. However, he then appears to use the terms interchangeably. Ibid., book 3, chap. 25: *Astronomiam primi Aegyptii invenerunt. Astrologiam vero et nativitatis observantiam Chaldei primi docuerunt. Abraham autem instituisse Aegyptios Astrologiam Iosephus auctor adservat. [...]. Quisquis autem ille fuit, motu caeli et ratione animi excitatus per temporum vices, per astrorum ratos definitosque cursus, per intervallorum spatia moderata, consideravit dimensiones quasdam et numeros, quae definiendo ac secernendo in ordinem nectens Astrologiam repperit.* While Isidore explicitly discusses the difference between *astronomia* and *astrologia* in a later chapter (book 3, chap. 27), the distinction between *astrologia* and *astronomia* or rather the utilisation of the terms regarding its invention become slightly blurred here. It thus cannot be assumed that Isidore saw the invention and development of astronomy and astrology as taking place independently of each other. For further discussion of the medieval distinction between astronomy and astrology, including Isidore's definition, see Chapter 1.5.2.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., book 3, chap. 25: *Graeci autem dicunt hanc artem ab Atlante prius excogitatam, ideoque dictus est sustinuisse caelum.* Ibid., book 3, chap. 26: *In utraque autem lingua diversorum quidem sunt de astronomia scripta volumina, inter quos tamen Ptolemaeus rex Alexandriae apud Graecos praecipuus habetur: hic etiam et canones instituit, quibus cursus astrorum inveniatur.* In book 5 (*De legibus et temporis*) Isidore himself names Atlas as astrology's inventor. Ibid., book 5, chap. 39: *Athlans astrologiam invenit.* The connection between Atlas and astrology had prior to Isidore been also pointed out by Augustine. Although Augustine does not credit Atlas with the invention of astrology, he states that he was said to have been a "great astrologer" (*magnus astrologus*). Augustine [Aurelius Augustinus]: *De civitate Dei*, 2 vols., ed. by Bernard Dombart / Alphons Kalb (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana 1105), Stuttgart / Leipzig ⁵1993, vol. 1, book 18, chap. 8, p. 264.

²⁸⁰ For Isidore's taxonomy of *magi* and the difficulties of defining the term, see Klingshirn: Isidore of Seville's Taxonomy of Magicians and Diviners. For the later discussions of *magi* in their function as astrologers, particularly by Albertus Magnus: David J. Collins: *Scholastics, Stars, and Magi: Albert the Great on Matthew 2*, in: David Collins (ed.): *The Sacred and the Sinister. Studies in Medieval Religion and Magic*, University Park, Pa. 2019, pp. 257–277.

²⁸¹ Isidore of Seville: *Etymologiae*, vol. 1, ed. Lindsay, book 8: *Primum autem idem stellarum interpretes magi nuncupabantur, sicut de his legitur qui in Evangelio natum Christum adnuntiaverunt; postea hoc nomine soli Mathematici. Cuius artis scientia usque ad Evangelium fuit concessa, ut Christo edito nemo exinde nativitatem alicuius de caelo interpretaretur.*

legendary postdiluvian fourth son, and Nimrod, the grandchild of Noah's son Cham.²⁸² Both figures were endowed with numerous myths and stories. The varying descriptions of Nimrod and Jonitus were shaped predominantly by biblical and patristic sources, Eastern apocryphal texts, and an early medieval astronomical work called the *Liber Nemroth*.²⁸³ In the biblical and patristic tradition, Nimrod emerges initially as a tyrannical ruler, the builder of the tower of Babel and a giant.²⁸⁴ However, he is not yet linked to astrology in those contexts. His image as an early or even the first astrologer was instead established by the way of certain late-antique and early medieval apocryphal Greek and Syrian texts, most notably the so-called (Pseudo-)Clementine writings (2nd–4th century) and the *Revelationes* attributed to St Methodius (7th–8th century).²⁸⁵ Although Nimrod is depicted as an astrologer in both cases, the connotations are very different.

The (Pseudo-)Clementine writings, ascribed to Pope Clement I, have been transmitted in two versions: the Greek *Homilies* and the Latin translation or rather reworking made by Rufinus of Aquileia (†411/12), called the *Recognitiones*, written in c. 405.²⁸⁶ The depictions of Nimrod in the *Homilies* and the *Recognitiones* differ in

²⁸² On Jonitus: Stephen Gero: The Legend of the Fourth Son of Noah, in: The Harvard Theological Review 73 (1/2) (1980), pp. 321–330; Mireille Schnyder: Der vierte Sohn Noahs und die Magie der Künste, in: Peter-André Alt et al. (eds.): *Magia daemoniaca, magia naturalis, zauber: Schreibweisen von Magie und Alchemie in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit* (Episteme in Bewegung 2), Wiesbaden 2015, pp. 57–73. For Nimrod as Cham's grandson: *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. by Robert Weber / Roger Gryson, Stuttgart 2007, Gen 10:8–12, p. 15. The spelling of his name varies in the sources as well as in modern literature. The use of Nimrod or Nemrot(h) is most common.

²⁸³ Steven John Livesey and Richard H. House traced the development of the stories about Nimrod and pointed out the wide-ranging influences that created and shaped the later perceptions about him. Steven J. Livesey / Richard H. House: Nimrod the Astronomer, in: *Traditio* 37 (1981), pp. 203–266. There also exists an Arabic Nimrod tradition in connection with Abraham: Heinrich Schützinger: *Ursprung und Entwicklung der arabischen Abraham-Nimrod-Legende* (Bonner orientalische Studien / NS 11), Bonn 1961. For literature on the *Liber Nemroth* see below.

²⁸⁴ In the Bible itself, Nimrod is merely described as one of the sons of Chus, who became the powerful ruler of Babylon and was a strong hunter. *Biblia sacra*, ed. Weber / Gryson, Gen 10:8–12, p. 15. The interpretation of Nimrod as a giant, the builder of the tower of Babel and a revolutionary against God stem mainly from Augustine's portrayal of him. Augustine: *De civitate Dei*, ed. Dombart / Kalb, vol. 1, book 16, chap. 3, p. 501; book 16, chap. 4, pp. 504–505. Although the connection of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel had already been made before Augustine, his treatment of the subject reinforced and perpetuated this story and added the characterisation of Nimrod as a giant. For a discussion of Augustine's depiction of Nimrod, see Livesey / House: Nimrod the Astronomer, pp. 209–211.

²⁸⁵ Livesey / House: Nimrod the Astronomer, pp. 211–215.

²⁸⁶ (Pseudo-)Clement: *Homilies* [Die Pseudoklementinen, vol. 1: Homilien], ed. by Bernhard Rehm (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte 42), Berlin / Leipzig 1953; (Pseudo-)Clement: *Recognitiones* [Die Pseudoklementinen, vol. 2: Rekognitionen in Rufins Übersetzung], ed. by Bernhard Rehm (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte 51), Berlin 1965. The text underwent many different reworkings and translations. Rehm (Einleitung, in: [Pseudo-]Clement: *Homilies*, ed. Rehm, p. vii) assumes that the first version was produced c. 220/230 in Syria. In the West the (pseudo-)Clementine writings gained widespread circulation mainly via Rufinus' version. Rehm: Einleitung, in: (Pseudo-)Clement: *Homilies*, ed. Rehm, p. viii. On Rufinus' *Recognitiones* and the

certain aspects. Still, the main elements of the descriptions are similar; they paint a very negative picture of Nimrod, who is either equated or associated with Zoroaster in the texts.²⁸⁷ Nimrod is portrayed as a powerful ruler who, in his hunger for power, turned to astral and demonic magic, inciting idolatry and superstition. His activities eventually resulted in his death, caused either by a personified star or a demon. However, according to the accounts, his death did not mean the end of those illicit practices. Instead, it led to his glorification or even deification by the common people, and the spread of superstitions. Such superstitions (*superstitiones*) seem to have been mainly centred on astrology. They are presented as paving the way for man's turning away from God.²⁸⁸

A second important text for the evolution of Nimrod as an astrologer is the so-called *Revelationes* ascribed to Methodios of Patara.²⁸⁹ Here, Nimrod's portrayal takes an entirely different form. He first appears in the third chapter, which begins with a description of Jonitus, who, the author writes, received "gifts" from his father Noah that are not, however, further described. The author explains that after Noah's death, his sons all went to build a tower in the land of Sennahar, where the languages were then divided and dispersed throughout the world.²⁹⁰ The building of the tower is not linked to

depiction of astrology and magic in it: Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 1, pp. 400–427.

²⁸⁷ For the accounts on Nimrod see (Pseudo-)Clement: Homilies, ed. Rehm, p. 133; (Pseudo-)Clement: Recognitiones, ed. Rehm, p. 26, pp. 159–161. For a more detailed description of the texts and contextualisation of the characterisation of Nimrod, see Livesey / House: Nimrod the Astronomer, pp. 212–213. For more on Zoroaster and his reception in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period, see Michael Stausberg: Faszination Zarathustra. Zoroaster und die europäische Religionsgeschichte der frühen Neuzeit (Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 42/1), Berlin / New York 1998.

²⁸⁸ This is most explicitly expressed in the *Recognitiones*, where the author writes that the *magi* who followed Nimrod decided to "make use of higher efforts, that men might be turned to erratic worship by signs among the stars and motions brought down as it were from heaven, and by the will of God." This made it easier, according to the author, to draw people away from God than when the veneration would be attached to "deaf and lifeless images". (Pseudo-)Clement: Recognitiones, ed. Rehm, pp. 160–161: *Etenim quoniam difficile erat humanum genus ab amore Dei abstrahi, et ad surda atque exanima simulacra deduci, idcirco excelsioribus usi sunt magi molitionibus, ut astrorum signis ac motibus tanquam coelitus et voluntate Dei delatis, ad suadendos cultos erraticos verterentur*. The English translation is based on the one provided in Livesey / House: Nimrod the Astronomer, pp. 212–213.

²⁸⁹ The *Revelationes* were likely written in Syriac in the seventh century, later translated into Greek and finally into Latin by Peter the Monk in the eighth century. Although the text is also highly apocryphal, it was widely read and led to the introduction of Jonitus into the Latin West, who, according to Syriac traditions, was the fourth son of Noah. See Elisabeth Heyse: Methodius, in: LexMA 6 (1993), col. 581; Livesey / House: Nimrod the Astronomer, p. 213.

²⁹⁰ (Pseudo-)Methodius: Revelationes [Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius. Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen], 2 vols., ed. by Willem J. Aerts / George A.A. Kortekaas (CSCO 569 / 570), Louvain 1998, vol. 1, chap. [3], 2–3, p. 81: *C autem anno de terciam chiliadam natus est Noe filius secundum ipsius similitudinem et vocavit nomen eius Ionitum. CCC vero tempore de trium milium annorum dedit Noe donationes filio suo Ionito et demisit eum in terram Eoam. Et post obitum Noe DCXC*

any of Noah's descendants in particular and is not commented on in any way. The focus then returns to Jonitus, who is described as travelling to Eoam, where he "received from God the gift of wisdom, and he was made the founder of not only this but also of all parts of astronomy."²⁹¹ Having received this wisdom, the giant Nimrod, here identified not as the grandson of Cham but as the son of Sem (Noah's other son), came to Jonitus, who taught him and gave him counsel.²⁹² Although it is not specified what Jonitus taught Nimrod, it is plausible that the lessons included the astrological studies mentioned in the previous sentence. However, the astrological skills of Jonitus or Nimrod are not referred to again by (Pseudo-)Methodius. Instead, he describes how Babylon, where Nimrod ruled, was built and that "there was great peace in the kingdom of Jonitus and Nimrod to the present day".²⁹³

Both Eastern texts thus connect Nimrod more or less directly with the beginnings of astrology or at least attribute to him an interest in the stars. They also add a second figure: Zoroaster or Jonitus. However, the assessment and the connotations associated with astrology could not be more different in the two versions. In the (Pseudo-)Clementine texts, astrology is not described as a legitimate pursuit but is associated with magic, superstition, star worship, and demons. Ultimately, it is presented as an act of defiance against God. Nimrod and / or Zoroaster are characterised as seducers who led people astray and were worshipped as gods by the ignorant. (Pseudo-)Methodius, on the other hand, depicts astrology as a gift bestowed to biblical forefathers by God himself. We can recognise aspects of both stories in the subsequent late-medieval narratives that revolve around Nimrod and Jonitus and their role in the invention of astrology.

The teacher-pupil relationship of Jonitus and Nimrod – although in the reversed constellation to the depiction in the *Revelationes* – and their characterisations as astrologers were taken up and perpetuated by another early-medieval work, the so-called *Liber Nemroth*. This work consists of a dialogue on astronomical and

anno in eosdem trium milium annorum ascenderunt filii Noe de terra eoam et aedificaverunt sibi turrem in terra Sennahar. Et illuc divisi sunt linguae; et dispersae sunt super faciem totius terrae.

²⁹¹ Ibid., chap. [3],4–5, p. 83: Ionetus autem, filius Noe, introivit in Eoam usque ad mare, qui vocatur ‚Hilui Chora‘, id est ‚Regio Solis‘, in quo solis ortum fit, et habitavit ibidem. 5. Hic Ionitus accipit a Deo donum sapientiae, qui non solum hoc tantum, sed et omnem astronomiae articulum factusque inventor.

²⁹² Ibid., chap. [3],5, p. 83: Ad hunc descendens Nebroth, qui fuit gigans, et eruditus ab eo accipit ab illo consilium [sic], in quibus regnare coepissent. Hi <c> autem Nebroth ex filiis discendebat hiroum; qui fuit filius Sem et ipse primus regnavit super terram.

²⁹³ Ibid., chap. [3],6–7, pp. 83–85: DCC vero et XC <anno> terciae chiliadae, quod agebatur trium milium annorum, aedificata est Babillon magna, et regnavit in ea Nebroth. [...] Et pax multa erat in regno Ioniti et Nebroth usque in praesentem diem.

cosmological matters between Nimrod, a wise teacher, and his pupil Jonitus.²⁹⁴ As John Livesey and Richard House have demonstrated, this work was read widely in the high and late Middle Ages and it strongly promoted the understanding of Nimrod as an astrologer.²⁹⁵

The outlined elements of those stories about astrology and its inventors or famous practitioners formed the basis for the narrative of the history of astrology in the high and late Middle Ages. How those traditions were incorporated and interpreted, however, could vary greatly. We do not find one uniform history of astrology in the high and late Middle Ages. Instead, the stories and figures mentioned above were used and embellished depending on the context and respective purpose of each author.

Until the thirteenth century, the origin story of astrology was mostly received in theological or philosophical works, such as Petrus Comestor's *Historia scholastica* († c. 1178) or Hugh of St Victor's *Didascalicon* († 1141).²⁹⁶ Surprisingly, twelfth-century scholars who wrote specifically about astrological topics, such as Petrus Alfonsi, Adelard of Bath, Raymond of Marseilles, or Daniel of Morley, did not address the discipline's history. This may be owed to the fact that they focused more on presenting the newly discovered theories and practices found in Arabic texts. Their aim was thus to promote the advantages of the new knowledge rather than to emphasise tradition.²⁹⁷ In

²⁹⁴ The context in which the text was composed and how it should be classified and interpreted have raised many questions and controversies which could not yet be resolved entirely. The *Liber Nemroth* (also: *Liber Nimrod*) has been first discussed in: Haskins: *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*, pp. 336–345. For a of more recent discussion of the text: Isabelle Draelants: *Le Liber Nemroth de astronomia. État de la question et nouveaux indices*, in: *Revue d'histoire des textes* 13 (2018), pp. 245–330. While Haskins: *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*, p. 344, located the origin of the text in ninth-century Gaul, subsequent authors varied in their estimations. It is not clear if the text was originally written in Latin at all and the dating ranges from the eight to the late eleventh century. For a discussion of the possible dates of composition, see David Juste: *On the Date of the Liber Nemroth*, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 67 (2004), pp. 255–258, who argued that the *Liber Nemroth* must have been written at least before 900.

²⁹⁵ Livesey and House discuss not only the indirect influence of the different Nimrod traditions but also offer an overview of scholars who presumably perused the *Liber Nemroth* directly, see Livesey / House: *Nimrod as an Astronomer*, pp. 237–249.

²⁹⁶ Petrus Comestor: *Scholastica Historia. Liber Genesis*, ed. Agneta Sylwan (CCCM 191), Turnhout 2005, chap. 39, pp. 74–75; chap. 45, p. 85; chap. 47, p. 89; Hugh of St Victor [Hugo von Sankt Viktor]: *Didascalicon de studio legendi*, ed. and transl. by Thilo Offergeld (Fontes Christiani 27), Freiburg 1997, book 3, chap. 2, p. 220.

²⁹⁷ See for this aspect: Burnett: *Advertising the New Science of the Stars*. This does not mean, of course, that the scholars did not base their deliberations also on ancient authorities. However, they often stressed the lack of astrological knowledge of contemporary Latin scholars and the need to incorporate 'new' findings from the studies of the 'Arabs'. See, for example, Daniel of Morley's comparison between the Latin and Arabic levels of knowledge in his cosmological treatise: Daniel of Morley: *Philosophia*, ed. Maurach, p. 212: *Exorandus igitur atque multipliciter exhortandus est, ut, quamvis hic nichil contineatur obscurum non idcirco planas atque dilucidas Arabum sententias contempnere festinet, sed attendat, quod Latini philosophi circa talia inutiliter laborantes obscura per ignorantiam figmenta quibusdam ambagibus obvoluta protulerunt, ut ita sub umbra ambiguitatis error incertus tegetur*. Daniel of Morley

the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, however, the (re-)discovered Greek and Arabic theories had been largely integrated into the Christian canon of knowledge. Astrologers were faced with the task of asserting, or rather, claiming their place as legitimate scholars. For this, they drew on the traditional elements of the origin stories described above. They adapted them to their own objectives, both to present themselves as successors to a long and distinguished – even biblical – line of venerable practitioners and to highlight the distinctive features of astrologers.

3.2 The Astrologers' View of Their Discipline – Two Detailed Narratives

3.2.1 Defying Demonic Temptations – Michael Scot's Origin Story of Astrology

One of the most detailed accounts about the history of astrology was written by thirteenth-century scholar Michael Scot († c. 1235), who is best known for his connection to the court of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (r. 1220–1250).²⁹⁸ His main work was an introduction to astrology, the *Liber introductorius* (written c. 1210–1235), which consists of a long *Prohemium* and three books: the *Liber Quattuor distinctionum*, the *Liber particularis*, and the *Liber physionomie*.²⁹⁹ As a guidebook for prospective astrologers, written by a scholar who identified himself as an astrologer, the *Liber introductorius* is particularly valuable to explore which knowledge was

(† c.1210), an English scholar, reports in his *Philosophia* on the new insights on the quadrivial arts and especially astrology which he gained through his travel to Toledo. See on Daniel of Morley: Charles Burnett: Morley, Daniel of (d. in or after 1210), in: ODNB, URL: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19284>, last accessed 02/12/2024.

²⁹⁸ For Michael Scot's role at the court of Frederick II and general literature about his biography, see also Chapter 2.1.1.

²⁹⁹ Although astrological content features in all parts of the *Liber introductorius*, the discipline itself and the behaviour of its practitioners are treated most extensively in the *Prohemium* and the *Liber quattuor distinctionum*. The *Prohemium* has been edited by Glenn M. Edwards as part of his dissertation: Michael Scot: The *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards. The *Liber particularis* and the *Liber physionomie* have recently been edited: Michael Scotus: *Liber particularis*. *Liber physionomie*, ed. Voskobochnikov. An edition of the *Liber quattuor distinctionum*, however, has not been undertaken yet. Edwards attributes this lacuna to the enormous length of the work as well as to its complicated transmission history, see Glenn M. Edwards: The Two Redactions of Michael Scot's *Liber introductorius*, in: *Traditio* 41 (1985), pp. 329–340, here pp. 330–331. Michael Scot explains the structure of the entire work in his *Prohemium*: Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, p. 233. The *Prohemium* served as an introduction to all three parts of the *Liber introductorius*. Additionally, the *Liber particularis* and the *Liber physionomie* have their own short introductions. Due to the often slightly diffuse nature of the *Liber introductorius* Glenn M. Edwards (Introduction, in: Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. by Glenn M. Edwards, PhD dissertation, University of Southern California 1978, pp. iii–li, here p. xxx) assumes that the *Prohemium* as well as the rest of the entire work is a compilation of different materials that Michael Scot collected over time.

considered essential for representatives of the discipline and how astrologers wanted their activity to be seen and perceived. He appears to have understood knowledge on the history of astrology as an integral part of the required learning for astrologers, seeing that he dedicates much space to this topic. He addresses it at length towards the end of the *Prohemium* under the heading “About the invention of this art and the names of the first inventors in the succession of time and men.”³⁰⁰ In his narrative, Michael Scot incorporated numerous earlier discussions on the topic, yet he also adapted them to his own objectives and integrated them into one long transmission history. Some of his choices of representatives may seem surprising at first but can be explained when we consider the entire story. To understand why he chose to present the history of astrology and its proponents in the way he did, we must consider Michael Scot’s long narrative in detail.

Michael Scot opens his account of the history of astrology in a traditional way: by embedding it in the biblical genealogy. While he seems to be drawing primarily on the tradition that centred Noah and his descendants, he does not start with Jonitus or Nimrod. Instead, he focuses on Noah’s son Cham.³⁰¹ Among Noah’s three sons, Michael Scot writes, Cham was “by nature” (*naturaliter*) the most ingenious.³⁰² His subsequent description of how Cham encountered and acquired astrological knowledge is not what one would expect to find in a text written by an astrologer to support the discipline’s legitimacy: According to Michael Scot, Cham began to associate with scholars who were being taught by demons, and was delighted to be able to understand their words.³⁰³ Those “angelic spirits of the damned or demons” (*angelici spiritus dampnatorum sive demones*) existed at that time in the air and tried to tempt people to commit sins. They also taught “their doctrines which are today called arts” (*doctrinis eorum hodie artes nuncupantur*) such as “spatulamancy, nigromancy and others”

³⁰⁰ Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, p. 223: *De inventione huius artis et de nominibus priorum inventorum sucessionem temporis et virorum*.

³⁰¹ While Michael Scot writes that God had revealed “many secrets of the future” to Noah, an explicit connection to astrology is mentioned only for Cham. Ibid., p. 223: *Noe iustus, [...] cum quo Dominus Deus sepe loquebatur ei revellans secreta multa futurorum, [...]*.

³⁰² Ibid., p. 224: *Ex hiis quidem 3 filiis Noe, Cham, dum esset naturaliter subtilissimi ingenii, [...]*.

³⁰³ Ibid., p. 224: *Cham, [...], diligenter inter scolares demonum qui docebantur ab illis cepit conversari et delectabatur intelligere verba eorum*. The idea of a connection between astrology and demons was expounded already by early Christian opponents of astrology. See Hegedus: *Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology*, pp. 125–137.

(*spatomancia, nigromancia et cetera*), which contained “turpitude, repulsiveness, and infamy” (*turpitudō, [h]orribilitas, et infamia*).³⁰⁴

Michael Scot seems to draw a connection between these arts and magic as he next explains that the invention of magic can be attributed to Zoroaster, a descendant of Sem.³⁰⁵ Zoroaster, born in Persia, had likewise been thoroughly trained by demons.³⁰⁶ Michael Scot continues the story by recounting that the giant Nimrod (*Nebroth gigas*) came to Zoroaster after the dispersal of languages, i.e. the building of the tower of Babel. He – it is not entirely clear if Michael Scot means Zoroaster or Nimrod – taught the people to worship fire, which he had previously learned from demons; the people of this region, Michael Scot writes, still follow these teachings to this day.³⁰⁷ Michael Scot emphasises the possible danger posed by demons even further by adding that they “wish to deceive people” and “add lies to their discussions of the arts” – they are “seducers of minds, deceitful, and princes of lies”.³⁰⁸

After this short digression, Michael Scot returns to the story of Cham. Although Cham learned from demons, he did not let himself be deceived. He reassessed everything they told him, refused to write down falsehoods, and thus only compiled true matters.³⁰⁹ Using this method, Cham mastered two ways of predicting the future: by means of water (hydromancy) and fire (pyromancy). He also learned many other “judgements of things from different doctrines” (*iudicia rerum diversis doctrinis*) that are today called “arts” (*artes*).³¹⁰ Since Cham wanted his knowledge to endure, he wrote

³⁰⁴ Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 224–225. Spatulamancy involved the divination by means of an animal’s shoulder blade. Nigromancy usually denominated some kind of magic which involved demons. For the differentiation between nigromancy and necromancy, which generally applied an invocation of the dead, see Boudet: Entre science et nigromance, pp. 92–94.

³⁰⁵ It is noteworthy that Michael Scot connects Zoroaster with the lineage of Sem instead of Cham as it is usually done. Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 225. Since Zoroaster is explicitly mentioned as the “inventor of the art of magic” (*inventor artis magice*) and the development and transmission of astrology is associated with other figures, Michael Scot apparently wanted to establish at least some distinction between magic and astrology – even though in the following the boundaries become increasingly blurred.

³⁰⁶ Ibid. Regarding the sentence structure, it is not quite clear whether Sem or Zoroaster had been trained by demons: *Sciendo quod Zoroastes fuit primus inventor artis magice natus de genere Sem iam doctus a demonibus multum, et in Persida primo est orta, [...]*.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.: *Set quia solita fraude ipsi demones cupiebant eos decipere, cum sit sibi proprium mendacia admiscentes in suis sermonibus de omnibus artibus [...] cum sint seductores animarum, mendaces et principes*. Edwards transcribes *princeps* instead of *principes*. The abbreviation in the Munich manuscript and the grammatical fit suggest a reading as *principes*. Compare with manuscript BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 3, fol. 19^{ra}.

³⁰⁹ Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 225: [...] *Cham, et naturaliter prudens nec tardatus investigator existens apud eosdem spiritus, quicquid ipsi dicebant ei experimento probans vera scripsit et falsa scribere penitus recusavit*.

³¹⁰ Ibid., p. 225–226.

what he had learned on two columns, one made of copper and the other out of brick. He did this so that when the predicted end of the world came either through water or fire, at least one of the columns would be preserved. This, continues Michael Scot, is what happened during the Flood. The remaining column could still be seen in Syria.³¹¹

According to Michael Scot, Cham also transmitted his knowledge in another way. He taught his son Chanaan “this art” (*hac arte*), who soon surpassed his father and composed 30 books about the “arts of divination” (*de artibus divinationis*). Chanaan, in turn, wanted his son Nimrod (*Nemroth*) to be equally versed in the arts and, for his sake, invited many students to his house to teach them.³¹² This Chanaan was so famous for his knowledge, Michael Scot writes, that the people of his homeland even believed him to be a god.³¹³ By deception, however, Chanaan was killed in a war against the king of the Egyptians. The victorious king subsequently ordered all of Chanaan’s books to be burnt.³¹⁴ In spite of this catastrophe, his knowledge was not lost, as his son Nimrod and his fellow students revived the “art of astrology” (*ars astronomie*) from memory as best as they could.³¹⁵ Notably, this is the first instance in which Michael Scot uses *astronomia* instead of simply “this art” or “the art of divination”. Its use may indicate Michael Scot’s intention to designate a specific point in time when astrology emerged as a more defined discipline. Nimrod is, therefore, the first figure to be explicitly associated with astrology and, consequently, plays a crucial part in the discipline’s transmission history.

Michael Scot subsequently continues his description of Nimrod and states that – as was the case for his father Chanaan – the admiration of Nimrod became so great that many even worshipped him as a god and came to him with many concerns.³¹⁶ Among Nimrod’s companions was his disciple Jonitus (*Ioanton*), for whom Nimrod composed

³¹¹ Ibid., p. 226. Michael Scot here clearly draws on the account of Josephus (Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, vol. 4, ed. and transl. Thackeray, I.ii.3, pp. 32–33). However, while Josephus only mentions that the transmission of knowledge was ensured by the descendants of Adam’s son Seth, Michael Scot ascribes it specifically to Noah’s son Cham.

³¹² Ibid., pp. 226–227. Michael Scot here seems to describe two different Nimrod figures: the previously mentioned giant who came to Zoroaster and now the son of Chanaan. The spelling of the two is also slightly different: *Nebroth* (p. 225) and *Nemroth* (pp. 226–228).

³¹³ Ibid., p. 227.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid. Michael Scot’s account is slightly confusing here. It seems that – without the interference of Nimrod and his companions – Chanaan’s knowledge would have been lost, but what about the surviving column which Cham had inscribed with his teachings? Perhaps Michael Scot refers to two different bodies of learning (Cham’s and Chanaan’s knowledge respectively) or he simply conflates two origin stories without resolving the contradiction.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

“a book on the entire art of astrology” (*liber totius artis astronomie*).³¹⁷ Subsequently, Jonitus’ son Abraham, who likewise excelled “in this art” (*in eadem arte*), went from Africa to Jerusalem and taught Demetrius and Alexander.³¹⁸ These two, who were most knowledgeable “in this art” (*in hac arte*), then instructed Ptolemy, the king of Egypt, in it.³¹⁹ Being more ingenious and learned than all others in this art (*in eadem arte*), Ptolemy derived astronomical rules and compiled tables to determine the movement of the zodiac and the course of the stars. In addition, he created the astrolabe and set up rules for its proper use. This invention was of utmost importance because, as Michael Scot writes, astrologers could not discover anything true about the present and future without it.³²⁰

Next, Michael Scot explains how this “art or science” (*hec ars sive sciencia*)³²¹ and the essential new instrument, the astrolabe, were introduced to Western Europe.³²² The

³¹⁷ Ibid.: *Et docendo illum ei, composuit librum totius artis astronomie quid dicitur Nemroth, in qui libro sunt magnalia cum rotis et figuris*. Jonitus is here simply depicted as Nimrod’s disciple and not as Noah’s fourth son. This as well as the reference to the book including “circles and images/diagrams” are clear references to the *Liber Nemrod*. See for further discussion: Livesey / House: Nimrod the Astronomer, pp. 243–244.

³¹⁸ The genealogy here is slightly confusing. The wording suggests that Abraham is Jonitus’ son (*Iste autem Chanaam similiter genuit filium quem vocavit Abraam et ei insinuavit toto posse hanc Artem ut Nemroth [...]*), but in a later sentence he is called the son of Cham (*iste Abraam filius Chaam*). Possibly Michael himself became confused with the various traditions he used. Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 227.

³¹⁹ Ibid., p. 228

³²⁰ He also points out that the astrolabe provided the basis for the later development of another astronomical instrument, the quadrant. Ibid.: *Constituit etiam astrolabium quo utuntur astrologi, et de quo postea quadrans est extractus, et sine quo instrumento et veraciter insignito, astronomiste nichil possunt veritatis invenire de presentibus et futuris*. On the foundations of the history of the astrolabe in ancient Greece: Otto Neugebauer: *The Early History of the Astrolabe*. *Studies in Ancient Astronomy IX*, in: *Isis* 40(3) (1949), pp. 240–256. On various medieval astronomical instruments and their workings: Emmanuel Poulle: *Les instruments astronomique du Moyen Âge*, Paris 1983, esp. pp. 25–42. On instruments and their uses for astrological purposes in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Richard Dunn / Silke Ackermann / Giorgio Strano (eds.): *Heaven and Earth United: Instruments in Astrological Contexts (Scientific Instruments and Collections 6)*, Leiden / Boston 2018.

³²¹ The terms *ars* and *sciencia* seem to have been used interchangeably by Michael Scot or rather he applied both to astrology. In an earlier section, Michael Scot, drawing on quotations from various scholars, discusses the meaning of *ars* and *sciencia*, as well as of *doctrina*, *disciplina* and *methodus*. *Ars* for him refers more to certain principles, while *sciencia* more broadly encompasses the possession of an excellent mind through contemplation. He states at the end of his deliberations that “doctrine, discipline, method, art and science are the same in substance but differ in reason.” Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, pp. 183–186, quotation on pp. 185–186: *Unde doctrina, disciplina, methodus, ars, et sciencia idem sunt in substantia, set differrunt in ratione*.

³²² Ibid., p. 229. On the role of the astrolabe in medieval Europe: Rodríguez Arribas / Burnett / Ackermann / Szpiech (eds.): *Astrolabes in Medieval Cultures*. The astrolabe was transmitted to Latin Europe mainly through Arabic copies, beginning in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. See for this aspect: David A. King: *Astronomical Instruments Between East and West*, in: Helmut Hundsbichler (ed.): *Kommunikation zwischen Orient und Okzident. Alltag und Sachkultur (Sitzungsberichte. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 619)*, Wien 1994, pp. 143–198. For an early mention of an astrolabe in France, see Mohamed Qassiti: 1010–1028: *Ersterwähnung eines Astrolabs im lothringischen Raum in einem Brief Radulfs von Lüttich*, in: Daniel G. König / Theresa Jäckh (eds.):

person responsible for this was Atlas (*Athalax*), who was “from birth” (*a nativitate*) inclined to learn and love the art. He brought “this art with its instrument” (*hanc artem cum suo instrumento*) from Egypt to Spain and was therefore believed to be its “first and most extraordinary inventor” (*primus et novissimus inventor*).³²³ Atlas is thus presented as another key figure in astrology’s history and placed at the beginning of the discipline in Western Europe. Michael Scot even provides a time frame when this happened – before the birth of the prophet Moses.³²⁴ Confusingly, however, he then describes how Atlas met “two clerics from France or two scholars” (*duo clerici Franci sive duo scolares*), who seem to have lived much later.³²⁵ A friendship between them and Atlas developed, and the scholars expressed great interest in his belongings. Atlas showed them the astrolabe, so they could “touch and see the foreign novelty regarding the art of astronomy.”³²⁶ Intrigued above all by its “beauty and foreignness” (*pulcritudinis causa et extraneitatis*), they bought the astrolabe from him for a high price and eagerly carried it back to France.³²⁷ When they showed the instrument to learned men in France, it was thought to be an exceptional device and ideally suited to inform people about the “doctrine of this art of the stars”.³²⁸ Michael Scot then again

Transmediterrane Geschichte. Kommentierte Quellenanthologie: URL: [https://wiki.uni-konstanz.de/transmed-de/index.php/1010-](https://wiki.uni-konstanz.de/transmed-de/index.php/1010-1028:_Ersterw%C3%A4hnung_eines_Astrolabs_im_lothringischen_Raum_durch_Radulf_von_L%C3%BCttich)

1028:_Ersterw%C3%A4hnung_eines_Astrolabs_im_lothringischen_Raum_durch_Radulf_von_L%C3%BCttich, last accessed 02/12/2024.

³²³ Michael Scot does not explicitly states that Atlas brought astrology to Spain but it is strongly suggested by his statements. Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 229: *Habemus ergo in promptu quod ab Egypto hec ars sive sciencia translata est in Yspaniam cum hoc instrumento quod dicitur astrolabium [...]. Et hanc artem cum suo instrumento detulit Athalax oriundus Egypti quia a nativitate habuit plenam virtutem cognoscendi et amandi prenominatam artem. Et ideo dicitur quod ipse fuit primus et novissimus inventor eiusdem.*

³²⁴ Ibid

³²⁵ Ibid. Lynn Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, p. 322, suggests that either something has been omitted in the manuscripts or Michael Scot portrayed Atlas as very long-lived. As Atlas is mostly seen as a mythological giant, the idea that he lived longer than humanly possible, is not too far-fetched.

³²⁶ Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 229: *Petentes autem velle videre aliquam de suis rebusculis, idem Athalax ostendit sibi hoc instrumentum dicens: Quia venistis visuri me et mea domestice palpate et videte tunc extraneam et in arte astronomie novam.*

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.: *Et hostendentes illud hominibus literatis reputatum est magnum ingenium et nobile opus ad insinuationem doctrine huius artis stellarum.*

emphasises Atlas' outstanding contribution to the discipline and reports that a memorial was erected in honour of Atlas, which depicted him as carrying the sky on his head.³²⁹

Read as the next step in the history of astrology, the discipline's further development in France becomes the focus of attention. Intriguingly, Michael Scot chose to highlight the controversial figure of Gerbert of Aurillac, the later Pope Sylvester II.³³⁰ He does not conceal or deny the infamous legends surrounding this figure but, on the contrary, even elaborates on them. According to Michael Scot, "master Gerbert" (*magister Gilbertus*) was "the best nigromancer" (*optimus nigromanticus*), whom the "demons of the air" (*demonēs aerei*) readily obeyed in all his wishes.³³¹ During a stay in France, Michael Scot further recounts that Gerbert had the opportunity to see Atlas' astrolabe mentioned earlier and was greatly impressed by its workmanship. Eager to find out

³²⁹ Michael Scot gives the location of the statue as in a street in his native land or city, so presumably somewhere in Egypt. He furthermore provides a second possible name for Atlas: Caelon. Ibid., pp. 229–230: *Et ut semper sit ad memoriam mundo perseverante, auctoritate pretoris est institutum ut figuretur predictus gigans nomine Athalas vel Caelon de ramo puro cum celo in capite ac locetur in uno latere platee comunis illius patrie seu civitatis, velud hic patet in exemplo*. In at least two manuscripts of the *Liber introductorius*, we find the drawing of Atlas carrying the heavenly spheres on his head: Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, fol. 15^{ra} (Third Quarter Fifteenth Century). Franz Boll: *Sphaera. Neue griechische Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Sternbilder*, Leipzig 1903, p. 440, n. 2, assumed that Michael Scot did indeed see such a statue originating from antiquity, erected in a French town, but which has disappeared. An example for such a statue would be the so-called *Atlas Farnese* (2nd century AD). For more information on the *Atlas Farnese*, see Dieter Blume / Mechthild Haffner / Wilhelm Metzger: *Sternbilder des Mittelalters. Der gemalte Himmel zwischen Wissenschaft und Phantasie*, 2 vols., Berlin / Boston 2012–2016, vol. 2, pp. 120–121. It is equally likely, however, that Michael Scot was simply influenced by Augustine's description of Atlas as well as earlier illustrations such as the one from the *Liber Nemroth* in Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BAV, Pal. Lat. 1417, fol. 1^r. Here, however, we find both Atlas and Nimrod, each carrying a celestial sphere. For a discussion of the image, see Haskins: *Studies in Mediaeval Science*, pp. 339–340. On the influence of the *Liber Nemroth* on Michael Scot, see Grebner: *Der Liber Nemroth*.

³³⁰ Gerbert of Aurillac, who was elected Pope Sylvester II (999–1003), was known for his interest in mathematical and astronomical issues. This interest formed the basis for later legends about him, which were fuelled above all by the Investiture Controversy. One of the most detailed accounts on Gerbert of Aurillac's life and death can be found in the *Gesta regum Anglorum*, written c. 1120 by the English monk and chronicler William of Malmesbury († c. 1143). William portrays Gerbert as an exceptional scholar who, however, also became involved in magic and formed a pact with a demon, which eventually led to his gruesome death. See William of Malmesbury: *Gesta Regum Anglorum. The History of the English Kings*, 2 vols., ed. and transl. by Roger A.B. Mynors, completed by Rodney M. Thomson / Michael Winterbottom (Oxford Medieval Texts), Oxford 1998, here vol. 1, pp. 278–294. For the stories and legends developing around the figure of Gerbert of Aurillac, see Massimo Oldoni: *Gerberto e il suo fantasma. Tecniche della fantasia e della letteratura nel Medioevo* (Nuovo Medioevo 7), Naples 2008; Elly R. Truitt: *Celestial Divination and Arabic Science in Twelfth-Century England. The History of Gerbert of Aurillac's Talking Head* 73 (2012), pp. 201–222; Elly R. Truitt: *Medieval Robots. Mechanism, Magic, Nature, and Art* (The Middle Ages Series), Philadelphia, Pa. 2015, pp. 71–88.

³³¹ Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 230. While the terms *nigromantia* and *necromantia* were also used synonymously, from the twelfth century onwards the meanings of the terms seem to have been more strongly differentiated, with *necromantia* continuing to retain the traditional meaning of conjuring the dead with the help of demons and *nigromancia* being used generally for divination involving demons and for demonic magic. See for this development: Boudet: *Entre science et nigromance*, pp. 92–94. In Michael Scot's case, he seems to refer to divination with the aid of demons, i.e. nigromancy.

more, he summoned demons with the help of his cursed books and instructed them to explain exactly how the instrument worked. After having heard their explanations, he wrote everything down. The knowledge about the workings and use of the astrolabe seemed to have whet Gerbert's appetite for more, as he next commissioned the demons to go to Egypt and Jerusalem to gather knowledge of the "art of astronomy" (*ars astronomie*), which they afterwards passed on to him.³³² Michael Scot then goes on to briefly describe Gerbert's political career. Initially, he relied on demonic help in order to be appointed bishop of Rheims. Subsequently, however, God illuminated him, and he left his cursed books and the "rest of the evil arts" (*cetera malarum artium*) behind. Instead, he concentrated on the sacred scriptures, was elected Archbishop of Ravenna, and eventually even Pope.³³³ Gerbert remained committed to Christian causes until the end of his life, and, as Michael Scot writes, "finished his life in Christ" (*finivit vitam in Christo*).³³⁴

After this short digression on Gerbert's life, Michael Scot returns to the history of astrology. In contrast to the detailed descriptions of individual scholars' earlier contributions, Michael Scot simply sums up the following developments by stating that the astrolabe came into the hands of many others who studied the discipline and added further knowledge.³³⁵ It seems to have been particularly important to him to emphasise the collaborative nature of the increase in astrological knowledge: he first emphasises that – apart from the already mentioned scholars – there were "many teachers of this art" (*doctores huius artis*); he also includes a list of other authorities on astrology.³³⁶ These scholars, he explains, lived during different times and came from various parts of the world. Each contributed new knowledge to "this art" through "sedulous study" (*sedulum studium*) and "experiential discoveries" (*experimentata reperta*).³³⁷ With this statement, Michael Scot concludes his exposition of the origins of astrology.

³³² Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 230.

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 231: *Pervenit postea istud astrolabium in manus multorum qui etiam audientes verba huius artis et que sciri poterant et multa fieri per eam, cum illo instrumento ceperunt alia facere ad exemplum illius, et hanc scientiam adiscentes in unum totis viribus collegerunt et ad huc colligitur sigilatim.*

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 231–232: *Unde multi fuerunt doctores huius artis tempore precedente ut prenominanti, et etiam Salomon, Sibilla, Tebit benchorat, Mesealla, Dorotheus, Hermes, Boetius, Averroes, Iohannis Yspanus, Ysidorus, Zael, Alchabicius, et cetera.* The scholars listed all lived before Gerbert of Aurillac. Consequently, Michael Scot does not seem to want to give an outlook on later developments of the discipline, but rather to stress how many famous scholars there have been in the history of astrology.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 231: [...] *et hanc scientiam adiscentes in unum totis viribus collegerunt et ad huc colligitur sigilatim.* *Ibid.*, p. 232: *Cum vero diversi fierunt auctores natione regionem et diversa etate temporum,*

The insertion of such an extensive, albeit sometimes confusing, account of the transmission history of astrology in his main prologue suggests that it played a significant role in Michael Scot's overall objectives of his *Liber introductorius* – the introduction to and the justification of astrology. Instead of merely copying Isidore of Seville's or another scholar's narrative, Michael Scot consciously chose particular stories, expanded on them, and highlighted specific figures. His aim was to convey a particular image – of his discipline, its representatives, and ultimately also of himself. However, his choice to elaborate on specific stories and his selection of protagonists often seem surprising for an advocate of astrology.

By embedding the history of astrology in the biblical genealogy, Michael Scot initially followed the traditional narratives. The connection to early Christian history was naturally in his interest; here, he could show astrology as a fundamentally Christian discipline of distinguished and long history. However, what is unexpected is that within this account, Michael Scot associated his discipline closely with magic, other divinatory practices, and even the involvement of demons. The lack of conceptual clarity concerning terminology – he predominantly merely refers to “this art” – further contributes to the impression that astrology first developed in close connection with other, more dubious divinatory disciplines. Instead of keeping astrology separate from any evil influences, Michael Scot repeatedly emphasises the role of demons in the acquisition of astrological knowledge. This link between demons and astrology becomes apparent right from the introduction of the first major character, Noah's son Cham, who is portrayed as obtaining his knowledge from them. The description of those demons marks them as evil-doers and dangerous, whose main goal was to tempt people to sin. Although they are knowledgeable about different arts, Michael Scot warns that they also deliberately distribute misinformation. They are furthermore mentioned as training Zoroaster in the magical arts and later as Gerbert of Aurillac's aids in his nigromantic activities as well as in his astrological endeavours.

Yet, not only is the voluntary association of astrological knowledge with demons baffling – Michael Scot's choice of the discipline's famous representatives also raises questions. Cham, Chanaan, Nimrod, and Gerbert of Aurillac were all highly controversial figures. Cham and Chanaan are traditionally linked to the account of Genesis, in which the dishonouring of Noah by Cham is described, resulting in the

omnis aliquid in hac arte sedulo studio colligerunt et propter experimentata reperta libros conpillantes eos intitulerunt.

cursing of Chanaan.³³⁸ Michael Scot's decision to attribute the beginnings of his discipline to Cham and Chanaan – instead of Sem and his descendants – would thus rather be expected in a treatise by an opponent of astrology.³³⁹ Furthermore, Michael Scot mentions that both Chanaan and his son Nimrod were regarded as gods due to their exceptional wisdom, linking astrological prowess directly to idolatry. Thus, his depictions seem strongly influenced by the negative portrayals of Nimrod in the (pseudo-)Clementine writings.³⁴⁰ It is likely that the figure of Nimrod, who played such a crucial role in Michael Scot's transmission history, would initially have evoked negative associations in any case, as he was frequently used as the stereotype of a tyrannical and prideful ruler.³⁴¹ The same applies to Gerbert of Aurillac – the stories about his alleged interaction with evil spirits were widely known.³⁴² Instead of contesting any misconduct on Gerbert's part, Michael Scot even explicitly attributes his astrological knowledge to this involvement with demonic powers.

At first glance, therefore, Michael Scot's portrayal of the origin of his discipline does not seem overly positive. This is highly surprising for a work meant to introduce interested novices to astrology and ultimately convince them of its appeal, utility, and legitimacy. However, Michael Scot's narrative is not as negative as it first appears – on the contrary, it contains several arguments in favour of the study of astrology,

³³⁸ Biblia sacra, ed. Weber / Gryson, Gen 9:20–27, p. 15. See on this: Ernst Haag: Ham, Hamiten, in: LThK 4 (31995), col. 1163.

³³⁹ This was done, for example, by Hugh of St Victor, who had a rather critical view towards astrology. Hugh of St Victor first lists Cham as inventor of *astronomia*. However, he also mentions a possible identification of Cham with Zoroaster, the “first inventor of magic”. Hugh of St Victor: Didascalicon, ed. and transl. Offergeld, book 3, chap. 2, p. 220; Appendix B: *De magica et partibus eius*, p. 406: *Magicae repertor primus creditur Zoroastres, [...], quem nonnulli asserunt ipsum esse Cham, filium Noe, sed nomine mutato*. In a different work he then characterises this Zoroaster as “the inventor and author of evil mathematical/astrological arts” (*inventor et auctor maleficae mathematicae artis*). See Hugh of St Victor: Adnotationes elucidatoriae in Pentateuchon, in: PL 175, Paris 1854, cols. 29–86, here chap. 7, col. 49.

³⁴⁰ See Chapter 3.1.

³⁴¹ For the interpretation of Nimrod as a tyrant by various commentators on the Bible, see Livesey / House: Nimrod the Astronomer, pp. 232–234. The persistent negative associations of Nimrod are also evident, for example, in the famous depiction of Nimrod in Dante's *Commedia*. Here, Nimrod is depicted as a giant without the ability to speak an understandable language who is banished to guard the ninth circle of hell. Dante Alighieri: *Commedia*, ed. Chiavacci Leonardi, Inferno, canto XXXI, ll. 48–81, pp. 922–927. Whether this depiction was also influenced by the *Liber Nemroth* and the link to astrology has been discussed controversially in research. For these discussions, see Richard Lemay: Le Nemrod de l'enfer de Dante et le liber Nemroth, in: Studi danteschi 40 (1963), pp. 57–128; Richard Lemay: Mythologie païenne et révélation chrétienne éclairant la destinée humaine chez Dante: Le cas de géants, in: Revue des études italiennes, Ser. NS 11 (1965), pp. 237–279. Lemay's interpretation of the *Liber Nemroth* in connection with Dante Alighieri's portrayal of Nimrod in his *Commedia* encountered strong opposition, see, for example: Bruno Nardi: Intorno al Nemrot dantesco e ad alcune opinioni di Richard Lemay, in: Bruno Nardi (ed.): Saggi e note di critica dantesca, Milan / Naples 1966, S. 367–376; Peter Dronke: Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions, Cambridge 1986, pp. 44–45, pp. 112–117.

³⁴² See Truitt: Celestial Divination and Arabic Science.

subsequently making it clear why the presented astrologers were the ones chosen as representatives of the discipline.

The most striking aspect of Michael Scot's account is undoubtedly the connection between astrology and demons or divinatory practices. The origin story is not the only time he turned to those topics. He addresses demons and their involvement in divinatory or magical practices repeatedly and at length throughout his *Liber introductorius*.³⁴³ In his *Prohemium*, however, this is particularly pronounced. Before his account of astrology's history, Michael Scot devotes several chapters to the discussion of angels and, in this context, also turns to their counterparts – the *angeli mali* or *demones*.³⁴⁴ Their characterisation as deceiving tempters of people is consistent with the description in his narrative of the history of astrology. In this case, their behaviour is often contrasted with those of the good angels: while the counsel of angels could urge people to do good deeds, the deceit of evil angels could lead to the opposite outcome.³⁴⁵ However, in addition to the potential dangers associated with demons, Michael Scot also describes their superior knowledge. According to him, angels are generally better suited to gain an understanding of the world than otherwise accessible for simple human beings through art.³⁴⁶ This superior ability, he claims, was not lost to the demons with their fall, as it was not related to their sin.³⁴⁷ Indeed, Michael Scot repeatedly emphasises the angelic nature of the demons, describes them as being *scientes vel periti* (“knowledgeable and skilled”) and stresses that they are more “skilled in all arts than any learned man”.³⁴⁸

³⁴³ For an overview of Michael Scot's attitude towards magic: Thorndike: Michael Scot, pp. 116–121; Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 2, esp. pp. 319–323. The way he describes the general character and behaviour of magicians and diviners in comparison with astrologers is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.3.1.

³⁴⁴ Michael Scot used the two terms interchangeably and states that the name of all “bad angels” was “demon”. Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, p. 161: *Nomen vero universorum malorum angelorum est demon* [...]. He devotes in total five chapters to the topic of angels, including the fallen ones, but digresses repeatedly on this topic throughout the *Prohemium*. Ibid., pp. 110–166 (for the chapters on angels).

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 151: *Sciendo quod multi homines fiunt boni et sapientes causa suasionis angelorum sicut mali fraude demonum*.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.: *Item dicimus quod angeli sunt excelenciores ad cognoscendum omnia que sunt, fiunt, ac fieri possunt quam homines naturales arte*.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 161: *Et est sciendum quod demones sic hodie sunt periti ut prius fuere creati, scientiam non perdentes suo casu quia in ea et per eam non peccaverunt set honorem*.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 54: *Nam cum sint demones sciunt ipsi omnia ex angelica quidam natura. Plurima in eis est scientia non cum sciunt omnia set quanto illorum natura est sublimior, tanto in omnibus artibus periciores sunt quam ullus hominum sit doctus. Unde demon exponatur sciens vel peritus*.

Such knowledge seems to have tempted people because Michael Scot explains that demons were often also invoked for the arts of nigromancy or *mathematica*.³⁴⁹ It is not quite clear what Michael Scot understood under *mathematica* in this case. In a later passage, Michael Scot differentiates between *mathesis* or *mathematica*, i.e. the mathematical art of the quadrivium, and *masesis* or *matematica*, i.e. divination.³⁵⁰ While in the passage above the term is spelled as *mathematica*, the connection to nigromancy suggests an interpretation of the term as divination.³⁵¹ In summary, Michael Scot thus understands demons as a potentially dangerous but essential part of the world of which the astrologer must be aware.³⁵²

Although the specific way Michael Scot incorporates demons and divinatory arts into his text is exceptional, it also reflects general developments of the thirteenth century. Questions on the nature, location, and influence of demons were increasingly raised in scholastic discussions during this period. As Alain Boureau noted in his study of demonology in the medieval West, this growing interest can be attributed to, among other things, the rising influence of the Greco-Arabic peripatetic cosmology, which mapped out a hierarchy of a multitude of intermediate creatures.³⁵³ Likewise connected with this development was the categorization of occult practices as ‘sciences’. Their use

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 161: *Solent aliquando responsa dare invocantibus eos arte nigromancie sive mathematice.*

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 206: *Notandum est etiam quod duplex est sciencia, scilicet mathesis et masesis, quia cum aspriatione [sic!] H significat quadruvium [sic!] cum trivio et eius penultima scandendo est brevis, set sine H significat scienciam divinandi. Unde versus: Scire facit mathesis, set divinare masesis.* For further information on how Michael Scot distinguishes between the two areas and how the distinction between *mathesis* and *masesis* served other scholars such as Roger Bacon in this, see Chapter 5.3.1.

³⁵¹ This could be due to a scribal error in the manuscripts or a confusion on the part of Michael Scot. Roger Bacon, for example, equally makes such a distinction, and even complains about the incapability of scholars to distinguish between the two. However, he then seems to have become confused with the terms himself. See George Molland: Roger Bacon’s Appropriation of Past Mathematics, in: F. Jamil Ragep / Sally P. Ragep/ Steven Livesey (eds.): Tradition, Transmission, Transformation. Proceedings of Two Conferences on Pre-Modern Science Held at the University of Oklahoma (Collection de travaux de l’académie internationale d’histoire des Sciences 37), Leiden / New York / Cologne 1996, pp. 347–365, here pp. 348–349.

³⁵² He even explicitly states that knowledge about the angelic nature is important for astrologers. Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, pp. 110–111: *Et quia fecimus mentionem superius de angelica natura, eam volumus diffinire ac eam sufficienter determinare secundum naturam facultatem et dicta sanctorum, ut Augustini, Ieronimi, Ysidori, et ceterorum doctorum ecclesie Romane, ne huius sciencie videamur inscii et increduli, volentes quod omnis astrologus deinceps senciatur de angelica natura quod ceteri cognoverunt, et est de arte astronomie cognitio ipsius, velud stellarum celi et planetarum.*

³⁵³ Alain Boureau: Satan the Heretic. The Birth of Demonology in Medieval West, transl. by Teresa L. Fagan, Chicago 2006, p. 97. He also cites as possible reasons for the increased interest in demons the continuing prominence of dualistic heresies, the role attributed to demons as supporters of the Antichrist in eschatological ideas of the time, and scholasticism’s interest in the limitations of the human person as compared to demons as “borderline cases”. Ibid., pp. 96–99. See for the growing interest in demons in the context of cosmology in the thirteenth century and beyond: Sophie Page: A Late Medieval Demonic Invasion of the Heavens, in: David J. Collins (ed.): The Sacred and the Sinister. Studies in Medieval Religion and Magic, University Park (Pa.) 2019, pp. 235–256.

was condemned not because they were deemed inefficient but because they promoted sinful purposes instigated by the involvement of demons.³⁵⁴ Michael Scot, whose whole work draws heavily on Greco-Arabic influences, was therefore very much in line with the trends of his time with his exploration of demons in terms of their hierarchical order, their cosmological location and their abilities concerning the arts, especially astrology.³⁵⁵ The link between cosmology and demons, and in particular the question of whether demons could harness celestial influences, seems to have been an aspect that greatly preoccupied Michael Scot. It likely contributed to his assigning demons a vital role in the history of the discipline.³⁵⁶ Since he repeatedly emphasises the superior knowledge of angels and demons, a quasi-divine intervention through God's intermediaries to promote the development of astrology also does not seem surprising.³⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the question remains as to why he chose to style fallen angels or demons as intermediaries rather than angels themselves and what the depiction of practitioners relying on the help of such demons may reveal about the way Michael Scot sought to represent the figure of the astrologer.

In the two cases where demons are involved in acquiring astrological knowledge, i.e. in the cases of Cham and Gerbert of Aurillac, they fulfil a specific function. Although Cham is interested in learning from them, he does not simply accept the demonic doctrines. He instead reassesses them thoroughly, and conducts his own research, actively refusing to adopt any false propositions. Consequently, the story about Cham is not an endorsement of demonic teachings but an example of an explicit and prudent decision against dangerous and malign parts inherent in the knowledge. In short, demons – as former angels – still possess valuable and worthy information, and it is up

³⁵⁴ For this development, see Steven P. Marrone: Magic and Natural Philosophy, in: Sophie Page / Catherine Rider (eds.): *The Routledge History of Medieval Magic* (Routledge Histories), Abingdon / New York 2019, pp. 287–298, who attributes this new categorization particularly to the influx of Islamic, Hebrew and Greek learning from the twelfth century onwards. See for the scholastic arguments against magic: David J. Collins: Scholasticism and High Medieval Opposition to Magic, in: Sophie Page / Catherine Rider (eds.): *The Routledge History of Medieval Magic* (Routledge Histories), Abingdon / New York 2019, pp. 461–474, esp. 466–469.

³⁵⁵ He indeed represents an early exploration of this topic since it was only in the wake of Thomas Aquinas and other famous scholastics that the topic was discussed more often. For this development, see Boureau: Satan, the Heretic, pp. 93–118.

³⁵⁶ Page: A Late Medieval Demonic Invasion of the Heavens, pp. 240–244, explores Michael Scot's portrayal of demons and magic within the context of cosmology. However, she does not address their depiction in Michael Scot's narrative on the history of astrology.

³⁵⁷ Michael Scot describes angels – though not demons – explicitly as *mediatores inter Deum et hominem, id est intermedii*. Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 152.

to the individual scholar to attain and evaluate it correctly.³⁵⁸ Michael Scot thus presents the astrologer Cham as someone who acted wisely and resisted the demons' temptations to which many others had succumbed.

In the case of Gerbert of Aurillac, however, Michael Scot states explicitly that he was interested in all parts of demonic wisdom. Worse, he primarily exploited it for personal gain and power. Apart from this decidedly illegitimate use, the demons also provided Gerbert with the necessary knowledge about the astrolabe and instructed him in the discipline of astrology. Again, it can be seen that demons – as former angels – could still access this type of knowledge better than humans. Most importantly, Michael Scot does not end the story here but instead recounts how Gerbert was illuminated by God and left all his evil doings behind. His further political or religious ascent was due to his reputation for knowledge and sanctity. The crucial point of the story is that Gerbert – although initially having gained his astrological expertise with the help of demons – eventually turned to God and the Holy Scriptures.

The association of astrology with demons in the cases of Cham and Gerbert of Aurillac thus serves to highlight various aspects of the discipline and its practitioners: firstly, the level of difficulty and complexity of astrology becomes apparent – the input of former angels, whose knowledge is greater than that of humans, is necessary to comprehend the discipline fully. Secondly, new knowledge cannot simply be accepted, but the information and the underlying intention should be thoroughly examined and challenged. Thirdly, and most importantly, it shows that the mentioned astrologers rejected the evil deeds of demons and pursued the way of truth towards God. They either saw through the demons' deceptions or turned away from them while still using their valuable and superior knowledge to learn about astrological practices. Michael Scot shows astrologers to be exceptional individuals who did not succumb to the deception of demons. The stories of Cham and Gerbert of Aurillac may, in this way, be interpreted as educational parables about how a good Christian and, more precisely, a good astrologer should behave.

Likewise, astrology's link with idolatry, as seen in the adoration of Chanaan and Nimrod as gods, can also be explained positively to a certain degree. First, it is essential to note that it was not the astrologers themselves who were said to have instigated their

³⁵⁸ The notion that demons still possess a higher understanding of nature than people was also espoused by later scholastic thinkers such as Albert Magnus. See Collins: *Scholasticism and High Medieval Opposition to Magic*, p. 469.

worship but the common people who admired the astrologers' outstanding erudition. This showcases the exceptional abilities of Chanaan and Nimrod; it also illustrates the high esteem in which the astrologers and their discipline were held. After all, their knowledge was considered to be godlike. Michael Scot, in fact, repeatedly highlights the difficulty of astrological studies throughout the narrative about astrology's history, characterising all mentioned astrologers as particularly intelligent and gifted. In his depiction, it becomes clear that not everyone can master astrology because it requires outstanding natural aptitude and talent.³⁵⁹ The involvement of supernatural powers and the equation of astrologers with gods by unsophisticated people only reinforce this argument.

Concerning the representation of Nimrod, it is important to note that Michael Scot seems to distinguish between the various Nimrod traditions.³⁶⁰ He introduces two very different characters: The first figure is described as a giant, connected to the inventor of magic, Zoroaster, and the confusion of languages after the building of the tower of Babel. However, this Nimrod with his negative connotations does not play any role in the transmission of astrology. Instead, Michael Scot introduces a second Nimrod. This figure, meanwhile, is described in exclusively favourable terms; he represents a key figure in the history of astrology. Unlike the first Nimrod, he is included in the biblical genealogy as the son of Chanaan.³⁶¹ The description of his activity and his disciple Jonitus mark him as the astrologer depicted in the *Liber Nemroth*.³⁶² Thus, Michael Scot separates the various Nimrod traditions to construct a purely positive view of the astrologer Nimrod.

Even though the chosen representatives of astrology can thus be interpreted in a more positive light, there is no denying that Michael Scot selected figures who were often seen as controversial. Furthermore, his descriptions of demonic contributions are not conducive to depicting astrology as a discipline beyond dispute. It is clear that he made use of various traditions regarding the origin story and added his own ideas. He could, however, easily have chosen a less problematic account. One explanation for why he did not do this could be that he explicitly wanted to acknowledge the controversies

³⁵⁹ For an analysis of the intellectual requirements that an astrologer had to fulfil, see Chapter 4.1.

³⁶⁰ On Michael Scot's use of different Nimrod traditions, particularly regarding his potential knowledge of the *Liber Nemroth*, see Livesey / House: Nimrod the Astronomer, pp. 243–244.

³⁶¹ Michael Scot does not follow the biblical account exactly. In the Bible (Gen 10:8), Nimrod is depicted as the son of Cham's son Kusch.

³⁶² For the potential use of the *Liber Nemroth* by Michael Scot: Livesey / House: Nimrod the Astronomer, pp. 243–244; Grebner: *Der Liber Nemroth*, pp. 285–289.

surrounding astrology and the potential dangers of acquiring new knowledge. Michael Scot himself was a highly controversial figure, and he was well aware of the intense debates about the discipline. Instead of denying any possible link between astrology and supernatural beings, he appropriated them, explaining how the discipline's famous, if disputed, practitioners made the right decisions and were either not tempted by the demons' allure or realised their mistakes and returned to the right path. The astrologers could, therefore, still be understood as role models despite their dubious connections. In addition, and albeit with some alterations, Michael Scot takes care to integrate the origins of astrology into the traditional biblical genealogy. Such incorporation provided legitimacy and presented astrology as a fundamentally Christian discipline.

A further potential reason to include more controversial aspects could have been to generate interest. As Michael Scot explicitly identifies beginners of the discipline, i.e. prospective astrologers, as the intended audience of his work, we may assume that he wanted to spark the readers' interest in astrology through engaging stories and colourful personalities. Although connections to demons, magic and the occult were dangerous, they aroused people's curiosity. Michael Scot's entire way of writing is designed to entice the reader by telling exciting stories.³⁶³ Including demons and controversial figures was a sure way to add to the allure of his work. Since, however, it was a fine line between arousing the reader's interest and taking it a step too far, i.e. venturing into the realm of heresy, Michael Scot combined controversial with traditional aspects in his narrative.³⁶⁴

Another striking feature of his account is that Michael Scot does not assign influential positions to any Arab astrological authorities. The only reference to them in his history of astrology is in his concluding remarks, where he names Arab scholars such as Zael (Sahl ibn Bishr al-Israili, † c. 845) or Alcabitius (Al-Qabisi, † 967) among those who advanced the discipline. The absence of Arab authors is particularly noticeable when he describes how the astrolabe and the accompanying knowledge reached Western Europe. Here, he bypasses the transmission process via Arabic works

³⁶³ He uses, for example, direct speech when describing the meeting of the French clerks with Gerbert of Aurillac: Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, p. 230: *Iste quidem magister, cum vidisset illud instrumentum tam admirabile et tam rationabiliter esse confectum, habens illud in manu dixit: Substinet vos parum donec revertar*. He also directly addresses the reader when detailing how an astrologer should conduct himself: Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, *distinctio* 3, fol. 118^{vb}: *Et ideo te astrologum oportet [...]*. For an assessment of Michael Scot's writing style in the *Liber introductorius*, see Thorndike: Michael Scot, pp. 7–8.

³⁶⁴ For an overview of Michael Scot's views in the scientific and religious context of his time, see Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, pp. 307–337.

by simply drawing a connection from Ptolemy in Egypt to Atlas in Spain. Even in Spain and France, only the “French clerics” and Gerbert of Aurillac are mentioned. One reason for this omission could be that Michael Scot wanted to downplay any non-Christian and especially Islamic influence in the history of astrology.³⁶⁵ While Muslim astrologers such as Albumasar feature heavily in the rest of his work, including them as figures of identification in his history of astrology and putting them on a par with Christian forefathers and Greek authorities may have still been considered too controversial.³⁶⁶ Since stories about Arabic scholars were not part of the traditional lore of the Latin-Christian history of knowledge, it is also possible that Michael Scot either did not know engaging stories about them or did not want to include figures unknown to his readership. However, what Michael Scot does in his text is to emphasise the allure of the unfamiliar when he describes the astrolabe – Atlas is praising it as something new and exotic, and the two French clerks buy it primarily because of its foreignness. Even though astrology is thus not explicitly branded as non-Christian knowledge, it is associated with some kind of ‘other’. Consequently, Michael Scot’s description shows astrology as an exciting and ‘foreign’ discipline without depicting it as contrary to Christianity or connecting it with Muslims.

By establishing a long and elaborate history of his discipline – ranging from Noah to his own time – Michael Scot highlights how many gifted scholars devoted themselves to the discipline. The astrologers Michael Scot describes are unorthodox but outstanding scholars who are ultimately committed to promoting good. He sees astrology as the result of many centuries of work by the brightest scholars. They all contributed to the progress of the discipline and resourcefully passed on their knowledge despite adverse circumstances, which range from the Flood to the burning of Chanaan’s books. Those adverse circumstances reinforce the significance of memory that Michael Scot seeks to convey – the memory of the actual astrological knowledge and the memory of how and by whom knowledge was obtained. Repeatedly, he demonstrates the importance of preserving this knowledge for the next generation, emphasising especially the

³⁶⁵ Another reason could be related to the text structure. Since Glenn Michael Edwards assumes that the *Liber introductorius* consists of a compilation of different materials that Michael Scot collected over time, it is conceivable that he planned to expand on the contribution of Arab scholars in a later revision. See Edwards: Introduction, p. xxx.

³⁶⁶ See for his Arabic sources: Edwards: Introduction, p. viii. He even translated several, non-astrological works from Arabic himself. See, for example, Aristotle: *De animalibus*. Michael Scot’s Arabic-Latin Translation, vol. 1: Books I–III. History of Animals, ed. Aafke M.I. van Oppenraay / Erik Kwakkel (Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus 5,1a), Leiden / New York / Cologne 2020.

relationship between teacher and student. Since he devised the *Liber introductorius* for beginners to astrology, he fashioned himself as the succeeding link in this long transfer process of knowledge. He was the next teacher of astrology in its long history; a teacher who imparted his inherited and expanded knowledge to the students of his own time.

Although Michael Scot's narrative about the history of astrology thus did not describe the longstanding existence of a synchronous 'group' of astrologers working together, he still portrayed an astrological 'group' over time, comprising famous individuals who created a sense of community through the memory and continuing development of their collective knowledge. By presenting such a detailed history of astrology, Michael Scot not only practiced scholarly *memoria*, thereby strengthening a sense of community among real-life astrologers, but also highlighted the exceptional qualities of astrologers – among whom he counted himself – which in turn lent greater legitimacy to the practice of astrology.

3.2.2 Christian Beginnings and Pagan Contributions – Roger Bacon's Conception of the History of Knowledge

A different view on the origin story of astrology, although no less detailed, is presented by Roger Bacon († c. 1292), the thirteenth-century Franciscan polymath.³⁶⁷ Given Roger Bacon's broad scientific pursuits, it may at first seem surprising that Roger Bacon is included here as an astrologer. However, a closer look at his works makes this characterisation tenable. In his main work, the *Opus majus*, written c. 1266–1268 for Pope Clement IV, Roger Bacon argued for the practical benefits of *philosophia*³⁶⁸ for

³⁶⁷ See for Roger Bacon's life and works: Power: Roger Bacon and the Defence of Christendom. Still useful is also the account in: Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 2, pp. 616–691. On Roger Bacon's life and his contribution to different disciplines see also the articles in Jeremiah M. G. Hackett (ed.): Roger Bacon and the Sciences. Commemorative Essays (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 57), Leiden 1997.

³⁶⁸ Philosophy (*philosophia*) is used by Roger Bacon as an umbrella term and encompasses different disciplines, most importantly for him those he discusses in his *Opus majus*, i.e. mathematics, perspective/optics, *scientia experimentalis*, and moral philosophy.

Christianity and called for a reorientation of the educational system of the time.³⁶⁹ A key element of his reform plan was the intensified study of *mathematica*, which – according to Roger Bacon – was the “gate and key” (*porta et clavis*) to understanding all other sciences and, ultimately, theology.³⁷⁰ Under the umbrella term *mathematica* he subsumed various mathematical disciplines and also included astrology as an essential element. He explained astrology’s theories and possible benefits in detail and even discussed the role and appropriate behaviour of astrologers. Astrological ideas are for Roger Bacon instrumental in many areas, and he draws on them throughout his entire *Opus majus*.³⁷¹ His interest in the subject also becomes apparent in his other works, notably in his edition of the (pseudo-)Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum* and the *De laudibus mathematicae*.³⁷² Although Roger Bacon did not write exclusively on astrological topics and did not explicitly refer to himself as an astrologer, his extensive discussions on the subject, his fervent promotion of the discipline, and his preoccupation with the qualities required of astrologers justify including him among the astrologers discussed in this study.

Moreover, Roger Bacon’s objective in the *Opus majus* is, to a certain degree, comparable to those of the authors of introductory works on astrology. Like them, Roger Bacon wanted to portray astrology as a legitimate discipline that should occupy a

³⁶⁹ In 1263–1264 Roger Bacon came in contact with the then Cardinal Guy le Gros de Foulques. During their conversations, Roger Bacon seems to have explained his ideas about the need of a reform of the ‘sciences’ in the Christian West. In 1266, Cardinal de Foulques, who had become Pope Clement IV in 1265, issued an order to Roger Bacon to compose a work based on their previous conversations. Roger Bacon sent his *Opus majus* and several other works to the Pope sometime in 1267–8. However, since Clement IV died on the 26th November 1268, it is not clear if the works ever reached him. See for the background of the composition of the *Opus majus* and Roger Bacon’s other works for the Pope: Hackett: Roger Bacon. His Life, Career and Works, pp. 17–19. Also: Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 2, pp. 622–626. The *Opus majus* was edited in its entirety: Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges. However, the quality of the edition has been often criticised, see, for the background of the composition and reception of Bridges’ edition: Amanda Power: A Mirror for Every Age: The Reputation of Roger Bacon, in: The English Historical Review 121 (492) (2006), pp. 657–692, on Bridges’ edition esp. pp. 677–679.

³⁷⁰ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, distinctio 1, chap. 1, p. 97: *Et harum scientiarum porta et clavis est mathematica*, [...]; *ibid.*, p. 175: *Ergo mathematica omnino est necessaria sacrae scientiae*.

³⁷¹ See on Roger Bacon’s treatment of astrology: Hackett: Roger Bacon on Astronomy-Astrology; Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 2, pp. 659–677.

³⁷² On Roger Bacon’s edition of the *Secretum Secretorum*: Williams: Roger Bacon and His Edition of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum*. H. Darrel Rutkin has explored how the *Secretum Secretorum* influenced Roger Bacon’s portrayal of an “idealized vision of an astrologically-informed political counselor-courtier” in his *Opus majus* in: H. Darrel Rutkin: An Idealized Astrological Courtier at a 13th Century Papal and Royal Court. The Case of Roger Bacon, in: Jean-Patrice Boudet / Martine Ostero / Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (eds.): De Frédéric II à Rodolphe II. Astrologie, divination et magie dans les cours (XIII^e–XVII^e siècle), Florence 2017, pp. 53–70. Rutkin here also provides a discussion on Roger Bacon’s general depiction and categorisation of astrology (*Ibid.*, pp. 54–60). On the *De laudibus mathematicae*: Molland: Roger Bacon’s *De laudibus mathematicae*.

prominent place in the Christian canon of knowledge. At the same time, he tried to highlight the exceptional nature of astrology and its unique benefits in order to argue for the need to intensify its study. That this was an uphill battle is reflected, among other things, in his statement that *mathematica* was being attacked primarily on the basis of astrology. His self-proclaimed aim was, therefore, to verify astrology's purpose and remove the "infamy" (*infamia*) attached to "true mathematics" (*vera mathematica*).³⁷³ This same concern is reflected in the way he presented the origins and development of the study of astrology.

In his *Opus majus*, Roger Bacon did not address the history of astrology on its own. Instead, he constructed a detailed history of knowledge, or more precisely, philosophy, in which he incorporated the emergence of the study of astrology. Like Michael Scot before him, he drew on traditional narratives but adapted and interpreted these to fit his own agenda. As Roger Bacon's overall objective was to demonstrate that philosophy was useful and indeed necessary to understand theological matters more fully, it is not surprising that he repeatedly emphasised that philosophy was part of God's divine wisdom.³⁷⁴ Based on this premise, Roger Bacon traces a history of the rise and fall of this originally divine knowledge.³⁷⁵

He begins his narrative by describing how the knowledge of philosophy was revealed in its entirety to the holy patriarchs and prophets at the very beginning of the world.³⁷⁶ It is important to note that Roger Bacon presents philosophy here as revealed knowledge rather than a learned art. He states that "it would have been impossible for men to acquire the great matters of the sciences and arts by themselves, but they needed to have a revelation."³⁷⁷ The only "true philosophers" (*veri philosophi*) with complete

³⁷³ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, p. 239: *Et illud in quo maxime percutitur mathematica est propter judicia astronomie. [...]; ideo volo in praesenti verificare intentionem eorum, et evacuare infamiam verae mathematicae.* For more on his categorisation of "true" and "false" mathematics and particularly the description of the behaviour of its practitioners, see Chapter 5.2.1 and 5.3.1.

³⁷⁴ See, for example: Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 2, chap. 3, p. 35: *Quod autem philosophia non sit aliena a Dei sapientia, sed in ipsa conclusa, manifestandum est.*

³⁷⁵ As in the case of Michael Scot, the chronology of the narrative is sometimes slightly convoluted, as Roger Bacon's narrative often jumps back and forth in time and includes various digressions. Roger refers to this sapiential history throughout his work, but the key narrative is provided in the second part of the *Opus majus*, in which he describes the relationship between philosophy and theology. Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 33–65.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., part 2, chap. 9, p. 44: *Et hoc ultimo confirmari potest per hoc, quod eisdem personis data est philosophiae plenitudo quibus et lex Dei, scilicet, sanctis patriarchis et prophetis a principio mundi.*

³⁷⁷ Ibid., part 2, chap. 9, p. 45: *Nam impossibile fuit homini ad magnalia scientiarum et artium devenire per se, sed oportet quod habuerit revelationem, [...].*

knowledge of all parts of philosophy were thus the holy patriarchs and prophets.³⁷⁸ According to Roger Bacon, however, this did not preclude the further study of the subjects. While philosophy in its perfection was first given by God, people still needed to be convinced, and the knowledge had to be “proved, communicated, and expanded”. For him, philosophy was ultimately the “exposition of divine wisdom through teaching and art”.³⁷⁹ Roger Bacon thus endows this knowledge with both a revealed and an experimental legitimacy. This can also be seen from the description of Adam and his descendants, who were given the opportunity to verify the revealed knowledge through experience. Following Flavius Josephus, Roger Bacon traces the beginning of philosophy to Adam and the descendants of his son Seth, *viri religiosi et ab ipso Deo dilecti*, to whom God granted 600 years of life to study all parts of philosophy. This long lifespan was given to them so they could “experience [...] what God had revealed to them”.³⁸⁰ A vital part of this knowledge that had to be verified and studied seems to have been astrology, as Roger Bacon explains in a later passage that God granted them such an extended life principally because of the difficulty of astrology.³⁸¹

His description of the further transmission of philosophy initially continues to follow the traditional narratives of Flavius Josephus and Isidore of Seville. He explains that the knowledge about philosophy had been passed on through the line of Seth to Noah and his sons, who taught the Chaldeans, and finally, Abraham taught the Egyptians.³⁸² Roger Bacon singles out Sem as exceptionally gifted among Noah’s sons rather than Cham in his account.³⁸³ The fact that astrology was part of this first transmission of philosophy is made clear by several remarks scattered throughout the *Opus majus*, such

³⁷⁸ Ibid., part 2, chap. 9, p. 45: *Soli enim patriarchae et prophetae fuerunt veri philosophi qui omnia sciverunt, non solum legem Dei, sed omnes partes philosophiae.*

³⁷⁹ Ibid., part 2, chap. 18, p. 65: *Ideo manifestum est, quod philosophiae perfectio fuit primo data sanctis, Patriarchis et Prophetis, [...]; insuper ut fiat ejus persuasio, et probetur et communicetur et dilatetur; [...]. Et ideo philosophia non est nisi sapientiae divinae explicatio per doctrina et opus, [...].*

³⁸⁰ Ibid., part 2, chap. 9, p. 45: *Et Josephus primo antiquitatum libro, capite secundo, dicit, quod cum filii Adae per Seth fuerunt viri religiosi et ab ipso Deo dilecti, Deus dedit eis sexcentos annos vivere propter gloriosas partes philosophiae in quibus studuerunt, ut, quod Deus eis revelavit, possent experiri per vitae longitudinem.*

³⁸¹ He explains this difficulty by the fact that the celestial bodies are located far away from mortal men. Ibid., part 2, chap. 18, p. 65: [...] *qui fuerunt filii Seth et Noe cum filiis suis, quibus Deus dedit vivere sexcentos annos propter studium sapientiae complendum, ut dicit Josephus primo Antiquitatum, asserens quod in minore tempore non potuerant complere philosophiam praecipue propter astronomiam in qua est major difficultas, eo quod a caelestibus homines mortales multum distant; sed Deus eis revelavit omnia, et dedit eis vitae longitudinem, ut philosophiam per experientias complerent.*

³⁸² Ibid., part 2, chap. 9, p. 45: [...] *et addit, quod Noe et filii ejus docuerunt Chaldeos partes philosophiae, et quod Abraham intravit Aegyptum et docuit Aegyptios.*

³⁸³ Ibid., part 2, chap. 9, p. 46: [...] *quod Noe et filii ejus multiplicaverunt philosophiam; et praecipue Sem praevaluit in hac parte.*

as the aforementioned statement that the descendants of Seth devoted their long lives primarily to studying astrology. Roger Bacon also identifies the sons of Noah and Abraham as “skilled astronomers” (*periti astronomi*)³⁸⁴ and credits Moses with astrological abilities.³⁸⁵

The inclusion of astrology in the history of divine knowledge becomes even more explicit in a comment by Roger Bacon in his edition of the *Secretum secretorum*. Here, he draws on the same sequence of revelation and transmission of knowledge. In this case, however, he applies this specifically to astrological knowledge.³⁸⁶ The aforementioned biblical characters are thus portrayed as the first astrologers. He emphasises that the reader should know that it was not the “unbelieving philosophers” (*infideles philosophi*) who invented astrology – or any other part of mathematics – but that God gave it to “His saints and the just Hebrews”. Only from them did the non-Christian philosophers receive “the principles of all sciences”.³⁸⁷ Roger Bacon’s aim is thus not only to present astrology and all philosophy as originally revealed Christian knowledge but also to refute that non-Christian philosophers were its inventors.

The statements above raise questions about Roger Bacon’s general attitude towards non-Christian scholars. As an advocate of philosophy, Roger Bacon was fundamentally dependent on the works of pagan Greek and Muslim Arabic authors. For the study of astrology, in particular, the contributions of authors from an Islamicate context were indispensable since much of the discipline practised in thirteenth-century Europe was based on their works.³⁸⁸ Indeed, Roger Bacon extensively used the writings of authors such as the famous Persian astrologer Albumasar (Abū Ma‘shar), and the plea for more

³⁸⁴ Ibid., part 2, chap. 9, p. 48.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., part 4 [without chapter numbers for these sections], p. 392, describes Moses as a “skilled astrologer” (*peritus astronomus*) and references a story about how Moses managed to free himself from a marriage to an Ethiopian princess by engraving figures in gems with the help of the stars which made the princess forget. See for more details of this episode and its possible origins: Nicolas Weill-Parot: *Les “images astrologiques” au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance. Spéculations intellectuelles et pratiques magiques (XII^e–XV^e siècle)* (Sciences, techniques et civilisations du Moyen Âge à l’aube des Lumières 6), Paris 2002, pp. 149–152. The story was also referenced in more detail by the fourteenth-century Oxford astrologer John Ashenden. See John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, prologue, fol. 1^{ra}.

³⁸⁶ Roger Bacon: *Secretum secretorum cum glossis et notulis tractatus brevis et utilis ad declarandum quedam obscure dicta*, ed. by Robert Steele (*Opera hactenus inedita Rogeri Baconi* 5), Oxford 1920, part 1, chap. 22, pp. 62–63.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., part 1, chap. 22, p. 62: *Sciendum ergo quod infideles philosophi non invenerunt hanc scienciam nec alias partes Mathematicae, ut Geometriam et Arithmetica, nec alias ciencias, set Deus dedit eas suis sanctis et justis Hebreis, a quibus omnes philosophi infideles habuerunt omnium scienciarum principia.*

³⁸⁸ See for more information on which Arabic texts were especially popular: Juste: *The Impact of Arabic Sources on European Astrology*.

in-depth study of Greek and Arabic scholars was a central element of his reform programme.³⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the insistence that these authors were only later recipients of the originally Christian knowledge points to a more complicated attitude towards them.

In order to understand Roger Bacon's stance on this issue, his writings must be considered in the context of the heated controversies that took place at the University of Paris in the thirteenth century. Those revolved primarily around the reception of Aristotle's works on natural philosophy and their possible implications for theology. The fundamental question was whether it was permissible to apply philosophical approaches to theological problems. Since Roger Bacon was a regent master at the University of Paris in the 1240s and was indeed one of the first to lecture on Aristotle after the prior restrictions had been lifted, he was right at the centre of these discussions.³⁹⁰ The controversies in Paris continued throughout the thirteenth century. They finally culminated in the condemnations of certain propositions in 1270 and 1277 by the Bishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier, thus shortly after Roger Bacon's composition of the *Opus majus*.³⁹¹ Between 1277 and 1279, Roger Bacon himself was condemned to

³⁸⁹ One theory that played a central role in Roger Bacon's work was that of the great conjunctions, for which he drew primarily on the ideas of Albumasar. See for his reliance on Albumasar for this topic: Charles Burnett: The Astrological Categorization of Religions in *Abū Ma'shar*, the *De vetula* and Roger Bacon, in: Ernst Bremer et al. (eds.): *Language of Religion – Language of the People. Medieval Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Mittelalterstudien des Instituts zur Interdisziplinären Erforschung des Mittelalters und seines Nachwirkens, Paderborn 11), Munich 2006, pp. 127–138. For more information on the importance of the theory of the great conjunction for Latin-Christian astrologers, see Chapters 3.3.1 and 5.3.2. In his justification of astrology, Roger Bacon highlights specifically Greek and Arab scholars as authorities on astrology (here in reference to the fact that those authorities also denied an absolute necessity of astral influence): Roger Bacon: *Opus Majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, p. 240–241: *Ptolemaeus etiam et Aristoteles et Avicenna et Messehalec et Haly et Albumazar, qui prae aliis majori auctoritate de his locuti sunt*, [...]. Roger Bacon also criticised the quality of the existing translations of those texts. See, for his stance: Richard Lemay: Roger Bacon's Attitude Toward the Latin Translations and Translators of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, in: Jeremiah M. G. Hackett (ed.): *Roger Bacon and the Sciences. Commemorative Essays* (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 57), Leiden 1997, pp. 25–47.

³⁹⁰ It is not certain when exactly Roger Bacon was in Paris and how long he stayed there. See Hackett: *Roger Bacon. His Life, Career and Works*, pp. 13–15.

³⁹¹ For more information and literature about the condemnations, see Chapter 2.1.2.

house arrest due to “certain suspicious novelties” (*aliquae novitates suspectae*), which may have stood in direct connection to the general condemnations of 1277.³⁹²

The discussions taking place around Roger Bacon thus shaped how he evaluated the scholarly achievements of non-Christian philosophers. The precise role he assigned to them becomes more apparent in his further description of the history of philosophy in his *Opus majus*.³⁹³ He recounts how the first revelation of divine knowledge to the holy patriarchs and saints was followed by several periods of intellectual decline and recovery. The first downfall already began in the generation of the sons of Noah, when a bifurcation of the transfer of knowledge occurred: While the legitimate parts of wisdom were passed on through Sem and later Abraham, Zoroaster, whom Roger Bacon identifies as Noah’s third son Cham, invented the magical arts (*artes magicae*).³⁹⁴ On account of the “wickedness (*malitia*) of people who abused the ways of wisdom”, as had first been done by Zoroaster (Cham), Nimrod and others “who were worshipped like gods for their wisdom, God darkened the hearts of men, and the use of philosophy slowly declined.”³⁹⁵ Remarkably, Roger Bacon here names three figures – Nimrod, Atlas and Zoroaster – who were commonly associated with astrology to illustrate the misuse of philosophy.³⁹⁶ At first glance, this may seem surprising.

³⁹² Hackett: Aristotle, Astrologia, and Controversy, p. 94, assumes that Roger Bacon became a “casualty of the Parisian Condemnation of 1277”. However, the first mention of this condemnation stems from the “Chronicle of the 24 Minister Generals of the Franciscan Order”, which was written more than 100 years later. *Chronica XXIV generalium Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, ed. a patribus collegii S. Bonaventurae (Analecta franciscana sive chronica aliaque varia documenta ad historiam fratrum minorum spectantia 3), Florence 1897, p. 360. For the assessment of this source and the possible reasons for Roger Bacon’s condemnation, see Paul L. Sidelko.: The Condemnation of Roger Bacon, in: *Journal of Medieval History* 22 (1996), pp. 69–81, who attributes his condemnation mainly to Roger Bacon’s explanation of the advent of Christianity through astrology.

³⁹³ He explicitly states that he describes this development to demonstrate that also among the “unbelieving philosophers and poets” were individuals who distinguished themselves. Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 2, chap. 9, p. 46: *Quatenus omnis igitur dubitation tollatur in hac parte, videamus decursum et seriem infidelium philosophorum, et poetarum, et omnium sollicitantium de studio sapientiali, et percipiemus quod post Abraham et decessores suos, quibus a Deo sapientia revelata est, inventi sunt singuli qui aliquem titulum adepti sunt*. For Roger Bacon’s attitude towards Muslim philosophers in the context of his history of knowledge, see Mark T. Abate: The Reorientation of Roger Bacon: Muslims, Mongols, and the Man Who Knew Everything, in: Albrecht Classen (ed.): *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times. Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World* (Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture 14), Berlin 2013, pp. 523–573.

³⁹⁴ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 2, chap. 9, p. 46: [...] *Zoroastres invenit artes Magicas, secundum Augustinum vicesimo primo de civitate Dei; et secundum omnes auctores hoc vulgatum est; sed hic fuit Cham filius Noe, [...]*.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., part 2, chap. 18, p. 65: *Sed propter malitiam hominum qui abusi sunt viis sapientiae, ut Nimroth, et Zoroaster, et Atlas, et Prometheus, et Mercurius aut Trismegistus, et Aesculapius, et Apollo, et alii qui colebantur sicut Dii propter sapientiam, Deus obscuravit cor multitudinis, et recedit paulatim usus philosophiae [...]*.

³⁹⁶ In a previous passage, Roger Bacon himself even refers to Atlas as a *magnus astrologus*. Ibid., part 2, chap. 9, p. 48.

However, it fits Roger Bacon's later description of astrology and provides valuable information about his portrayal of the discipline and its practitioners. Thus, he explicitly asserts that astrology in itself is neither good nor bad. Although its power can also be used for evil purposes, it should not be condemned entirely.³⁹⁷ In order to underscore this argument, Roger Bacon compares astrology to a table knife, which can be employed either to cut food or to slay one's companion – still, no one would ban knives because of this.³⁹⁸

Instead of denying the possible abuse of the discipline, Roger Bacon devotes much effort to differentiate between “true and false astrologers” (*mathematici veri et falsi*).³⁹⁹ “True astrologers” are portrayed as scholars who understand astrology's value and potential benefits and choose to use this power on God's behalf for the good of Christianity. The narration of the origin of philosophy testifies that astrology was initially good and part of divine revelation. This is evident from the fact that the astrological abilities of Adam, Seth, Noah, Sem and Abraham are highlighted. Similarly, Moses, Aaron and Solomon are likewise associated with astrological practices in various passages throughout the *Opus majus*.⁴⁰⁰ This approach allowed Roger Bacon to distance himself from controversial astrologers like Nimrod or Atlas, who abused the knowledge, while presenting astrology as a legitimate science and placing himself among the ranks of ‘true’ astrologers.

Roger Bacon also repeatedly points towards the criticism ‘true’ astrologers faced as they were often accused of being magicians. He blames this mainly on the ignorance of people to whom these matters seem to be beyond human understanding. For this reason, many astrologers would not dare to speak publicly about their knowledge.⁴⁰¹ While it here appears as if ‘true’ astrologers are forced into hiding, in a previous chapter, Roger Bacon argues for the need to maintain a certain measure of secrecy regarding philosophical knowledge in general. He explains this at the beginning of his *Opus majus*, where he lists several obstacles that, according to him, would prevent an understanding of the truth. As one obstacle he identifies the “opinion of the ignorant

³⁹⁷ Ibid., part 4, p. 395: *Non tamen propter hoc studium sapientiae damnandum est. Nam semper mali in malis convertuntur, ex quibus boni utilitates varias producunt.*

³⁹⁸ Ibid., part 4, p. 394: [...] *nam tunc deberent homines carere cultellis in mensa, quoniam comedentes possunt interficere socios eodem ferro quo scindunt cibaria, [...].*

³⁹⁹ Ibid., part 4, pp. 239–248.

⁴⁰⁰ See, for example, *ibid.*, part 4, p. 392, p. 394.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., part 4, p. 394: *Sed quia haec opera videntur vulgo studentium esse supra humanum intellectus, quia vulgus cum suis doctoribus non vacat operibus sapientiae, ideo vix est aliquis ausus loqui de his operibus in publico. Statim enim vocantur magici, cum tamen sint sapientissimi qui haec sciunt.*

multitude” (*vulgi sensus imperiti*) and warns against revealing the secrets of wisdom to the masses.⁴⁰² He recounts that the wise had always been separate from the crowd and had concealed their secrets from it – to divulge them would only diminish the dignity of nature.⁴⁰³ Even if the ignorant crowd could reach the perfection of wisdom, they would turn it into evil.⁴⁰⁴ According to Roger Bacon, only a few are chosen to receive both the divine and the philosophical truth.⁴⁰⁵ While Roger Bacon advocates this secrecy not exclusively for practitioners of astrology, but as they, in particular, are often met with scepticism or hostility, this certainly applies to them to an even greater extent. He thus presents philosophers and, with them, astrologers as an exclusive and chosen group that should protect their knowledge and, with it, also their elevated status by concealing their understanding from common people.

The need for and the significance of such exceptional individuals equally becomes evident in the further description of the history of knowledge. Roger Bacon narrates that several periods of intellectual decline and revival followed Noah’s son Cham’s first misuse of legitimate wisdom. The key role in the first restoration of legitimate knowledge was held by Solomon, who revived and brought back philosophy in its entirety.⁴⁰⁶ After Solomon, this knowledge again disappeared due to the “sins of men”

⁴⁰² Ibid., part 1, chap. 1, p. 2. As obstacles he lists „the example of unreliable and unworthy authority, the long duration of custom, the opinion of the ignorant multitude, and the concealment of one’s own ignorance by putting forth the appearance of wisdom”: *Quatuor vero sunt maxima comprehendendae Veritatis offenticula, quae omnem quemcumque sapientem impediunt, et vix aliquem permittunt ad verum titulum sapientiae pervenire, videlicet fragilis et indignae auctoritatis exemplum, consuetudinis diuturnitas, vulgi sensus imperiti, et propriae ignorantiae occultatio cum ostentatione sapientiae apparentis.*

⁴⁰³ Ibid., part 1, chap. 4, pp. 9–10: *Nam semper sapientes contra vulgus divisi sunt, et arcana sapientiae non toti mundo sed plebi philosophantium revelaverunt. [...]; nam rerum majestatem minuit, qui vulgat mystica.* He even describes that the wise took certain measures to actively hide their knowledge from the masses: Ibid., p. 10: *Et propter hoc sapientes licet darent in scriptis radices arcanorum sapientiae, tamen ramos et fructus vulgo philosophantium non dederunt. Nam vel omiserunt scribere, vel per sermones figurativos et multis modis, de quibus non est ad praesens dicendum, occultaverunt.* This argument is even more prominent in his “Letter on the Secret Works of Nature and Art and the Nullity of Magic”. Here, he even devotes a chapter to explain how to best disguise the “secrets of nature and art” (*De occultando secreta natura et artis*). Roger Bacon: *De nullitate magiae* [Epistola Fratris Rogerii Baconis de secretis operibus artis et naturae et de nullitate magiae], ed. by John S. Brewer, in: *Fr. Rogeri Bacon opera quaedam hactenus inedita*, vol. 1, London 1859, pp. 523–551, pp. 523–551, here chap. 8, pp. 542–545.

⁴⁰⁴ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 1, chap. 4, p. 11: *Et ideo vulgus imperitum nunquam ad perfectionem sapientiae potest ascendere, nam nescit uti rebus dignissimis: quas si aliquando casu contingat omnia in malum convertit, [...].*

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., part 1, chap. 4, p. 11: *Nam multi sunt vocati, pauci vero electi ad veritatis divinae receptionem, et similiter philosophicae.*

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., part 2, chap. 9, p. 45: *Sed et Solomon sapientior omnibus praecedentibus et subsequentibus secundum testimonium scripturae plenam obtinuit philosophiae potestatem.* Ibid., part 2, chap. 18, p. 65: *[...] et recedit paulatim usus philosophiae usquequo iterum Salomon eam revocavit et perfecit omnino, [...].*

(*propter peccata hominum*) until the ancient Greek philosophers restored it “as far as was possible for that time”.⁴⁰⁷ Roger Bacon describes in detail the different philosophical currents of ancient Greece and emphasises especially Aristotle’s outstanding role in restoring philosophy.⁴⁰⁸ However, Aristotle’s works subsequently were neglected until Arabic scholars – most importantly Avicenna and Averroes – revived and expounded them and thus introduced the next stage of the restoration of philosophy.⁴⁰⁹ The continuous inclusion of astrological knowledge in this transmission can be seen in the occasional descriptions of certain scholars as astrologers.⁴¹⁰

While Roger Bacon thus credits certain non-Christian philosophers with an essential role in the transmission history of knowledge, he emphasises again and again that perfect wisdom was first given to the Christian forefathers by God and that the non-Christian philosophers merely built on this knowledge and strove to restore it to its former glory.⁴¹¹ However, Roger Bacon not only argues that the philosophical knowledge of non-Christian philosophers ultimately goes back to revealed divine wisdom, but he also claims that they developed their philosophical insights expressly on

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., part 2, chap. 18, p. 65: *Et iterum propter peccata hominum evanuit studium sapientiae, donec Thales Milesius resumpsit eam, et ejus successores dilataverunt, usquequo Aristoteles consummavit, quantum fuit possibile juxta idem tempus.*

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., part 2, chap. 13, p. 55: *Hic [i.e. Aristotle] omnium philosophorum magnorum testimonio praefertur philosophis, et philosophiae ascribendum est id quod ipse affirmavit; unde nunc temporis autonomicus Philosophus nominatur, in auctoritate philosophiae, [...].*

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., part 2, chap. 13, p. 55: *Quievit autem et siluit philosophia Aristotelis, pro majori parte aut propter occultationem exemplarium et raritatem, aut propter difficultatem, aut propter invidiam, aut propter guerras Orientis, usque post tempora Mahometi, quando Avicenna et Averroes et caeteri revicaverunt philosophiam Aristotelis in lucem plenam expositionis.* In his *Opus tertium*, Roger Bacon summarises these different stages of transmission, which he structured according to the languages in which they took place, i.e. Hebrew, Greek, and Arabic. Roger Bacon: *Opus tertium*, ed. by John S. Brewer, in: *Fr. Rogeri Bacon opera quaedam hactenus inedita*, vol. 1, London 1859, pp. 3–310, here chap. 10, p. 32: *Revelavit igitur Deus primo philosophiam sanctis suis, [...]. Et ideo primo tradita est principaliter et complete in lingua Hebraea. Deinde renovata est principaliter per Aristotelem in lingua Graeca; deinde principaliter per Avicennam in lingua Arabica; [...].*

⁴¹⁰ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 2, chap. 9, p. 48 (*fuit Atlas magnus astrologus*); chap. 10, p. 50 (*qui Hiarcus dicitur esse Abrachis astronomus*); chap. 11, p. 51 (*Josia, qui rerum naturas scrutatus est, et fuit astrologus*). While Aristotle himself is not explicitly mentioned as an astrologer here, that Roger Bacon credits him with the highest astrological expertise becomes clear through his extensive use of the *Secretum secretorum*, where Aristotle is depicted as the astrologically-versed teacher of Alexander the Great. See for this: Rutkin: *An Idealized Astrological Courtier*.

⁴¹¹ See, for example, Aristotle’s quest to reach the former level of philosophical wisdom: Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 2, chap. 13, p. 55: *Hic enim praecedentium philosophorum errores evacuavit et augmentavit philosophiam aspirans ad ejus complementum quod habuerint antiqui patriarchae, quamvis non potuit singula perficere.* For the statement that the non-Christian philosophers were all subsequent to the initial divine relation: Ibid., part 2, chap. 18, pp. 64–65: [...]; *et manifestum est quod omnes philosophi infideles et Poetae et Sibyllae et quicunque sapientiae sunt dediti, inventi sunt post philosophos veros et fideles, qui fuerunt filii Seth et Noe cum filiis suis, [...].*

the basis of Christian writings, which they deliberately sought out.⁴¹² This aspect has been explored further by Mark T. Abate, who proposes that Roger Bacon classified people based on four variables – Christian, non-Christian, wise, and ignorant.⁴¹³ The way Roger Bacon describes pagan Greco-Roman or Muslim-Arabic philosophers suggests to Abate that Roger Bacon saw them primarily as wise philosophers and, since they participated in the restoration of the originally divine knowledge, even categorised them as “quasi-Christians”.⁴¹⁴ Consequently, Roger Bacon’s attitude towards non-Christian philosophers is complex. On the one hand, he acknowledges the crucial role of Greek and Arab philosophers in restoring and transmitting philosophy, and his reverence for them is evident in his writings. On the other hand, he makes it clear that their faith prevented them from acquiring the full extent of philosophy, as they did not take divine things into account to the necessary degree.⁴¹⁵ He even goes as far as to state that the “philosophy of the infidels” is harmful and has no value by itself.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹² Ibid., vol. 1, part 2, chap. 14, p. 58: [...] *nam omnes philosophi fuerunt post patriarchas et prophetas, sicut prius de hoc facta est consideratio in suo loco; et legerunt libros prophetarum et patriarcharum qui sunt in sacro textu, [...]. [...] Philosophi igitur curiosi et diligentes in studio sapientiae peragrarunt regiones diversas, ut sapientiam inquirerent, et libros sanctorum perlegerunt, et didicerunt ab Hebraeis multa.* As examples of this, he refers to Avicenna and Plato, both of whom, according to him, drew on biblical texts in their works. Ibid., pp. 58–59. For further examples, see Abate: *The Reorientation of Roger Bacon*, p. 534.

⁴¹³ Abate: *The Reorientation of Roger Bacon*, p. 533. He considers this metric crucial for assessing Roger Bacon’s attitude towards non-Christian philosophers.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., p. 534, p. 538. In his later part on moral philosophy, Roger Bacon goes even farther. He again emphasises that philosophy is only compatible with the Christian religion, not with the religion of the Jews or Muslims, which is shown through the statements of the philosophers. In support of this, he also cites the “philosophers of the Saracens” such as Avicenna and Albumasar, who had spoken against their own law and foresaw its downfall. Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 2, part 7.4, chap. 1, p. 389: *Quod autem sola lex Christiana sit praeferenda potest homo considerare his modis. Primo per sententias philosophorum [...]. [...] Non sic autem Philosophia est conformis sectae Iudaeorum et Saracenorum; nec dant philosophi eis testimonia. [...] Et philosophi Saraceni suam legem vituperant et determinant quod cito deficiet. Nam Avicenna nono Metaphysicae suae redarguit Machometum propter hoc quod solum posuit delicias corporales et non spirituales. Et Albumazar in primo libro Conjunctionum docet quod ad plus non durabit secta illa nisi per 693 annos, [...].* In this way Roger Bacon depicts especially Muslim philosophers not only in favour of Christian doctrines but even as essentially opposed to their own religion. This type of reasoning to explain why ‘rational’ philosophers can be found among the proponents of ‘irrational’ religions was also used by other thirteenth-century Christian scholars, such as Ramon Martí († 1285), Ramon Llull († c. 1316) and Riccolando da Montecroce († 1320). See for a further discussion of their descriptions of Muslim philosophers as secret opponents of Islam: John V. Tolan: *Saracen Philosophers Secretly Deride Islam*, in: *Medieval Encounters* 8 (2002), pp. 184–208.

⁴¹⁵ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 2, chap. 17, p. 63: *Et ideo philosophia apud Christianos debet sapere multum de divinis, plus quam apud philosophos infideles, [...]. Et ideo debent multa addi in philosophia Christianorum; quae philosophi infideles scire non potuerant.*

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., part 2, chap. 18, p. 65: *Atque propter hoc, philosophia infidelium est penitus nociva, et nihil valet secundum se considerata, [...].*

Since philosophy can only lead to perfect wisdom if joined with divine truth, Roger Bacon sees a need for action on the part of contemporary Latin Christianity.⁴¹⁷ Christians must go beyond the writings of the ‘unbelieving’ philosophers to complete the restoration of the once divine knowledge and put it at the service of Christianity.⁴¹⁸ In his chapter on astrology, Roger Bacon explains why an intensified study of philosophy and astrology, in particular, is so crucial for Latin Christians. For him, restoring the complete knowledge of philosophy is not only significant on an intellectual level, but the failure to do so would entail great dangers for Christianity. In his view, the knowledge of philosophy and especially astrology was necessary to defend Christianity against the ‘infidels’ but, even more importantly, against the Antichrist, whose arrival he believed was imminent and who would employ the power of this knowledge to turn everything to evil.⁴¹⁹ He states that the practical use of astrology was already evident among the “Tartars and Saracens” (*Tartari et Saraceni*), who invested much time in astrological studies and used them for the military expansion of their power.⁴²⁰ It would therefore have serious consequences if Christians did not now follow suit and abandon their unjustified reservations about astrology.⁴²¹ This threat is the ulterior reason Roger Bacon turns to the Pope for support in his quest. The final restoration of the originally revealed perfect wisdom before the world’s end thus forms the conclusion of Roger Bacon’s long history of knowledge.

In summary, what can Roger Bacon’s account of the origin and transmission of philosophy thus tell us about his perception of astrologers as a group? Unlike Michael Scot, Roger Bacon does not describe astrology’s history separately from philosophy but identifies it as an integral element. He explicitly depicts it as part of divine knowledge

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., part 2, chap. 17, pp. 63–64: *Et ideo Christiani, philosophiam volentes complere, debent in suis tractatibus non solum dicta philosophorum de divinis veritatibus colligere, sed longe ulterius progredi, usquequo potestas philosophiae totius compleatur.*

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., part 2, chap. 14, p. 57: *Item Christiani debent ad suam professionem quae sapientia Dei est caetera pertractate, et vias philosophorum infidelium complere; non solum quia posteriores sumus, et debemus addere ad eorum opera, sed ut cogamus sapientiam philosophorum nostrae deservire.*

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., part 4, p. 399: *Non solum pro consideratione sapientiali haec scribo, sed propter pericula quae contingunt et contingent Christianis et ecclesiae Dei per infideles, et maxime per Antichristum, quia ipse utetur potestate sapientiae, et omnia convertet in malum.* See on Roger Bacon’s stance towards the coming of Antichrist with respect to astrology: Hilary M. Carey: *Astrology and the Antichrist in the Late Middle Ages*, in: Gerhard Jaritz / Gerson Moreno-Riaño (eds.): *Time and Eternity. The Medieval Discourse* (International Medieval Research 9), Turnhout 2003, pp. 515–535, esp. pp. 517–529.

⁴²⁰ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, p. 399–400.

⁴²¹ Ibid., part 4, p. 402: *Quicquid sit de Tartaris et Saracenis, certum est de Antichristo et suis, quod haec operabuntur. Et nisi ecclesia occurrat per sancta consilia ad impediendum et destruendum opera huiusmodi, aggravabitur intolerabiliter flagellis Christianorum. [...] Si igitur Christiani scirent haec opera auctoritate papali facienda ad impedienda mala Christianorum, satis esset laudabile, [...]*

and emphasises its Christian legitimacy. While Roger Bacon's history of knowledge appears more conservative than Michael Scot's narrative through its constant emphasis on the divine origin and the subordination of philosophy to theology, he also acknowledges the potential for misuse of this knowledge. His distinction between 'true' and 'false' astrologers shows that such a misuse also occurred in the field of astrology. The group of 'true' astrologers is thus defined primarily by the deliberate decision to use their knowledge for good. Nevertheless, this group – whose members again do not appear at the same time but consecutively – seems less distinct than in Michael Scot's work since the astrologers are portrayed primarily as a subgroup of wise philosophers here.

What Roger Bacon makes very clear, however, is that these wise philosophers constituted scholars chosen by God. For him, this group also encompassed the ancient Roman-Greek and Muslim-Arab scholars to a certain degree. His detailed discussion of the role of non-Christian scholars was strongly influenced by the contemporary controversies taking place primarily at the University of Paris. Roger Bacon was faced with the task of promoting the study of philosophy, which was primarily based on the works of non-Christian scholars, while at the same time presenting philosophy as a fundamentally Christian endeavour. The fact that he regarded astrology as an integral part of philosophy made matters even more complicated since the discipline was not only controversial but was also based primarily on the works of Arab-Muslim scholars. As a solution, Roger Bacon integrated both non-Christian authors and astrology into the general history of knowledge. However, he emphasised that non-Christian authors were merely trying to restore Christian knowledge. Despite their best efforts, they were only partially successful because they lacked the 'right' faith.

Nonetheless, through his history of the development of philosophy, Roger Bacon created a distinct group of wise philosophers who sought to restore and expand knowledge – and this group transcended both time and religion.⁴²² He uses this narrative not only to legitimise the theories from non-Christian scholars, but he primarily employs it as a call to action. In order to belong to this group of exceptional philosophers who try to reconstruct the once complete knowledge in the name of God, contemporary Christians must act now and engage more intensively with philosophy.

⁴²² This approach should not be misinterpreted as tolerance or indulgence for their religion as Roger Bacon positions himself clearly in opposition to Islam. See for this: Abate: *The Reorientation of Roger Bacon*, p. 538.

Astrological abilities occupy a prominent role here since they, in particular, are needed in the fight against the Antichrist.

In conclusion, the two histories of astrology presented by Michael Scot and Roger Bacon exemplify how astrologers wanted to portray their discipline and its representatives. Both relied on traditional narratives in their stories but adapted them to their own objectives. The individual contexts of the authors are reflected in the way they framed the stories: while Michael Scot, as Frederick II's 'court astrologer', focuses more on creating an entertaining and engaging account of outstanding characters, Roger Bacon, the Franciscan who addressed the Pope, emphasises the Christian origin of astrology and its use for the good of Christianity. Despite all their differences, both versions create a sense of community by recounting the long tradition of astrology and thus practising a kind of scholarly *memoria*. Furthermore, both authors point out the possibility of misuse of astrological knowledge and thereby create another layer of group identity: To be a good or 'true' astrologer does not only require astrological skills but to belong to this group, a conscious decision to use it in accordance with God's will is necessary. In both examples, the transmission of knowledge occurs primarily between individual scholars in a student-teacher relationship. There is no description of a larger group of astrologers interacting at the same time; instead, a genealogy of astrologers is constructed. Therefore, it is apparent that the astrologers are not concerned with creating a closer collective organisation but that their scholarly *memoria* serves to legitimise the discipline and the individual practitioner. Thus, the practitioner can point to a long tradition of famous predecessors who showcase the traits of the ideal astrologer. The emphasis on the fact that knowledge is acquired over time and is based on the successive accumulation of knowledge also allows astrologers to argue that they can make predictions that involve observing celestial phenomena over periods spanning several lifetimes.

3.3 Challenging Aspects and Outside Perspectives

3.3.1 The Magi – The Case of the Missing Role Models

While the astrologers included many biblical figures in the accounts of their discipline's history, it is striking that precisely the most famous interpreters of stellar movements mentioned in the Bible found no prominent place in the astrologers' narratives. These

were the Magi,⁴²³ who were said to have learned of Christ’s birth through a star. At first glance, they would seem to be ideal role models for astrologers – wise men who used their astrological expertise for a thoroughly Christian purpose. So why didn’t the astrologers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries draw on these illustrious predecessors in their efforts to highlight a long and venerable tradition of practitioners? In the following subchapter, I will explore potential reasons for this omission and what this can tell us about how astrologers did, and did not, want to fashion their discipline’s group of representatives.

Since the interpretation of the Magi in the late Middle Ages depended heavily on earlier discussions and traditions, it is first necessary to consider the development of the general discourse on this topic so that we may understand specific references and implications.⁴²⁴ In the Greco-Roman tradition, the concept of *magi* or *μάγοι* was well-known and denoted people who possessed specific attributes or practised certain activities. The terms encompassed chiefly four often overlapping meanings: a *μάγος* could be a “member of the Persian priestly caste”, “the possessor and user of supernatural knowledge and ability”, a “magician” or a “deceiver, seducer”.⁴²⁵ Building on this tradition, the evangelist Matthew described how certain *magi* were part of the annunciation of Christ’s birth.⁴²⁶ The Magi, Matthew writes, came “from the East” and inquired in Jerusalem about the new-born “King of the Jews” whose star they had seen

⁴²³ In the following I will use capitalisation in *recte* when referring to the biblical figures and italics when referring to the term in general.

⁴²⁴ The biblical Magi have been the subject of numerous studies. See for an overview of their representation in literature and art: Hugo Kehrer: *Die Heiligen Drei Könige in Literatur und Kunst*, 2 vols., Leipzig 1908–1909; about their reception in the ancient and early Christian tradition: Peter Barthel / George van Kooten (eds.): *The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi. Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Experts on the Ancient Near East, the Greco-Roman World and Modern Astrology* (Themes in Biblical Narrative 19), Leiden / Boston 2015; Tim Hegedus: *The Magi and the Star in the Gospel of Matthew and Early Christian Tradition*, in: *Laval théologique et philosophique* 59 (1) (2003), pp. 81–95; Hegedus: *Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology*, pp. 201–222; Wilhelm A. Schulze: *Zur Geschichte der Auslegung von Matth. 2,1–12*, in: *Theologische Zeitschrift* 31 (1975), pp. 150–160; for the medieval and early modern reception: Collins: *Scholastics, Stars, and Magi*; Michael A. Screech: *The Magi and the Star* (Matthew 2), in: Olivier Fatio / Pierre Fraenkel (eds.): *Histoire de l’exégèse au XVI^e siècle. Textes du colloque international tenu à Genève en 1976*, Geneva 1978, pp. 385–409; for the history of the adoration of the Magi: Hans Hofmann: *Die Heiligen Drei Könige. Zur Heiligenverehrung im kirchlichen, gesellschaftlichen und politischen Leben des Mittelalters*, Bonn 1975; Richard C. Trexler: *The Journey of the Magi. Meanings in History of a Christian Story*, Princeton, NJ 1997.

⁴²⁵ Gerhard Delling: *μάγος*, in: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 4 (1973), pp. 356–359, here pp. 356–357.

⁴²⁶ Matthew is the only evangelist who includes the Magi in his account of the birth of Christ. See *Biblia sacra*, ed. Weber / Gryson, Matt 2, pp. 1528–1529.

“at its rising” and whom they wanted to worship.⁴²⁷ According to Matthew, the star led them to Bethlehem until it halted above Christ’s birthplace.⁴²⁸

The Matthew pericope provoked much discussion among biblical commentators about the role of the Magi, their abilities, and the nature of the star they followed. Their designation as *magi* and the fact that they interpreted and followed the star of Christ strongly suggests an identification as astrologers.⁴²⁹ This, however, posed problems for early Christian scholars, who, for the most part, regarded astrology as an illegitimate part of pagan heritage.⁴³⁰ Early Christianity thus had to find a way to explain why the pericope seemed to endorse astrological practices. Explanations for this problem took different forms, but certain influential narratives may be identified.⁴³¹

Generally, early Christian writers sought to diminish the importance of the Magi’s astrological expertise in their recognition of Christ. A significant development in this regard was the establishment of a link between the Magi and the messianic prophecy of the biblical prophet Balaam as described in the Book of Numbers. In the latter, Balaam, although a pagan, is portrayed as being inspired by God and prophesies that “a star will rise out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel.”⁴³² Early biblical commentators often connected this prophecy and Matthew’s description of the Magi following the star. One of the earliest instances of this is the writings of Origen of Alexandria († c. 253), who depicted the Magi as direct descendants of Balaam. Since they were in possession of his prophecy, they could recognise the star as a sign of Christ and thus as the fulfilment of Balaam’s prophecy.⁴³³ In this way, the Magi understood the meaning of

⁴²⁷ Ibid., Matt. 2:1, p. 1528: *Cum ergo natus esset Iesus in Bethleem Iudaeae in diebus Herodis regis, ecce magi ab oriente venerunt Hierosolimam dicentes, ubi est qui natus est rex Iudaeorum, vidimus enim stellam in oriente et venimus adorare eum.* See Hegedus: The Magi and the Star, pp. 83, for how the Greek terms should be best translated.

⁴²⁸ Biblia sacra, ed. Weber / Gryson, Matt 2:9, p. 1528: *Et ecce stella quam viderant in oriente antecedebat eos, usque dum veniens staret supra ubi erat puer.*

⁴²⁹ Hegedus: The Magi and the Star, p. 83, even sees them as “professional astrologers”.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., p. 82.

⁴³¹ For the different interpretations of early Christian scholars, see Hegedus: The Magi and the Star; for the general early Christian attitude towards astrology: Barton: Ancient Astrology, pp. 64–85.

⁴³² Biblia sacra, ed. Weber / Gryson, Num 24:17, p. 215: *Orietur stella ex Iacob et consurget virga de Israhel.* See for a more details on the context of the prophecy and the often negative assessment of the figure of Balaam as a magician, astrologer who was even in some cases identified as Zoroaster: Hegedus: The Magi and the Star, pp. 87–88; Collins: Scholastics, Stars, and Magi, p. 264; Tobias Nicklas: Balaam and the Star of the Magi, in: George H. van Kooten / Jacques van Ruiten (eds.): The Prestige of the Pagan Prophet Balaam in Judaism, Early Christianity and Islam (Themes in Biblical Narrative 11), Leiden / Boston 2008, pp. 233–246.

⁴³³ Origen: Homilien zum Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung, part 2: Die Homilien zu Numeri, Josua und Judges, ed. by Wilhelm A. Baehrens, in: Werke, vol. 7 (Die griechischen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte 30), Leipzig 1921, Homilia XIII,7, p. 118. Hegedus: The Magi and the Star, p. 88, states that this connection was well-established in the fourth century and refers for this to the writings of Gregory of

the star – not through their astrological expertise but through their knowledge of the prophecy. While this did not rule out that the Magi could have been astrologers, it still diminished or even denied the importance of an astrological interpretation of the star.⁴³⁴

However, there was some uncertainty as to whether the astrological abilities of the Magi also played a role in their identification of the star as a sign for Christ. For example, Jerome († 420) admitted that it was unclear whether the Magi had followed the star based on Balaam’s prophecy or based on knowledge “from their art”, which he equated with learning from demons. Nevertheless, he stated that the birth of Christ, in any case, meant the destruction of “the power of their entire art”.⁴³⁵ While it is uncertain whether Jerome is referring specifically to astrology here, the interpretation that Christ’s birth ended not only false religious beliefs but also pagan disciplines such as astrology is found in numerous writings and played a central role in the (re-)assessment of the Magi.⁴³⁶ In this context, scholars often focused on the nature of the star and interpreted it allegorically.

This was first done by Ignatius of Antioch (first century AD), who highlights the star’s singularity and novelty which caused all other stars, as well as the sun and moon, to “surround the star in chorus”. “From then on”, Ignatius writes, “all sorcery was

Nyssa, Ambrosiaster and Jerome. A second possibility of prophetic knowledge about the star is mentioned in an anonymous fourth-century commentary to Matthew, the *Opus imperfectum*, which was falsely attributed to John Chrysostom († 407). While the author mentions that the Magi may have received the knowledge about Christ’s star through Balaam’s prophecy, he additionally points to “a certain writing, entitled Seth” which could also have informed them on the appearance and meaning of the star. He then construes an elaborate story of transmission for the text. To conserve this knowledge, he writes, the *magi* selected twelve of the “most studious scholars and lovers of heavenly mysteries” (*studiosiores, et amatores mysteriorum caelestium*) from their ranks who passed the knowledge down through the generations until the birth of Christ. Every year those scholars would climb upon a certain mountain and wait for the appearance of the star so that the prophecy would be fulfilled. (Pseudo-)John Chrysostom: *Opus imperfectum* [Diatriba ad opus imperfectum quod Chrysostomi nomine circumfertur], in: PG 56, Paris 1862, cols. 601–946, here col. 641. For a translation to English: (Pseudo-)John Chrysostom: *Incomplete Commentary on Matthew (Opus imperfectum)*, 2 vols., transl. by James A. Kellerman, ed. By Thomas C. Oden (Ancient Christian Texts), Downers Grove 2010. See *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. xvii–xxvi, for more details on the potential author and the work.

⁴³⁴ On what kind of astrology the Magi may have practised: Hegedus: *The Magi and the Star*, pp. 83–84; also: Michael Molnar: *The Star of Bethlehem. The Legacy of the Magi*, New Brunswick / New Jersey / London 1999, pp. 64–84.

⁴³⁵ Jerome: *Commentary on Isaiah* [S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Commentariorvm in Esaia libri I–XI], ed. by Marcus Adriaen (CCSL 73), Turnhout 1963, book 7, chap. 19.2/4, pp. 278–279: [...] *intantum ut magi de oriente docti a daemonibus, uel iuxta prophetiam Balaam intellegentes natum Filium Dei, qui omnem artis eorum destrueret potestatem, uenerint Bethleem, et ostendente stella, adorauerint puerum*. See also Jerome: *Commentary on Isaiah* [S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Commentariorvm in Esaia libri XII–XVIII], ed. by Marcus Adriaen (CCSL 73A), Turnhout 1963, book 13, chap. 47.12/15, p. 525: *Vnde et Magi de Oriente uenerunt, Domini stellam se uidisse dicentes, uel ex artis scientia, uel ex uaticinio Balaam prophetae sui, [...]*.

⁴³⁶ Most significantly, this idea was taken up in the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville. The latter describes the Magi as *stellarum interpretes* whose knowledge was legitimate until the birth of Christ. After that, however, they were called *mathematici* and their art was forbidden. See footnote 281.

dissolved, and every fetter of wickedness disappeared; ignorance was destroyed, the old rule perished.”⁴³⁷ The uniqueness of the star thus symbolised Christ’s superiority and new rule. Later commentators embraced this interpretation and associated the victory over magic, above all, with the liberation from astrological fate.⁴³⁸ The Church Father John Chrysostom († 407), for example, addressed Matthew’s description of the Magi and the star precisely to show that the appearance of the star by no means – as some would claim – attested to the truth of astrology. On the contrary, Christ had “brought an end to astrology, nullified fate, silenced the demons, banished error, and destroyed all such deceptions.”⁴³⁹ Chrysostom shows this by highlighting that the apparition the Magi saw was not a star at all but “a certain unseen power” (*invisibilis quaedam virtus*) that only took the form of a star.⁴⁴⁰ God chose a star, he explained, because the Magi were accustomed to this mode of announcement and would not have listened to a prophet, a heavenly voice or an angel.⁴⁴¹ While the Magi were thus still portrayed as astrologers, the star’s appearance actually heralded the end of their discipline. Furthermore, since Christ’s star was no regular celestial body and did not follow astrological rules, its appearance could consequently not be construed as an endorsement of astrology.⁴⁴² A similar interpretation of the star was also advocated by one of the most vocal and influential adversaries of astrology, Augustine of Hippo († 430). He is particularly

⁴³⁷ Ignatius of Antioch: An die Epheser, in: Die Apostolischen Väter, Greek-German edition based on the editions by Franz Xaver Funk / Karl Bihlmeyer / Molly Whittaker, newly transl. and ed. by Andreas Lindemann / Henning Paulsen, Tübingen 1992, pp. 178–191, here pp. 188–191. See Schulze: Zur Geschichte der Auslegung von Matth. 2,1–12, p. 150; Hegedus: The Magi and the Star, pp. 89–91.

⁴³⁸ See for examples: Hegedus: The Magi and the Star, pp. 91–92.

⁴³⁹ John Chrysostom: Homiliae in Matthaeum, in: PG 57, Paris 1862, Homilia 6, cols. 61–2: *Quid igitur dicunt? Ecce, inquiunt, Christo nato stella apparuit, quod sane signum est astrologiam veram esse disciplinam. Quomodo ergo si illo ritu et modo natus est, astrologiam solvit, fatum sustulit, daemonum ora obturavit, errorem expulit, et omnes huiusmodi praestigias eliminavit?*

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., cols. 64–65. He points out the unusual behaviour of the star and in this context mentions its irregular trajectory, its shining during the day, its unique ability to conceal itself at the right time, and its miraculous power to stand above the child’s head.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., col. 65: *At cur illos, inquires, per talem visum adduxit? At quomodo oportuit? an prophetas mittere? Sed magi prophetis non credidissent. An vocem superne proferre? Verum non attendissent. An angelum mittere? Sed hunc quoque fortisan praeterissent. Quapropter illis omnibus omissis Deus, summa utens indulgentia, per consueta vocat illos, ostenditque stellam magnam ab aliis diversam, ut ipsos et ex magnitudine et ex pulchritudine spectaculi percelleret, necnon etiam ex cursu modo.*

⁴⁴² See, for example, also Gregory of Nazianzus († 390), who writes explicitly that the interpretation of this particular star did not fall within the normal sphere of activity of astrologers: “For this is not the kind of star dealt with by expounders of astrology, but rather a star without precedent which had never previously appeared.” Gregory of Nazianzus: On Providence, in: Gregory of Nazianzus: Poemata Arcana, ed. by Claudio Moreschini, transl. by D.A. Sykes, Oxford 1997, pp. 22–27, here p. 24 (Greek), p. 25 (English translation). The anonymous author of the *Opus imperfectum* even goes one step further and personifies the star. He describes that the star appeared in the form of a little boy with the image of the cross above it, which then directly spoke to the Magi, sending them to Judea. (Pseudo-)John Chrysostom: *Opus imperfectum*, col. 641.

indignant that certain people even go so far as to interpret the episode as proof that Christ himself stood under the influence of the stars. Augustine refutes this vehemently and explains that it was indeed the star that was under the influence of Christ and not the other way around. This would be evident since the star did not follow the usual way of the heavenly bodies but led the way to Christ.⁴⁴³

In summary, early Christian exegesis of the Matthew pericope provided explanations for the apparent endorsement of astrological knowledge by downplaying the role of astrology in the narrative and presenting the episode as a historical turning point that signalled the end of astrology – representative of pagan superstition – through the victory of Christ. While the Magi were in some cases portrayed as astrologers, the reason they understood the meaning of the star was either connected to the prophecy of Balaam, other prophetic knowledge, or simply due to the unique behaviour of the star. Moreover, the star is presented as a divine miracle, exempting it from the rules of astrology.⁴⁴⁴ The Magi, therefore, took on a sort of intermediary position – they were representatives of both pagan misbelief and the first new adherents and heralds of the Christian truth.

Interest in the pericope did not wane during the Middle Ages. On the contrary, the rekindled veneration of the relics of the Magi from the twelfth century onwards and the revival of astrology brought the figures of the Magi and their ability to interpret the star of Christ even more into prominence.⁴⁴⁵ The commentators of the high and later Middle Ages primarily relied on the accounts of the earlier patristic writers. Still, medieval

⁴⁴³ Augustine [Aurelius Augustinus]: *Sermones ad populum*. Classis II: *De Tempore*, in: PL 38, Paris 1863, cols. 995–1248, here Sermo 199, chap. 2, cols. 1027–1028. On Augustine's interpretation of the pericope: Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 1, pp. 518–519. On Augustine's stance towards astrology in general: Hegedus: *Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology*, pp. 43–84.

⁴⁴⁴ Although the interpretations of the Magi differed to some extent, by the fourth century certain traditions had been established – notably the connection between Balaam's prophecy and the Magi, as well as the exceptionality or newness of the star. See Hegedus: *The Magi and the Star*, p. 88, p. 93.

⁴⁴⁵ The 'rediscovery' of the relics of the Magi in Milan in the twelfth century and their following transfer to Cologne prompted the development of a cult of veneration of the Magi. See for this: Kehrer: *Die Heiligen Drei Könige in Literatur und Kunst*; Hofmann: *Die Heiligen Drei Könige*; Trexler: *The Journey of the Magi*. In addition, over the next centuries the number of the Magi as three and their identification as kings became widely accepted. See on these developments: Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 1, p. 445, p. 476; Richard C. Trexler: *Zahl und Geschlecht der Heiligen Drei Könige*, in: Andrea Löther et al. (eds.): *Mundus in imagine. Bildsprache und Lebenswelt im Mittelalter*, Munich 1996, pp. 205–218; Trexler: *The Journey of the Magi*, pp. 38–39; Klaus Oschema: *Bilder von Europa im Mittelalter*, Ostfildern 2013, pp. 491–499.

commentaries were also influenced by contemporary concerns – especially the scholastic preoccupation with magic and natural philosophy.⁴⁴⁶

Regarding the figures of the Magi, the question was often discussed whether they should be understood as magicians or astrologers and whether astrology should be counted as a subdivision of magic. In his Sermon for Epiphany, the theologian Peter Abelard († 1142), for example, characterised the Magi explicitly as magicians (*malefici*), equated them with soothsayers (*[h]arioli*), and stated that they owed their “abominable and detestable doctrine” (*nefaria et exsecrabilis doctrina*) to demons. However, he argued that precisely because they were the masters of the “greatest error” (*maximus error*), they were fittingly the first of the Gentiles to convert to Christianity.⁴⁴⁷ While it was thus their daemonic knowledge that prompted the Magi to follow the star, the birth of Christ signified the end of their doctrine.⁴⁴⁸ However, Peter Abelard also acknowledged that some people thought that the Magi were not “magicians” (*malefici*) but “knowledgeable in the stars, like astronomers” (*astrorum periti, quasi astronomici*).⁴⁴⁹ He links this to the story of (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, in which the Magi, informed through the writings of Balaam and Seth, had waited for generations for the star’s appearance until it appeared to them in the form of a child with the cross above it.⁴⁵⁰ In Abelard’s text, it is possible to observe a juxtaposition of “magicians” and “people knowledgeable in the stars” and a level of uncertainty in assessing the Magi.

⁴⁴⁶ See for the scholastic interest in the pericope: Collins: Scholastics, Stars, and Magi. On the interest in magic by scholastics: Marrone: Magic and Natural Philosophy; Collins: Scholasticism and High Medieval Opposition to Magic.

⁴⁴⁷ Peter Abelard: Sermones, in: PL 178, Paris 1855, cols. 379–611, here Sermo 4: In Epiphania Domini, cols. 409–410.

⁴⁴⁸ Peter Abelard cites Jerome’s dictum that it was either through their demonic knowledge or through Balaam’s prophecy that the Magi followed the star and understood its meaning, but that this in any case meant the destruction of the “power of their art” (*potestas artis*). Peter Abelard: Sermones, Sermo 4: In Epiphania Domini, col. 409.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., col. 413: *Sunt qui praedictos magos non sic appellari autumant, quia fuerint malefici, sed quod astrorum periti, quasi astronomici, vel quacunque alia de cause sic vocati*. There seems to have been an uncertainty or vagueness regarding what to call people “knowledgeable in the stars” as Peter Abelard adds to his reference to *astronomici* “or whatever else they are called for this reason”. It is furthermore remarkable that Abelard did not describe the Magi directly as “astrologers”, only as “knowledgeable in the stars” and “like astronomers”. This would suggest that he does not equate them fully with contemporaries practising astrology. Abelard addressed the issue of astrology in more detail in his commentary on the Book of Genesis, in which he used the creation of the stars and heavenly bodies on the fourth day of creation as a starting point for a refutation of judicial astrology. Peter Abelard: Expositio in Hexameron, ed. by Mary Romig / David Luscombe, in: Petri Abaelardi Opera Theologica, vol. 5 (CCCM 15), Turnhout 2004, pp. 3–111, here pp. 42–51. For Abaelard’s stance on astrology, see D’Alverny: Abélard et l’astrologie.

⁴⁵⁰ Peter Abelard: Sermones, Sermo 4: In Epiphania Domini, col. 413. On (Pseudo-)Chrysostom’s account, see footnote 433.

More definitive identification of the Magi as astrologers can be found in another influential twelfth-century commentary on the pericope of Matthew. In the anonymous *Enarrationes*, the Magi are explicitly distinguished from magicians (*malefici*) and defined as “wise astrologers” (*sapientes astrologi*) who came from the land of the Persians and Chaldeans.⁴⁵¹ While the Magi are clearly described as astrologers here, the author also cites the prophecy of Balaam, which he considers fulfilled by the Magi’s seeking out of Christ.⁴⁵² Furthermore, he explains that the Magi were moved by “divine inspiration” (*divina inspiratio*) to follow the star because they believed they would find God whom they wanted to worship.⁴⁵³ However, the author also refers to Jerome’s statement that the Magi knew about the birth of Christ either through the instruction of demons or through Balaam’s prophecy. He clarifies this by saying that Jerome’s reference to demons was due to their teaching of astrology. Nevertheless, he does not seem to agree with this statement – at least concerning the birth of Christ – as he adds that demons had been ignorant of Christ’s birth.⁴⁵⁴

Referring to a sermon by Gregory the Great, the author of the *Enarrationes* then explains why a star guided the Magi instead of the angel that appeared to the shepherds. He writes that different types of revelation were chosen because the Jews, since they used reason (*ratio*), received the information about the birth of Christ through a rational being, i.e. the angel. The Gentiles, who did not know how to use reason (*ratio*), were guided by the star as a sign. The author adds that this was furthermore fitting since the Chaldeans were knowledgeable about the stars, while the Jews had heard sufficiently about angels from the prophets and had seen them at one time.⁴⁵⁵ In the *Enarrationes*,

⁴⁵¹ *Enarrationes in Evangelium Sancti Matthaei*, in: PL 162, Paris 1889, cols. 1227–1500, here col. 1253. In a later passage (col. 1254), the Babylonians and Chaldeans are again highlighted as “experts/knowledgeable of the stars” (*periti astrorum*). On the *Enarrationes* and its possible authorship, see Damien van den Eynde: *Autour des “Enarrationes in Evangelium S. Matthaei” attribuées à Geoffroi Babion*, in: *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 26 (1959), pp. 50–84. Collins: *Scholastics, Stars, and Magi*, pp. 261–262, lists the *Enarrationes* as one of three “benchmark-setting expositions of the gospels”.

⁴⁵² *Enarrationes in Evangelium Sancti Matthaei*, col. 1254.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*: *Divina tamen inspiratione creduntur incitati, cum Deum esse credant quam adorare postulant.*

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: *Sed Hieronymus super Isaiam dicit: Magi ab orienti docti a daemonibus, vel juxta prophetiam Balaam natum intelligentes Filium Dei, qui omnem artis eorum destrueret potestatem, venerunt Bethlehem, et ostendente stella adoraverunt puerum. Docti a daemones dicuntur, quia per astronomiam, quam daemones docuerunt, docti erant. Daemones enim Christi nativitatem ignorabant.*

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, cols. 1254–1255: *Gregorius. Merito nato Domino angelus pastoribus apparuit; magos autem non angelus, sed stella perduxit; quia Judaeis tanquam ratione utentibus rationale animal, id est angelus praedicare debuit. Gentiles vero, quia uti ratione nesciebant, per signa ducendi erant. Signa enim data sunt infidelibus non fidelibus. Dignum etiam erat, ut per stellam Chaldaeis (qui de stellis sciebant) Christus ostenderetur, et per angelos Judaeis, qui angelos in prophetis satis audierant, et ipsi aliquando viderant.*

the Magi are thus portrayed as astrologers who learn about the birth of Christ through their familiar knowledge, i.e. the observation of the stars. This, however, is depicted as a lower, less rational form of revelation than the annunciation through an angel. Although ultimately, both forms of revelation came from God, the author emphasised that the Magi were Gentiles through this dichotomy.⁴⁵⁶

In the thirteenth century, we find extensive discussions of the Magi in the commentaries of two of the most influential scholastics of the time: Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas.⁴⁵⁷ Both draw on various earlier authorities and commentators, and although they often make similar statements, they also set their own priorities. Neither of the two scholars explicitly referred to the Magi as astrologers. Instead, they both distinguished them from magicians (*malefici*) and described them as “having knowledge about everything”.⁴⁵⁸ Albertus Magnus further elaborates with which other figures the Magi should not be equated. For a *magus*, he writes, was not a “mathematician, enchanter, magician, necromancer, soothsayer, augur or diviner” (*mathematicus et incantator et maleficus sive nigromanticus et ariolus et haruspex et divinator*).⁴⁵⁹ In order to avoid such confusion, he provides an overview of the definitions of the individual terms. As far as astrology is concerned, his explanation of the two different meanings of the term *mathematicus* is instructive. Based on the pronunciation of *mathesis*, a *mathematicus* can firstly denote someone who knows about “separation and abstraction”, which were topics addressed by the quadrivial arts.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., col. 1255: *Signa enim data sunt infidelibus non fidelibus*. However, the author later also remarks that the Jews did not deserve to see the star as they did not recognise Christ as king. This, therefore, revalues the star as a sign of revelation. *Gentilis enim inquit Deum, natum dicit, regemque Judaeorum asserit; Judaeus vero quaerere contemnit juxta sequasi inventum non agnoscit, regem suum fateri, prorsus refugit, quod totum significat illuminationem gentium; Judaeorum autem excaecationem. Unde nec meruerunt videre stellam.*

⁴⁵⁷ Albertus Magnus: *Super Matthaeum. Capitula I–XIV*, ed. by Bernhard Schmidt, in: *Sancti doctoris ecclesiae Alberti Magni ordinis fratrum praedicatorum episcopi Opera omnia*, vol. 21, part 1, Münster 1987, pp. 44–65; Thomas Aquinas: *Catena aurea in quatuor Evangelia*, vol. 1: *Expositionem in Matthaeum et Marcum*, ed. Bernard Marie de Rossi, Turin 1896, pp. 26–41 (on Matthew 2).

⁴⁵⁸ Albertus Magnus: *Super Matthaeum* ed. Schmidt, p. 46: *Nec sunt magi malefici, sicut quidam male opinantur. Quia magus proprie vir magnus est, qui scientiam habens de omnibus, [...]*. Thomas Aquinas: *Catena aurea*, ed. de Rossi, vol. 1, p. 27, did not directly state that the Magi were not *malefici* but attributed this ascription solely to “common parlance”: *Magi vero sunt qui de singulis rebus philosophantur; sed sermo communis Magos pro maleficis accipit; qui aliter tamen habentur apud gentem suam, eo quod sint philosophi Chaldaeorum, [...]*.

⁴⁵⁹ Albertus Magnus: *Super Matthaeum*, ed. Schmidt, p. 46: *Magus enim et mathematicus et incantator et maleficus sive nigromanticus et ariolus et haruspex et divinator differunt*. On Albertus Magnus’s taxonomy and possible sources, especially Isidore of Seville: Collins: *Scholastics, Stars, and Magi*, pp. 265–268.

This type of knowledge was “not reprehensible but praiseworthy”.⁴⁶⁰ However, the second type, *mathesis* with a long middle syllable, would signify divination from the course of the stars and was sometimes good and sometimes bad.⁴⁶¹ If it refers to things subject to the regular order of nature, Albertus Magnus thought it “very useful for many to avoid harm and promote advantages.” If this was not the case, the practitioner should be considered a “trickster” (*trufator*) and “charlatan” (*trutannus*) and should be cast aside.⁴⁶² Albertus Magnus thus explicitly differentiated the biblical Magi from astrologers – whether they were considered legitimate or not.

Besides the figures of the Magi, he also paid great attention to the star of Christ in his commentary. Like earlier writers, he presents the star as distinct from other celestial bodies. While he still depicts Christ’s star as a star *per se*, Albertus Magnus stresses that it did not act as such. He seems to have been particularly interested in its astronomical features, as he discusses five aspects that distinguished the star from others in detail, i.e. its nature, position, movement, brightness and significance.⁴⁶³ As David J. Collins has pointed out, the perspective of Albertus Magnus as a scholastic and natural philosopher shines through in his classification of the Magi and the extensive discussion of the star’s physical attributes.⁴⁶⁴ It is precisely this additional perspective as a natural philosopher and, to some extent, even an advocate of astrology that makes his commentary exceptional.⁴⁶⁵ Hence, it is instructive to note that although the portrayal of the Magi is more favourable than, for example, in Peter Abelard’s commentary, Albertus Magnus does not present the Magi as positive role models for astrologers but sees them as a separate group. The Magi rather resemble wise natural philosophers, who, among other issues, also dealt with astronomical matters.

⁴⁶⁰ Albertus Magnus: *Super Matthaeum*, ed. Schmidt, p. 46: *Mathematicus autem duplex est. Mathesis enim idem est quod scientia de separatis et abstractis, [...], sicut est tota quadrivii scientia. Et hoc non reprehensibile, sed laudabile.*

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46: *Aliter dicitur mathesis, producta media syllaba, idem quod divination per cursus siderum. Et haec aliquando est bona et aliquando mala, [...].*

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 46: *Si quis enim pronosticatur per stellas de his quae non subiacent nisi ordini causarum naturalium, et sua pronosticatio est de eis, secundum quod ordini illi subiacent, et non extendit se ad illa eadem nisi eatenus, quo inclinatur ad ea primus ordo naturae, qui est in situ stellarum et circulo, non male facit, sed potius utiliter a multis cavet nocuentis et promovet utilitates. Qui autem non consideratis omnibus pronuntiat de his quae futura sunt, aliter quam dictum est, trufator est et trutannus et abiciendus.*

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 48: *Haec autem stella in quinque differebat a stellis aliis secundum omnes communiter, natura videlicet, situ, motu, claritate et significatione.* For a discussion of these aspects, see Collins: *Scholastics, Stars, and Magi*, pp. 268–270.

⁴⁶⁴ Collins: *Scholastics, Stars, and Magi*, p. 258.

⁴⁶⁵ About Albertus Magnus’s stance to astrology: H. Darrel Rutkin: *Astrology and Magic*, in: Irven M. Resnick (ed.): *A Companion to Albert the Great. Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences* (Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition 38), Leiden / Boston 2013, pp. 451–505.

Although similar in many respects, Albertus Magnus's pupil Thomas Aquinas presented the Magi and the star somewhat differently in his commentary. He equally depicted the Magi as wise philosophers but emphasised their original faithlessness. Following Augustine, Thomas Aquinas explained that Christ deliberately did not reveal himself to "the learned or righteous" (*docti vel iusti*) but instead to the shepherds in their "ignorance" (*imperitia*) and the Magi in their "impiety" (*impietas*).⁴⁶⁶ The different types of revelations were also chosen on this basis: The shepherds were given the prophecies as "believers" (*fideles*), the Magi the sign of the star as "unbelievers" (*infideles*).⁴⁶⁷ The Magi are thus defined precisely by their unbelief and depicted as the antithesis of the faithful. Through this, above all, Christ's power is emphasised, as even unbelievers recognised him.⁴⁶⁸

Thomas Aquinas also took a closer look at the nature of the star and as to why the Magi were able to recognise its significance. Like Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas held that the star was no ordinary celestial body. However, he did not focus on astronomical matters; instead, he tried to distinguish the star from any 'normal' astronomical phenomena, stressing specifically its divine exceptionality. Indeed, he did not even perceive it to be a star – its route and conduct revealed it to be a "rational power" (*virtus rationalis*) that only took the appearance of a star.⁴⁶⁹ This was particularly important because Thomas Aquinas vehemently opposed the idea that Christ was in any way under the influence of the stars. On the contrary, he argued with

⁴⁶⁶ Thomas Aquinas: *Catena aurea*, ed. de Rossi, vol. 1, p. 27: *Manifestus est ergo Jesus non doctis, nec iustis: praevallet namque imperitia in rusticitate pastorum, et impietas in sacrilegiis Magorum.*

⁴⁶⁷ Thomas Aquinas also refers to Gregory the Great's distinction based on reason, i.e. the Jews, who could use reason, were informed by a rational being (the angel), but the Gentiles, who did not know how to use reason, were guided by a sign. Thomas Aquinas: *Catena aurea*, ed. de Rossi, vol. 1, p. 30: *Et rationabiliter Judaeis, tamquam ratione utentibus, rationale animal, idest Angelus, praedicare debuit. Gentiles vero, quia ratione uti nesciebant, ad cognoscendum Dominum non per vocem, sed per signa perducuntur: quia et illis prophetiae tamquam fidelibus, et istis signa tamquam infidelibus data sunt.*

⁴⁶⁸ This trope also functioned as contrast to the behaviour of the Jews who did not recognise Christ. For early Christian anti-Jewish readings of the Matthean pericope Hegedus: *The Magi and the Star*, pp. 88–89. Thomas Aquinas also cites (Pseudo-)Chrysostom's statement that the magi, after returning home, met the apostle Thomas, were baptised and became "executors of His preaching". Thomas Aquinas: *Catena aurea*, ed. de Rossi, vol. 1, p. 36: *Et denique cum Thomas ivisset ad provinciam illam, adjuncti sunt ei; et baptizati, facti sunt executores praedicationis ipsius.*

⁴⁶⁹ Thomas Aquinas: *Catena aurea*, ed. de Rossi, vol. 1, p. 30: *Quoniam autem non caelestium una stellarum haec fuit, manifestum est; nulla enim alia stellarum hac via procedit [...]. [...]; quod non est stellae motus, sed virtutis cujusdam rationalis; unde videtur haec stella virtutis invisibilis fuisse in talem apparentiam formata.* He adds that some therefore considered this star to have been the Holy Ghost or the angel that also appeared to the shepherds. This contradicts the previous distinction that to the shepherds the angel appeared as a rational force, but to the magi the star appeared only as a sign. This inconsistency can be explained by the nature of the commentary, in which Thomas Aquinas merely lists authoritative statements side by side which do not necessarily have to agree.

Augustine it was the star that was under the influence of Christ.⁴⁷⁰ He also used this aspect to discuss his view on the futility of astrology in general.⁴⁷¹ Nevertheless, the question remained how the Magi knew that the star signified the birth of Christ. Here, Thomas Aquinas suggests the possibility that they did so through some revelation by the angels or that they recognised Christ through the star since a secular king would typically be indicated by such.⁴⁷² He also again links this to the prophecy of Balaam.⁴⁷³

The brief overview of the textual representation of the Magi showed a somewhat ambiguous notion of the figures and their characterisation. In addition to the discussions mentioned above, other attributes of the Magi were also addressed in early Christian and medieval texts. Most notable are their identification as kings, their trinity, and the assertion that they represented three different generations and continents.⁴⁷⁴ For the question as to why astrologers did not choose the Magi as role models, their characterisation as unbelievers and the judgement of the star as something other than a regular celestial body seem particularly pertinent. Regardless of whether the Magi were depicted as magicians, philosophers or even astrologers, there is no depiction of them using astrological calculations to find Christ or to understand that he was born. Their interest in the stars was predominantly used to explain why a star was chosen as a form of revelation and to depict them as the ‘other’ – they are the representatives of the superstition and faithlessness that were overcome by the coming of Christ. In some texts, notably that of Albertus the Great, the Magi’s portrayal took on a more positive connotation which, however, only related to their general wisdom instead of astrological expertise.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 29: [...], *non stellam Christo, sed Christum stellae fatum fuisse diceremus*.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 28–29. He denies the influence of the heavenly bodies on free will but admits a certain influence on the temporal world with regard to the seasons, etc. For his stance on astrology, see Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, pp. 608–615; H. Darrel Rutkin: *Is Astrology a Type of Divination?* Thomas Aquinas, the Index of Prohibited Books, and the Construction of a Legitimate Astrology in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, in: *International Journal of Divination and Prognostication* 1 (2019), pp. 36–74.

⁴⁷² Thomas Aquinas: *Catena aurea*, ed. de Rossi, vol. 1, p. 30: *A quibus audierunt quod talis, scilicet stella, Christum natum significaret? Profecto ab Angelis aliqua monitione revelationis. [...] Vel Judaeorum natum regem intellexerunt, cum stella indice temporalis rex soleat designari*. The statement that a star could indicate the birth of a king seems to contradict Thomas Aquinas’ earlier refutation of astrology, but he does not comment further on whether he too believed that a star could indicate this in general or whether this was just the belief of the Magi.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., p. 30: *Sicut enim datur intellegi, traditionem Balaam sequebantur, [...]*. He also makes the connection to Balaam in a previous passage and agrees with the depiction of the magi as descendants of Balaam. Ibid., p. 27: *Alii vero dicunt illos fuisse nepotes Balaam: quod magis est credendum; [...]*.

⁴⁷⁴ For the different attributions and their developments, see Oschema: *Bilder von Europa*, pp. 491–499.

So how did the astrologers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries respond to such ambivalent interpretations of the Magi? As mentioned above, the Magi were not included as founding fathers or prominent representatives of astrology in the astrologers' origin stories. In some cases, however, references to the Magi, the star of Bethlehem or related matters can be found elsewhere in the astrological texts. Michael Scot, for example, addresses the figures of the Magi in a chapter of his *Prohemium* in which he considers how it was possible that each creature "sensed" God to fulfil His wishes.⁴⁷⁵ He begins by describing that there were three Magi, each living in one of the three parts of the world. Having been forewarned by the prophecy of Balaam, they met every year to worship and await the prophesied star. In the year of Christ's birth, they stood for three days on Mount Victorialis until "a most powerful star" (*stella maxima*) appeared, which had the form of a beautiful boy with a "spectacular crown" (*corona speciosa*) in which the sign of the cross could be seen. This boy told them to go to the land of Juda, where they would find the king they desired to see, which they subsequently did.⁴⁷⁶ Michael Scot thus largely followed the commentary on Matthew by (Pseudo-)Chrysostom. However, he also explains the meaning of the term *magus*. According to Michael Scot, a *magus* is threefold: "a deceiver, a magician and a sage" (*illusor, maleficus, sapiens*). In his opinion, the biblical Magi, whom he also refers to as kings, corresponded to all three descriptions. After the birth of Christ, he writes, they converted and became "witnesses of the highest king and teachers in the signs of the Trinity".⁴⁷⁷

Michael Scot's description of the Magi and their assessment are largely consistent with their general portrayal in biblical commentaries. He does not attribute astrological abilities to them in any way or considers the star from an astronomical point of view. On the contrary, the incorporation of the description of the star in the form of the

⁴⁷⁵ Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, p. 19: *Quare omnia creatorem suum senciunt qui est solus Deus et rector orbis?* His discussion of the Magi: Ibid., pp. 21–22.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 21–22: *Nam in die nativitatis ipsius, tres magi unum Deum omni anno adorabant, licet essent disperse in tribus partibus orbis cum unus eorum esset in Asia, secundus in Affrica, tercius in Europa. Causa huius fuit quia propheta Balaam dudum pronunciaverunt populo sic: 'Orietur stella ex Iacob et exsurget homo de Iacob,' id est de stirpe Iudeorum. [...] Ascendentes autem super montem altissimum iuxta id trivium qui dicitur mons victorialis, ibi steterunt tribus diebus adorantes continuo. In tercio vero die viderunt stellam maximam et quasi prope terram in qua videbatur esse forma pueri pulcherimi habentes coronam speciosam in capite et in ea videbatur sibi esse signum crucis quasi depicte. Puer autem loquebatur illis in hunc modum. 'Ite velociter in terram Iuda et ibi regem quem desideratis videre invenietis natum de virgine.' Et hec stella Christus est et Dominus totius mundi.*

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.: *Et ideo cognoscentes istud esse miraculosum, pari voluntate iverunt postea usque ad ipsum in Betleem. Et nota quod magus tripliciter dicitur, scilicet illusor, maleficus, et sapiens. Nam isti tres reges erant magni et magi, id est illusores, malefici, et sapientes, qui postea sunt conversi et facti testes summi regis et doctores in signum trinitatis.*

crowned Christ from the commentary of (Pseudo-)Chrysostom decidedly shows the star to be a divine manifestation. Furthermore, Michael Scot describes the apparition as a “new star” (*stella nova*) that the Magi recognised as miraculous (*miraculosus*) – thereby clearly setting it apart from other heavenly bodies.⁴⁷⁸

Roger Bacon, by contrast, did not deal with the biblical Magi in detail. In his *Opus majus*, we only find a reference to their assumed origin in his section on geography.⁴⁷⁹ A further mention of *magi* – this time in the general sense – can be found in a passage where he differentiates between “true” and “false” *mathematici*.⁴⁸⁰ He addresses and refutes above all the arguments of the Church Fathers against astrology. Among other things, they argued that *mathematici* had hindered the entry of faith into the world.⁴⁸¹ According to Roger Bacon, however, this accusation only referred to the “false mathematicians” (*mathematici falsi*) who claimed the necessity of the stars’ influence. Furthermore, those *mathematici* would put themselves on a par with the early Christians by attributing miracles – which “proved the faith of Christ” – not to the power of God but to their kind of *mathematica*. They would call Christians *mathematici* and *magi* who seduced people and employed the same “magical art” as themselves.⁴⁸² Roger Bacon, in this case, clearly portrayed the *magi* as representatives of magic. However, he not only distinguished Christians performing divine miracles from them but also “true” *mathematici*, a term he understood to mean astronomers/astrologers.⁴⁸³ Roger Bacon’s *magi* – at least in the general sense – are therefore not used as potential role models of astrologers. To the contrary, they are explicitly dissociated from them.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 21: *Celum in nativitate Christi mandavit deorsum stellam novam que aparuit residere in oriente, [...] [...] Et ideo cognoscentes istud esse miraculosum, [...]*.

⁴⁷⁹ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, p. 332: [...], *et est illa Saba thurifera, et de hac Saba venerunt magi qui adoraverunt Christum, non de Saba quae est in Ethiopia. Nam illa est in meridie. Ab oriente enim secundum Evangelium venerunt magi.*

⁴⁸⁰ Roger Bacon distinguished between two types of *mathematica*: one meant legitimate mathematics, including astrology, the other magic. Ibid., part 4, pp. 238–239. For a discussion of this section, see Chapter 5.2.1.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., part 4, pp. 242–242: *Sed praecipua ratio sanctorum fuit ad hoc, quod tales mathematici impediverunt a principio ingressum fidei in hunc mundum, quia non solum imbuti hac fantasia erraverunt in fide et finxerunt mores suos in coelestibus, tanquam per coelestia et caetera dicta de necessitate fierent iracundi vel mansueti, casti vel luxuriosi, et sic de aliis; [...]*

⁴⁸² Ibid., part 4, pp. 241–242: [...]; *sed opera miraculosa fidem Christi probantia ascripserunt isti mathematicae, dicentes, Christianos esse mathematicos et magos populum seducentes. [...], sic imposuerunt apostolis et martyribus et caeteris praedicatoribus fidei quod non ex parte Dei fecerunt vera miracula, sed per Artem magicam qua ipsimet uti sunt.* He then explains that it was only “this type of *mathematica* which was condemned fully by the holy teachers and the Church.” Ibid. p. 242: *Et ideo hanc mathematicam et ejus professors sancti et ecclesia penitus damnaverunt.*

⁴⁸³ While Roger Bacon distinguished between *astrologia* and *astronomia*, he often used the terms interchangeable. Here, he explicitly states that *astrologus* and *astronomus* can be used synonymously. Ibid., part 4, p. 242: *Sed veri mathematici, quos in hac parte vocamus astronomos et astrologos, quia indifferenter a Ptolemaeo et Avicenna et aliis pluribus sic vocantur, [...]*.

While Roger Bacon did not directly address the role of the Magi in the birth of Christ, he was intensely interested in a question regarding the birth of Christ also raised in other introductory astrological works of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, i.e. whether the birth and life of Christ were in any way connected to celestial influences.⁴⁸⁴ The discussion about this was prompted not only by Matthew's account but was revived in the late Middle Ages, particularly by way of the theory of conjunctions, which had reached the Latin West mainly through the translated works of the Persian astrologer Albumasar (†886).⁴⁸⁵ It essentially stated that periodically recurring conjunctions, i.e. the alignment of certain planets, particularly of Jupiter and Saturn, would signify important events on earth.⁴⁸⁶ One aspect that preoccupied the Christian-Latin astrologers of the late Middle Ages was whether the rise and fall of religions could also be determined by this theory and, in particular, whether Christianity was therefore subject to the influences of the stars. This was seen as an especially urgent issue since it could be a way to predict – and prepare for – the expected arrival of the Antichrist.⁴⁸⁷ Although the Magi were not the focus of these deliberations, the interest in this topic provides another clue as to why the Magi were not chosen as role models by the astrologers.

Roger Bacon was one of the most vocal proponents of the theory of conjunctions; he discussed it extensively in his *Opus Majus*.⁴⁸⁸ Following Albumasar, he differentiates six different religions or “sects” and explicitly states that Christianity was one of

⁴⁸⁴ For an overview of the development of the idea of drawing the horoscope of Christ, particularly during the Renaissance, see Ornella Pompeo Faracovi: *Gli oroscopi di Cristo*, Venice 1999.

⁴⁸⁵ The theory was first developed by the Jewish astrologer Masha'allah (c. †815) and was used by Albumasar's teacher al-Kindi (†873). Albumasar elaborated on it in his *Book of Religions and Dynasties* (also known as *On Conjunctions*), which was translated by John of Seville in the twelfth century under the Latin title *De magnis coniunctionibus*. For the origin, history and the astrological details of this theory, see John D. North: *Astrology and the Fortunes of Churches*, in: *Centaurus* 24 (1980), pp. 181–211, esp. pp. 185–188.

⁴⁸⁶ There were three types of conjunctions: the great conjunction (*coniunctio magna*), which occurs every 20 years, the greater conjunction (*coniunctio maior*), which occurs every 240 years, and the greatest conjunction (*coniunctio maxima*), which only occurs every 960 years. The general assumption was that the less frequently a conjunction occurred, the greater its effects were. North: *Astrology and the Fortunes of Churches*, p. 186.

⁴⁸⁷ On Roger Bacon's stance, see Burnett: *The Astrological Categorization of Religions*; Carey: *Astrology and the Antichrist*, Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, p. 672. Roger Bacon's views on religions in general has been analysed by Erich Heck: *Roger Bacon. Ein mittelalterlicher Versuch einer historischen und systematischen Religionswissenschaft* (Abhandlungen zur Philosophie, Psychologie und Pädagogik 13), Bonn 1957. The theory received new impetus especially in the context of the great Western schism and was discussed by the French Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly († 1420). See Ackerman Smoller: *History, Prophecy, and the Stars*. See for this also Chapter 5.3.2.

⁴⁸⁸ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, pp. 255–269.

them.⁴⁸⁹ Christianity's advent, he writes, was linked to the occurrence of a "greater conjunction" (*coniunctio maior*) which signified the birth of Christ six years later.⁴⁹⁰ Regarding the question whether the stars influenced the birth of Christ, he agrees with biblical commentators that the divine character of Christ could in no way have been subject to a celestial arrangement. The conjunction had merely served as a sign.⁴⁹¹ However, he states that insofar as the conception and birth of Christ were natural, i.e. in terms of His human form, a celestial influence could be assumed.⁴⁹² His subsequent remark shows that this concession must have been highly controversial since he writes that "whatever they [i.e. the astrologers] said about this must be reduced to the rule of faith so that it would not contradict Catholic truth."⁴⁹³

Indeed, Paul L. Sidelko considers Roger Bacon's statements on the astrological influence on Christ's birth and the rise of Christianity to be the reason for his condemnation by the Franciscan Order.⁴⁹⁴ Sidelko even goes a step further and equally

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., part 4, p. 262: *Sic igitur astronomi discutiunt sectas et praecipue Albumazar in libro conjunctionum, [...], ut inveniantur sex sectae principalis [...]. Et per hoc habetur quod secta Christi sit una de principalibus.* Apart from Christianity, he also mentioned the religions of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Muslims and Jews. Roger Bacon based his account mainly on Albumazar's *On Conjunctions* as well as the *De Vetula*, ascribed to Ovid. The *De Vetula* was probably written in the thirteenth century and was also largely dependent on Albumazar's work. Roger Bacon adopted their explanations in such a way that they could be interpreted in the most favourable way for Christianity. For the differences see Burnett: *The Astrological Categorization of Religions*.

⁴⁹⁰ He based these statements on the (pseudo-)Ovidian *De vetula*: Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, pp. 263–264: *Et una major vel fere maxima fuit xxiv anno Augusti Caesaris, quam dixerunt sapientes astronomi significare super legem Mercurialem futuram. [...], refertur Ovidius Naso locutus fuisse de hac conjunctione, et ex ejus dispositione prorupisse in admirationem sectae Mercuriales producendae in mundum per prophetam nasciturum de virgine absque maris commixtione, quam futuram esse praedixit post illam conjunctionem per annos sex, ita quod secundum ipsum nasceretur xxx anno Octaviani Augusti.*

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., part 4, p. 267: *Et proculdubio volunt quod impossibile sit Deum subjici creaturae, nec quod istud opus divinum in quantum fuit a virtute infinita et supra naturam, aliquo modo fuerit subjectum dispositioni coelesti; sed solum quod illud fuerat in signum.*

⁴⁹² Ibid., part 4, p. 268: *Si enim aliquid naturale fuerit in illa conceptione per materiae praeparationem et fomentum in utero et hujusmodi, in quantum fuerat naturalis et vera mater, non aestimant inconueniens ponere coelestem dispositionem esse plus quam signum, consideratis pure naturalibus.*

⁴⁹³ Ibid., part 4, p. 268: *Sed quicquid dicunt in hac parte, hoc ad regulam fidei reducendum est, ut a catholica veritate non discordet.*

⁴⁹⁴ Sidelko: *The Condemnation of Roger Bacon*, esp. p. 71: "[...], a specific aspect of Bacon's astrology, based on pagan writings, which states that the human nature of Jesus Christ and the advent of the Christian religion were influenced by a celestial phenomenon, is of sufficiently heterodox belief to have motivated his Franciscan superiors to imprison him and to condemn his doctrine." The circumstances of Roger Bacon's condemnation are not known and are based solely on the *Chronicle of the XXIV Generals*, written in 1370 and thus almost a hundred years after Roger Bacon's alleged conviction (c. 1277–1279). In the text Roger Bacon is said to have been sentenced to imprisonment for "some suspected novelties". *Chronica XXIV generalium ordinis minorum*, in: *Analecta Francisca* 1897, vol. 2, p. 360: *Hic Generalis frater Hieronymus de multorum fratrum consilio condemnavit et reprobavit doctrinam Fratris Rogerii Bachonis Angilici, sacrae theologiae magistri, continens aliquas novitates suspectas, propter quas fuit idem Rogerius carceri condemnatus, [...].* Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, pp. 628–629, had previously disputed that the condemnation should be linked to Roger Bacon's statement on astrology as his views were not novelties but shared with many others. Jeremiah Hackett:

connects the later inquisitorial indictments of Peter of Abano († c. 1316) and Cecco d'Ascoli († 1327) with their declaration of similar propositions.⁴⁹⁵ In the case of Roger Bacon, Sidelko arrives at his assessment primarily through a comparison of Bacon's position with that of other thirteenth-century scholars. For Cecco d'Ascoli, however, there is a more tangible indication that his conviction may be at least partly connected to his statements about a possible astrological influence on Christ.

Evidence for this is provided by the Italian chronicler Giovanni Villani (†1348), who recounts the fate of Cecco d'Ascoli. As one reason for Cecco's death sentence, Giovanni Villani states that Cecco claimed that "Christ came to earth according to the will of God and with the necessity of the course of astrology, and that through his nativity he had to be and live with his disciples like a *poltrone* and die the death He did."⁴⁹⁶ Although the chronicler explicitly points out that Cecco d'Ascoli expressed this opinion in his "treatise on the Sphere", no such statement can be found in this work – at least not in its extant version.⁴⁹⁷ On the contrary, in his commentary, the astrologer emphatically denies that the nature of the stars determined Christ's birth. Instead, he writes that it was Christ who was the stars' creator.⁴⁹⁸ As witnesses to this, Cecco d'Ascoli names the Magi the "greatest astrologers in the world", who knew "all of nature's secrets". They came to venerate Christ as God's son and a king because they had seen a star displaying the cross and a boy bearing a crown.⁴⁹⁹ Although this is the first case where an astrologer explicitly refers to the Magi as astrologers, the birth of Christ is described as divine, and their recognition of Him as God's son is not based on

Roger Bacon: His Life, Career and Works, p. 19 n. 26, suspects a connection with the general condemnations of Paris in 1277.

⁴⁹⁵ Sidelko: The Condemnation of Roger Bacon, p. 79.

⁴⁹⁶ Giovanni Villani: Nuova Cronica, vol. 2, ed. Porta, book 11, chap. 41, p. 570: *La cagione perché fu arso sì fu perché, essendo in Bologna, fece uno trattato sopra la spera, [...], e dicendo come Cristo venne in terra accordandosi il volere di Dio co la necessità del corso di storlomia, e dovea per la sua natività essere e vivere co' suoi discepoli come poltrone, e morire de la morte ch'egli morio; [...]*.

⁴⁹⁷ The work in question is a commentary on John of Sacrobosco's work *De Sphaera*. Cecco d'Ascoli: Commentary on Sacrobosco's Sphere, ed. Thorndike, pp. 344–411. About the possible reasons and background for his condemnation: Massimo Giansante: La condanna di Cecco d'Ascoli: fra astrologia e pauperismo, in: Antonio Rigon (ed.): Cecco d'Ascoli. Cultura scienza e politica nell'Italia del Trecento, Rome 2007, pp. 183–200; also Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 2, pp. 948–968.

⁴⁹⁸ Cecco d'Ascoli: Commentary on Sacrobosco's Sphere, ed. Thorndike, p. 408: *Et quod vere sit filius dei et non factus a natura celestium, immo nature celestis factor, apparet nobis per multa*. Similarly, he also addresses the darkness that prevailed during the Passion of Christ – claiming that this was a genuine miracle and not due to a natural eclipse or other natural phenomena. Cecco d'Ascoli: Commentary on Sacrobosco's Sphere, ed. Thorndike, pp. 408–411.

⁴⁹⁹ Cecco d'Ascoli: Commentary on Sacrobosco's Sphere, ed. Thorndike, p. 408: *Primo per tres magos qui erant maiores astrologi mundi et sciebant universa naturae secreta. Voluerunt ipsum tamquam dei filium et regem adorare, videntes in stella que eis apparuit cum quadam cruce puerum coronatum*

their astrological abilities. Nevertheless, this could, to a certain extent, suggest a development towards claiming the Magi as proto-astrologers, even though Cecco does not elaborate on this or use it explicitly as an argument.

Even if the accusations and condemnations of Roger Bacon, Peter of Abano or Cecco d'Ascoli cannot be traced back with certainty to statements made about the astrological influence on Christ's birth and life, it is nevertheless clear that this was a highly contentious issue. While the Magi do not feature prominently in these discussions, the explosive nature of the topic may have contributed to the astrologers not choosing them as role models to avoid further controversy. The reasons why the astrologers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries did not do this cannot be conclusively elucidated.

However, the deliberations presented here offer some clues. The overview of key developments in assessing the Magi in biblical commentaries showed a somewhat ambivalent depiction of them. While they were to some extent associated with astrology or at least the observation of the heavens, these practices were negatively connoted, often placed in connection with magic and served merely as symbols for the misguided beliefs of the time before Christ. The Magi consequently do not stand for the continuation of astrology but for its end – referring to them as important representatives for the transmission of the discipline would have been diametrically opposed to the established tradition. Moreover, although their contribution to Christian history, i.e. the recognition and annunciation of the birth of Christ, is linked to a star, the latter is explicitly understood as detached from regular astronomical principles and thus from astrology. In addition, the Magi's knowledge is often attributed to the prophecy of Balaam and thus even further removed from any mathematical-astrological scholarship.

The depiction of the Magi as astrologers who understood the birth of Christ through astrological calculations would also have risked diminishing the divine nature of the event. From the discussions of the astrological constellations and their influences at His birth, it becomes clear that the topic was of interest to astrologers, yet it was equally highly controversial and could potentially be regarded as heretical. Complicating matters further was the fact that the underlying theory of conjunctions was mainly based on Arab-Muslim, i.e. non-Christian, scholars such as Albumasar. The association of the Magi, who represented the pre-Christian era as it was, with this 'pagan' theory, might have further increased the potential for criticism. It is important to note that the astrological interpretation of the birth of Christ was not applied by astrologers to the star of Bethlehem itself but only to a conjunction. The appearance of Christ's star – and thus

the actions of the Magi – continued to be regarded as miraculous. Hence, the conjunction served as an independent and additional astrological sign and was not linked to the Magi.

In summary, no single decisive factor can be identified that explains why the astrologers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries did not use the Magi as an argumentative component of their narrative of the history of astrology. Yet, based on the medieval characterisations of the Magi as well as the discussions concerning the astrological interpretation of Christ's birth, it becomes clear that the figures of the Magi did not correspond to the image the astrologers sought to create of the earlier representatives of their discipline, and thus themselves in their narratives. The Magi were depicted as early, non-Christian prophets inclined towards magic. They did not learn of Christ's birth through their mathematical-astrological abilities, but through a miraculous star. In fact, they represented the end of pagan astrology, not its transmission or progression. Any identification with them would thus hardly have added value to the astrologers' quest to legitimise their activity; instead, it would have saddled them with a multitude of problematic implications. Consequently, the ideal image of an astrologer that Michael Scot and Roger Bacon presented in their accounts, namely that of an exceptionally gifted and, above all, a Christian scholar who – despite all adversities – succeeded in passing on his acquired, rational, and mathematical knowledge to the next generation, is not reflected in the figures of the Magi.

However, as seen in the depictions by Michael Scot or Roger Bacon, positive reinterpretations of controversial figures such as Cham or Nimrod were possible. A similar approach would also have been conceivable for the representation of the Magi. Some claim to the Magi as positive astrological predecessors is already evident in Cecco d'Ascoli's text, who refers to the Magi as *maiores astrologi mundi*.⁵⁰⁰ Although he identifies them as astrologers, he does not link their astrological activities to the birth of Christ, nor does he explicitly use them as an argument to legitimise his activity as an astrologer by emphasising the discipline's long genealogy through them. That such an approach was viable, at least at the end of the fifteenth century, is evident from the text of the French astrologer Simon de Phares († after 1499).⁵⁰¹ The latter took the genealogy of astrology to the extreme in his *Recueil des plus célèbres astrologues* – the

⁵⁰⁰ See footnote 499.

⁵⁰¹ About Simon de Phares, see Boudet: Simon de Phares: Le Recueil des plus celebres astrologues, vol. 2.

entire work is a catalogue of the most famous astrologers in history. In his list, we also find the biblical Magi.

Simon de Phares describes a twofold annunciation – one miraculous, one astrological – of the birth of Christ: while the Magi learned of it through a “miraculous star”, i.e. the star of Bethlehem, which Balaam prophesied, there was also another, natural, celestial phenomenon – in this case, a comet – announcing Christ’s birth.⁵⁰² What is remarkable about Simon de Phares’ account, however, is not only that he refers to the Magi several times as astrologers but that he also writes that they found Christ through astrology by understanding the meaning of the comet.⁵⁰³ The Magi are thus shown in their capacity as astrologers in the context of Christian history. Furthermore, Simon de Phares explicitly uses the activity of the Magi as astrologers as a genealogical argument for legitimising the discipline. He draws here on the description of the Magi as kings and refers specifically to Balthasar – “the 26th king and emperor”, who was “engaged in the science of astrology” and “worthy of memory”. Through him, Simon de Phares writes, it was evident that “the science of astrology was and has always been practised by great men, kings, princes and priests.”⁵⁰⁴ Simon de Phares’ remarks thus show the possibility of using the Magi as positive role models for astrologers.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, interest in the interpretation of the Magi and the history and origins of astrology, in general, did not wane but even intensified.⁵⁰⁵ One possible reason for this was the growing acceptance and interest in astrological historiography in general, based on the theory of conjunctions. This involved linking

⁵⁰² For other examples of connecting Christ’s birth to a comet instead of a conjunction, see Simon de Phares: *Le Recueil des plus celebres astrologues*, ed. Boudet, vol. 1, pp. 254–255, footnote 1b.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 254–255: *En ce temps vindrent en Bethleam les trois roys, Jaspas, Melchion et Balthasar, tous grans philozophes et astrologiens, de tres loingtaines et diverses regions, adorer Nostre Saulveur et Redempteur Jhesu Crist, duquel ilz avoient precongneu la glorieuse nativité et, par la vision de l'estoille miraculeusement de nouvel nee, la region et le chemin par son mouvement, pour laquelle veoir ilz avoient vellhé maintes nuiz, sachans par la prophecie: 'Orietur stella ex Jacob' qu'elle devoit apparoir. Il se treuve aussi, par astrologie, que certain temps devant la nativité de Nostredit Saulveur, s'estoit apparue une commecte qui se nomme Rosa, par laquelle estoit signiffiee ou monstree la figuracion de la nativité du plus grant et vertueux prophete et le plus juste qui jamais avout esté, estoit ou pavoit estre, qui assez representoit Nostre Saulveur Jhesu Crist, a le bien entendre, ce que lesdits trois roys, qui estoient grans astrologiens, pavoient aussi avoir veu et consideré.*

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 255: *Et soit noté que icelui Balthasar est le XXVI^e roy que empereur, qui se soit entremis de la science des estoilles, que j'ay recueilliz cy dessus, dignes de memorer, par quoy appert que la science de astrologie estoit et a esté tousjours excercee par grans hommes, roys et princes et par les pasteurs; [...].*

⁵⁰⁵ Sylviane Bokdam analysed the origin myths of astrology as interpreted in the sixteenth century and places the peak of this preoccupation in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Sylviane Bokdam: *Les mythes de l'origine de l'astrologie*, in: Robert Aulotte (ed.): *Divination et Controverse Religieuse en France au XVI^e siècle* (Collection de l'École Normale Supérieure de Jeunes Filles 35/ Cahiers V. L. Saulnier 4), Paris 1987, pp. 57–72, p. 58. On the continuing discussions about the Magi: Screech: *The Magi and the Star*.

secular historical events and processes with celestial phenomena, but also, as explained above, the attempt to explain religious events through astrology. While Roger Bacon applied the theory of the great conjunctions to the rise and fall of religions as early as the end of the thirteenth century, the use and acceptance of astrological historiography took off primarily through the writings of Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly († 1420) at the beginning of the fifteenth century.⁵⁰⁶ Although its application to Christian subjects always remained controversial, it gained popularity, among other things, as a means of confirming prophetic predictions by rational-mathematical means, which could also include astrology.⁵⁰⁷ The reluctance of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century astrologers to claim the Magi as their astrological predecessors was presumably due, at least in part, to the controversial nature and novelty of the theory of conjunctions concerning the birth of Christ. In the specific case of Simon de Phares, it is also noteworthy that he tried to portray as many people as possible as astrologers in his work; he even included scholars who had no known affinity with the discipline.⁵⁰⁸ Not including the Magi, who at least were associated with astrology, would have been inconsistent with his approach.

The reason for the absence of the Magi in the earlier origin stories of astrology can only be based on conjecture. However, the lack of suitable identifying features – especially concerning the attribution of mathematical-calculative skills – coupled with controversial forays into theological areas of expertise seems plausible enough to explain why the astrologers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries did not choose the Magi as role models.

3.3.2 Astrology's Past as an Argument against Astrology

The astrologers' narratives about their discipline's history show that although they relied on traditional stories and characters, they adapted them for their own objectives. They also deliberately refrained from including certain figures such as the Magi, who at first glance would have offered themselves as ideal role models but whose attributes and implications did not correspond to the astrologers' goal of representation. The astrologers thus sought to validate their activity by invoking a long and venerable lineage of practitioners and, in doing so, highlighted certain qualities that characterised

⁵⁰⁶ For Pierre d'Ailly's stance on astrology, see Smoller: *History, Prophecy, and the Stars. The Christian Astrology of Pierre d'Ailly, 1350–1420*, Princeton (NJ) 1994, esp. chap. 4: "Astrology and the Narration of History", pp. 61–84.

⁵⁰⁷ For the relation between astrology and prophecy and the background of astrology as an auxiliary discipline to prophecy, see Chapter 5.3.2.

⁵⁰⁸ On Simon de Phares, see also Chapter 2.2.1.

an ideal astrologer. Above all, they wanted to underline the continuity of transmission and the intergenerational cooperation between famous astrologers throughout history. By commemorating the long history of astrology in this way, they created a group portrait of extraordinary and venerable astrologers.

The opponents of astrology were aware of this tactic and tried to invalidate the astrologers' version of their discipline's history and the group identity it represented. In the following subchapter, I will examine the stance of one of astrology's most prominent opponents, Nicole Oresme († 1382), on this topic as an example for the opposing side's position.⁵⁰⁹ Such an analysis is valuable as it reveals that opponents recognised and took seriously the astrologers' attempt to practice scholarly *memoria* as a strategy to legitimise their occupation. Moreover, the way in which Nicole Oresme sought to refute the astrologers' arguments shows which aspects he considered particularly relevant and dangerous in this context. Since the astrologers' self-representation developed in tandem with the opposing views, his account provides further clues for how the image of the astrologer in the late Middle Ages evolved.

Although Nicole Oresme's position does not encompass all forms or arguments of late-medieval opposition to astrology, it provides an insightful example of the opponents' point of view.⁵¹⁰ It is particularly useful when considering the self-fashioning of astrologers since he discusses their social position and behaviour in the political sphere. His influential writings date from the end of the period under study here and thus mark the beginning of a time during which we see a steep increase in treatises specifically aimed against astrology. Moreover, Nicole Oresme wrote in a very conducive environment for astrologers, namely the court of King Charles V of France. His texts thus show an opponent's reaction at a time when astrologers were becoming increasingly successful in establishing themselves at court and university and were beginning to be perceived as a serious threat. The significance of his writings and their

⁵⁰⁹ For an overview of Nicole Oresme's life and writings, see Edward Grant: Nicole Oresme, in: Jorge J. E. Gracia / Timothy B. Noone (eds.): *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 24), Oxford 2003, pp. 475–480. On his stance of astrology: Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 398–423; Stefano Caroti: *La critica contro l'astrologia di Nicole Oresme*; Coopland: *Oresme and the Astrologers*.

⁵¹⁰ The approach of the criticism was, of course, strongly dependent on the context of the respective authors. In addition to the traditional theological arguments against astrology, which stayed relevant, the late Middle Ages saw the rise of critiques that focused either on the 'scientific' claims of astrology or on the social behaviour of astrologers. For the increasing focus on the 'scientific' nature of astrology, see Rapisarda: *Doubts and Criticism on Astrology*. Nicole Oresme, as a cleric, royal advisor and scholar was concerned with all three issues in his works.

continuing relevance are also reflected in the fact that many of the issues he raised were echoed in later writings against astrology.⁵¹¹

Nicole Oresme wrote several texts in which he addressed his opposition against astrology.⁵¹² However, it is notably in the *Livre de Divinacions* (written c. 1361–1365) in which he discusses various strategies with which, in his opinion, astrologers sought to establish themselves, especially in the realm of the court.⁵¹³ In his account, Nicole Oresme extensively analyses astrology's history and explicitly challenges the astrologers' portrayal of their discipline's history as a long success story of renowned practitioners. Although he argues in his treatise not only against astrology but against various forms of divination, his arguments are primarily directed against astrology and its practitioners.⁵¹⁴ His intention, he writes, is to demonstrate that it is “foolish, wicked, and dangerous” to seek hidden knowledge about the future through “astrology, geomancy, nigromancy, or any other such arts” and that this holds true, especially for people in positions of power. He aims to prove this from “authority and human reason” as well as “from experience”.⁵¹⁵ Under the aspect of “experience”, in particular, he discusses the history of astrology and divination.

⁵¹¹ For example, many of Nicole Oresme's arguments against astrology reappear in the extensive treatise against astrology by the Italian philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola more than a hundred years later (1494). Giovanni Pico della Mirandola even referred to Nicole Oresme directly in some cases. See, for example, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem*, 2 vols., ed. by Eugenio Garin (Edizione nazionale dei classici del pensiero italiano 3), Florence 1952, vol. 2, book 12, chap. 7, p. 530, where he is named among other famous opponents of astrology such as Henry of Hesse (Langenstein). For Nicole Oresme's influence in the discussions about astrology, see Caroti: *La critica contro l'astrologia di Nicole Oresme*, pp. 613–676 (pp. 659–666 for Pico della Mirandola, in particular). For Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's stance on astrology, see Steven vanden Broecke: *The Limits of Influence. Pico, Louvain, and the Crisis of Renaissance Astrology* (Medieval and Early Modern Science 4), Leiden / Boston 2003, pp. 55–80; for his attack on the “astrological tradition”, i.e. the unity of astrological opinions: Ovanes Akopyan: ‘Princeps aliorum’ and his Followers. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola on the ‘Astrological Tradition in the *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem*, in: *Renaissance Studies* 32 (4) (2018), pp. 547–564.

⁵¹² Nicole Oresme also addresses astrology in his *Tractatus contra judicarios astronomos*, the *Questio contra divinatores horoscopios* and a *Quodlibet*. While the *Questio* and the *Quodlibet* are written more from the point of view of the mathematician, the *Tractatus* is essentially a shorter, Latin version of *Livre de Divinacions* discussed here. For an overview of the different works, see Caroti: *La critica contro l'astrologia*, pp. 555–571, pp. 587–611.

⁵¹³ For a commentary, an edition, and English translation of the work, see Coopland: *Nicole Oresme and the Astrologers*.

⁵¹⁴ Not only does he frequently single out astrology, but there is also a considerable overlap in content with his previously written *Tractatus contra judicarios astronomos*, which was devoted exclusively to the refutation of astrology. On the content of the *Tractatus* and the differences to the *Livre de Divinacions*: Coopland: *Nicole Oresme and the Astrologers*, pp. 20–21; also: Caroti: *La critica contro l'astrologia di Nicole Oresme*, pp. 555–571. Since the explanations in the *Livre de Divinacions* are more detailed and better structured than in the *Tractatus*, and Nicole Oresme repeatedly emphasises here that his arguments relate particularly to astrology, I will focus on the *Livre de Divinacions* in the following analysis.

⁵¹⁵ Nicole Oresme: *Livre de Divinacions*, ed. and transl. by George W. Coopland, in: *Nicole Oresme and the Astrologers. A Study of his Livre de Divinacions*, Liverpool 1952, pp. 49–121, here prologue, p. 50:

Before presenting his own views, Nicole Oresme first lists the arguments of the proponents of astrology – his treatise is thus explicitly written in response to the astrologers’ accounts of their discipline’s history.⁵¹⁶ He points out that the various types of divination, especially astrology, are said to have a “time-honoured authority” and have been expounded “by prophets and rational authors in authentic books”.⁵¹⁷ At first glance, therefore, it might appear that “astrology and similar sciences” were suitable occupations for nobles and princes in particular.⁵¹⁸ This could be seen in many examples from history: Referring to the testimonies of Josephus, Isidore and others, Nicole Oresme lists a range of famous past astrologers, among them also the usual astrological identification figures of Christian history such as Abraham, Moses or Solomon, but also secular figures such as Ptolemy, Alexander the Great, and Greek and Roman rulers in general.⁵¹⁹ He concludes by saying that there were “many other valiant kings and princes who used these sciences or listened to the advice of those who knew them” and that this was why Aristotle had warned Alexander in the *Secretum secretorum* not to do anything without the advice of an astrologer.⁵²⁰

After having laid out these and other arguments in favour of divination and astrology, Nicole Oresme then turns to their refutation in Chapter 8. He argues that

Mon entencion a l’aide de Dieu est moustrer enc e livret, par experience, par auctoritez, par raison humaine, que fole chose, mauvaise, et perilleuse temporelment, est mettre son entente a vouloir savoir ou deviner les aventure et les fortunes avenir, ou les choses occultes, par astrologie, par gromance [sic!], par nigromance, ou par quelxconques tielx ars, se on les doit appeller ars, mesment telle chose est plus perilleuse a personnes d’estat comme sont princes et seigneurs auxquels appartient le gouvernement publique. For the direct quotations in English translation, I draw on the Coopland’s translation that accompanies the French edition.

⁵¹⁶ He sets out the astrologers’ or diviners’ arguments in chapters five to seven. Ibid., chap. 5, p. 62: *Je veuil avant mettre les argumens contraires a mon propos et après y respondray en la fin.* Ibid., chap. 7, p. 71: *Ces arguments me souffisent quant a present car par ce que je diray après on pourroit respondre a tous les argumens qui seroient contre mon propos, sicomme je cuide.*

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., chap. 4, p. 60: *Aucuns pourroient dire que les sciences dessus nommees sont dictes de tres ancienne auctorite et baillees par prophetes, par aucteurs raisonnables, et en livres autentiques, specialment astrologie [...].* It is noteworthy that Nicole Oresme mentions prophets here. Since the astrologers often included prophets as predecessors in their narratives, Nicole Oresme’s mention can thus be seen as a direct reference or response to those claims.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., chap. 5, p. 62: *Et premierement, il sambleroit que roys et princes deussent estudier en astrologie et en telles sciences. Car j’ay dit au premier chappitre que astrologie est tres noble science; dont s’ensuit il que elle est convenable et appatenant a nobles personnes et par especial a prince [...].*

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., chap. 5, pp. 62–64. He connects most of these figures specifically to astrology, not to divinations in general.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., chap. 5, p. 64: *Cest induction souffist combien que plusieurs autres vaillans roys et princes aient sceues telles sciences ou use du conseil de ceulx qui en savoient. Et pour ce Aristote, ou Livre des Secrez, ammoneste le roy Alixandre qu’il ne face chose au monde sans le conseil d’aucun qui soit sage en la science des estoilles.* In the seventh chapter, in which he sets out the argument that divination is possible and useful, he again explains that this follows “from the histories and experiences of past times.” Ibid., chap. 7, p. 68: *Item, la utilite et la possibilite de cecy appert par les ystoires et par les experimens du temps passe.* Ibid., pp. 68–70: *Item, plusieurs y treuvent maintenant verité et ont trouve au temps passe, especialment en astrologie.*

although many famous practitioners may have existed throughout history, this would not indicate the discipline's legitimacy and usefulness. On the contrary, "by experience and inference from the past", one could see that "princes and others who have engaged in such pursuits have come to a bad end and have had misfortunes in this world."⁵²¹ He cites numerous examples of well-known figures from history, including Zoroaster and Atlas, and reports – at times mockingly – just how badly they ultimately fared.⁵²² Remarkably, he does not list any of the authorities he mentioned as practitioners in the previous chapters of his work – hence he did not choose to reinterpret specific figures or dispute their preoccupation with astrology. Instead, he lists various other people and tells their stories of misfortune and failure. In some cases, there are familiar elements of stories as told by the astrologers, although attributed to other characters and with different connotations. Nicole Oresme mentions, for example, Zoroaster, "a great astronomer and the first inventor of the magical arts", who was defeated and killed by Ninus, who burned parts of Zoroaster's books.⁵²³ While Nicole Oresme uses this story to portray military defeat and the destruction of books as a sign that divination and astrology bring about misfortune, astrologers like Michael Scot used similar elements to point out how practitioners managed to preserve their knowledge against all odds.⁵²⁴ It is important to stress that Nicole Oresme explicitly attributes the protagonists' bad fortune to their astrological or divinatory activities. Their misfortune, he believes, was a punishment from God for attempting to penetrate fortune's mysteries and would not only befall kings and princes but "all, who by astrology or such arts strove to know the future."⁵²⁵ He closes the chapter by declaring that his assertion could be drawn "from so

⁵²¹ Ibid., chap. 8, p. 70: *Non obstant tout ces argumens je veuil moustrer evidaument mon propos principal, premièrement, par experience at par induction du temps passe. Et dy que les princes ou autres qui ont mis leur entente a telles choses ont fait mauvaise fin, ou ont este mal fortune temporellement.*

⁵²² Ibid., chap. 8, p. 70–74. He relates, for example, the story about Thales of Miletus who fell into a ditch because he was too busy looking at the stars to see what was in front of him. In addition to figures from more ancient history, Nicole Oresme also gives more recent examples such as King James III of Majorca, "who was too much given to these divinations, and used astrology to choose the hour at which to set out from Avignon on the expedition that cost him his life and kingdom." Ibid., p. 72: *Nous avons veu en nostre temps que Jaques, roy de Mallogres qui estoit trop enclin a tieulx divinemens et eslut heure par asrtologie de partir d'Avignon quant il ala ou il perdi la vie et le royaume.*

⁵²³ Ibid., chap. 8, p. 70: *Et mettons Zoroastres, roy des Bretaniens, qui fu si grant astronomen et qui premiers trouva les ars magiques, le quel roy occist Ninus et li osta ensemble sa vie et son royaume; ce raconte Justin, de quoy Hue de Saint Victor ou second livre de Vanite du Monde dit que Ninus ardy partie de ses livres.*

⁵²⁴ This is reminiscent of the story told by Michael Scot of Chanaan who was killed and whose books were burnt by the Egyptian king before the knowledge was restored by Nimrod. See Chapter 3.2.1.

⁵²⁵ Nicole Oresme: *Livre de Divinacions*, ed. Coopland, chap. 8, p. 72–74: *Item, cecy n'est pas tant seulement veritable quant aux roys et aux princes mais communement tous ceulx qui par astrologie ou par tieulx ars s'efforcent de savoir les fortunes a avenir sont infortunez. Et bien en avons veu en nostre*

many experiences, observations and examples” and “has been proven so many times”.⁵²⁶

Overall, Nicole Oresme’s strategy is not to contest the long history of astrology but to show that it does not support the legitimacy of the discipline. Instead, for him, its history provides countless examples that show astrology to be contrary to the will of God. He underlines this in the next chapter, where he writes that those practices were not “a gift coming from God” but sprang from the fact that “the human race is over-greedy after knowledge of the future”.⁵²⁷ Belonging to this group of astrologers was thus, according to Nicole Oresme, not only inadvisable but downright dangerous and even heretical. In this respect, his account stands in stark contrast to, for example, Roger Bacon’s narrative, which portrayed astrology as part of the original divine knowledge.

Nicole Oresme returns to the theme of astrology’s past in the fourteenth chapter, where he again addresses the argument that “enumerations and examples of former princes” would prove astrology to be a suitable occupation for rulers. In this case, however, he does not highlight the misfortune of rulers who believed in astrology but explains that often the astrological knowledge attributed to them had been exaggerated to bestow “greater honour of themselves and the science.”⁵²⁸ He elaborates that many books under the name of famous rulers had not actually been composed by them.⁵²⁹ Such false attributions would occur especially with texts of divination and magic. Through association with renowned figures, the reputation of those arts was sought to be enhanced, and belief in them strengthened.⁵³⁰ Some works would also be listed under

temps de tielx tout aussi comme se fortune se combatist aigrement contre ceulx qui folement s’efforcent de savoir ses secrez. Mais a parler véritablement c’est une raison que Dieu face punicion de tieulx gens.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., chap. 8, p. 74: *Doncques appert assez ceste conclusion, laquelle suppose qu’elle ne fust plus authement prouee par si grant induction ne par tant de expériences, de observacions, ne de exemple, ne qui aient este tant de fois esprouvees.*

⁵²⁷ Ibid., chap. 9, p. 78: *Et dit [i.e. the Greco-Roman poet Statius] que ce ne fu oncques don qui veinst de Dieu mais c’est nostre gloute pensee, selon ce que dit Chryzostomes, que humain lignage est trop glout de savoir les choses a avenir.* Giovanni Pico della Mirandola addresses the issue in a similar way when he argues that astrology should not be believed as if it were a revelation (*Non esse adhibendam fidem astrologiae quasi revelatae*). Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: *Disputationes*, vol. 2, ed. Garin, book 12, chap. 1, p. 484.

⁵²⁸ Nicole Oresme: *Livre de Divinacions*, ed. Coopland, chap. 14, p. 106: *Après estoit argue par mencion et par exemple des princes du temps ancien. Je dy, premierement, que plusieurs ont este qui n’en scevent (sic) pas tant comme l’en dit mais on magnifie la chose plus pour l’onneur d’eulx et de la science.*

⁵²⁹ He mentions Ptolemy’s *Almagest* as an example, which, as he explains was not written “by a king of Egypt” but by another namesake. Ibid., chap. 14, p. 106: *Item, ilz n’ont pas faiz tous les livres que on leur impose, sicomme il appert de Almagestes qui ne fu pas fait de un roy d’Egipte, sicomme aucuns disoient, mais d’un autre qui avoit a nom samblablement Ptholomee, [...].* He also disputes Aristotle’s authorship of the *Secretum secretorum*. Ibid., p. 108.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., chap. 14, p. 106–108: *Item, ilz n’ont pas faiz tous les livres que on leur impose, [...]. Item, par especial plusieurs livres de divinements, de art magique, de art notoire, et de telles choses, sont*

the name of rulers but had merely been commissioned by them – this would not mean the rulers themselves necessarily practised divination.⁵³¹

Finally, Nicole Oresme concedes that some rulers indeed knew “such sciences” through “a gift of God”, such as Noah, Moses, or Solomon and that, as Josephus wrote, God awarded some with a greater lifespan to investigate astrology and geometry further. However, Nicole Oresme emphasises that they never neglected their duty as rulers to do so.⁵³² While this acknowledgement might point to Nicole Oresme’s belief that astrology also contained permissible elements, it highlights above all his main preoccupation in the treatise, namely, to argue that divination or astrology should never interfere with governmental affairs. The importance he attaches to good governance becomes even more apparent in his discussion of the fate of the Romans in the sixteenth chapter. He states that their use of divination, which he attributes to the work of the devil, did not lead to lasting prosperity but ultimately brought them to ruin, as he had previously stated concerning the misfortune of individuals.⁵³³ Referring to Augustine, he adds that their previous “great power in temporal rule” was, in fact, given to them by God on account of “the great love they had for the republic”.⁵³⁴ Moreover, he writes, it was not the Roman rulers themselves but the priests of the temples who practised divination and caused much misfortune.⁵³⁵

Nicole Oresme’s depiction of the history of astrology and divination shows that the tactic of astrologers to highlight the history of their discipline to legitimise their activity was noticed and taken seriously by its opponents. Nicole Oresme’s own tactic, however, was not to disavow the long history of astrology or its large following but to cast past astrologers in a negative light. He shows the history of astrology as one of downfall and misfortune. In his portrayal, the shared characteristic of astrologers lies primarily in the fact that they would cause harm to themselves and their environment through their

faussement intitulees de Hermes, ou de Psalmon, ou d’aucun autre bien renomme pour relever la fame de tielx ars et affin que l’on y croye plus tost.

⁵³¹ Ibid., chap. 14, p. 108: *Item, aucuns princes ont ame astrologie et y ont fait estudier a leurs despens par philosophes et les libres estoient intitulez ou nom du prince pour cause de sa reverence, sicomme il fu fait des tables Alfons.*

⁵³² Ibid., chap. 14, p. 108: *Item, il est verite que aucuns princes ont sceu telles sciences par tres especial don de Dieu sicomme Noe, Moyse, Salomon et autres, et de ce dit Josephus que Dieu donna a aucuns d’iceulx plus grant espace de vivre pour les vertus et pour les glorieuses utilitez qu’il envestiguoient, c’est a savoir astrologie et geometrie. Mais pour ce ne laissoient ilz rien a faire qui appartienst a bon gouvernement, [...].*

⁵³³ Ibid., chap. 16, p. 116.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., chap. 16, p. 118: *Item, Saint Augustin dit que Dieu leur donna aussi grant puissance a seignourie temporelle pour la grant amour qu’ilz avoient de la chose publique, et communement par tielx divinemens ilz ne laissoient riens a faire qui appartienst a bonne pratique, [...].*

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

activities. The misfortunes that would befall them are explained as God's punishment because the astrologers and those who listened to their advice acted against His will.

The argument that astrology would lead to worldly misfortune, and the portrayal of astrologers as inevitably unfortunate in worldly affairs, reflects the environment in which Nicole Oresme was active. The treatise was written during the reign of the French king Charles V (r. 1364 bis 1380), who employed several astrologers and showed a strong interest in astrology. Nicole Oresme was in close contact with the royal court and directly witnessed the king's inclination.⁵³⁶ His treatise thus confronts the circumstances he experienced, and bears witness to the fear of opponents that astrologers might exert too much influence at the royal court.

In this context, it is important to note that the astrologers themselves did not portray their predecessors in the origin stories as necessarily successful in worldly matters either. They even emphasised the difficulties and failures past astrologers had to endure. Yet this was not considered a flaw of astrologers, but, on the contrary, presented as proof of astrologers' faithfulness to God, their intelligence, and their striving for Christian knowledge – they continued to pursue their goal despite all obstacles put in their way by less gifted people. The image that the proponents of astrology created of the astrologer was thus that of a scholar for whom the pursuit of truth and knowledge was more valuable than worldly success and recognition. Hence, while the interpretation of the misfortunes of past astrologers differed in the accounts of the history of astrology by proponents and opponents, the image of the astrologer that emerged was not entirely dissimilar. However, since the astrologers also wanted to advertise their abilities in the secular sphere, they had to find a balance between the image of a reclusive scholar striving only for intellectual greatness and that of an indispensable advisor well-versed in worldly concerns. In doing so, astrologers had to address why, if astrology was as profitable for rulers and secular enterprises as they claimed, they did not also use this knowledge for their own advancement. Their way of approaching this problem in terms of their self-fashioning, and the difficulties they had

⁵³⁶ Nicole Oresme functioned as an advisor to Charles V when he was still dauphin and their relationship continued in different forms throughout Charles' reign. See Edward Grant: Nicole Oresme, Aristotle's *On the Heavens*, and the Court of Charles V, in: Edith D. Sylla / Michael R. McVaugh (eds.): *Texts and Contexts in Ancient and Medieval Science. Studies on the Occasion of John E. Murdoch's Seventieth Birthday* (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 78), Leiden / Boston 1997, pp. 187–207; Cadden: Charles V, Nicole Oresme, and Christine de Pizan, esp. pp. 211–216 on Charles V's interest in astrology and his employment of Thomas of Pizan, Pèlerin de Prusse and Gervais Chrétien.

in finding the right balance, can be seen above all in how they described their rules of conduct, which will be addressed fully in the following chapter.

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that astrologers used complex origin stories to gain legitimacy by presenting the long tradition of their activity. They instrumentalised famous Christian scholars as the forefathers of astrologers but also drew on highly controversial representatives. In both cases, however, specific, desirable ideals were emphasised. They especially concerned intelligence, divine endorsement, and commitment to the advancement and dissemination of knowledge. While in this way, individual past astrologers were fashioned as aspirational ideals, recounting astrology's supposed origin story also created a distinct kind of group identity. This did not imply a contemporaneous collaboration and, thus, the joint activity of astrologers as a group in a strict sense. Rather, this shared identity sought to represent a group of outstanding personalities and the progressive development of astrology by building on the knowledge of one's predecessors and ensuring the uninterrupted transmission of knowledge. This group portrait over time provided the basis for the 'scientific' legitimisation of the practice of astrology since astrologers relied on data, observations and interpretations that extended beyond an individual's lifetime.

The enquiry into why the astrologers did not also instrumentalise the Magi shows that the accounts were strongly influenced by debates of the time. Even if the authors used controversial elements in many respects, they seem not to have wanted to cross certain boundaries, at least in the period under consideration here, to avoid the accusation of heresy. Moreover, the prevalent portrayals of the Magi did not offer the appropriate identifying features that astrologers were looking for at the time. The analysis of an adversarial view of the history of astrology in the form of Nicole Oresme's treatise showed that astrologers were perceived as figures that needed to be taken seriously. Astrologers could no longer be ignored, and consequently, their strategies of self-fashioning were prominently discussed and needed to be challenged. Moreover, with his account, Nicole Oresme contributed to creating a group portrait of astrologers – even if he described a group to which one would not necessarily want to belong. His description consolidated the memory of a continuing presence of astrologers throughout history, thus substantiating the astrologers' claim of a long-standing tradition of practitioners. The interplay between opponents and supporters of astrology ultimately led to the formation of a more distinct image of the astrologer.

4 What Makes an Astrologer – Requirements and Rules of Conduct

In their narratives about the history of the discipline, astrologers already drew attention to certain qualities and behaviours that an ideal astrologer should possess. However, this issue was addressed even more explicitly in other parts of their texts. In the introductions to astrology examined here, there are indeed sections, even entire chapters, that discuss the requirements someone must fulfil to become an astrologer and what behaviours were appropriate for such an occupation. This direct engagement with the astrologer's role demonstrates how the authors actively pursued the creation of a specific profile for the astrologer.

In this context, it is essential to remember the intended readers of the introductory works: aspiring astrologers. The texts aimed not only to instruct the future representatives of the discipline in astrological theory but also to prepare them for their new role as astrologers. Consequently, a kind of group identity emerged through the accounts – astrologers were defined as a distinct group by their characteristics and behaviours, and aspiring practitioners were initiated into this group's rules of conduct through the descriptions. Apart from this group self-fashioning, the authors naturally also employed those depictions as a strategy for their individual self-fashioning – as practising astrologers, it was implicit that they conformed to the standards outlined.

Several factors impacted how astrologers portrayed the representatives of their discipline. Firstly, the opposing arguments against astrology significantly influenced their depiction. Many of the characteristics and behaviours mentioned are listed – sometimes explicitly – to counter critics. The portrayal was intended to equip aspiring astrologers with the necessary tools to defend their chosen occupation. Consequently, astrologers partly defined themselves in contrast to the negative image which their critics presented of them. Secondly, the conceptions of an exemplary astrologer were modelled on figures from the fields in which the astrologers sought to establish themselves. Their portrayals were thus primarily oriented towards the ideals of university scholars and courtly advisors.⁵³⁷ The role of scholar and courtly advisor

⁵³⁷ For both settings, the university and the court, general tendencies towards greater categorisation and the formulation of behavioural guidelines for their members can be observed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Prescriptive texts such as university statutes, mirrors for princes or stand-alone treatises can provide information on the desired conduct of certain groups. Particularly revealing are the didactic handbooks by and for scholars, which began to appear in growing numbers from the beginning of

naturally remained a part of the astrologers' professional identity and shaped their self-fashioning. Nevertheless, astrologers purposefully chose attributes that suited their needs and adapted them accordingly. Thus, on the one hand, they wanted to integrate themselves as legitimate and respectable figures into the framework of medieval society, which meant that they had to adapt to a certain extent to generally accepted ideals. On the other hand, they also sought to create a specific professional profile of astrologers that differed from that of other occupations. Thirdly, the Greek and Arabic foundational astrological texts provided the starting point for devising a specific conception of the role of a Christian-Latin astrologer. The Arabic texts, in particular, played a central role in this, since at the time when the seminal Arabic introductory works of astrology were written, that is, in the context of ninth- and tenth-century Baghdad, the specific occupation of astrologer was already well-developed.⁵³⁸ This more defined and established role of the astrologer is reflected in the Arabic astrological writings of the time and served as a template for the Latin astrologers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. However, the Arabic and predominantly Islamic ideas and concepts could not simply be copied but had to be modified to suit the Christian ideals and the Latin-European context of the authors studied here.

Based on those models and influences, astrologers created an image of the ideal representative of their occupation, specifically tailored to their purposes. The texts examined here differ to some extent in how direct and detailed their descriptions of the

the thirteenth century. For a brief overview of those manuals, see Charles H. Haskins: *Studies in Mediaeval Culture*, New York 1929, pp. 72–91. While there already existed a wide variety of handbooks dealing with moral behaviour in general or the rules of cloistered life before the thirteenth century, the orientation of those scholarly manuals represented a new direction as they specifically focused on education outside of an exclusively religious context. This was pointed out by Weijers in her discussion of the (pseudo-)Boethian didactic treatise *Disciplina scolarium*, one of the earliest and most influential of those treatises, which Weijers assumes was written in the context of the university of Paris between the years 1230 and 1240. See Olga Weijers: Introduction, in: (Pseudo-)Boethius: *De disciplina scolarium*, ed. by Olga Weijers (*Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters* 12), Leiden / Cologne 1976, pp. 1–90, here pp. 11–13. See on the desired behaviour by scholars also the article by Astrik L. Gabriel who tried to bring different accounts on university education together to reconstruct a *speculum doctorum* (“a mirror of masters or doctors”, showing the “ideal portrait of the mediaeval master”. Astrik L. Gabriel: *The Ideal Master of the Mediaeval University*, in: *The Catholic Historical Review* 60 (1974), pp. 1–40. While mirrors for princes are naturally focused on the behaviour of the rulers, they often also include information on the qualities a good counsellor should possess. It is important to emphasize, however, that newly composed texts on rules of conduct for both fields were, of course, always influenced by earlier ideas – by general Christian ideals as well as by ancient Greek and Roman traditions. For a brief overview of the origins and the medieval development of mirrors for princes, see Ulrike Graßnick: *Ratgeber des Königs. Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherideal im spätmittelalterlichen England* (*Europäische Kulturstudien* 15), Cologne / Weimar / Vienna 2004, pp. 51–67; on the counsellor in the late-medieval English context: *ibid.*, pp. 166–172.

⁵³⁸ See George A. Saliba: *The Role of the Astrologer in Medieval Islamic Society*, in: *Bulletin d'études orientales* 44 (1992), pp. 45–68, who explores the social status of the astrologer from the ninth up to the eighteenth century.

ideal image of the astrologer were and where they placed their focus. Nevertheless, common tendencies can be identified. In the following chapter, I have classified the preoccupation with the astrologer's role into three overarching themes.

First, the focus will be on the intellectual requirements that someone had to fulfil to pursue the discipline successfully and thus be accepted as a member of the group. My aim here is not to list the specific astrological knowledge that an astrologer had to learn but rather to analyse, based on the intellectual prerequisites named, whether astrologers presented access to their discipline as predetermined, acquired, or as a combination of both. Such considerations offer valuable insights into how astrologers perceived and presented membership to their group and, subsequently, how they portrayed themselves.

Secondly, I will analyse how they described the ideal astrologer's daily demeanour and moral qualities. Depending on the context of the respective astrologer – especially concerning his primary place of occupation at court or university – there are more pronounced differences between the texts. I will, therefore, first examine the description of Michael Scot as a court astrologer before turning to that of John Ashenden as an astrologer mainly active in the university context. Both astrologers wrote at great length and explicitly about the desirable behaviour and moral qualities of astrologers and thus provide unique insights into this topic. I will supplement their remarks with shorter comments from other astrologers to obtain a more comprehensive picture.

Finally, I will address a specific aspect of being an astrologer which is repeatedly mentioned in the texts, i.e. the appropriate relationship to money, wealth, and profit. Since astrology in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was in a transitional phase towards a profession in the narrower sense, the authors' views on whether an astrologer could and should earn money from his discipline can shed light on the status they desired for the discipline as well as for astrologers.

4.1 Intellectual Preconditions – Inherent Aptitude and Acquired Skill

4.1.1 Inherent Aptitude for the Work of an Astrologer

Since astrologers were, above all, scholars, the first question concerns the intellectual requirements that had to be met to become an astrologer: Could this discipline be mastered by anyone, or were certain innate qualities required? Not surprisingly,

astrologers unanimously presented their discipline as exceedingly difficult.⁵³⁹ This served, for one, to show the value of astrology – a highly sophisticated and demanding field must be of great importance and thus held in high esteem. The proclaimed high level of difficulty was also used to explain potentially incorrect predictions while upholding the general validity of the discipline. An erroneous forecast was attributed to the inadequacy of the practitioner or incorrect astronomical tables – astrology itself, however, should not be called into question. Such arguments trace back to Ptolemy and can be found repeatedly in medieval defences of astrology.⁵⁴⁰ As for the importance of using and understanding the correct astronomical tables, already Albumasar referred to opponents of astrology who used faulty tables and, therefore, wrongly inferred that astrological judgements were not true.⁵⁴¹ At the beginning of the fourteenth century, this issue came to the fore again with the introduction of the Alfonsine tables in Paris, which sparked heated debates.⁵⁴²

For a discipline like astrology, where false predictions were inevitable, blaming the practitioner's inaptitude thus served as a kind of safety net to pre-empt opponents' attacks. It furthermore made correct predictions seem more valuable and the skills of successful astrologers more impressive. Correspondingly, astrologers accused their opponents regularly of ignorance and, above all, of envy (*invidia*) of their superior

⁵³⁹ For example, Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, p. 186, claims that astrology is exceptionally difficult and useful, even if its rules and precepts do not appear to be that way ([...] *dicimus quod difficillima est circa utiliora licet in quibusdam regulis et preceptis levis appareat et non confusa*). See also Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 5, col. 162: *Et licet sit difficilimum de futuris iudicare, non tamen est labor evitandus*, [...]. See also John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, prologue, fol. 1^{rb}: *Ex hiis omnibus satis liquere potest quod hec scientia astronomie nobilis et ardua ac summe utilis et necessaria*. References to the difficulty of astrology can indeed be found in almost all of the astrological introductions.

⁵⁴⁰ Ptolemy: *Tetrabiblos*, ed. and transl. by Frank E. Robbins (Loeb Classical Library 435), Cambridge (MA) / London 1940, book 1, chap. 2, pp. 12–13. See, for example, Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, p. 183, who attributes mistakes made by the practitioner “to his inadequacy or the hindrances of many people” ([...] *propter eius insufficienciam vel multorum impedimenta*). Similarly, John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 12, chap. 3, fol. 243^{va}. Apart from the fault of the practitioner, there was also always the possibility that God had interfered if events unfolded differently than foretold, see for the mention of this: Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 3, fol. 120^{ra}. Opponents of astrology equally used the proclaimed high complexity as an argument against the discipline, arguing that – even if astrological predictions were theoretically possible – the complexity and numerous factors that would have to be taken into account for this would render a correct prediction practically impossible. See for example, the rebuttal of this argument in Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 1, chap. 4, cols. 3–5.

⁵⁴¹ Abū Ma‘shar: *The Great Introduction to Astrology*, vol. 1, ed. and transl. Burnett / Yamamoto, part 1, chap. 5, pp. 132–137.

⁵⁴² On the discussions surrounding their introduction, see Nothaft: *Scandalous Error*, pp. 189–204. On the Alfonsine Tables, see also Chapter 2.1.2.

abilities.⁵⁴³ Good astrologers, consequently, are portrayed as inherently intelligent and capable of mastering such a demanding subject. This becomes already evident, for example, in the way Michael Scot describes the astrologers in his narrative on the history of astrology. All astrologers he mentions are characterised by an extraordinary natural intellect that enabled them to acquire and expand the discipline in the first place.⁵⁴⁴

However, the authors of the introductory works go even further, writing that an astrologer must not only be exceptionally intelligent in general but also possess a natural predisposition specifically for astrology. A particularly insightful and detailed discussion of this required innate aptitude for the study of astrology is provided by Roger Bacon in his short work *De laudibus mathematicae*, a letter written around 1267 for scholars interested in astrology.⁵⁴⁵ Roger Bacon outlines several natural conditions that must be met to become a good astrologer. For him, the most important is that the student must be “astronomically destined/born” (*astronomice natus*), i.e. the astronomical conditions of his nativity must be favourable for his activity as an astrologer. If this is not the case, even “intention and instruction” (*intentio et doctrina*) could not enable the scholar to master the art perfectly.⁵⁴⁶ Roger Bacon further states that such a predisposition would become apparent at a young age, as the student would show an “intense and earnest desire” (*uoluntas intensa et effectuosa*) for astrology and would progress faster than others under the same circumstances. He writes that whether the student is *astronomice natus* can be ascertained by examining the day and hour of

⁵⁴³ The motive of envy is found in most defences of astrology, see, for example Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 1, chap. 3, col. 3; chap. 7, col. 7; John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, prologue, fol. 1^{ra}, 2^{va}; John of Saxony: *Commentary*, Paris 1521, fol. 32^v.

⁵⁴⁴ See, for example, Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, pp. 224–225: Cham was “inherently of a most subtle intellect” (*naturaliter subtilissimi ingenii*) and “inherently wise” (*naturaliter prudens*). Ibid., p. 228: Abraham was having “by nature more subtle abilities in this art than anyone else” (*Abraam natura ingeniosus subtilior in eadem arte factus est omnibus aliis*). For Michael Scot’s account, see Chapter 3.2.1.

⁵⁴⁵ The text consists of eight sections, of which sections 1–2 and 7–8 largely correspond to passages from his *Opus majus*. Sections 3–6, however, contain independent material that provides more detailed information about Roger Bacon’s view on astrologers. The text has received little attention so far, with the exception of the article by George Molland: Roger Bacon’s *De laudibus mathematicae*. Molland, ibid., p. 70, dates the text to c. 1267 and suggests that Roger Bacon wrote the letter to an “aspiring scientist” to offer him guidelines (ibid., p. 83). I have compared the transcriptions I made from the manuscript with those produced by Molland in his article and have adopted his punctuation for better comprehensibility.

⁵⁴⁶ Roger Bacon: *De laudibus mathematicae*, BLO, MS. Digby 218, fol. 100^{vb}: [...] *quod quantumcumque habuerit de intentione et doctrina si non sit astronomice natus, dicunt quod numquam erit perfectus secundum artem suam* [...].

his birth and conception, which would indicate such a predisposition.⁵⁴⁷ Therefore, the stars themselves determine who is suitable for the activity of an astrologer.

Roger Bacon's belief that a person's nativity impacts their suitability for a particular occupation is in line with the astrological theory of the time.⁵⁴⁸ Guido Bonatti, for example, likewise addresses which trade or activity suits a person based on their nativity.⁵⁴⁹ In this context, he also mentions which astrological conditions at someone's birth would be conducive to becoming an "astrologer" (*astrologus*) who would "judge hidden things and predict the future even if he has little or no knowledge of letters."⁵⁵⁰ Guido Bonatti thus attaches similarly great importance to the predetermined conditions set by a person's nativity and considers them more decisive than formal training for enabling a person to practice astrology. A striking example of how the idea of being "astronomically destined" was used to reinforce an author's own claim to aptitude as an astrologer can be found in Henry Bate's *Nativitas*. He claims here that his birth chart would indicate, among other things, his ability to "occupy himself with the celestial regions" and to be "skilled in the calculations for interpreting the course of the stars".⁵⁵¹

In addition to astrological suitability, Roger Bacon, in his *De laudibus mathematicae*, lists further "useful and necessary conditions" that a good astrologer must fulfil but

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., fols. 100^{vb}–101^{ra}: *Cognoscat autem homo an sit astronomice natus si a iuuentute habuerit ad astronomiam uoluntatem intensam et effectuosam. Et quando in ea aliquantulum studuerit si notabiliter profecerit respectu aliorum ceteris paribus. Potest autem hoc scire reuoluendo tempus ad diem et horam et natiuitatis et conceptionis sue [...]*.

⁵⁴⁸ Already Ptolemy described the effects of a person's nativity on his suitability for certain occupations, and the late medieval accounts are mainly based on his theories. See Ptolemy: *Tetrabiblos*, ed. / transl. Robbins, book 4, chap. 4, pp. 380–392. In addition, especially in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the concept of the so-called "children of the planets" ("Planetenkinder") became popular. This idea is also based on ancient sources and assigns people to one of the planets, each of which were believed to confer certain characteristics on its 'child', i.e. the person born under its influence. See on the development of this idea and its manifestation in the fifteenth century in relation to the categorisation of scientists and artists: Luís Campos Ribeiro: *The Children of Mercury: The Image of the Artist and the Scientist in Medieval Astrological Texts and Iconography*, in: Maria Amalia Castro Miranda / Alicia Miguélez Cavero (eds.): *Portuguese Studies on Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts (Textes et études du Moyen Âge 76)*, Turnhout 2014, pp. 131–144.

⁵⁴⁹ Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 9, On the Tenth House, chap. 1, col. 788: *De magisterio nati ac de isius opere, suis que officiis, [...]*.

⁵⁵⁰ According to Guido Bonatti, a conjunction of the significators of the native's work and of the Sun and the Moon in Virgo or Scorpio would imply an occupation as an astrologer or a nigromancer. Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 9, On the Tenth House, chap. 1, col. 792: *Sed si fuerit in Virgine uel Scorpione, fiet Astrologus atque nigromanticus et iudicabit occulta, et praedicet futura etiam si non multum, uel nullam habuerit scientiam litterarum*. The inclusion of nigromancers here is probably due to the fact that both astrologers and nigromancers have "uncovering secret/hidden things in the future" as a common concern.

⁵⁵¹ Henry Bate: *Nativitas*, ed. Steel et al., chap. 4.3.1, p. 158. It should be noted that Henry Bate emphasises his suitability for the activity of astrological predictions, not specifically for the occupation of astrologer. For the classification of Henry Bate as astrologer, see Chapter 2.2.1.

which he believes are not required with the same necessity.⁵⁵² These refer to the physical features of the astrologer. Roger Bacon states that “bodily excellence regarding composition and complexion” (*bonitas corporalis secundum compositionem et complexionem*) is needed, i.e. a scholar must also be “physiognomically born” (*phisionomice natus*) for the occupation of astrology.⁵⁵³ “A solid composition”, Roger Bacon further explains, would “dispose toward longevity, and this is necessary for an astrologer because his occupation demands experience and time”, whereas “a good complexion accompanies and facilitates skill”.⁵⁵⁴ He even elaborates on the exact desirable physical features: An astrologer should have “a virile heart, a strong and subtle brain, an open and well-disposed face, and a free and lofty brow as a sign of great and good imagination”, as well as “clear, strong, and healthy eyes [...] and many other things that signify wise dispositions.”⁵⁵⁵ Roger Bacon then states that it would be furthermore very expedient for the astrologer to have by nature “virtues (*uirtutes*) of the soul appropriate to his office, namely a strong and long-lived intellectual virtue on account of the magnitude of experience (*experientia*) that is required and that he has an ingenious and penetrating discretionary virtue, and a will strongly moved to the desire of this science.”⁵⁵⁶ From his descriptions, it becomes clear that, in Roger Bacon’s opinion, the astrologer needs certain innate qualities to be able to practise astrology competently. However, it should also be noted that he presents those qualities as the

⁵⁵² Roger Bacon: *De laudibus mathematicae*, BLO, MS. Digby 218, fol. 101^{ra}: *Sed et alie sunt conditiones utiles et necessarie, licet non exigantur tanta necessitate, [...]*.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., fol. 101^{ra}. *Complexio* was understood as the temperament, i.e. “the balance of the qualities of hot, wet, cold, and dry, resulting from the mixture of elements in the human body.” See for this definition and further explanations on those ideas which go back to Galenic theories: Siraisi: *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine*, pp. 101–104.

⁵⁵⁴ Roger Bacon: *De laudibus mathematicae*, BLO, MS. Digby 218, fol. 101^{ra}: *Compositio enim solida disposuit ad longeuitem, et hec necessaria est astronomo, quia sua occupatio indiget experimento et tempore. Complexio uero bona attendit ingenium et habilitat*. English translation: Molland: Roger Bacon’s *De laudibus mathematicae*, p. 77.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., fol. 101^{ra}: [...] *uidelicet quod habeat cor uirile, cerebrum forte et subtile, faciem apertam et bene dispositam, et frontem liberam et eminentem in signum bone et magne imaginationis, [...] habeatque claros oculos et fortes et sanos [...] multaque alia que significant dispositiones insipiales [...]*. English translation: Molland: Roger Bacon’s *De laudibus mathematicae*, p. 77. Molland translates *insipiales* with “wise” which fits perfectly with the general content of the text. The transcription is also clearly readable in the manuscript. However, while I could not find a direct translation of *insipiales*, it seems likely to be a modification of *insipiens* which translates to “foolish”. Since this translation would not correspond to the general intention of the text, I have adopted Molland’s translation.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., fol. 101^{ra}: *Sed a parte anime expedit nimis quod uirtutes anime habeat naturaliter ad officium eius conuenientes utpote uirtutem intellectualem ualidam et longeuam, propter magnitudinem experientie que requiritur, et quod habeat uirtutem discretiuam, ingeniosam et perspicacem ac uoluntatem fortiter motam ad desiderium istius scientie*. English translation: Molland: Roger Bacon’s *De laudibus mathematicae*, p. 78.

foundation that enables the astrologer to subsequently acquire the skills needed for astrology, for which, above all, time and experience are imperative.

Roger Bacon is not an isolated case in portraying the astrologer as someone who must possess certain natural predispositions to be able to pursue astrology. Similarly, John of Saxony, for example, also directly addresses the necessary intellectual prerequisites of the astrologer in the prologue to his commentary of Alcabitius' introduction to astrology, written in 1331.⁵⁵⁷ With reference to Ptolemy, he names three "qualities or conditions a true philosopher, but even more so an astrologer had to fulfil": first, the "steadfastness of intention" (*stabilitas intentionis*), second, the "suitability of disposition" (*habilitas dispositionis*), and third, the "abdication of earthly possessions" (*abdicatio terrenae possessionis*).⁵⁵⁸

The second condition regarding disposition shows that John of Saxony also considered that astrologers would need to possess an inherent aptitude, for he states here, much like Roger Bacon before him, that to succeed in astrology, a person must be "naturally predisposed" (*naturaliter dispositus*) to its study.⁵⁵⁹ If a person did not have the appropriate disposition by nature, he would not be able to master this discipline. As an example, John of Saxony recounts seeing some clerics who – despite being good at logic and natural philosophy – were "completely unable to understand anything about astronomy, not even [the tables of] al-Khwārizmī". Those who are "naturally unsuitable" (*naturaliter indispositi*), he resumes, would therefore be "repelled" by astrology and would turn against it.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁷ Burnett: Al-Qabīṣī's Introduction to Astrology, p. 53.

⁵⁵⁸ The first and third conditions will be further discussed later in this chapter. John of Saxony derives those three premises from the phrase, *Vir sapiens dominabitur astris*, attributed to Ptolemy. See John of Saxony: Commentary, Paris 1521, fol. 30^v: *De istis Ptolemeus dicit verba proposita. Vir sapiens dominabitur astris. In quibus verbis Ptolemeus tangit tres proprietates vel conditiones, quas debet verus philosophus habere et maxime astronomus, secundum quas tria genera hominum ab astronomia repelluntur. Prima conditio est stabilitas intentionis. Secunda est habilitas dispositionis. Tertia est abdicatio terrenae possessionis. Primam tangit cum dicit vir. Secundam cum dicit: sapiens. Tertiam cum dicit: dominabitur astris.* See for John of Saxony's use of the phrase Boudet: Entre science et nigromance, p. 291; for a general discussion of the origin and use of the phrase in the Middle Ages: Coopland: Nicole Oresme and the Astrologers, pp. 175–177; and Justin Niermeier-Dohoney: Sapiens Dominabitur Astris: A Diachronic Survey of a Ubiquitous Astrological Phrase, in: Humanities 10(117) (2021), URL: <https://doi.org/10.3390/h10040117>, last accessed 02/12/2024.

⁵⁵⁹ John of Saxony: Commentary, Paris 1521, fol. 30^v: *Vult ergo quod homo naturaliter debet esse dispositus ad istam scientiam qui debet proficere in ea.*

⁵⁶⁰ John of Saxony: Commentary, Paris 1521, fol. 30^v: *Vidi enim bonos clericos in logica et in naturali philosophia: qui nullo modo poterant aliquid capere de astronomia: immo nec algorismum. Patet ergo quod naturaliter indispositi repulsi sunt ab astronomia, de quibus Albumazar facit sectam secundum [...].* John of Saxony refers here to the ten different groups of opponents of astrology that Albumazar described in his "Great Introduction to Astrology". See below for more information. Charles Burnett translates *algorismum* here as the clerics' or clerks' inability "to calculate". See Burnett: Al-Qabīṣī's Introduction to

The argument that many opponents of astrology are merely inadequate or failed astrologers who, in their frustration or envy, deny the discipline its validity is frequently found in the texts of astrologers.⁵⁶¹ John of Saxony returns to this issue later in his prologue, describing the ten different adversarial groups that Albumasar had distinguished in his “Great Introduction to Astrology”.⁵⁶² John of Saxony – following Albumasar – even specifies several groups for whom ignorance and lack of understanding are the reason for their opposition. This applies most explicitly to the seventh group of opponents who reject astrology because – despite their best efforts – they cannot master the subject and thus feel envious of the practitioners’ skills.⁵⁶³ It was precisely this group that John of Saxony seems to have had in mind in the context of the second condition he mentioned for astrologers.

However, the distinction between gifted astrologers and those who do not understand astrology is also reflected in the descriptions of the ninth and tenth groups, where Albumasar lists the “common crowd” (*vulgus universalis*). Albumasar – and, summarising him, John of Saxony – explains that the common crowd rejected astrology either because they did not understand the “value” (*dignitas*) of its predictions (ninth group) or because they saw the many errors of practitioners who prided themselves on their knowledge (tenth group).⁵⁶⁴ The latter group’s members, though, should not be

Astrology, p. 54. While the statement certainly is in line with this idea, I consider it more likely that John of Saxony is referring here more specifically to an understanding of the astronomical tables of al-Khwārizmī (lat. Algorismi). This, of course, nevertheless refers to a lack of mathematical-astronomical capabilities.

⁵⁶¹ See, for example, John Ashenden, who similarly ascribes some people’s opposition as well as their failure to obtain any benefits from astrology to the “ignorance and dullness of their intellect”: John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, prologue, fol. 1^{ra}: *Uideant autem omnes tales priusquam ipsam contempnant si aliqualem scintillam de ipsa possint apprehendere, quam si apprehendere possint si exinde emolumentum inueniant, cur eam contempnunt, si autem nullum emolumentum uel fructum reportent, hoc eorum ignorantie et ingeniorum eorum obtusitati imputandum est et non scientie.*

⁵⁶² Albumasar listed ten different opposing groups. See Abū Ma’shar: *The Great Introduction to Astrology*, vol. 1, ed. and transl. Burnett / Yamamoto, part 1, chap. 5, pp. 106–149. John of Saxony gives a brief summary of each of the groups mentioned by Albumasar and adds an eleventh group. See John of Saxony: *Commentary*, Paris 1521, fols. 31^v–33^v. The eleventh group, according to John of Saxony, consists of people who would claim that astrology goes against the faith. Interestingly, John of Saxony here cites a passage from the Qur’an in his explanations as a result of drawing on texts by Arab astrologers. See for this finding: Burnett: *Al-Qabīṣī’s Introduction to Astrology*, pp. 56–57. It is worth noting here that John of Saxony adheres very closely to Albumasar’s text in his remarks on the opponents of astrology. However, the presentation and arrangement of the text, as well as the selection of certain sections and John of Saxony’s additions, show that the ideas behind it were still applicable and relevant to John of Saxony.

⁵⁶³ John of Saxony: *Commentary*, Paris 1521, fol. 32^v: *Septima secta est eorum qui repulerunt hanc scientiam, eo quod aspexissent in ea impossibile fuit eos peruenire ad id quod voluerunt. Sunt quam inuidentes huius magisterii sectatores super scientia eorum in ipsa, et repellent scientiam magisterii iudiciorum propter inuidiam.*

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 33^r: *Nona secta est vniuersitatis vulgi. Et isti diuiduntur in duas sectas, quarum vna est eorum qui nesciunt dignitatem iudiciorum caeterarumque scientiarum neque dignitatem prescientie*

blamed for their unjustified rejection of astrology; instead, the responsibility falls on those practitioners who boasted of their expertise. In fact, several of them, writes John of Saxony, were, in reality, “foolish, uneducated and fallen men” (*homines insipientes et imperiti atque caduci*). Many of them use the name of astrology to practice “various seductions” and were only out to make a profit.⁵⁶⁵

John of Saxony’s comments on the opponents of astrology thus reveal two further groups who lacked the necessary intellectual preconditions to become astrologers: on the one hand, the common masses, who did not recognise the true value of astrology and instead allowed themselves to be fooled by ‘false’ astrologers, and, on the other hand, the ‘false’ practitioners themselves who were unable or did not want to make the necessary effort to attain ‘true’ astrological knowledge and were morally reprehensible. Through this negative exploration of who is not eligible to become an astrologer, John of Saxony further clarifies what for him constitutes a ‘true’ astrologer – setting him apart from the general masses but also from ‘false’ astrologers and thus elevating him to be an exceptional figure. His descriptions also point out how quickly the lack of capability and required knowledge of people who only pretend to practice astrology could discredit ‘true’ practitioners.

4.1.2 Astrology as an Acquired Skill

While the above remarks show that natural aptitude was regarded as a prerequisite for the occupation of astrologer, they also indicate that this was ultimately perceived only as the starting point to enable the practitioner to acquire through study the knowledge needed for the practice of the discipline. When Roger Bacon, for example, comments on the physiognomic suitability of the astrologer, he stresses that the qualities mentioned would signify, among other things, longevity. This would be indispensable for an astrologer since his occupation requires experience and time, i.e. a long life would allow

rerum [...]. Decima secta est etiam vniuersalis vulgi. Et isti repulerunt scientiam huius magisterii propter hoc quod viderunt de multitudine erroris eorum qui se iactant de ea. Roger Bacon even argues that common people should generally not be taught about the intricacies of wisdom and lists as reasons for this not only their insufficient intellect, but also their susceptibility of evil. Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 1, chap. 4, pp. 9–11. See also: Roger Bacon: *De nullitate magia*, ed. Brewer, chap. 8, pp. 542–545.

⁵⁶⁵ Abū Ma’shar: *The Great Introduction to Astrology*, vol. 1, ed. and transl. Burnett / Yamamoto, part 1, chap. 5, pp. 144–145; John of Saxony: *Commentary*, Paris 1521, fol. 33^r–33^v: *Dicit Albumazar quod isti non sunt culpandi in contradictione magisteriorum huius scientiae, quia plurimi eorum qui se iactant de ea sunt homines insipientes et imperiti atque caduci. Et quibusdam interpositis dicit quod isti exercent sub nomine huius magisterii varias seductiones quibus seducunt homines debiles, [...]. Isti non quaerunt nisi lucrum.*

the practitioner to acquire the necessary astrological knowledge through experience.⁵⁶⁶ Experience and time are indeed two often-cited aspects showing astrology to be a learnable activity and not simply a given ability. It is worth taking a closer look at how astrologers understood those factors and why they placed such emphasis on them since this can shed light not only on how the astrologers understood the process of acquiring knowledge but also on how they used this process to bolster their self-fashioning as a group. While most of the astrologers discussed here mention experience in their remarks, above all, it is Roger Bacon who elaborates on the concept of “experience” (*experimentum* or *experientia*).⁵⁶⁷ For him, it formed a cornerstone for attaining general knowledge. He explains his understanding of experience in detail in the sixth part of his *Opus maius*, which he devotes entirely to his idea of a *scientia experimentalis*.⁵⁶⁸ He first establishes that there are two ways to gain knowledge: “through reasoning and experience” (*per argumentum et experimentum*). Roger Bacon considers experience to be the more important of those two as it leads to more certain results.⁵⁶⁹ Experience, he continues, can be obtained in two different manners. The first is through the external senses. As an example, he lists the experience that can be gained about phenomena in the heavens by using astronomical instruments or about occurrences on earth through vision. If something has happened further away, that is outside of one’s personal field of

⁵⁶⁶ See footnote 554.

⁵⁶⁷ The medieval understanding and usage of the terms *experimentum* and *experientia* have been discussed repeatedly and controversially in modern research; in this context, particularly Roger Bacon’s concept of a *scientia experimentalis* prompted the question of whether one can already discern the beginnings of the modern experiment in his writings. See on the concepts and Latin words used: Jürgen Sarnowsky: *Expertus – experientia – experimentum. Neue Wege der wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnis im Spätmittelalter*, in: Hedwig Röckelein / Udo Friedrich (eds.): *Experten der Vormoderne zwischen Wissen und Erfahrung (Das Mittelalter 17,2)*, Berlin 2012, pp. 47–59. For a discussion of Roger Bacon’s *scientia experimentalis*: Jeremiah M.G. Hackett: *Roger Bacon on scientia experimentalis*, in: Jeremiah M.G. Hackett (ed.): *Roger Bacon and the Sciences. Commemorative Essays (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 57)*, Leiden 1997, pp. 277–315. Hackett, *ibid.*, p. 293, footnote 49, and p. 314, points out that although Roger Bacon is writing about “experimental science”, this should be considered in its medieval context and understanding, which is not to be equated with the experimental science of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, i.e. comprising controlled laboratory procedures. As the terms *experientia* and *experimentum* were used in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries virtually synonymously, and to avoid any misconception of the medieval *experimentum* as signifying a modern “experiment”, I am following Jeremiah Hackett’s suggestion to translate *experimentum* as well as *experientia* and the respective associated cognates as “experience”. Hackett: *Roger Bacon on scientia experimentalis*, pp. 293–294, footnote 49. See also Sarnowsky: *Expertus – experientia – experimentum*, p. 58, for the synonymous use of the terms.

⁵⁶⁸ See footnote 567.

⁵⁶⁹ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 2, part 6, chap. 1, pp. 167–168: *Argumentum concludit et facit nos concedere conclusionem, sed non certificat neque removet dubitationem ut quiescat animus in intuitu veritatis, nisi eam inveniatur via experientiae; quia multi habent argumenta ad scibilia, sed quia non habent experientiam, negligunt ea, nec vitant nociva nec persequuntur bona. [...]. Ergo argumentum non sufficit, sed experientia.*

experience, he recommends that one should rely on the word of scholars who have experienced it.⁵⁷⁰ Roger Bacon classifies this experience as “human and philosophical” (*humana et philosophica*).⁵⁷¹ Hence, for this first category, Roger Bacon emphasises the practical aspect of acquiring knowledge, which entails physically experiencing something or relying on the experiences of others.

However, Roger Bacon adds that this type of experience alone is insufficient because it neither fully testifies about corporeal things nor touches on spiritual things.⁵⁷² Therefore, the intellect of man, Roger Bacon states, must be aided in another form, which represents the second way of gaining experience, by divine grace. This had happened to the holy patriarchs and prophets, who, as they “received illumination within and were not dependent on sense alone”, “first gave sciences to the world”.⁵⁷³ Divine grace and inspirations, Roger Bacon further writes, illuminate not only spiritual but also corporeal things as well as the “sciences of philosophy”.⁵⁷⁴ To reinforce his point, he remarks that (Pseudo-)Ptolemy, in his *Centiloquium*, equally recognized those two paths to knowledge – i.e. “the experience of philosophy” and “divine inspiration” – and considered the latter to be far better.⁵⁷⁵

Thus, Roger Bacon interprets experience not just as the external sensory perception of our modern understanding but equally, and even more importantly for him, as findings gained through divine guidance, which are obtained explicitly “from within” and not from the senses alone. Intriguingly, Roger Bacon states that both types of experience create knowledge about the natural world. Divine inspiration is hence not restricted to understanding more about the faith but also allows even deeper insight into the workings of nature than mere sensory perception. This view corresponds to Roger Bacon’s idea that, ultimately, only divine grace and inspiration can lead to a complete

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 169: *Sed duplex est experientia; una est per sensus exteriores et sic experimenta ea, quae in coelo sunt per instrumenta ad haec facta, et haec inferiora per opera certificate ad visum experimur. Et quae non sunt praesentia in locis in quibus sumus, scimus per alios sapientes qui experti sunt.*

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.: *Et haec experientia est humana et philosophica, [...].*

⁵⁷² Ibid.: [...] *sed haec experientia non sufficit homini, quia non plene certificatur de corporalibus propter sui difficultatem, et de spiritualibus nihil attingit.*

⁵⁷³ Ibid.: *Ergo oportet quod intellectus hominis aliter juvetur, et ideo sancti patriarchae et prophetae, qui primo dederunt scientias mundo, receperunt illuminationes interiores et non solum stabant in sensu. [...].*

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.: *Nam gratia fidei illuminat multum, et divinae inspirationes, non solum in spiritualibus, sed corporalibus et scientiis philosophiae.*

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 169–170: [...] *secundum quod Ptolemaeus dicit in Centilogio quod duplex est via deveniendi ad notitiam rerum, una per experientiam philosophiae, alia per divinam inspirationem, quae longe melior est, ut dicit.* In this context, he also addresses the issue of acquiring knowledge through prophecy and discusses the relationship between astrologers and prophets. This topic is explored in more detail in Chapter 5.3.2.

understanding of philosophy, which is why unbelieving philosophers could never achieve such perfection.⁵⁷⁶

Whereas Roger Bacon discusses experience in relation to philosophy in general in this part of the *Opus maius*, his remarks in *De laudibus mathematicae* show that both ways of acquiring knowledge also apply specifically to astrology or, rather, knowledge about the future. Here, he not only emphasises several times the need for the astrologer to experience, but he also summarises that all the listed prerequisites – the astrologer’s fitting astronomical birth, his acquired erudition, his physiognomic qualities, and his suitable virtues – would only lead him to perfect and certain knowledge of the future if he was also inspired and enlightened by God.⁵⁷⁷ In this way, Roger Bacon underscores that while he considers the physical and human acquisition of knowledge essential, certain and complete knowledge could only be achieved through an additional divine inspiration. Notably, this second kind of experience can only be actively pursued in terms of being a good Christian, yet whether enlightenment by God occurs cannot be directly influenced. It is, therefore, inherent or given.⁵⁷⁸

While for Roger Bacon, experience also has a divinely inspired component that would enable someone to have perfect knowledge of the future, the way he – and other astrologers – mention it in the context of astrology seems to refer primarily to sensual, human experience. This is evident from its frequent joint mention with time, suggesting that the astrologer had to gain practical experience over time to master his discipline. In the way astrologers discuss the time required to master astrology, it is evident that they address two different levels of time. Firstly, this includes personal time: an astrologer needs to spend time acquiring knowledge about astrology. As noted in Chapter 3.2.2, Roger Bacon, for example, relates in his version of the history of knowledge that the sons of Adam through Seth were granted a life of 600 years to “complete the study of wisdom”. Having taken this assertion from Josephus’ *Antiquitates*, Roger Bacon then attributes this time requirement explicitly to astrology. He explains that this extensive

⁵⁷⁶ See Chapter 3.2.2.

⁵⁷⁷ Roger Bacon: *De laudibus mathematicae*, BLO, MS. Digby 218, fol. 102^{ra}: *Quantumcumque igitur sit homo natus astronomice, per inuentionem et per doctrinam informatus, et fuerit compositionis et complexionis bene morigeratusque tempusque constellationis impediens modicum declinauerit, consilium apponat in preparandis bonis significationibus et mitigandis malis, nunquam ut dicunt pertinet astrologus ad certitudinem sui officii et certitudinaliter et perfecte cognoscat futura et eorum remedia et adiutoria, nisi sit a Deo inspiratus et specialiter illuminatus.*

⁵⁷⁸ On Roger Bacon’s view of this, see Chapter 5.3.2.

period was needed “especially on account of astronomy, in which there is the greater difficulty because mortal men are far distant from the heavenly bodies.”⁵⁷⁹

In addition to expending his own time gaining personal experience, however, the would-be astrologer relies on a second level of time and experience, that of the cumulative experience gained over a much longer period by earlier astrologers. Discussion of the various contributions of individual astrologers highlighted their important contributions to the progress of the discipline as a whole. At the end of his discussion of the origins of astrology, for example, Michael Scot lists ancient and more recent authors who, in his view, have furthered the study of astrology, stating that authors from different regions and times “each collected something in this art with careful study and on the basis of their experiential findings”, which they then recorded in their books.⁵⁸⁰ Such cumulative experience was essential for astrologers because, as explained in chapter 3, the discipline depended on observations over long periods. John of Saxony, summarising Albumasar’s account of opponents of astrology, writes that certain people reject astrology on the grounds of experience since one person’s lifetime is not sufficient to observe recurring planetary constellations. In reply, Albumasar, and with him John of Saxony, state that, while some general phenomena can be observed during one lifetime, for those events that occur rarely, “the sayings of our predecessors should be sufficient to us”.⁵⁸¹ Here, both levels of time – personal and cumulative – are deemed essential for the astrologer.

⁵⁷⁹ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 2, chap. 18, p. 65: [...], *qui fuerunt filii Seth et Noe cum filiis suis, quibus Deus dedit vivere sexcentos annos propter studium sapientiae complendum*, [...], *asserens quod in minore tempore non potuerant complere philosophiam praecipue propter astronomiam in qua est major difficultas, eo quod a caelestibus homines mortales multum distant*. See Josephus: *Jewish Antiquities*, vol. 4, ed. and transl. Thackeray, p. 50. However, in an earlier chapter, Roger Bacon attributes this long lifespan to the necessity to study medicine. See Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 2, chap. 9, p. 49: *Et cum medicina magis sit necessaria homini quam multae aliae scientiae, non est dubium quin filii Adae et Noe illam invenerunt, quibus sapientiae plenitudo data fuit, et quibus concessum est tam diu vivere propter studium sapientiae perficiendum*. Roger Bacon was overall interested in the human lifespan and believed that in the beginning of time, people had a much longer lifespan, but that over the generations, it has shortened considerably due to poor lifestyle and sinful behaviour. Roger Bacon, *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 2, part 6, chap. 12, pp. 204–213. See for a discussion of this in the context of Roger Bacon’s attitude to medicine: Faye Marie Getz: *Roger Bacon and Medicine. The Paradox of the Forbidden Fruit and the Secrets of Long Life*, in: Jeremiah M. G. Hackett (ed.): *Roger Bacon and the Sciences. Commemorative Essays* (*Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters* 57), Leiden 1997, pp. 337–364, esp. pp. 345–346.

⁵⁸⁰ Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, pp. 231–232: *Unde multi fuerunt doctores huius artis tempore precedente ut prenominanti, et etiam Salomon, Sibilla, Tebit benchorat, Mesealla, Dorotheus, Hermes, Boetius, Averroes, Iohannis Yspanus, Ysidorus, Zael, Alchabicius, et cetera. Cum vero diversi fierunt auctores natione regionem et diversa etate temporum, omnis aliquid in hac arte sedulo studio colligerunt et propter experimentata reperta libros conpillantes eos intitulaverunt*.

⁵⁸¹ John of Saxony: *Commentary*, Paris 1521, fol. 32^{r-v}: *Quinta secta est eorum qui aspexerunt in scientia totius et annullauerunt scientiam iudiciorum ex parte experimentorum. [...] Et breuiter virtus verborum*

Through naming time and experience as integral elements in the practice of an astrologer, astrology is shown as a constantly evolving, progressive discipline that builds on the longstanding work of practitioners. This emphasis on the sum of experience and knowledge accumulated over the centuries creates a sense of community across time and demonstrates the significance of such a group of astrologers for advancing the discipline. The role of the scholar who wants to become an astrologer is also evident here: he must learn the basics of the field, drawing on the discoveries of his predecessors, but also contribute his own insights. This makes him part of the chain of transmission and progress, which in turn strengthens the sense of group identity.⁵⁸² This dimension of time is particularly emphasised in the origin stories of astrology but is also reinforced in further passages related to intellectual requirements which similarly highlight time and the importance of experience. The long time and experience that the study of astrology requires for the individual show that it is a learnable but difficult and time-consuming discipline, so scholars who have mastered it appear particularly impressive.

In addition to this general emphasis on experience and time, the authors of the introductory works also discuss how an astrologer should approach learning astrology more specifically. One requirement frequently voiced was that the astrologer also needed knowledge of other disciplines. Roger Bacon, for example, was concerned not only with the natural intellectual prerequisites but also with the skills to be learned by the astrologer. In line with his general appeal in his *Opus maius* to study a range of different disciplines, he describes in his *De laudibus mathematicae* that the astrologer must be knowledgeable not only in astrology *per se* but in several subjects. In particular, he argues that knowledge of medicine, moral philosophy, physiognomy, alchemy, physical agriculture, experimental science, and natural astronomy are central to the practice of astrology. Without being versed in those subjects, one could not be an “adequate judge” (*sufficiens iudicator*). However, he admits, finding someone who has mastered all this knowledge is rare and difficult.⁵⁸³ The requirement for the astrologer to

est quod homo in modico tempore potest experiri illa quae communiter occurrunt, sed quantum ad alia quae raro fiunt, sicut sunt coniunctiones magne: debent nobis sufficere dicta predecessorum nostrorum.

⁵⁸² See on the idea of ‘scientific progress’ in the Middle Ages: Andrew G. Molland: *Medieval Ideas of Scientific Progress*, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39 (1978), pp. 561–577.

⁵⁸³ Roger Bacon: *De laudibus mathematicae*, BLO, MS. Digby 218, fol. 100^{vb}: *Propter quod autem oportet significata scire alias partes naturales philosophie quia per celestia uel impressiones fit iudicium de ceteris rebus naturalibus, sed propter iudicia de homine a parte corporis oportet medicinam cognosci, et a parte anime moralem philosophiam quantumlibet de moribus salua libertate arbitrii iudicare, propter quod dixit Ptolomeus. Non potest quis peruenire ad perfectionem iudicandi nisi sapiens morum,*

be proficient in several subjects also appears in the writings of other astrologers. John Ashenden, for example, similarly describes that an astrologer must have a wide-ranging education.⁵⁸⁴

Astrology is thus presented as a highly demanding subject requiring considerable learning, and the astrologer is shown as a versatile scholar. Astrology is assigned a superior status by stating that mastery of astrology presupposes the knowledge of other disciplines. Consequently, someone who successfully practices astrology must be exceptionally skilled and dedicated. Roger Bacon underlines this exceptionality again in the context of his concept of being “astronomically born” for astrology. He writes that both a complete knowledge of what pertains to the astrologer’s activity, acquired through “discovery and teaching” (*per inuentionem et doctrinam*), and a suitable astrological nativity are necessary for the astrologer to be able to make adequate judgements.⁵⁸⁵ For Roger Bacon, it is therefore this combination of natural talent and acquired skills which is the key to becoming a successful astrologer, a combination he believes is rarely found in one person.⁵⁸⁶

In terms of what the actual study of astrology entails and how the aspiring astrologer must approach the subject, the remarks of John of Saxony are particularly instructive. As already mentioned, John of Saxony identifies, besides the required “suitability of disposition”, also the “steadfastness of attention” (*stabilitas intentionis*) as a condition for an astrologer. Under the latter heading, he explains – with reference to Ptolemy and

phisionomiam uero oportet propter iudicia tam corporis quam anime, quia secundum phisionomicam complexionem homo inclinatur et disponitur ad passiones uarias anime et corporis. Sed alkimia, ut certum est, facit cognoscere omnia inanimata que sunt in aqua et terra, et certificat naturalem philosophiam et medicinam, quapropter oportet astrologum scire hanc scientiam. Et agricultura phisica docet in particulari et per experientiam omnes naturas et proprietates rerum animatarum. Et experimentalis scientia et astronomia naturalis complent omnia. Quapropter non potest esse sufficiens iudicator, nisi sciat alias scientias, et hoc raro inuenitur et cum difficultate. The discipline of physiognomy, i.e. the study of the relationship between physical and psychological characteristics, features prominently in the (pseudo-)Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum*, which was edited and commented on by Roger Bacon. Roger Bacon: *Secretum secretorum*, ed. Steele, part 4, pp. 164–172.

⁵⁸⁴ However, he does not go as far as Roger Bacon, but only mentions philosophy, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomical knowledge, that is, the areas most directly related to astrology. John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 12, chap. 3, fol. 243^{vb}: [...] *in philosophia arismetica geometria probabiliter fueris instructus et motus planetarum in circulis suis iuxta doctrinam ptholemei in libro almagesti agnoueris* [...].

⁵⁸⁵ Roger Bacon: *De laudibus mathematicae*, BLO, MS. Digby 218, fol. 100^{vb}: *Et hee due radices, scilicet completa cognitio per inuentionem et doctrinam quantum pertinet ad officium astronomii et astronomica natiuitas sunt omnino necessaria, sine quibus non est possibile astronomi iudicare, ut sufficit secundum artem.*

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, fols. 100^{vb}–101^{ra}: *Et hee sunt conditiones principales que tamen raro inueniuntur in uno homine.*

Haly – that knowledge about the stars is generated by the astrologer and by others.⁵⁸⁷ Therefore, someone wanting to know about future events must proceed in two ways: First, he would need to observe the movement of the stars and their effects. Second, he must take into account what “the ancients” wrote in their books about the meaning of the stars’ movements and add to it “whatever he has proven in his own time”.⁵⁸⁸ John of Saxony goes on to explain why those activities would demand a “steadfastness of intention”. Since observing the movements of the stars would involve much work, he writes that an astrologer should neither be “effeminate nor careless” (*effoeminatus nec remissus*). Moreover, studying the “books of the ancients” (*libri antiquorum*) requires much time; an astrologer should, therefore, not be “inconstant” (*vagabundus*). Instead, he ought to be “firm and stable in his thoughts” (*firmus et stabilis in meditatione*).⁵⁸⁹

John of Saxony here shows both the astrologer’s own observations and the new insights gained from them, as well as the study of the authoritative texts, as key parts of an astrologer’s activity. Remarkably, he highlights that astrologers need to make their own observations and supplement the existing knowledge with their own experiences. That such observations were indeed carried out is evident, for example, from the writings of John of Saxony’s contemporary Geoffrey of Meaux, who mentions in several smaller treatises how he observed and interpreted certain phenomena.⁵⁹⁰ As C. Philipp E. Nothaft remarks, the observational side of medieval European astronomy has often been downplayed by modern researchers, who claimed that empirical measurements of celestial positions did not play an important role in the development of

⁵⁸⁷ He refers here to the (pseudo-)Ptolemaic *Centiloquium* and its commentator “Haly”. See for more information on this work and its reception: Jean-Patrice Boudet: The Medieval Latin Versions of Pseudo-Ptolemy’s *Centiloquium*: A Survey, in: David Juste et al. (eds.): *Ptolemy’s Science of the Stars in the Middle Ages* (Ptolemaeus Arabus et Latinus. Studies 1), Turnhout 2020, pp. 283–304. John of Saxony: *Commentary*, Paris 1521, fol. 30^v: *Quantum ad primam conditionem dicit Ptolemeus in prima propositione centiloquii: Scientia stellarum ex te et ex illis est.*

⁵⁸⁸ John of Saxony: *Commentary*, Paris 1521, fol. 30^v: *Et Haly in commento eiusdem dicit. Qui res futuras scire desiderat, duabus viis oportet incedere: Vna vt aspiciat motum stellarum et opera quae fiunt in rebus secundam motum earum. Et aspiciat libros quos antiqui scripserunt de significatione motuum ipsarum, et adiungat his quaecunque probauit in tempore suo.*

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*: *Cum ergo magnus sit labor in aspiciendo motus stellarum non potest astronomum esse effoeminatus nec remissus. Et cum multum tempus requiratur ad respiciendum libros antiquorum: non potest esse vagabundus. Oportet ergo ut astronomus sit firmus et stabilis in meditatione.*

⁵⁹⁰ See, for example: Geoffrey of Meaux: *De stellis comatis*, ed. by Lynn Thorndike, in: *Latin Treatises on Comets Between 1238 and 1368 A.D.* (Corpus of Mediaeval Scientific Texts 3), Chicago 1950, pp. 210–214, see p. 212: *Ista autem stella a Marte principaliter elevata in Virgine, hoc est sub signo Virginis, fuit orta, quod sic scivi quia [cum] ego quadam nocte vidi eam cum tribus stellis que sunt in palma Ululantis. In quadam alia nocte ego vidi eam quasi in medio duarum stellarum que sunt in cauda Draconis.* See also Geoffrey of Meaux: *On the Comet of 1337* [without Latin title], ed. by Lynn Thorndike, in: *Latin Treatises on Comets Between 1238 and 1368 A.D.* (Corpus of Mediaeval Scientific Texts 3), Chicago 1950, pp. 221–225, see pp. 223–224, where he relates his observations but also narrates his thoughts and records of the movements of the stars.

astronomy before the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries.⁵⁹¹ John of Saxony's and Geoffrey of Meaux's comments, however, show that making one's own observations was, in fact, considered an important factor for astrologers in the first half of the fourteenth century.

Astrology is thus presented as a constantly evolving discipline, and it is the astrologer's task to add further insights. Overall, John of Saxony underlines with his statements the indispensable role that a long and focused preoccupation with astrology played in the successful mastery of the discipline – again, time and experience are shown as central for astrologers. The fact that he lists the “steadfastness of attention” as the first of the three preconditions for an astrologer further illustrates the significance he attaches to obtaining the knowledge needed to practise astrology. He presents the astrologer primarily as a capable scholar, persevering in his studies and fully dedicated to acquiring the necessary skills.

Another astrologer who identifies a focused mindset as a requirement for an astrologer is Michael Scot. He writes that the astrologer must have “a very stable, well-disposed and calm mind” and should not be “inconstant”. This, he explains, is on account of the “contemplation” that the astrologer must frequently employ to truthfully investigate the heavenly bodies, as astrology is first “contemplative” rather than “practical”.⁵⁹² He further clarifies that the qualities outlined were needed because errors can quickly occur in this discipline due to even minor inaccuracies regarding, for example, the unit of a number.⁵⁹³ Michael Scot thus emphasises, above all, the fundamental role of the speculative side of astrology in the form of its mathematical foundations, which would require a dedicated focus on the part of the astrologer.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹¹ C. Philipp E. Nothaft: Guillaume des Moustiers' Treatise on the Armillary Instrument (1264) and the Practice of Astronomical Observation in Medieval Europe, in: *Annals of Science* 78 (2021), pp. 401–417. In his article, Nothaft could show that this was indeed the case already for the thirteenth century.

⁵⁹² Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 187: *Hec quidem ars valde stabillem animum requirit bene dispositum et quietum in se et non vagum propter contemplationem quam uti oportet ipsum frequenter si vult veraciter celestia investigare, cum hac ars prius sit contemplative quam actualis substantiarum.*

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*: *Dicimus enim hoc pro eo quod in eadem arte homo cito erraret et potest errare pro modico ut unitate numeri et cetera.*

⁵⁹⁴ Like medicine, astrology was seen to have a theoretical/speculative as well as a practical side. The theoretical side was often emphasised to highlight the character of the discipline as a *scientia*. See for a discussion of this aspect: Robert S. Westman: *The Copernican Question. Prognostication, Skepticism, and Celestial Order*, Berkeley / Los Angeles / London 2011, pp. 34–43; Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, vol. 1, pp. xlii–xliv. The latter actually sees a threefold structure of astrology (as well as medicine) and divides it into: “practical, theoretical and natural philosophical/scientific” (*Ibid.*, p. xlv). About the development of the image of an ‘expert’ who could draw on both theoretical knowledge and practical experience: Martin Kintzinger: *Experientia lucrativa? Erfahrungswissen und Wissenserfahrung im europäischen Mittelalter*, in: Hedwig Röckelein / Udo Friedrich (eds.): *Experten der Vormoderne zwischen Wissen und Erfahrung (Das Mittelalter 17,2)*, Berlin 2012, pp. 95–117. William Rede, a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, and

Michael Scot's and John of Saxony's portrayals of the astrologer as a single-minded man focused upon the persistent acquisition of knowledge correspond to the widespread ideals of scholars in general. For example, in the popular late-medieval didactic handbook *De Disciplina scolarium* on the exemplary behaviour of scholars, the figure of the *filius inconstantiae* appears as a negative model. As soon as such a person encountered difficulties, he would turn to the next task and consequently never fully master a discipline.⁵⁹⁵ While a certain amount of perseverance is undoubtedly required for any subject, Michael Scot's and John of Saxony's comments show that they were particularly keen to emphasise that because of astrology's complexity and the time and experience needed for its study, it was even more critical for aspiring astrologers to be committed and focused than for other scholars.

In conclusion, what kind of image of an astrologer emerges from the descriptions of the necessary intellectual prerequisites? The remarks on this topic encompass several aspects that are closely related to the definition of the discipline and that can be summarised under two overarching but intertwined main points: innate aptitude and learned ability. Astrologers stipulate that someone who wants to become a successful practitioner must fulfil certain inherent conditions. According to this, a prospective astrologer must display not only exceptional general intelligence but also a specific aptitude for astrology and its activities. The authors mention a suitable astrological and physiognomic disposition or, more generally, the intellectual capacity to understand complicated astrological correlations and calculations. The idea that a person must be naturally predestined to become an astrologer evokes the way prophets were chosen by God to receive their knowledge.⁵⁹⁶

However, this natural gift was presented merely as a starting point for acquiring the required skills through long study and experience. Since astrologers depicted their

friend of John Ashenden, explains the theoretical and practical part of astrology in an annotation to his astronomical tables of 1340 as follow: He writes that "For those who wish to prognosticate future effects of the planets on inferior bodies, first it is necessary to calculate, according to the operation of astronomical tables, the diversities of their motions so that there may be a natural progression from speculative science to the practical." See BL, MS. Harley 1009, fol. 3r: *Volentibus prenosticare futuros effectus planetarum in inferioribus primo secundum opus tabularum oportet calculare ipsarum motuum diversitates ut a speculative ad practicam fiat progressio naturalis*. See on the tables of William Rede: Richard Harper: The Astronomical Tables of William Rede, in: *Isis* 66 (3) (1975), pp. 369–378.

⁵⁹⁵ (Pseudo-)Boethius: *De disciplina scolarium*, ed. Weijers, pp. 104–108. The text is an educational handbook, which until the fifteenth century was attributed to the late antique writer Boethius. Although the author still remains unknown, the editor of the treatise assumes that it was written in the context of the university of Paris between the years 1230 and 1240. Haskins: *Studies in Mediaeval Culture*, p. 73, considers this work "the most popular of mediaeval manuals" and points to the wide diffusion of it in the late Middle Ages. See also footnote 537 for more information on the work.

⁵⁹⁶ The relation between astrologers and prophets is discussed in Chapter 5.3.2.

discipline as demanding but rational and thus learnable, the aspiring astrologer must have an appropriate attitude, i.e. be determined and highly dedicated to meet the challenges associated with the study of astrology. In terms of the actual intellectual activities of astrologers, observation, book knowledge and mathematical knowledge are highlighted – all of which must be learned through experience over a long period of time. The emphasis on commitment to astrological studies and the difficulty of becoming proficient in the discipline portrays the study of astrology as a full-time occupation. While knowledge of other subjects is also considered necessary, these are only cited as resources for an even better understanding of astrology. An astrologer, as described by the authors studied here, devotes himself entirely to the aim of mastering his occupation.

Regarding their self-fashioning as a group, there is no indication that contemporaneous cooperation was considered particularly important. The astrologers are depicted as individual scholars. A kind of group affiliation is established here only insofar as it is explained what intellectual qualities and behaviour a person must display in order to belong to this ‘group’ of exceptional scholars. It is precisely through the description of those qualities that such a cohesive group of astrologers is constituted and defined in the first place. Moreover, by emphasising time and cumulative experience, a further sense of group identity over time is established. However, what emerges most clearly in the descriptions of intellectual prerequisites is that the astrologer must be exceptional – both in terms of innate qualities and acquired skills. The accounts convey that few have the necessary foundations to become an astrologer, and even fewer put in the hard work to master the complex discipline.

4.2 Moral Disposition and Rules of Conduct

While the intellectual demands placed on an astrologer already outline a specific type of scholar, those were not the only requirements stipulated by the authors of the introductory works. Indeed, it becomes evident from their writings that they were also concerned with the social role of the astrologer, describing the moral qualities he needed to have and how he should conduct himself appropriately. Information on this subject appears in passing remarks, but some authors also compiled veritable catalogues of virtues and desired behaviours.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁷ Oleg Voskoboynikov: *Le “Liber particularis” de Michel Scot*, in: *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 81 (2014), pp. 249–384, here pp. 255–256, footnote 30, points out that such

In the following subchapter, I will focus on two such comprehensive expositions of this topic, written in very different contexts. The first is the account of Michael Scot, who was active in the Italian court milieu of the first half of the thirteenth century, and the second is that of John Ashenden, a fellow of Merton College, Oxford, who wrote in the mid-fourteenth century. In contrast to the intellectual prerequisites, which were primarily linked to the overarching definition of astrology and thus more or less independent of the individual fields of activity, the desired daily behaviour of astrologers was naturally more dependent on the respective contexts in which the astrologers worked. The accounts by Michael Scot and John Ashenden, who both wrote explicitly and in great detail about how an astrologer had to be and act, will thus provide exemplary insights into the challenges and tasks that an astrologer had to face at court and university, respectively. Although the texts are unique in their detail and directness, their in-depth exploration of the social role of the astrologer reflects how the authors sought to assert a distinct place for astrologers in those settings. Additionally, I will expand on the descriptions of Michael Scot and John Ashenden for certain aspects with comments from other astrologers. In this way, it will be possible to obtain a more comprehensive picture and to better assess the extent to which their statements may only have constituted individual opinions.

4.2.1 Ideals of an Astrological Advisor in a Courtly Environment

In the first case study, I will analyse the views of Michael Scot, who, as already mentioned, stood in the service of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II and presented himself as his personal astrologer.⁵⁹⁸ As such, he can be placed in the Italian court milieu of the first half of the thirteenth century and thus at the beginning of a phase in which rulers' employment of astrologers for political advice gained momentum. His background is worth emphasising once again since the setting – for this topic in particular – directly influences his deliberations.

In his *Liber introductorius*, Michael Scot dedicates much of the volume's third distinction to an astrologer's proper mindset and conduct.⁵⁹⁹ He combines moral

codes of conduct increasingly emerged in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries for groups such as physicians, lawyers, rulers and monks, and suggests that the establishment of rules for astrologers may have been part of this trend.

⁵⁹⁸ See Chapter 2.1.1.

⁵⁹⁹ Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 3, fols. 118^{va}–120^{va}. Parts of the third distinction were transcribed in an article by Morpurgo: Note in margine, pp. 8–12; and by Wheeler: The Third Distinction, pp. 17–37, as part of her master thesis. The transcriptions show several discrepancies. I

principles that should govern the life of an astrologer with tangible instructions and advice. The rubricated title already shows this focus on practical and detailed aspects: *De noticia regiminis astrologi, tam in habitando domum et uiuendo quam in audiendo petentium ex industria huius artis et satisfaciendo sibi.*⁶⁰⁰ In what follows, he fully delivers on his promise, giving a lengthy account of the desired living conditions of astrologers and discussing in detail the relationship between the astrologer and his clients.

Before Michael Scot goes into more detail on how an astrologer should live and behave, he begins by emphasising the high esteem in which the astrologer should be held. He declares that “every astrologer is worthy of praise and honour” because he found favour with God when he gained access to many of God’s secrets through astrology.⁶⁰¹ In fact, astrologers have their place “among great men and barons” because worldly duties would often burden such men, so they could not easily focus on future affairs. This “lack of foresight” (*defectus praeuidencie*) must, therefore, necessarily be compensated for by a “skilled astrologer” (*astrologus peritus*).⁶⁰² Due to his “reputation” (*fama*) for such foresight, the astrologer would indeed be considered “a philosopher among the uneducated”. There was, Michael Scot writes, no other knowledge from the seven liberal arts that would make a man as famous for all knowledge as astrology.⁶⁰³

Hence, with his introductory words, Michael Scot places the astrologer at court or at least in the company of distinguished figures and highlights the great value of the occupation as their advisor. Moreover, the significance of the astrologer’s reputation is already alluded to, which the following remarks will only reinforce. The initial image

have compared the transcribed passages with the text in the manuscripts BSB, Clm 10268, and BLO, MS. Bodley 266. The following transcriptions follow the text as written in the Munich manuscript. See for the different manuscripts and the textual transmission: Edwards: The Two Redactions of Michael Scot’s *Liber introductorius*. As in the rest of his work, Michael Scot often jumps between different topics in this section. In my description, I roughly follow the order of his explanations, but in some instances also address topics that are connected in terms of content but do not directly follow one another in his description.

⁶⁰⁰ Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 3, fol. 118^{va}.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.: *Omnis astrologus dignus est laude et honore quia inuenit gratiam apud deum factorem suum, cum per talem doctrinam qualis est astronomia probabiliter sciat multa secreta dei, [...]*.

⁶⁰² Ibid., fols. 118^{va}–118^{vb}: *Habent quidem astrologi locum apud magnates et barones eo quod tales domini frequenter agrauantur negotiis secularibus, unde non facile possunt per se uidere in rebus futuris que spectant ad eos suo honore, et ideo defectus sue praeuidencie que sibi esset de necessitate habenda suppletur per astrologum peritum.*

⁶⁰³ Ibid., fol. 118^{vb}: *Unde astrologus ex ipsius fama tante praeuidencie scientiarum et secretorum penitus reputatur philosophus inter gentes illitteratas, nec est scientia de liberalibus artibus 7 que totaliter faciat hominem esse famosum omni scientia, uelut est astronomia.*

Michael Scot paints of the astrologer here is thus that of a sought-after and admired counsellor and scholar.

After those more general remarks on the status of the astrological occupation, Michael Scot details an astrologer's ideal life and actions. Here it becomes evident that he is writing his book for aspiring astrologers since he addresses them directly with his advice in the following sections.⁶⁰⁴ He begins by describing the astrologer's ideal living arrangements. Most importantly, the astrologer should live "very privately" and "abstain from food and drink". This privacy should be reflected in the location of his house, which should not be on a very public street where passers-by might constantly disturb the astrologer. Therefore, a place on a road running through the middle of a town or a castle would not be suitable for an astrologer.⁶⁰⁵ Instead, the house should be on the corner of two streets, one or both of which are short, "as if it were in a private place remote from infamy, such as brothels or taverns".⁶⁰⁶ It should, however, be in a place "suitably well-known and famous, such as near a church."⁶⁰⁷ The house itself must be "well designed inside and out". Besides a pleasant, heated room, this also should include a "private office" (*camera secreta*) where the astrologer could receive clients and give consultations. For the astrologer to work effectively, this office must be positioned so that he can observe the desired celestial bodies at any time.⁶⁰⁸

The required seclusion of the house and the private office seems to have been intended not only for the astrologer's benefit – allowing him to work undisturbed – but also to preserve the privacy of his visitors. As Michael Scot explains, the relative privacy of the astrologer's house would be necessary to prevent large crowds of people from dwelling in front of the astrologer's house all day. Someone seeking advice from the astrologer might otherwise "fear humiliation" (*timet verecundia*) from the assumptions of passers-by about the reasons for the visit to "such a wise man" (*talis*

⁶⁰⁴ At the beginning of his work, he had already named his addressees as "scholars who are still novices and poor in intellect" (*propter scolares novicios et pauperes intellectui*). Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 1.

⁶⁰⁵ Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 3, fol. 118^{vb}: *Et ideo te astrologum oportet ualde uiuere secreto cibis et potibus ac te abstinere ne habites in domo que sit in uia multum publica, sollicitate populi euntis et reddeuntis per illam tota die sicut est strata que currit per medium ciuitatis uel burgi longi et cetera.*

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.: *Igitur sit domus tue habitationis in angulo duarum uiarum, quarum una sit breuis extensionis, uel ambe sint breuitatis, que quasi sit in loco priuato remota infamia, qualis esset postribuli taberne etc.*

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.: *Sit etiam locus conuenienter notus et famosus ut apud ecclesiam et cetera.*

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.: *Sed debes tibi eligere domum bene dispositam interius et exterius ut ibi habeas caminatam placitam, cameram secretam ad loquendum de negotiis personarum querentium consilium, et possis hora diei uidere solem ex aliqua parte, et tollere ascendentem in die per radium solis et in nocte per aspectum stellarum fixarum.*

sapiens) if seen entering or exiting the house. Such fear could even result in the visitor refraining from seeing the astrologer altogether.⁶⁰⁹

It is remarkable that Michael Scot writes about the fear and potential shame or humiliation of visiting an astrologer.⁶¹⁰ His point, however, is not to convey that an astrological consultation is something to be ashamed of, but that people are prone to make assumptions about the reasons for someone visiting “such a wise man”. The fact that Michael Scot explicitly describes the astrologer as a “wise man” reinforces that the issue is not the visit to the astrologer in itself but merely the reaction of people and their poor judgement. Michael Scot even specifies who is most likely to succumb to the temptation to judge others: “a woman more than a man, a young man more than an old man, a nobleman more than someone of lower rank, a cleric more than a layperson, and someone well-dressed more than someone dressed poorly”.⁶¹¹ Although the classification of women and young men as particularly inclined to propagate rumours is not surprising, it is somewhat unexpected that Michael Scot considers nobles and clerics to be more susceptible to this than people of low rank and laypeople. A potential reason for this assessment could be that clerics and nobles were more likely to voice criticism against astrologers, and Michael Scot thus tries to discount those voices as mere slander. All in all, a degree of privacy should be maintained regarding the astrologer’s home to forestall such rumours. A house on a busy street would therefore be detrimental to both the astrologer and his clients and ought to be avoided. By contrast, an ideally located and designed house would create optimal working conditions for the astrologer and ensure his clients’ comfort.

The recommended isolation of the astrologer does not only pertain to the astrologer’s house but should, according to Michael Scot, also be reflected in the astrologer’s conduct. Overall, he writes, the astrologer should lead a “solitary life” (*vita solitaria*) in

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.: *Ideo dixi in loco privato quasi ne multitudo populi tota die habitent in facie domus, quia quando gentes sunt foris, et querens consilium invenit populum in uia stantem et uidentem introitum et exitum uerecundia timet et timendo ne uideatur et de se dicatur se abstinet quandoque intrare domum consulentis, putans quod omnis qui est foris uideat suum introitum et exitum ac presumat quare intret et talem sapientem uisitet.*

⁶¹⁰ Wheeler: *The Third Distinction*, p. 39, points out that Michael Scot’s remarks show that “[...] the act of consulting an astrologer did have, or could have, a certain stigma or embarrassment attached to it, [...]”.

⁶¹¹ Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 3, fol. 118^{vb}: *In hoc etiam plus peccat mulier quam uir et iuuenis quam senex, et nobilis quam uilis et clericus quam laycus et bene uestitus quam male.* The inclusion of well-dressed and poorly dressed people in this list shows how much importance Michael Scot attached to clothes. For his comments in regard to the vestment of astrologers see further below in this subchapter. The negative evaluation of well-dressed people in this instance was presumably due to equating them with people interested primarily in appearances and thus in rumours as well.

his house and spend his time studying the books of the philosophers so that he may enhance his knowledge and earn himself a “good name” (*bonum nomen*) among the people.⁶¹² Michael Scot’s recommendations thus concern not only the scholarly side of the astrologer’s life but even more so his public image. He even emphasises this further by explaining that “wisdom is acquired by study, a good name by practising laudable morality in public” and that it is better to be known for reading very much than for playing dice or chess.⁶¹³ In another passage, Michael Scot describes a pitfall associated with leaving one’s house too often. An astrologer, he advises, should generally avoid consorting with common men or others on the street lest they might slight him. Otherwise, as Michael Scot explains, the astrologer may even become “infamous” (*infamis*) for his statements because some of his knowledge would appear impossible to uneducated people.⁶¹⁴ Interacting too much with people who do not understand complicated issues, therefore, puts the astrologer’s good name at risk.

Apart from the threat to the astrologer’s reputation, Michael Scot adduces another reason why astrologers should be sparing with their words. He instructs the astrologer that he does not have to philosophise or converse all the time in order to entertain and that he is not obliged to give everyone an answer to his astrological questions.⁶¹⁵ Michael Scot then adduces two metaphorical comparisons that imply that the astrologer should instead increase his appeal by not being omnipresent and constantly accessible.⁶¹⁶ The advice to avoid excessive speech and close ties thus serves multiple purposes: the astrologer provides less of a target for criticism, and his behaviour simultaneously arouses people’s interest by making his services appear exclusive.

⁶¹² Ibid.: *Uitam solitariam debes facere in camera tue domus et sepe studere in libris phylosophorum ut efficiaris sapientior memoria doctrine preuise, ac bonum nomen habeas inter gentes.*

⁶¹³ Ibid., fol. 119^{ra}: *Unde dicitur sapientia per studium acquiritur, nomen bonum per plaudabilem moralitatem exercitatum in publico. Item dicitur qui parum legit parum adiscit, melius enim quod dicaris in populo satis legere quam ludere ad aleas uel ad scachos.* He somewhat relaxes the previously described seriousness of study by quoting the dictum attributed to Cato that it is important to also integrate enjoyable activities into one’s life from time to time so that the soul can endure the work. Ibid.: *Tamen observandum est preceptum catonis qui dicit sic: Interpone tuis interdum gaudia curis ut possis animo quem vis sufferre laborem.*

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., fol. 118^{vb}: *Debet etiam astrologus sapiens se abstinere in uiis a conuictu communalium hominum et etiam ceterorum ne multiloquio uilipendatur ab eisdem et ex dictis eius apud eos infamis efficiatur cum nemo se possit omni uice sic abstinere quando dicat magna scientie que uidentur impossibilia ydiotis, [...].*

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.: *Non oportet hominem semper phylosophari uelut nec fabulari solaciando. Non omni homini debes uelle respondere per artem nec te ponere studiosum ad satisfaciendum sibi de omni questione, licet te quis petat de leui et sapienter, uel blande.*

⁶¹⁶ The examples Michael Scot uses as comparison relate to smell and gems. Ibid.: *Quia qui omnibus uult redolere, omnibus debet olere. Nam gemme sunt kare precio, et preciose reputantur, quia sunt pulcri coloris et pauce reperiuntur, ac rari sunt qui habeant eas.*

Michael Scot offers several other suggestions about the astrologer's relationship to his social environment. For example, the astrologer should seldom accept invitations to banquets and rarely answer astrological questions unless they are sought by "the sort of person to whom an answer cannot be denied for an effective reason".⁶¹⁷ This combination of moral codes and exceptions made for career purposes becomes even more apparent in Michael Scot's remarks on gambling. While he explicitly cautions against "games of dice and chess" (*ludus allearum et scachorum*), he limits this prohibition merely to the "public sphere" (*in publico*). In private – for example, in the astrologer's house or the house of a magnate – and particularly in the company of nobles, better-off people or people who were the astrologer's equals in rank or knowledge, playing such games was not only permitted but even required, so that the astrologer would not seem "wild and of no other value than his knowledge" (*silvester et nullius alterius ualoris quam scientie*).⁶¹⁸ The relationship with important clients and the reputation of the astrologer thus take precedence over purely moral aspects such as abstaining from games or festivities.

The question of appearance and reputation is also discussed in relation to the astrologer's clothing. According to Michael Scot, an astrologer should always be "well dressed" (*bene uestitus*), i.e. he should wear "respectable clothes" (*uestimenta honesta*) that are "of a visible colour" (*parissibilis color*). In this way, he would appear to be very wise and would be received with great reverence everywhere.⁶¹⁹ The discussion of scholars' clothes is in itself not surprising as appropriate academic dress played an essential role throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as evidenced, for example, by its constant mention in the university statutes. However, Michael Scot's remark that the astrologer's clothes should be "of a visible colour" is striking compared to those guidelines. Though the statutes likewise stipulated honourable attire, they often included admonitions against overly extravagant and conspicuous clothing to avoid

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., fol. 119^{ra}: *Debes etiam raro ire ad conuiuia inuitatorum te, et rarius sumere questiones ad soluendum ex industria huius artis nisi forte sint facte tibi a tali persona cui non sit deneganda responsio per causam efficientem que potest esse multis modis inducta.*

⁶¹⁸ Ibid., fol. 118^{vb}: *Debes etiam uitare ludum allearum et scachorum in publico sed in loco secreto ut in propria domo uel in domo magnatis communiter potes ludere ad utraque, et principaliter cum nobili, uel meliore te, aut tuo consimili gradu persone uel scientie, ne usquam dicaris esse silvester et nullius alterius ualoris quam scientie.*

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.: *Debes ire toto tempore bene uestitus uidelicet uestimentis honestis et que sint parissibilis coloris ut sapientior uidearis et ubique recipiaris cum maiori reuerentia.*

scandal.⁶²⁰ This discrepancy can presumably be explained by the fact that the astrologer Michael Scot envisioned was not primarily a scholar affiliated with a university, school, or religious order but one who offered his services in a courtly setting or the city. As such, he did not have to adhere to a specific dress code. Instead, his clothes served as a sort of advertisement to attract customers. For this to work, he had to strike a balance between drawing attention to himself and presenting himself as a respectable scholar in order to appeal to potential clients. The focus of Michael Scot's advice on the astrologer's attire is thus clearly on the public image of the astrologer. He reinforces this by citing two proverbs stating that a well-dressed man is generally honoured and believed to be knowledgeable, "even if he is a fool" (*quamuis ydiota sit ille*).⁶²¹

In a later passage, Michael Scot references another aspect of the astrologer's appearance, writing that since the aim of the questioner's wish may change quickly in the event of any delay, an astrologer should always carry his astrolabe or a quadrant with him – just "as a scribe does with a writing tablet and pen".⁶²² Although Michael Scot raises this point primarily to underline that an astrologer should always be ready to perform, carrying astronomical instruments would certainly also serve as a distinguishing feature to advertise his services.

Finally, Michael Scot also covers how a consultation at the astrologer's home should be conducted. Again, the priority is to make the client feel comfortable. Michael Scot describes that the astrologer must receive people with delight, show a welcoming face and pay them the deference appropriate to their rank to serve them and ultimately win their goodwill.⁶²³ During the client's explanation of why he seeks the astrologer's help,

⁶²⁰ An illustrative example for this can be found in the first statutes of the Sorbonne from 1274, which explicitly prohibit conspicuous clothing. See CUP, vol. 1, ed. Denifle / Chatelain, no. 448, p. 506: *Item nullus habeat sotulares vel vestes notabiles, per quod possit aliquo modo scandalum generari*. It should be noted that the Sorbonne was a college for theology students only and the emphasis on simply, inconspicuous clothing was therefore probably more pronounced than in other faculties. Nevertheless, the admonition to avoid extravagant clothing is also found in other statutes, for example, in the oaths of those incepting in arts (1280) "shoes with pointed toes or ornaments or openings" are prohibited. CUP, vol. 1, ed. Denifle / Chatelain, no. 501, p. 586: *Non habebitis sotulares rostratos nec laqueatos nec fenestratos*, [...]. The dress of scholars and its role as a distinguishing feature in pictorial representations has been explored in depth in: Huelsen-Esch: *Gelehrte im Bild*.

⁶²¹ Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 3, fol. 118^{vb}: *Unde dixit quidam et bene, hunc homines honorant quem uestimenta decorant, alius dixit, uir bene uestitus pro uestibus esse peritus, creditur a mille, quamuis ydiota sit ille*. See for the identification of the two proverbs: Wheeler: *The Third distinction*, p. 23, pp. 46–47.

⁶²² Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 3, fol. 119^{rb}: *Et ob hanc causam quisquam astrologus semper deberet portare secum astrolabium uel quadrantem uelud notarius pugilare et calamum*.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, fol. 119^{ra}: *Debes etiam esse pulcre receptus ad omnes personas et letam faciem ostendere unicuique superaduenientium tibi cum mollibus uerbis et blandis surgere de sede pro omnibus et*

he must listen to him willingly and with an honest and kind face. Such “morality” (*moralitas*) would lead the minds of people towards love, which would be followed by “honour and profit” (*honor et lucrum*).⁶²⁴ In other words, a welcoming attitude towards people seeking his help would pay off for the astrologer’s business model in the long run as it would guarantee him a good reputation and, thus, clients and income.

For an even more welcoming atmosphere, Michael Scot advises aspiring astrologers that the rooms where they receive clients should be clean, appropriately arranged and decorated with seasonal herbs or flowers to make the clients feel comfortable (“to delight by their sight and smell the hearts of men”).⁶²⁵ After having listened to the visitor’s query, the astrologer should answer him in a “friendly” (*benigne*) way and inform him whether he is willing to serve him in this matter.⁶²⁶ Depending on the answer, the astrologer should then escort the client either to the door of the room, the top of the stairs or the exit of his house.⁶²⁷ In any case, the astrologer should communicate with the client “honestly” (*honeste*) and with “a humble manner of words” (*humilis stillus verborum*), lest he appears “proud and unpleasant” (*superbus et malus*). Otherwise, this could lead to him being despised and becoming “hateful and infamous” (*odiolus et infamis*).⁶²⁸

What, then, can be deduced from Michael Scot’s guidelines on the astrologer’s appropriate moral attitude and behaviour? Although several of the aspects covered touch on moral principles (moderation in food and drink, avoidance of worldly pleasures such as banquets, not socialising too much with common people, refraining from playing games in public, not being loquacious), his main concern seems to have been to guide new astrologers in how to establish a good relationship with their clients

reuerenciam facere conuenienter, secundum gradum personarum, ut sibi seruias et captes beniuolentiam cunctorum.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., fol. 119^{ra}: *Debes etiam libenter audire uerba uolentium tibi loqui cum honestate benigni uultus, et talis moralitas inflammat animos gencium ad amorem. Unde si amor est ortus inter personas postea sequitur honor et lucrum per tempora successive.*

⁶²⁵ Ibid.: *Debes tenere domum bene mundam et conuenienter dispositam in locis ubi personas es recepturas et ornatam herbis uiridibus aut floribus et cetera, secundum conuenienciam temporis. Nam talia letificant suo aspectu corda hominum et odore.*

⁶²⁶ Ibid.: *Postquam uero intellexeris personam de omnibus que tibi uoluerit recitare, sibi responde benigne siue dixerit bonum siue malum, et si ei uelis inde seruire uel non seruire.*

⁶²⁷ Ibid.: *Facta sibi responsione prospera uel aduersa, ipsum debes assotiare usque ad ianuam camere uel ad caput scalarum uel usque ad exitum domus, [...].*

⁶²⁸ Ibid.: *[...] et eum uel eam debeas honeste commeari et humili stillo uerborum, ne sibi uidearis superbus et malus, cum ex superbia et praua moralitate omnis homo despiciatur sit odiolus et infamis.* It is interesting to note here that Michael Scot writes that the astrologer should communicate honestly with “him or her”, i.e. it becomes clear that both men and women used the services of astrologers. This is also shown by the fact that questions about pregnancy, for example, were often discussed, but the passage by Michael Scot also shows that women apparently came to the astrologer directly.

and to advise them on how to protect their reputation. Michael Scot's suggestions, therefore, are only marginally concerned with the moral disposition of the astrologer. Rather, he provides practical and strategic career advice aimed at preventing any behaviour that could bring the astrologer into disrepute. His appeal for caution in the astrologer's interactions with his clients and the emphasis on a good reputation reflect that the professional role of the astrologer as a consultant was just beginning to emerge in thirteenth-century Italy and was highly controversial. Moreover, Michael Scot wrote before astrology became part of the Italian university curriculum and gained more prestige as a subject.⁶²⁹

While Michael Scot's description of an astrologer's ideal life and behaviour is unique in its comprehensiveness and directness, comments on the desired behaviour of an astrologer employed in a courtly environment can also be found in texts by other astrologers. An introductory work that provides particularly valuable insights in this regard is Guido Bonatti's *Liber astronomiae*. Since Guido Bonatti practised as an astrologer in the service of several Italian lords around the middle to the end of the thirteenth century and possibly had connections with Frederick II, he was active in a very similar or even the same environment as Michael Scot.⁶³⁰ His field of activity was thus mainly in the circles of the lords of the city-states, but in his astrological treatise, he discusses aspects related to different social classes, ranging from kings to merchants.

While Guido Bonatti does not devote a separate chapter to the moral behaviour of astrologers in his *Liber astronomiae*, he nevertheless sheds light on the expected behaviour of an ideal astrological advisor through various asides and explanations. In an article from 2015, Benjamin N. Dykes examined Guido Bonatti's text from this perspective with the aim of constructing "a medieval astrologer's creed".⁶³¹ The five primary roles of an astrologer Dykes identifies in Guido Bonatti's text are that he must be "therapeutically and morally helpful to the client and to himself", "a respected counsellor and military adviser, a socially responsible opponent of fear and superstition, a social observer and critic, and a practical adviser."⁶³² From Dykes' analysis of the outlined roles it becomes evident that Guido Bonatti sees the task of the astrologer not

⁶²⁹ For more information on status of astrology in the university and court in Italy, see Chapter 2.1.1.

⁶³⁰ For more information on Guido Bonatti's background, see Chapter 2.1.1.

⁶³¹ Benjamin N. Dykes: Practice and Counsel in Guido Bonatti, in: Deimann / Juste (eds.): Astrologers and their Clients, pp. 29–42, here p. 29.

⁶³² Those descriptions are used as titles for the different sections of the article, see Dykes: Practice and Counsel, pp. 32–33, p. 35, p. 37, p. 39.

only in the sober and objective interpretation of the movements of the stars but also ascribes to him a social function and moral responsibility.

This applies first of all to the general purpose of astrology and its practitioners. Guido Bonatti suggests that astrology could, to some extent, counterbalance the forces of fortune. At various points, he emphasises that no one could protect themselves from misfortune – it would indeed often strike decent and innocent people.⁶³³ Part of the astrologer’s task was to use his knowledge to help unfortunate people improve their lot, at least as far as possible.⁶³⁴ Dykes summarises Guido Bonatti’s attitude in this context by stating that for him, “this metaphysical situation of humanity justifies the astrological profession”.⁶³⁵

The social responsibility of the astrologer is not only reflected in the occupation’s general objective but also becomes more tangible in some of Guido Bonatti’s passing remarks on specific topics. In the section on *interrogationes* in particular, he comments on subjects he considers morally reprehensible, such as the indiscriminate pursuit of religious dignities or the practice of slavery, which he describes as being worse than any disease.⁶³⁶ Dykes construes those remarks as marking the astrologer’s role as “social critic and observer”.⁶³⁷ It is noteworthy, however, that despite his criticism, Guido Bonatti still provides the astrological information necessary to enable the astrologer to answer the questions posed. Thus, he does not urge the astrologer to refrain from answering such questions or actively oppose those practices. Satisfying the client consequently seems to take precedence over moral concerns in those cases.⁶³⁸

⁶³³ He argues most forcefully for the existence of fortune in his initial statements on elections, the benefits of which he attempts to emphasise in this part. See Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 7, chap. 1, col. 388. See for a more detailed discussion of this aspect: Dykes: *Practice and Counsel*, p. 40.

⁶³⁴ Guido Bonatti highlights the benefits that astrology could bring, for example, in: Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 1, chap. 9, cols. 9–14.

⁶³⁵ Dykes: *Practice and Counsel*, p. 40.

⁶³⁶ About the attainment of clerical dignities: Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 6, part 2, 9th house, chap. 10, col. 345: *Licet videatur inhonestum religiosas dignitates affectare, cum diuinum donum desuper fit expectandum tamen sunt hodie multi qui dignitates clericales, ut papatum, cardinalatum, archiepiscopatum, abbatias, prioratus, et alias dignitates atque ordines clericales, tam fratres quam alii qui dicuntur clerici seculares, indifferenter affectant.* About whether someone will be freed from slavery: *Ibid.*, treatise 7, part 2, 6th house, chap. 5, col. 261: *Restat nunc dicendum in isto capitulo de seruo, utrum liberetur a seruitute an non, nec in cassum, quoniam seruitus prauissime aegritudini comparatur, non est enim aegritudo quae posset dici deterior illa quae semper ubique et indifferenter atque continue affligit, nulla aegritudo enim est quin aliquando affligat interuallo, uel aliquali quiete, praeter seruitutem, in illa enim interuallum uel quies non interuenit.*

⁶³⁷ For this term and a discussion of the mentioned aspects, see Dykes: *Practice and Counsel*, pp. 37–38.

⁶³⁸ Concerning slavery, Dykes: *Practice and Counsel*, p. 37, suspects that Guido Bonatti felt obliged to explain astrological aspects relating to this issue because his astrological predecessors had addressed it as well. However, as far as the pursuit of religious dignities is concerned, this assessment does not seem

Yet Guido Bonatti also mentions cases where it seems that the astrologer should intervene, namely when he directly encounters despots or religious frauds. Indeed, he relates several examples in which some individuals became so powerful and influential that no one dared to contradict them except Guido Bonatti himself, who recognized their true nature.⁶³⁹ In this way, he portrays himself as morally upright and intelligent enough to see through such power-hungry deceivers. It should be emphasized, however, that he refers to such incidents outside the actual practice of the astrologer, i.e. his interactions do not seem to have taken place in the context of a consultation. Furthermore, he does not formulate any general advice or instructions on how an astrologer should act but only describes his own behaviour – and even this not in any detail.⁶⁴⁰ Nevertheless, by outlining his conduct, or at least his attitude towards such people, in his introductory work – a work aimed at aspiring astrologers – he creates an ideal image of the astrologer as what Dykes calls a “socially responsible opponent of fear and superstition”.⁶⁴¹

A further remark by Guido Bonatti in another section of his work shows that such behaviour represented an ideal and that not all astrologers always acted or could act this way. In the context of a discussion about the various positions and movements of the planets, Guido Bonatti mentions that some people had a different opinion from him in this respect, among them Ezzelino da Romano.⁶⁴² The latter, he tells us, had an astrologer named Salio who agreed with Ezzelino’s position. However, Guido Bonatti believes that Salio endorsed this “more out of fear than because he believed it to be so”. He came to this assessment, he reports, because Ezzelino kept Salio’s brother in fetters,

pertinent, since Guido Bonatti explicitly writes that it was a frequent occurrence in his day (*hodie*). See footnote 636.

⁶³⁹ See the cases of Simon Mestaguerra, a local demagogue in Forlì, and the Dominican John of Vicenza in Bologna – a religious charlatan in Guido Bonatti’s opinion. Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, Treatise 5, consideratio 141, cols. 210–211: *Idem accidit Forliiui de quodam qui uocabatur Symon Mestaguerre, qui de uili patre natus est, qui deuenit ad tantam sublimitatem, quod totus populus sequebatur ipsum; nec audebat ei aliquis resistere, nisi ego solus qui pure noueram illum, [...]. [...] Fuit similiter quidam frater de ordine praedicatorum, nomine Ioannes, natione Vicentinus, [...], qui reputabatur sanctus quasi ab omnibus Italis, qui confitebantur ecclesiam Romanam, mihi autem uidebatur quod esset hypocrita [...]. [...] nec fuit potestas ausus facere inde aliquod regimen, nec erat aliquis ausus contradicere suis mandatis, nisi ego solus, non tamen Bononiae, noueram enim suas tricas et suas falsitates.*

⁶⁴⁰ In the cases of Simon Mestaguerra and John of Vicenza, Guido Bonatti simply writes that he “resisted” (*resistere*) or contradicted (*contradicere*) them. See footnote 639. What exactly this entailed, is not clear.

⁶⁴¹ Dykes: *Practice and Counsel*, p. 35.

⁶⁴² See on Ezzelino da Romano’s employment of astrologers and his own potential astrological knowledge: Siraisi: *Arts and Sciences at Padua*, pp. 78–81.

and Salio feared that Ezzelino would kill him if he disagreed with his view.⁶⁴³ With this story, Guido Bonatti illustrates that it is not self-evident that an astrologer openly opposes tyrants but that he may even make false astrological statements out of fear so as not to upset a powerful client. The reference to Ezzelino da Romano is particularly charged because Guido Bonatti himself had worked for him. The fact that he explicitly writes that he holds a different opinion from Ezzelino – and, in contrast to Salio, upholds it – shows Guido Bonatti as a principled individual of integrity. However, Guido Bonatti does not explicitly condemn or reprimand Salio’s behaviour, which indicates some understanding of his situation. The passage on Ezzelino da Romano and his astrologer thus exemplifies the significance of the relationship between astrologer and client. It illustrates the potential risks and pressures to which the astrologer is exposed, especially when working for powerful clients.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to one more remark by Guido Bonatti that offers further information about the social responsibility he believed an astrologer had to assume. This passage comes from Guido Bonatti’s comments on the question of a woman’s virginity or sexual experiences.⁶⁴⁴ He begins by setting the scene and, in doing so, also provides insight into the often-challenging situation of women in the late Middle Ages. He explains what to do when someone comes to the astrologer wanting to enter into a marriage but doubting the virginity of his future bride. This was occasionally the case, writes Guido Bonatti, because some people may have spoken ill of her, “sometimes out of envy, sometimes to disturb the marriage so that it would not be consummated, or because someone sought something unchaste from her that she did not want to do to him.”⁶⁴⁵ In those statements, a degree of sympathy and understanding

⁶⁴³ Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 3, part 2, chap. 14, col. 144: *Ego tamen inueni aliquos, qui uidebantur mihi diuersi ab aliis, et erant in quadam sua opinione, quod non credebant, quod redditus uirtutis seu dispositionis esset aliquid, sicut fuit ille tyrannus Ycilinus de Romano, et erat quidam eius Astrologus nomine Salionus quem credo assensisse sibi, potius ex timore quam quod crederet ita esse. Et hoc credo propterea, quia Ycilinus habebat quendam eius fratrem in compedibus, de quo ipse timebat ne occideret eum.* See for the astrologer Salio, who was Canon of Padua and is known to have translated a work by the Persian astrologer Abu Bakr (fl. late ninth century): Siraisi: *Arts and Sciences at Padua*, p. 80; Haskins: *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*, p. 258; Boncompagni: *Della vita e delle opere di Guido Bonatti*, pp. 29–31. Guido Bonatti emphasises the ruthlessness of Ezzelino also in other passages. See, for example: Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 9, part 3, 12th house, chap. 5, col. 816: [...] *ille Ecilinus de Romano qui non pepercit sexui nec aetati, nec ordini, nec dignitati, [...]*.

⁶⁴⁴ Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 6, 7th house, chap. 4, col. 267: *De muliere, utrum sit corrupta uel uirgo, vel habeat amasium vel alium quem ipsa diligit praeter uirtum si fuerit nupta, uel praeter amasium si habuerit illum.*

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, treatise 6, 7th house, chap. 4, col. 267: *Si aliquis forte uolens contrahere matrimonium cum aliqua muliere fuerit suspicatus eam non esse uirginem, quia forte aliqui dixerunt ei malum de ipsa, sicut*

for the situation of women can already be detected. Guido Bonatti then runs through different types and levels of ‘corruption’ of a woman and how the astrologer could recognize them through the stars.⁶⁴⁶ At the end of his explanations, Guido Bonatti addresses the potential behaviour of the astrologer when faced with a delicate constellation of circumstances. Sometimes, a woman might be deflowered “by touch or in some other way” without realising that this meant the loss of her virginity. In this case, Guido Bonatti suggests, the astrologer can justifiably bend the truth a little and tell the inquiring groom that the woman was not “known (sexually)” (*cognita*) by a man and thus would remain blameless before him. Otherwise, he cautions, that is, if the astrologer were to tell “the whole truth” (*tota ueritas*), the groom might consider his bride “corrupted” (*corrupta*) as if she had slept with a man.⁶⁴⁷

Even if this remark only refers to a very specific situation and Guido Bonatti does not prescribe here how the astrologer should act but only suggests a possible behaviour, this passage nevertheless underlines the importance of the social role and responsibility that Guido Bonatti assigns to the astrologer in his activity. The astrologer must display what Dykes calls a “sensitivity to client needs”, especially when dealing with such delicate issues.⁶⁴⁸ The advice to the astrologer not to tell the client the “whole truth” shows that Guido Bonatti – at least in this case – places an astrologer’s social responsibility above the need to convey exactly what the stars reveal.

Overall, Guido Bonatti’s statements show that for him, the astrologer’s task encompassed more than his purely ‘scientific’ role, i.e. the objective interpretation of the stars, but that he considered sympathy for interpersonal issues and commitment to what was morally right to be equally important aspects of the astrologer’s work. Both Michael Scot and Guido Bonatti are very client-focused in their descriptions, which can be attributed to their activities as counsellors in a courtly environment. While in

multotiens fieri consuevit, quandoque causa inuidiae, quandoque causa disturbandi matrimonium, ut non compleatur, uel forte aliquis qui petiit ab ea aliquod incoestum quod ipsa noluit ei facere, [...].

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., cols. 267–269. Those acts include among others foreplay, rape, lesbianism, and masturbation. See on this also Dykes: Practice and Counsel, pp. 38–39.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., col. 269: *Uerumtamen tu posses excusare mulierem, su tu uis per istum modum, licet forte tu inuenias eam deuirginatam per aliquem de modis supradictis, [...]. Sed si inueneris eam delusam, sicut dixi, quod uirginitas sit accepta tactum uel alio modo, quoniam aliquando corrumpitur mulier et expirat eius uirginatas solo tactum manus suae uel alienae, uel digitorum titillatione, dummodo ipsa spermatizet, illa de causa potes dicere quod licet ipsa riserit uel luserit cum aliquo, non fuit tamen per uirum aliquem cognita, quicquid de ipsa sit dictum, et sic remanebit mulier excusata penes illum, qui te interrogauit, quoniam si dices ei totam ueritatem, forte quod haberet ille ipsam pro corrupta ac si egisset cum uiro.*

⁶⁴⁸ Dykes: Practice and Counsel, p. 39. Dykes also suggests that the comprehensiveness of the section probably testifies to the fact that Bonatti faced such problems in his practice and therefore speaks from experience.

Michael Scot's case, this client orientation seems to be even more strongly geared towards career advancement and building a good reputation, Guido Bonatti emphasises the social aspect and the responsibility of the astrologer to a greater extent. The seclusion and isolation that stood out in Michael Scot's account are not reflected in the work of Guido Bonatti, who instead attributes to the astrologer an active role in medieval society, involving himself in topical issues. In both cases, however, the importance of the astrologer's conduct beyond the strictly 'scientific' part of the work is evident. Furthermore, it becomes apparent in both descriptions that an astrologer works alone in his daily practice. This is most likely because direct and individual contact with the client was the highest priority for astrologers who worked as court and city advisors. A kind of group identity only arises from the descriptions of how astrologers – as representatives of a specific type of scholar – are expected to act and from the relationship between the authors as experienced astrologers and the readers as novices who are initiated by the texts into the rules of conduct of the group of astrologers.

4.2.2 Ideals of a University Astrologer

While the focus on reputation and the best way to treat a client is not surprising in works by astrologers who worked in a courtly environment, the question arises whether similar considerations can be found in texts by astrologers who were primarily active in a university setting. A particularly pertinent case study for this is provided by the introductory work of the mid-fourteenth-century Oxford astrologer John Ashenden, who has been described as “the leading English academic astrologer of the Middle Ages”.⁶⁴⁹ The proper demeanour and necessary moral qualities of an astrologer seem to have been of great concern to John Ashenden since, at the very end of his extensive *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi* (written 1346/1347), he devotes an entire chapter – much like Michael Scot – to listing desirable qualities and behaviours for astrologers.⁶⁵⁰

However, subtle differences to Michael Scot's approach can already be detected in the title, which reads: *De conditionibus cuiusque qui de accidentibus mundi per scientiam uoluerit astronomie pronosticare*.⁶⁵¹ What is first noticeable is that John Ashenden – in contrast to Michael Scot – does not direct his instructions to “the astrologer” but to “anyone” (*quisque*) who wants to make a prediction. This manner of

⁶⁴⁹ Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, p. 21.

⁶⁵⁰ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 12, chap. 3, fols. 242^{rb}–243^{vb}.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 242^{rb}.

address remains consistent, for even in the following remarks, he does not expound his concepts by referring to the actions of “an astrologer” but appeals directly to the reader in the second person singular.⁶⁵² In some instances, John Ashenden also refers to him as a “listener/disciple” (*auditor*) of astrology, thus coming closer to describing the reader as an astrologer though never explicitly labelling him as such.⁶⁵³ The reference to the activity of studying or practising astrology instead of the occupation as an astrologer is likely due to John Ashenden’s working environment, i.e. the English university context, in which there was no institutional establishment of astrologers at the universities in the fourteenth century, and the professional figure of the astrologer was less developed than in Italy.⁶⁵⁴ In addition, the title of the chapter also indicates that John Ashenden was more concerned with the moral “conditions” (*conditiones*) that an astrologer must fulfil than with the daily “behaviour” (*regimen*) that was highlighted in Michael Scot’s work.⁶⁵⁵ Although those areas are naturally interdependent, John Ashenden focuses more strongly on the state of mind and inner attitude necessary for astrology than on day-to-day behaviour.

The recommendations, or rather the precepts, for budding astrologers that John Ashenden presents in his chapter mainly assume the form of a long list of dos and don’ts. While Michael Scot’s suggestions were primarily tailored directly to the specific situation of astrologers and provided helpful guidance for successfully navigating daily life, John Ashenden’s advice not only sounds stricter but is often also more generic in the sense that it represents universal Christian ideals. From the beginning, he sets the tone of his discourse by admonishing the reader never to let the following remarks slip from his mind.⁶⁵⁶ Before addressing more particular issues, he stipulates that the astrologer must first and foremost subject all his deeds, activities, and predictions to

⁶⁵² See the following footnotes for examples.

⁶⁵³ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 12, chap. 3, fol. 242^{rb}: *Tu qui preclare sciencie astronomie uolueris esse auditor et qui secundum regulas huius libri de accidentibus mundi pronosticare intendis. [...] Primo itaque si istius sciencie astronomie uolueris utilis auditor haberi, [...].* He does use the term “astrologer” (*astrologus*) once in this chapter, but only in a quotation from Ptolemy. Ibid., fol. 242^{vb}: *Nam ut dicit ptholomeus in centilogio propositione prima. Astrologus non debet dicere rem specialiter set uniuersaliter, [...].*

⁶⁵⁴ For the development of astrological practice in England, see Chapter 2.1.3.

⁶⁵⁵ For Michael Scot’s title, see footnote 600.

⁶⁵⁶ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 12, chap. 3, fol. 242^{rb}: *Tu qui preclare sciencie astronomie uolueris esse auditor et qui secundum regulas huius libri de accidentibus mundi pronosticare intendis. Ista que tibi monstrabo ab animo tuo numquam labantur.*

God.⁶⁵⁷ The persistent practice of astrology, he writes, would make the practitioner appreciate the “celestial beauty” (*celestis pulcritudo*) and lead him to persevere with the “divine pursuit” (*diuinum studium*).⁶⁵⁸ Astrology is thus depicted as a path to appreciate and learn about God’s creation.

John Ashenden next turns more directly to the behaviour and attitude that the astrologer must display. He begins by advising the reader to refrain entirely from “human praise” (*humana laus*) and elaborates that while an astrologer should protect his good “reputation” (*fama*), he must beware of “popular glory” (*gloria popularis*).⁶⁵⁹ The disregard for worldly fame seems to have been a central aspect of the astrologer’s ethics for John Ashenden since he next stresses that the astrologer should shun flatterers and their praise but instead accept criticism and learn from people greater and wiser than himself.⁶⁶⁰ John Ashenden admonishes the astrologer emphatically and at length not to attach too much importance to himself and his abilities: he should refrain from all presumption, boasting, and the “pursuit of vainglory” (*inanis glorie studium*).⁶⁶¹ Those exhortations seem to have been urgently called for and necessary because, as John Ashenden explains, “many presumptuous and vain boasters and the worst sycophants” (*presumptuosi et uani iactatores et pessimi adultores*) would “enter” (*intromittunt*) the discipline, who would “defame it miserably” (*miserabiliter diffamant*).⁶⁶² Hence, for John Ashenden, the *fama* of astrologers and the discipline were relevant insofar as the astrologer was required to protect his reputation by displaying a humble frame of mind and rejecting or not coveting any worldly fame or recognition. This differs from Michael Scot’s advice, who was indeed concerned with how the astrologer would be perceived and how he could best present himself in public to appear as wise as

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.: *Primo itaque si istius sciencie astronomie uolueris utilis auditor haberi, omnes actus tuos et operationes et tuas pronosticationes singulas in deum creatorem tuum referre debes, sicut decet auditorem huius sciencie testante ptholemeus in prologo almagesti*. It is noteworthy that John Ashenden bases this Christian framing of astrology on the writings of Ptolemy.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., fol. 242^{rb-va}: *Ubi astrologiam comendans inter alia dicit quod ipsa facit eum qui perseueranter eam acquiritur celestem pulcritudinem diligere et ducit eum ad perseuerenciam diuini studii*.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid., fol. 242^{va}: *In omnibus pronosticationibus tuis et in cunctis operibus tuis ab humana laude te tempera. Sicut iudices: ut tuam famam custodias. Caue semper gloriam popularem*.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.: *Desine te iactari in adulancium oculis esse magis sapiens quam uideri studeas. Si enim contempnis laudes facilliter uituperacionem recipies. In cunctis iudiciis tuis, caue super omnia presumptionem. Estima omnes superiores tibi sapientiores te multos enim reperies*.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.: *Nulli ergo te preponas, caue iactanciam, caue ostentaciones, appetitum, cave inanis glorie studium. Nichil de te presumas, nichil boni tibi tribuas, de tua sciencia seu de tuis pronosticationibus, nulla eleuacione superbias*.

⁶⁶² Ibid.: [...], *multi enim presumptuosi et uani iactatores et pessimi adultores de hac sciencia preclarissima intromittunt, qui eam tota die miserabiliter diffamant*.

possible.⁶⁶³ The astrologer depicted by John Ashenden operates unimpressed by worldly fame – the aforementioned appreciation of the divine should drive him, not “human praise” or “popular fame”.⁶⁶⁴

John Ashenden next turns to how an astrologer should talk and communicate. This is still connected to the previous advice, for instead of being “arrogant, presumptuous, or a boaster” (*superbus, presumptuosus, iactator*), the astrologer should talk “in a humble way” (*humiliter*) when presenting his prognostications.⁶⁶⁵ Furthermore, in his interactions, he should neither be a “sycophant” (*adulator*) nor speak in an obscure way so that his speech would neither “displease the uneducated nor offend the wise”.⁶⁶⁶ The astrologer’s overall communication skills must be excellent: he should know when and how to speak as much as when to remain silent. Generally, he should only talk when asked and avoid all “verbosity” (*verbositas*).⁶⁶⁷

This advice is reminiscent of Michael Scot’s counsel to avoid loquaciousness because the astrologer’s knowledge was potentially too complicated for the common person and could easily be misinterpreted.⁶⁶⁸ In this case, however, John Ashenden shifts the blame for misunderstandings from the audience to the astrologer. It is the astrologer’s responsibility to ensure he conveys his teachings comprehensibly – regardless of the subject’s level of complexity. John Ashenden elaborates even further on the aspect of loquaciousness and explains that it could open the door to “sin” (*peccatum*) and is a sign of inexperience, for a “talkative man is inexperienced; a wise man, however, uses few words.”⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶³ This becomes particularly clear, for example, if one juxtaposes the following statements of the two: While John Ashenden admonishes the astrologer not to try to appear wiser (*magis sapiens*) than he really is, Michael Scot, on the other hand, advises him to always dress well in order to appear wiser (*sapientior*). Ibid.: *Desine te iactari in adulancium oculis esse magis sapiens quam videri studeas*. Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 3, fol. 118^{vb}: *Debes ire toto tempore bene uestitus uidelicet uestimentis honestis et que sint parissibilis coloris ut sapientior uidearis et ubique recipiaris cum maiori reuerentia*.

⁶⁶⁴ See footnote 659.

⁶⁶⁵ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 12, chap. 3, fol. 242^{va}: *Non ergo sis superbus non presumptuosus non iactator, set humiliter in tuis pronosticacionibus loquere, [...]*.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.: *Non sis adulator. Pessima enim res est adulacio. In tuis ergo pronosticacionibus super omnia: caue adulacionem, noli uerborum obscuritatibus uti, ita dic, ut intelligaris ne simplicibus loquendo displicias, et ne prudentes offendas*.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.: *Scito quo tempore loquaris, loquendi modum, non excedas, tempore congruo loquere, tempore congruo tace, ne loquaris, nisi interrogatus, sint uerba tua pauca. Tolle uerbositatem sermonis superflui*.

⁶⁶⁸ See Chapter 4.2.1.

⁶⁶⁹ He additionally illustrates with a river metaphor that too much talking would entail dangers. John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 12, chap. 3, fol. 242^{va}: *Nam multiloquia non declinant peccatum. Fluius exundans cito colligit lutum. Ultra modum flatur maris periculum parit, ymbrium nimietas periculum suscitatur. Lingosus homo imperitus est. Sapiens*

The sin that he alludes to becomes evident in the following passages when he cautions the astrologer against deceit and lies in his speech. An astrologer should never deceive someone by lying or pretending. Instead, he should be completely sincere and show emotion without pretence.⁶⁷⁰ Moreover, in his astrological discussions, he must avoid disputes, stubbornness, and arguments and come straight to the point.⁶⁷¹ Instead of striving to be superior, he should discuss matters and let “reason” (*ratio*) guide his judgements and actions.⁶⁷² “Reason”, not emotions, should thus always be the deciding factor for astrologers. John Ashenden warns particularly against different types of anger (*furor, indignatio, iracundia, ira*) since such emotions would – as one had learned in puberty – prevent the mind from being able to discern the truth.⁶⁷³ Furthermore, the astrologer also must beware of the destructive power of “envy” (*invidia*), which would “destroy all seeds of virtue” and “devour all good things with a pestilential ardour”.⁶⁷⁴

Avoiding those negative emotions was certainly advisable at all times. Still, it is noteworthy that John Ashenden repeatedly points out that this is required “in your [i.e. the astrologer’s] predictions” (*in tuis pronosticacionibus*).⁶⁷⁵ The emphasis on the astrologer’s behaviour or state of mind when making his forecasts presumably reflects that the interaction with clients could often be demanding and require a balanced disposition. However, it is not known whether John Ashenden conducted any astrological consultations for individual clients.⁶⁷⁶ Nevertheless, he considered it essential to impress upon the aspiring astrologer that a good relationship and harmonious communication with the person asking for astrological advice are

uero paucis utitur uerbis. He then again emphasises that the astrologer should in his prognostications “excessive verbosity” as much as “perfidious flattery”. Ibid.: *Ffuge ergo in tuis pronosticacionibus superfluum sermonis uerbositatem. Ffuge perfidam sermonis adulacionem.*

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.: *Et super omnia fuge sermonis fallaciam. Neminem menciendo fallas. Nullum circumscribas uerbo. Non aliud loquere et aliud in animo teneas. Prebe affectum sine simulacione. Caue simulacionem. Uita fictionem.*

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., fol. 242^{vb}: *In tuis disputacionibus tolle certamen. Tolle pertinacem. Uincendi defensionem. Cede cito ueritati.*

⁶⁷² Ibid.: *Disputare stude et non superare, in omnibus iudiciis tuis et in omnibus tuis actibus tene rationem. Preualeat tibi ratio. Tempera animum ratione.*

⁶⁷³ Ibid.: *Tempera furorem. Tempera indignacionem. Cohibe animi motum, refrena iracundie impetum. In prima enim pubescentis etate didicisti quod impedit ira animum ne possit cernere uerum. In tuis enim pronosticacionibus non sis iracundus.*

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.: *In nullis actibus tuis sis inuidus. Inuidia enim cuncta uirtutum germina concremat. Inuidia cuncta bona ardore pestifero deuorat. Inuidia animi tineas sensum comedit. Pectus urit et cor hominis quasi quedam pestis depascit.* He then summarises his advice again: *Non ergo sis inuidus non iracundus non uiolentus.*

⁶⁷⁵ See, for example, footnote 673.

⁶⁷⁶ In addition to his main work, the *Summa*, he also wrote more specific prognostications that included political issues. However, there is no evidence that he provided direct and personal advice to individuals. See for this aspect Chapter 2.1.3.

paramount for any astrologer. An ideal astrologer would therefore put aside his own emotional needs and assume the role of an objective scholar.

John Ashenden also lists elements and behaviours that might hinder a balanced mind, such as the consumption of wine. “Wine is a venom”, he explains, which “excites emotions” and “burdens the mind greatly.”⁶⁷⁷ Drinking wine would act like kindling for a fire, provoking a whole range of inappropriate conduct, such as “drunkenness” (*ebrietas*), “lust” (*libido*), and “debauchery/excess” (*luxuria*), which would ultimately lead to “ruin” (*perditio*).⁶⁷⁸ *Luxuria*, in particular, has ruined not only many “kings and nobles” (*reges et nobiles*), John Ashenden remarks, but has also made fools out of many “wise men” (*sapientes*).⁶⁷⁹ An astrologer should therefore be “modest, chaste, sober, not gluttonous, nor given to carousing and drunkenness lest this noble discipline of astrology be defiled by your [his] vilenesses.”⁶⁸⁰

Among the behaviours and attitudes inappropriate for an astrologer, John Ashenden also counts ambition and greed for money.⁶⁸¹ While his treatment of money will be addressed in more detail below,⁶⁸² it is noteworthy that he again urges the astrologer to shun worldly success, emphasising in particular that the “greed for ignoble money” (*cupiditas ignobilis pecunie*) would “defame” (*diffamet*) the “nobility of the discipline of astrology” (*sciencie astronomie nobilitas*).⁶⁸³ It is, therefore, not so much the reputation of the individual astrologer that is at stake but that of the discipline itself.

In the following sections, John Ashenden then turns more to the actual practice of astrology. Here, he emphasises the significance of the astrologer’s diligence and impartiality.⁶⁸⁴ For the latter, he cites the twelfth proposition from (Pseudo-)Ptolemy’s *Centiloquium*, which warns that “love and hate distort the truth of an astrological judgement” – the astrologer, according to John Ashenden, must therefore take care

⁶⁷⁷ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 12, chap. 3, fol. 242^{vb}: *Unum enim uirus est et animi motum excitat. Uino multo grauatur mens.*

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.: *Igni enim adiecto fomite incendium magis crescit. Adiecta igni materia plus angetur flamma. Ad ebrietatem et luxuriam cito accrescit perditio. Non ergo sis ebrius, non sis luxuriosus, non libidinosus.*

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid.: *Multos reges et nobiles perdidit luxuria. Multos etiam sapientes infatuant luxuria.*

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.: *Esto pudicus castus et sobrius et non gulosus nec commessacionibus et ebrietatibus deditus, ne hec preclara sciencia astronomie tuis feditatibus deturpetur.*

⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

⁶⁸² See Chapter 4.3.2.

⁶⁸³ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 12, chap. 3, fol. 242^{vb}: *Non ergo sis cupidus, non auarus non ambiciosus, ne huius sciencie astronomie nobilitatem ignobilis pecunie cupiditas diffamet.*

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., fols. 242^{vb}–243^{ra}.

always to act and judge impartially when giving astrological judgements.⁶⁸⁵ Although he does not elaborate on this point, it is worth highlighting that the impartiality of the astrologer – based on (Pseudo-)Ptolemy’s dictum – was indeed a frequently mentioned aspect by astrologers.⁶⁸⁶

John Ashenden also addresses activities with which the astrologer should not concern himself. This applies primarily to judgements about things “very far removed from the human senses”.⁶⁸⁷ As examples, he lists illicit practices such as nigromancy, magic or geomancy, but also branches of astrology such as “questions” (*questiones*) and “elections” (*electiones*).⁶⁸⁸ The main reason why John Ashenden rejects those arts and branches is that they would promote a belief in fate and necessity.⁶⁸⁹ In the remainder of the chapter, he elaborates on this aspect. He is primarily concerned with showing that the astrology he practises, which focuses on major events such as the weather and the occurrence of diseases, does not advocate any necessity of the stars’ influences and

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., fol. 243^{ra}: *Et amor et odium peruertunt iudicii ueritatem. Ptholomeus in centilogio propositione 12. In omnibus ergo iudiciis tuis indifferenter age indifferenter iudica.*

⁶⁸⁶ It was addressed, for example, by Henry Bate in his reflections on whether he was allowed to draw up his own nativity. On Henry Bate’s statements, see Chapter 2.2.1. Roger Bacon equally pointed out in his *De laudibus mathematicae* that love or hate risked corrupting the judgement. See Roger Bacon: *De laudibus mathematicae*, BLO, MS. Digby 218, fol. 101^{rb}.

⁶⁸⁷ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 12, chap. 3, fol. 243^{ra}: *Caue super omnia iudicare de rebus que sunt a sensibus humanis nimis remota.*

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.: *Non te intromittas de factis illicitis cuiusmodi sunt nigromancia, magica, geomantia, nec de questionibus astronomie, nec de electionibus sit tibi magna cura.* He later also raises concerns about nativities, as they are “too much removed from human senses” and are asked with “too much curiosity”. The astrologer, however, “should not desire to know what is not allowed to know”. Ibid., fol. 243^{va}: *In natiuitatibus eciam magna curiositas est et magnum tedium operandi quamuis enim fetus in utero hora conceptionis et natus in hora natiuitatis quamdam influenciam suscipit a supracelestibus. Unde et natus ille ad uirtutes uel ad uicia sic dispositus uel inclinatus cum hac sciencia natiuitatum a sensibus humanis nimis remota est et nimiam curiositatem inquiri, nulla ergo sic tibi curiositas scire huius latencia, nec scire cupias quod sciri non licet.* John Ashenden’s rejection of more controversial branches of astrology speaks to his astrological conservatism, conditioned by his working environment at an English university. In comparison, Guido Bonatti, for example, argues in favour of *electiones*, explaining in the first chapter of his treatise on elections how they work and the benefits they could offer. He even attributes Christ with having used elections. See Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 7, chap. 1, cols. 385–388, col. 386: *Et potest eligi bona hora a mala, secundum quod ipse dominus noster Iesus Christus elegit dum dixit, Eamus in Iudaeam iterum etc.* About the different branches of astrology, see Burnett: *Astrology*, pp. 375–376. Burnett points out that *electiones* and *interrogationes* are branches that were not known in classical antiquity but appear to have been an Indian invention that became popular especially among Islamic astrologers. While these branches promised particularly helpful insights and were sought after in the courtly environment, they remained the most controversial parts of astrology even among astrologers. See, for example, the opposition of the Renaissance astrologer Girolamo Cardano († 1576): Anthony Grafton / Nancy Siraisi: *Between the Election and My Hopes: Girolamo Cardano and Medical Astrology*, in: William R. Newman / Anthony Grafton (eds.): *Secrets of Nature: Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge (MA) 2001, pp. 69–131, here p. 106. On this and how these techniques were used by Ambrogio Varesi da Rosate, the astrologer of Ludovico Maria Sforza, see Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars*, pp. 167–209.

⁶⁸⁹ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 12, chap. 3, fol. 243^{ra}: *De nulla ergo scienciis illicitis aliquo modo intromittas que ponunt necessitatem stellarum aut que ponunt neccessitatem fatalem.*

consequently does not contradict the Catholic faith.⁶⁹⁰ It was the accidental or deliberate confusion with illicit practices and the existence of ignorant or untrained people that would bring “true astrology” (*uera astronomia*) into disrepute.⁶⁹¹

After this brief digression on the nature of astrology, the correct behaviour of the astrologer becomes the focus of attention again. John Ashenden encourages the astrologer to avoid conflict, always strive for harmony, and promote friendship.⁶⁹² The value of friendship is further emphasised when John Ashenden advises the astrologer to “show the right way to live”, especially to his friends adhering to the wrong views. Through the astrologer’s instruction, they could be “freed from their past errors”; by so doing, he would “restore the lost virtues of men”.⁶⁹³ The astrologer, thus, should function as a role model to convince others of the value of astrology.

John Ashenden concludes that once the reader has acquired the aforementioned virtues, abstains from the “nefarious actions that used to burden the mind”, is sufficiently versed in philosophy, arithmetic and geometry, and has recognised the movements of the planets according to Ptolemy’s *Almagest*, he would be ready to undertake the prognostications presented in the *Summa*.⁶⁹⁴ In this way, John Ashenden thus sums up the overall requirements for the astrologer: the possession of virtues, the abstention from bad behaviour, the training in the auxiliary subjects necessary for

⁶⁹⁰ He adduces the widely used argument that the stars only incline, but do not compel: Ibid.: *Planete enim non necessitant set disponunt, iudicia enim astrorum sunt media inter necessarium et possibilem sicut dicit ptholomeus in centilogo propositione prima. Nullam ergo necessitatem agunt stelle.* He also repeatedly asks rhetorically what Catholic could deny certain effects of the stars in the areas with which he is occupied. See Ibid., fol. 243^{rb}: *Quis enim unquam catholicus negaret quin calor et frigus siccitas et humiditas et omnes impressiones tam humide quam sicce in regione aeris generate ex corporibus supracelestibus generentur? [...] Quis catholicus negaret quin pestilentia et mortalitas et infirmitates ex stellis causentur?*

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., fol. 243^{va-rb}: *Tales itaque scienciam astronomie pessime diffamant qui suas sciencias illicitas sub quodam uelaminem astronomie palliant ponentes omnia necessario produci ex stellis et omnia necessitati fatali subiacere. [...] Isti ergo qui de scienciis predictis illicitis intromittunt, ueram astronomiam pessime diffamant. [...].* Ibid., fol. 243^{va}: *Sed sicut propter stultorum ignorantiam ut ait ptholomeus non est paruipendenda philosophia, sic propter habemus imperitos in astronomia non uera sciencia practica astronomie reprobanda. Nam quot habet astronomiam ignorantes, tot habet eam despicientes.*

⁶⁹² Ibid., fol. 243^{va}: *Esto paciens esto micis esto mansuetus esto modestus esto ab omnibus contencionibus separatus. Numquam alienis iurgiis ac pestiferis inimiciciis gaudeas, sed tibi in omni conuersacione placeat quieta moderatio fuge sediciones fuge semper turbulenta certamina, amicitie fidem fortibus copulacionibus stringendam operam da ut in omnibus actibus, fides tua, incorrupta permaneat.*

⁶⁹³ Ibid.: *Errantibus hominibus praesertim quos tibi amicitie necessitudo coniunxit rectam uiuendi uiam monstra ut tua instructione formati, praeteritis uite liberentur erroribus ut non solum responsis, sed etiam consiliis perditas hominum possis restituere uirtutes.*

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., fol. 243^{va-vb}: *Cumquam animum tuum hiis ornamencis ac presidiis uirtutum ornaveris, ab omnibus quoque actibus nephariis fueris separatus, que animum pessundare consueuerant atque in philosophia arsmetia geometria probabiliter fueris instructus et motus planetarum in circulis suis iuxta doctrinam ptholemei in libro almagesti agnoueris: has pronosticaciones quas in hoc libro tibi scripsi de accidentibus audacter aggredere et hanc summam iudicalem de accidentibus mundi diligenter inspice.*

astrology, and the astronomical-astrological knowledge itself. A final remarkable observation can be made regarding John Ashenden's concluding words, for here he declares that he wrote his *Summa* "not out of presumption or for vain glory" but out of "brotherly affection".⁶⁹⁵ In doing so, he highlights the very virtues he had set out earlier and shows that he embodies – at least in his own estimation – his outlined ideal image of an astrologer.

What, then, can be gleaned from studying the texts of Michael Scot and John Ashenden about the ideals regarding the moral dispositions and daily conduct of astrologers working at court and university? Both texts were written for prospective astrologers and contain various guidelines for the desirable moral qualities of the astrologer as well as rules of conduct for their daily behaviour. Despite this shared objective, the authors prioritised different issues. Even when they discussed the same problem and gave the same advice – for example, in the case of loquaciousness – their reasoning differed. Michael Scot placed considerable emphasis on the external image of the astrologer and how the astrologer could best enhance the relationship with his clients. The latter becomes particularly noticeable, for example, when he advises decorating the house with flowers or herbs: in this case, his attention was not focused on the content of the astrological consultation but rather on ensuring that the customer felt comfortable. This is not to say that Michael Scot was not interested in the intricacies of actual predictions – most of his work is dedicated to these issues – but merely that he equally attached great importance to other, more superficial social aspects regarding the tasks of an astrologer. His focus on pleasing clients was certainly strongly influenced by his working environment. For astrologers active at court or in a city, personal consultations were an integral part of their professional activity, and it was undoubtedly imperative to ensure the satisfaction of their clients.

Michael Scot also incorporated more traditional scholarly ideals in his guidelines, most prominently the advice to distance oneself from society. Unlike John Ashenden, however, he did not justify this behaviour by highlighting the value of particular virtues but rather related it to the importance of having a good reputation – a factor which again affects the relationship between client and astrologer. In this context, the exceptions that Michael Scot grants in his rules are particularly revealing. First, the concession to accept invitations of people "that cannot be denied" portrays astrologers as sought-after

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., fol. 243^{vb}: [...], *fessus a labore scribendi non ex presumptione, seu gloria inani sed fraterna caritate coactus huic summe iudiciali de accidentibus mundi finem imposui*.

experts of high standing who associate with influential and illustrious people. Furthermore, the differentiation between public and private behaviour, as exemplified in playing games of dice and chess, again shows the importance of the astrologer's relationship with his clients. To be a good astrologer thus also meant being a good entertainer and accommodating the client's wishes.

While Michael Scot's text mostly reads like career advice from a fellow astrologer, who incorporated his own experiences, John Ashenden's remarks appear more like a sermon from the pulpit. The moralising tone, the emphasis on Christian virtues, the conservatism regarding the branches of astrology, and the demand to shift attention away from oneself, that is, no arrogance, no boasting, is undoubtedly due to John Ashenden's field of activity, the University of Oxford, where he presumably also studied theology.⁶⁹⁶ His emphasis on friendship – in marked contrast to Michael Scot's advice to seclude oneself – can equally be linked to the ideals of university communities, particularly given his affiliation with Merton College. His advice relates primarily to the inner attitude of the astrologer, and the list of virtues and vices he supplies could equally apply to other scholars or even people in general. His choice of recommendations, however, was not as arbitrary or generic as it might seem at first glance. John Ashenden repeatedly states that his instructions refer to the behaviour of astrologers during prognostications, and the described conduct or frame of mind seems particularly fitting and helpful for interaction with others. Most of his advice indicates that the astrologer should set aside his own feelings – such as anger or jealousy – and assume a conciliatory role. While the client is not as much of a focus as with Michael Scot, John Ashenden still appears to have been keen to provide counsel for facilitating a harmonious astrological consultation.

The awareness of sharp criticism against astrology is noticeable in both works and was certainly a crucial factor for discussing the correct moral conduct of the 'ideal astrologer' in such detail. The vehemence and length of his condemnation of arrogance and boastfulness suggest he is referring to actual patterns of behaviour frequently displayed by astrologers. This assumption is further corroborated by the fact that such behaviours are points of criticism often cited by opponents of astrology.⁶⁹⁷ However, it

⁶⁹⁶ Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, pp. 7–8, considers it likely that John Ashenden continued his studies at the Faculty of Theology after obtaining his Master of Arts, even though he did not obtain a further degree. Snedegar furthermore identified multiple quotations of theological works and noted a general sensitivity to theological issues throughout John Ashenden's text.

⁶⁹⁷ See, for example, Nicole Oresme: *Livre de Divinacions*, ed. Coopland, chap. 12, pp. 92–102.

is equally possible that John Ashenden – aware of this criticism – merely anticipates those attacks. He would thus caution the astrologers explicitly against such misconduct from the outset so that they could counteract this negative conception by acting in a morally irreproachable manner. While Michael Scot and John Ashenden adopted different approaches, reflecting their own circumstances, they each attempted to advise the astrologer in such a way that he would not become a target for the adversaries of astrology.

What is particularly notable is that despite their different fields of activity, both scholars emphasise the significance of the interaction between astrologers and clients. The focus here is not solely on the astrologer's intellectual abilities – his professional role involves more than the objective interpretation of celestial influences. Instead, he must also be equipped with specific social skills. Guido Bonatti's remarks also demonstrate that the astrologer was assigned a social responsibility towards his clients and society. The fact that Michael Scot and John Ashenden considered descriptions of moral disposition and behaviour significant enough to devote separate chapters to them in their works shows the high value they attached to the social role of the astrologer. In their descriptions, we can perceive the gradual emergence of a more distinctive picture of the astrologer's identity – shaped by the demands of clients, general scholarly ideals and criticisms voiced by opponents.

4.3 Money Matters – Astrologers and Profit

The third aspect often addressed by authors of the introductory works in connection with an astrologer's character and comportment regards his desired attitude towards wealth and profit. While this topic may seem peripheral at first glance, it actually goes to the heart of what constitutes an astrologer because it sheds light on whether the authors regarded astrology as a 'profession' in the strict sense, i.e. something through which to earn a living. Furthermore, it provides information about the desired and perceived social status of astrologers and the purpose of the discipline itself.

Even though these discussions have underlying common themes, the authors of the introductory works under study explored the topic in different ways. Their approaches will be explored in three steps. Firstly, the financial starting conditions for someone aspiring to be an astrologer are addressed, indicating the social class from which astrologers should come according to the introductory texts. Secondly, it will be shown how the authors counter the frequently raised argument that astrology holds no value

because it is not lucrative. Here, the writers are not only concerned with the worth of astrology but, above all, with how the astrologer should relate to the pursuit of profit through his astrological services. The last subchapter builds on this debate but also shows instances in which it becomes clear that astrologers were not always entirely satisfied with the current *status quo* and the required ideal attitude towards profit and wealth. It is essential to emphasise that the aim of this analysis is not to determine whether astrologers were wealthy or whether astrological practice could lead to wealth but to discover how astrologers portrayed their activity in this respect. Nevertheless, some preliminary general remarks about astrologers' financial circumstances and income opportunities allow a more accurate assessment of their statements.

Obtaining reliable information about astrologers' revenues in the late Middle Ages is difficult, especially for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This is primarily because the role of the 'professional' astrologer was only beginning to emerge. The institutionalisation of the role – and a regular accompanying salary – can only be observed at Italian universities and, to a certain extent, at the French court at the end of the period under study.⁶⁹⁸ Furthermore, scholars who practised astrology also frequently pursued other activities, such as medicine, and often worked under the patronage of influential people. Those factors render it challenging to ascertain the exact nature of the remuneration and to determine for which specific activity or activities it was granted. Still, some observations can be made about the general employment situation of astrologers and the associated potential income. The fundamental question is whether the practice of astrology in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries offered any earnings opportunities, and if so, what they were.

In the university setting, the establishment of chairs of astrology provide the most definitive evidence of astrologers being remunerated for the practice of their discipline. In the geographical areas studied here, however, such institutionalisation of the role of astrologers only took place in Italy. Even there, the information on the employment and payment of astrologers is fragmentary for the period under study. Although the earliest examples of astrology lecturers at the University of Bologna date back to the second half of the thirteenth century, the connection of those scholars with the university

⁶⁹⁸ For the different developments in Italy, France and England and the question of what constitutes a 'professional' astrologer, see Chapter 2.2. Although it remains difficult to trace the exact income of astrologers, information on astrologers' pay is easier to find for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For a discussion and references to those later developments, see also Chapter 6.1.

remained rather tenuous, and it is not known whether or how they were paid for their work.⁶⁹⁹

The first recorded payment of a Bolognese astrologer was to Giovanni di Luni (Iohannes de Luna/Luca), who was attested as a teacher of philosophy and astrology at the University.⁷⁰⁰ A register of the proceedings of the commune of Bologna recorded that Giovanni di Luni, an *astrologus et artis fixice professor*, received an annual payment of six *corbae* of grain in 1303. He is moreover praised for his activities on behalf of the commune of Bologna.⁷⁰¹ However, the source does not specify whether he was paid expressly for astrological services nor whether his work was performed for the university or directly for the commune.

Information on the payment of university astrologers in Bologna becomes more reliable in the fourteenth and especially in the fifteenth century – from 1334, a paid chair of astrology was established, and the *rotuli* surviving from 1384 provide official records of the holders of those chairs.⁷⁰² An insight into the precise duties the salaried Bolognese astrology professors had to perform for their wages is given by the university statutes of 1405. While we do not know whether these conditions were enacted in Bologna already before 1405, it is probable that they represent the official endpoint of a longer development and that they were, at least to some extent, already in place beforehand. Most notably, astrologers were required to issue astrological judgements free of charge (*gratis*) for all interested university scholars to receive their regular

⁶⁹⁹ See Chapter 2.1.1.

⁷⁰⁰ He is listed as such in: Serafino Mazzetti: Repertorio di tutti i professori, antichi e moderni della famosa Università e del celebre Istituto delle Scienze di Bologna, Bologna 1847, p. 154. See on Giovanni di Luni: Bònoli and Piliarvu: I lettori di astronomia, p. 57.

⁷⁰¹ The text was printed by Mauro Sarti / Mauro Fattorini: De claris archigymnasii Bononiensis professoribus a saeculo XI usque ad saeculum XIV, vol. 1,1, Bologna 1769, p. 494, note b: *An. MCCCIII. Item providerunt [...] quod Ponterii pontis Idicis Reni teneantur omni anno in festo S. Marie Augusti mittere Mag. Joanni de Luna astrologo et artis Fixice professori VI. corbas frumenti [...] et hoc cum dictus Mag. Joannes in factis Communis Bonon. semper vigil fuerit et attentus et multos labores sustinuerit intendat circa honorem, et statum Communis Populi Bonon.* See for this passage also Bònoli / Piliarvu: I lettori di astronomia, p. 57, who interpret the passage to mean that Giovanni di Luni was elected astrologer through this payment: “[Giovanni di Luni] fu eletto astrologo dal popolo bolognese con una donazione di 6 corbe di frumento, [...]” While this is entirely possible, it is not directly evident from the source text. Giovanni di Luni is also mentioned in the context of the process of the archbishop of Aix, Robert de Mauvoisin, who had apparently consulted him as an astrologer. See for this: Boudet / Théry-Astruc: Le procès de Jean XXII, pp. 164–170.

⁷⁰² The earliest *rotuli* date back to 1370/71, but a systematic compilation began only in 1438. Bònoli / Piliarvu: I lettori di astronomia, p. 21 (about the *rotuli*), p. 55 (salaried chair of astrology). Whilst Bònoli and Piliarvu here point to the high value of *rotuli*, they also note that they are often incomplete and even contradictory. For the transcription of the *rotuli*: I rotuli dei lettori, legisti e artisti dello studio Bolognese, ed. Dallari. See Boudet: Entre Science et nigromance, p. 288, for a discussion on the exact payment of the astrologers at the end of the fourteenth century according to the *rotuli*. For information on the developments in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the salaries of Italian university professors: Grendler: The Universities of the Italian Renaissance, pp. 415–426.

salaries.⁷⁰³ Additional earnings through the preparation of personal astrological judgements – at least for university members – were thus not possible. However, this does not exclude the possibility that university astrologers produced texts for influential people outside the university to acquire money or favour.⁷⁰⁴

Specific information about the remuneration of a salaried university astrologer at the University of Padua is provided by the will of one of the university's most famous scholars, Peter of Abano (†1315/16).⁷⁰⁵ In his will, he bequeathed his overdue salary to the community of Padua. This amounted to 1500 pounds for the last three years and 500 small *denarii* for his current salary.⁷⁰⁶ However, it should be noted that Peter of Abano not only held the chair of astrology but was also a professor of philosophy and medicine, i.e. the payment mentioned did not pertain exclusively to his teaching of astrology.⁷⁰⁷ The fact that his salary had not been paid for such a long time and that he nevertheless bequeathed it to the Commune of Padua furthermore indicates that Peter of Abano did not necessarily depend on it for his livelihood. Thus, he likely had additional income, presumably in his capacity as a physician.⁷⁰⁸

While the establishment of chairs of astrology at Italian universities demonstrates that astrologers made at least some money from their discipline – even though it was

⁷⁰³ Statuti delle università e dei collegi dello Studio bolognese, ed. Malagola, rubrica 60, p. 264: *Item statuerunt, ordinaverunt et firmaverunt quod doctor electus vel eligendus per dictam Universitatem ad salarium ad legendum in astrologia, teneatur iudicia dare gratis scholaribus dicte Universitatis [...]*.

⁷⁰⁴ Bartholomew of Parma, for example, who is considered the first 'official' lecturer of astrology at the University of Bologna (fl. c. 1280/86–1297), dedicated his *Breviloquium* as well as his *Ars geomantiae* to a *Theodosius de Flisco*, and produced a horoscope for *Henricus de Flisco*. Both Theodosius and Henricus belonged to the Genoese patrician family of the Fieschi, who gained influence in the city during the thirteenth century. We do not have any further information about the relationship between Bartholomew and the Fieschi nor do we know whether he was remunerated in any way. However, the references at least indicate that Bartholomew also sought out patrons outside the university. For Bartholomew of Parma's teaching activity at Bologna, see Bònoli / Piliaryu: *I lettori di astronomia*, p. 47. For his references to the Fieschi: Ackermann: *Bartholomew of Parma, Michael Scot and the Set of New Constellations*, pp. 80–81, who identifies Theodosius as pope Hadrian V's nephew, who was a canon in Laon. See also Chapter 2.1.1 on Bartholomew of Parma.

⁷⁰⁵ On Peter of Abano, see Chapter 2.1.1.

⁷⁰⁶ Monumenti della Università di Padova, no. 642, p. 78: *Item reliquit communi Padue libras quingentas parvorum quas habere debet a dicto communi Padue pro suo salario de quo habebat boletas dominorum potestatis, antianorum et gastaldionum communis Padue supradicti. Item reliquit eidem communi Padue libras mille et quingentas quas habere debebat a dicto communi Padue pro suo salario de tribus annis retroactis*. For more information about this: Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, pp. 931–933 (appendix V: "Peter's Salary at Padua").

⁷⁰⁷ As it is stated in his will, he was *artis medicine, philosophie et astrologie professor*. Monumenti della Università di Padova, ed. Gloria, no. 642, p. 77.

⁷⁰⁸ There is evidence, for example, that he acted as medical advisor to Pope Honorius IV. (1285–1287) and dedicated his work on poisons to Pope John XXII (1316–1334). For his work for Pope Honorius IV, he is said to have received an exorbitant fee. However, the information on this comes from much later sources and was therefore probably only used to underline his great prestige. See *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, p. 881, pp. 935–938.

supplemented through other activities – assessing the financial situation of university astrologers in England and France proves more difficult. In contrast to Italian universities, there is little evidence that astrological topics featured prominently in the Paris or Oxford university curricula, and no specialised chairs in astrology were created. As shown in Chapters 2.1.2 and 2.1.3, this does not mean that no scholars were interested in astrology at those universities, but they seem to have pursued it mainly outside the official curriculum. While, in some cases, we can discern the mutual support of fellow astrologers through the bequest of books or instruments, there does not seem to have been any official remuneration for astrological research by the university.⁷⁰⁹

Whether these astrologers were trying to obtain or indeed obtained funding or patronage from individuals outside the university is difficult to ascertain. Henry Bate, for example, seems to have enjoyed the patronage of worldly potentates.⁷¹⁰ However, he only pursued astrology in earnest after leaving the university of Paris and beginning his ecclesiastical career.⁷¹¹ Furthermore, there is no evidence that he was directly paid for his astrological activities. John Ashenden, as another example, may have attempted to offer his services to King Edward III but does not seem to have been successful.⁷¹² Astrology thus appears to have been primarily a leisurely intellectual endeavour for the scholars at the universities of Paris and Oxford rather than a means of financing their livelihood. For the astrologers studied here, their income – as far as can be determined – seems to have been generated mainly from teaching other disciplines or from scholarships or benefices.⁷¹³

⁷⁰⁹ Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 62–63. The Merton College Fellowship could be seen as indirect payment for astrological research. However, it was not specified which activities had to be carried out for the fellowship to continue, and only John Ashenden seems to have been exclusively involved in astrological research under the fellowship. In addition, John Ashenden also performed other administrative tasks for the College, which were presumably necessary for the continuation of the Fellowship. Hence, it cannot be called a payment for astrological practices.

⁷¹⁰ He acted as philosophy teacher and princely secretary to Guy of Avesnes, brother to John II of Avesnes, count of Hainaut (1247–1304). It was to him that Henry Bate dedicated his philosophical encyclopaedia *Speculum divinatorum* (written c. 1301–1305). In 1278, he also produced the translation of a treatise attributed to al-Kindi on request of John of Milan, the alderman of Mechelen. See Steel / Vanden Broecke: *A Portrait of Henry Bate*, pp. 34–35.

⁷¹¹ For his biography, see Steel / Vanden Broecke: *A Portrait of Henry Bate*, pp. 31–43.

⁷¹² Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 85–91.

⁷¹³ Roger Bacon, for example, is known to have taught at the Arts Faculty at the University of Paris. See Hackett: *Roger Bacon. His Life, Career and Works*, pp. 13–14. As a fellow, John Ashenden received disbursements from Merton College. See Snedegar: *John Ashenden and the Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, p. 6. As Klaus van Eickels: *Zusammenfassung*, in: Frank Rexroth (ed.): *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der Gelehrten im späten Mittelalter (Vorträge und Forschungen 73)*, Ostfildern 2010, pp. 321–332, here p. 323, has pointed out, scholars in the late Middle Ages obtained their livelihood mainly from three sources: 1.) a teaching position at an institution, 2.) a supplementary occupation that left sufficient time for study, 3.) private means.

In the case of astrologers at court or in the Italian city-states, astrological activity is naturally more explicitly linked to the astrologers' livelihood since they stood in the direct service of a ruler. As described in chapter 2, we find such employment of astrologers at different times and to varying extents, depending on the geographical setting.⁷¹⁴ However, the specific conditions of such employments are difficult to reconstruct. For example, the question arises whether an astrologer was employed – and paid – only for his astrological knowledge or possibly also for other activities.⁷¹⁵ Moreover, even in cases such as that of Guido Bonatti, who can be considered a 'professional' court astrologer and practised astrology exclusively, it is not known how exactly he was remunerated and what the employment arrangements were: Was he permanently part of a ruler's retinue and, as such, regularly received a certain amount of money or favours? Or was he only called upon occasionally to assist with specific issues? Did he work exclusively for one ruler, or did he also make predictions for other people?

Questions of this kind can only be answered to some extent for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and even then, it remains complicated to determine the exact conditions of employment.⁷¹⁶ A particularly intriguing insight into astrologers' earnings and social standing at the French court is provided by the accounts of the *Hôtel du roi*, which reveal payments made by the French kings specifically for astrologers from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards. Jean-Patrice Boudet, who has studied those accounts in more detail, notes here that the astrologers, with an annual pension of 200 to 240 *livres tournois*, occupied a very average rank among the officials of the *Hôtel du roi*, roughly equivalent to that of barbers, and had to supplement their income by working for several princes at the same time.⁷¹⁷ While this finding naturally cannot be extrapolated back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it is noteworthy that even

⁷¹⁴ Astrologers can be found employed in the entourage of rulers in Italy as early as the thirteenth century – for example in the cases of Michael Scot and Guido Bonatti –, in France only from the second half of the fourteenth century onwards – especially at the court of Charles V –, and in England not until the fifteenth century, i.e. after the period covered by this study. For more detailed information, see Chapter 2.1.

⁷¹⁵ This applies in particular to the activity as an astrologer and physician. On this aspect, see especially Chapter 5.1.

⁷¹⁶ In her study of Renaissance court astrologers in Milan, Monica Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars*, pp. 117–118, points out that the patronage of those astrologers was not formalized by contracts and their remuneration frequently did not take place in the form of monetary remuneration, but through other posts, privileges and honours, thus making it difficult to reconstruct the conditions of employment.

⁷¹⁷ Boudet: *Les astrologues européens*, paragraph 22.

in the century following the period under study, astrologers were not among the best-paid employees, at least not at the French court.

Overall, based on the limited evidence available, it does appear to have been possible to earn money with astrology in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. However, employment opportunities varied significantly according to time and place, and the exact working conditions or remuneration are difficult or even impossible to reconstruct. Astrology alone does not seem to have guaranteed an income, let alone automatically led to great wealth. What should not be underestimated, though, is that astrologers increasingly attained positions of power at courts and universities – whether through their astrological expertise or other skills and activities. Even if astrology by itself did not guarantee wealth, scholars with additional astrological expertise were coveted. Combined with the study of other disciplines such as medicine – a *scientia lucrativa* – pursuing astrology thus could at least contribute to achieving social advancement and income.

The statements in the introductory works on wealth and profit are all the more valuable because they originate from a period when astrologers' specific work and earning opportunities were just emerging. Little information is available about this process and the status of astrologers. Although the accounts do not provide details of how astrologers earned their living, they give insight into the authors' ideas about how astrologers should ideally approach the question of wealth and profit and how astrologers were perceived in this regard.

4.3.1 Astrology as a Privilege for Wealthy Men

Within the context of defining astrology and its challenges in his *Liber introductorius*, Michael Scot makes some informative remarks regarding the financial demands encountered by the aspiring astrologer. Astrology, he claims, should not be learned by a “poor man” (*pauper homo*). Instead, it would be “more suitable for someone wealthy” (*sed convenientior est diviti*).⁷¹⁸ The reason for this, Michael Scot goes on to explain, is that the *homo pauper* must spend most of his time earning money for food and clothing for himself and possibly his relatives, and therefore would simply not have sufficient

⁷¹⁸ Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, p. 186.

time for studying astrology.⁷¹⁹ A wealthy man, by contrast, has the means to devote the appropriate time to learning astrology.⁷²⁰

Moreover, Michael Scot states that the study of astrology itself could incur considerable additional expenses. A poor man seeking to learn astrology would ultimately be “deceived by the temporal riches he will lack”, which he could only obtain through the “gift of fortune”. This is not to say, Michael Scot hastens to point out, that astrology is not entirely “good and lucrative” (*bona et lucrativa*). However, the poor student would not be able to reap these benefits because he would not be able to obtain the knowledge needed to interpret astrological matters truthfully.⁷²¹ Michael Scot elaborates that one particularly costly aspect would be the purchase of many books that a poor man could not afford. Even if he somehow succeeded in acquiring the necessary books, however, he would still not have enough time to read them and would therefore be unable to understand astrological matters. Finally, the accumulation of further costs, such as for the employment of a good teacher, would prevent even the last remaining poor student from mastering astrology.⁷²² While Michael Scot here attributes poor people’s lack of understanding of astrology to their circumstances, he adds in a later comment that, besides various obstacles, a poor man would also be unable to gain complete knowledge of astrology because of his unwillingness to study for a long time or his lesser “ability” (*capacitas*) to “understand or remember”.⁷²³ Hence, inherent qualities also play a role in impeding poor people from becoming astrologers.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.: *Nec est etiam pro paupere homine adiscenda cui sit necessarium lucrari iugiter victum et vestitum ut sibi et aliis vel sibi tantum.*

⁷²⁰ Ibid.: *Set convenientior est diviti qui habet longum spacium studendi et addiscendi, [...].*

⁷²¹ Ibid., p. 187: *Set si homo pauper temporalium rerum hanc artem requisciverit omnino scire iam pro me ipso iudicio et sententio manifeste quod se inveniet ultimo deceptum divitiis temporalibus quibus carebit et quas non poterit obtinere causa sui nisi sit dono fortune, licet ars per se sit omnino bona et lucrativa, quod raro est in multis, non propter artem, set quia nesciunt causam veraciter extrahere, [...].*

⁷²² Ibid.: [...] *et quia libri utiliores ac necessarii sibi defecerunt vel aliqui ex eis cum sint multi, vel si libros habuerit sibi sufficientes non habebit spacium temporis in studiando quare fiet vacuus suo bono intellectu, vel ei erit defectus expensarum vel boni instructoris.* The high costs required for mathematical studies in general are also evident, for example, in the complaints of Roger Bacon, who describes his lack of funds as a key obstacle for his studies. He emphasises in particular the high costs that would be necessary to buy instruments and also declares that he has already spent over 2,000 pounds on his studies. As a member of the Franciscan Order, which prohibited any possessions, the situation was naturally especially difficult for Roger Bacon. See Roger Bacon: *Opus tertium*, ed. Brewer, chap. 11, p. 35: *Et praeter expensas istarum personarum oporteret magnas expensas fieri: nam sine instrumentis mathematicis nihil potest sciri, et instrumenta haec non sunt facta apud Latinos et non fierent pro ducentis libris, nec trecentis.* Ibid., p. 59: *Nam per viginti annos quibus specialiter laboravi in studio sapientiae, neglecto sensu vulgi, plus quam duo millia librarum ego posui in his, propter libros secretos, et experientias varias, et linguas, et instrumenta, et tabulas, et alia; [...].*

⁷²³ Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, p. 188: *Etiam pauper homo plenam scienciam huius artis non poterit obtinere propter varia impedimenta que continue superveniunt; nolente studere diu, vel propter grossam capacitatem capiendi vel retinendi.*

Michael Scot thus makes it clear that the study of astrology presupposes a certain social position in terms of wealth – not everyone had the means, time, and capacity to acquire this knowledge. Astrology is not primarily presented as a way for someone to attain wealth but rather as an investment for affluent scholars. While he stresses that astrology is profitable if expertly practised, he sets a high entry threshold for acquiring the necessary skills. His comments also reflect that he wrote at a time when astrology was not yet an established course of study at university – there was neither a prescribed path to becoming an astrologer nor a precisely defined field of work which would then securely promise a good income.

The exclusion of poor people from studying and thus practising astrology and the resulting characterisation of the astrologer as belonging to a socially privileged class is also reflected in Michael Scot's descriptions of the ideal behaviour of the astrologer discussed in Chapter 4.2.1. The astrologer is distinctly portrayed here as someone who counsels people of high status and knows how to comport and represent himself appropriately in such interactions. The concurrent advice for a measure of seclusion and focus on one's studies is equally consistent with the view that an aspiring astrologer must be willing to invest time and money consistently to master astrology. From Michael Scot's remarks on whether a poor man can study astrology, it thus becomes evident that the astrologer was supposed to fulfil two different roles: on the one hand, he should be a modest and secluded philosopher who dedicates his time and money to his discipline; on the other hand, he must be able to conduct himself appropriately in noble society which required a fitting worldly demeanour. Michael Scot's portrayal of astrology as an elitist discipline, accessible only to wealthy scholars due to its difficulty level and the high expenditure of time and money, is indicative of his own position at the court of Frederick II. His view of the astrologer – and thus of himself – is that of a worldly and successful advisor who is fully dedicated to the study of his discipline.

Michael Scot is the only author of an introductory work who explicitly writes that a poor person could not attain sufficient knowledge to practice astrology successfully.⁷²⁴ However, the need for time and books was often emphasised to present astrology as a learnable but demanding skill and the astrologer as an exceptional and dedicated scholar

⁷²⁴ There are, however, many references to why the general masses could not understand astrology but these do not address their wealth but rather point to their lack of intellect or understanding. For example, John of Saxony, citing Albumasar, lists the "common crowd" among the groups opposing astrology. See Chapter 4.3.2.

who could master its challenging requirements.⁷²⁵ Although these authors did not specifically mention money or expenses in those cases, the frequent emphasis on time for study and the need to read a multitude of books implied a certain affluence and standing on the part of the prospective astrologers.

4.3.2 An Unprofitable Art

While the necessary financial starting position of astrologers may have been explicitly discussed only by Michael Scot, one issue that preoccupied many of the authors of introductory astrological works was whether the activity could be considered profitable. Such deliberations were often responding to a claim by opponents of astrology that the discipline was not lucrative and therefore had no value. Albumasar's "Great Introduction to Astrology", for example, which lists various types of opponents of astrology, includes amongst them "the common crowd" who consider wealth more important than knowledge and, for this reason, dismiss astrology.⁷²⁶

The relationship between astrology and profit appears to have been of great concern to Latin-Christian astrologers since they explored it in various ways, often drawing on Albumasar's remarks. Guido Bonatti, for example, devoted an entire chapter of his *Liber astronomiae* to refute "those who oppose the judgements of astrology, and who reprehend it, not knowing its dignity because it is not lucrative".⁷²⁷ In his remarks, he first explains that often common men, but occasionally even some religious people and others who are "wise in astronomy, medicine and other disciplines", commend the accumulation of money above anything else.⁷²⁸ Rejecting this stance, Guido Bonatti points above all to the impermanence of material wealth and argues that only wisdom will have real and lasting value.⁷²⁹ The "true sage", he explains, does not care about temporal matters.⁷³⁰ He declares that man is "more worthy than other animals" only by

⁷²⁵ See Chapter 4.1.2.

⁷²⁶ Abū Ma'shar: The Great Introduction to Astrology, vol. 1, ed. and transl. Burnett / Yamamoto, part 1, chap. 5, pp. 142–145.

⁷²⁷ Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 1, chap. 8, cols. 7–9: *Contra illos qui contradicunt iudiciis Astronomiae, et qui reprehendunt eam, nescientes dignitatem eius, eo quod non est lucratiua*. Overall, his entire first treatise deals with the defence of astrology and like Albumasar, Guido Bonatti mainly lists and refutes various arguments that frequently have been put forward against the discipline by its opponents. The argumentation in this chapter largely follows that of Albumasar.

⁷²⁸ Ibid., col. 8: [...] *et saepissime uidi hoc, quod uulgus non commendat aliud, nisi accumulationem pecuniae: nec mirum, quoniam ipsi uident aliquando quosdam tam religiosos, quam alios qui credunt, sapientes tam in Astronomia atque medicina quam in aliis scientiis, attendere circa illa. Quorum opiniones si bene considerentur, satis uidetur mihi posse infringi.*

⁷²⁹ Ibid.

⁷³⁰ Ibid.: [...] *uerus sapiens de temporibus non curat, [...]*. It is noteworthy that he did not write that the "true sage" was not allowed to have wealth only that he should not care about it.

virtue of “wisdom, knowledge and understanding”.⁷³¹ Since astrology is indeed “nobler” (*nobilior*) than most other disciplines, astrological knowledge would make someone even “nobler, worthier, more exalted, and more intelligent” than other types of knowledge could.⁷³²

In summary, Guido Bonatti argues that astrologers, or wise people in general, should not focus on accumulating money or possessions because wealth in itself has no great value. Astrology’s worth instead lies in the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. Whilst diverting attention from material gain in this way, Guido Bonatti does not claim here that an astrologer is not allowed to be wealthy or that astrology does not have the potential to be lucrative and lead to economic benefits. Indeed, from the topics covered in the rest of his work, it is evident that he considered astrology a valuable means of gaining material advantages. He frequently addresses issues revolving around financial concerns and advises on how to determine the best time to, for example, borrow or lend money profitably, plant crops to make the most profit or win money playing cards.⁷³³

Additionally, Guido Bonatti repeatedly stresses that money and wealth depend strongly on chance and are often not distributed fairly.⁷³⁴ Astrology is thus shown as a tool to potentially aid less fortunate people, and the astrologer has the power to counterbalance certain injustices.⁷³⁵ However, it should be kept in mind that Guido

⁷³¹ Ibid., col. 9: [...] *et sic per sapientiam et cognitionem et intellectum homo est effectus dignior caeteris animalibus.*

⁷³² Ibid.: *Et si illud quod facit hominem dignum nobilitate est sapientia, oportet quod illa sapientia quae est nobilior et dignior et altior faciat hominem nobiliorem et digniorem et altiolem, et magis intelligentem: et illud est scientia futurorum quod non potest scire, nisi per scientiam stellarum: igitur scientia stellarum, est nobilior caeteris scientiis, preter philosophiam primam [...].* The exalted position of astrology and its utility for the soul has been already discussed in the first chapter. It is noteworthy that in this context he explicitly writes that the soul gains “intellectual wealth” (*lucrum intellectualem*). Ibid., treatise 1, chap. 1, col. 1: [...] *ipsa* [i.e. the soul] *gaudet in lucro intellectuali, [...] et nihil est praeter philosophiam primam, in quo anima tantum lucretur, quantum in Astronomia siue Astrologia.*

⁷³³ See, for example, ibid., treatise 7, part 2, On the second house, chap. 1, col. 427 (*De accomodatione uel acceptione*); ibid., On the fourth house, chap. 10, col. 440 (*In seminandis seminibus quae in eodem anno uel in secundo fructificare intendimus*); ibid., On the seventh house, chap. 13, col. 470 (*In electione ludorum cum taxillis hel* [sic!], *qui fiunt alio modo causa lucrandi.*

⁷³⁴ For his arguments for the existence of *fortuna*, see ibid., treatise 7, part 1, chap. 1, col. 388: *Volo enim te scire quod fortuna dominatur in omni re, [...]. [...] Si enim fortuna non est, quis esset tantae fatuitatis qui nesciret ex arbitrio suo cuncta necessaria sibi abundanter acquirere, sed nos uidemus quotidie contrarium manifeste: nonne uides quosdam sapientes probos et intelligentes, qui non habent ut plurimum quod manducantur, et quosdam fatuos, quibus si lupus auferet ex decem pecudibus 7 nesciret utrum essent diminute uel non, cunctis sibi necessariis affluentibus abundanter.*

⁷³⁵ Dykes: *Practice and Counsel*, p. 40, takes Guido Bonatti’s statements on fortune to mean that it is “the astrologer’s job to help people overcome the forces of fortune” and interprets this as a way to justify “the astrological profession”. While Guido Bonatti certainly showed astrology to be able to aid one’s fortune, he does not specifically state that it is the astrologer’s role to help less well-to-do people in particular. Rather, astrology is presented as a useful tool for everyone. See for this Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 1, chap. 9, cols. 9–14, where he argues against the stance that it would be harmful to know about future accidents and instead emphasises its benefits.

Bonatti himself worked mainly for wealthy rulers. It is highly doubtful that he gave free astrological advice to destitute people to aid them in their fortune. Even if astrology thus theoretically enabled everyone to improve their circumstances, in reality, this was undoubtedly limited to wealthy clientele and learned scholars.

Like Michael Scot, Guido Bonatti wanted to create an ideal image of the discipline and, thus, of the astrologer. On the one hand, an astrologer represented an exemplary scholar who was only interested in “intellectual wealth”.⁷³⁶ On the other hand, it was equally important to emphasise that astrologers could also offer practical advantages for their clients through their discipline – even if they were not interested in this for themselves. The opposing views strongly influenced Guido Bonatti’s statements in this context. What is particularly remarkable here is that astrology – unlike medicine or law – was apparently not perceived as a lucrative science. Although the argument of astrology’s lack of lucrateness goes back to the time of Albumasar, it seems to have struck a nerve with Latin-Christian astrologers as well.

While Guido Bonatti wrote his advice while working in a courtly or urban setting in the thirteenth century, where his astrological activity was connected to his livelihood, the question of whether astrology was a lucrative activity and how astrologers should position themselves in relation to profit was also discussed by those astrologers practising in the university setting. One university astrologer who wrote at length on this subject was John of Saxony, active at the University of Paris between 1323 and 1355.⁷³⁷ In the prologue to his commentary on Alcabitus’ “Introduction to Astrology”, John of Saxony, like Guido Bonatti, confronts various arguments against astrology and also discusses the different groups that Albumasar had identified as opponents of astrology in his “Great Introduction”. However, while Guido Bonatti only loosely and partially follows Albumasar’s argumentation, John of Saxony lists all ten groups.⁷³⁸ Although John of Saxony, for the most part, merely summarises Albumasar’s

⁷³⁶ Guido Bonatti emphasises the value of “intellectual wealth” (*lucrum intellectuale*) that can be gained from astrology particularly at the very beginning of his work. See Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 1, chap. 1, col. 1.

⁷³⁷ For his university background, see Chapter 2.1.2.

⁷³⁸ John of Saxony: *Commentary*, Paris 1521, fols. 31^v–33^v. While John of Saxony follows Albumasar’s template, he also adds an eleventh group with those who claim that astrology is against the [Christian] faith. Ibid., fol. 33^v: *Et posset addi undecima secta. Et sunt illi qui dicunt quod ista scientia sit contra fidem*. Interestingly, to support this point, he again cites statements by Muslim authors such as Haly Abenragel or Albumasar, and even quotes from the Qur’an. See for a discussion of this aspect: Burnett: *Al-Qabīṣī’s Introduction to Astrology*, pp. 56–57.

arguments, the explicit mention of the individual groups and their arguments shows the significance he attached to them and which aspects he considered particularly important.

The possible advantages of astrology and the income of astrologers are discussed in relation to two of those groups. In the ninth and tenth groups, Albumasar and John of Saxony place the arguments of the “common crowd” (*universitas vulgi*). The ninth group was the one also discussed by Guido Bonatti, that is, people “who do not understand the value of astrology (*dignitas iudiciorum*), nor of other sciences, nor of the knowledge of things to come, but consider him most worthy who has the most possessions”.⁷³⁹ The refutation of this argument runs along the same lines previously described. We thus again find the sentiment that wealth is distributed haphazardly and is due to fortune; for this reason, Albumasar – and with him, Guido Bonatti and John of Saxony – argue that people should not be praised for wealth. Instead, they should be commended for wisdom and knowledge, particularly that about the future, which elevates man above the animals.⁷⁴⁰

However, according to Albumasar and John of Saxony, the “common crowd” reject astrological knowledge for yet another reason. The tenth group consists of people who oppose astrology because they have seen how many mistakes have been made by those who boast of possessing this knowledge.⁷⁴¹ As John of Saxony writes, this is because there are many “foolish, unskilled, and fallen men” who “practise various deceptions under the name of astrology that seduce weak men”.⁷⁴² Those incompetent astrologers are only interested in “profit” (*lucrum*) and, because of their greed, even tailor their answers to fit the desires of their clients.⁷⁴³ Albumasar’s and John of Saxony’s criticism here is directed less against the common people who reject astrology because of erroneous predictions than against the practitioners who only pretend to know astrology

⁷³⁹ John of Saxony: Commentary, Paris 1521, fol. 33r: *Nona secta est uniuersitatis vulgi. Et isti diuiduntur in duas sectas: quarum vna est eorum qui nesciunt dignitatem iudiciorum caeterarumque scientiarum neque dignitatem prescientie rerum, dignior que hominibus apud eos est cui fuerit plus substantiae.*

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.: *De istis fuit prius dictum: Contra quos dicit Albumazar quod substantia et fortuna aptantur sapienti et insipienti: forti quoque et debili et homo non est laudabilis super hoc quod aptatur ei ex hoc: quia hoc non est aptatum ei per scientiam suam neque per insipientiam: neque per fortitudinem seu debilitatem suam: sed laudatur super sapientia et cognitione: quia dignitas hominis super caetera animalia non sit nisi per sapientiam et cognitionem et per cognitionem rerum quae fuerunt et quae futurae sunt. Et quibusdam interpositis dicit quod dignius rerum in homine est futurorum scientia.*

⁷⁴¹ Ibid.: *Decima secta est etiam uniuersalis vulgi. Et isti repulerunt scientiam huius magisterii propter hoc quod uiderunt de multitudine erroris eorum qui se iactant de ea; [...].*

⁷⁴² Ibid., fol. 33v: [...] *dicit quod isti exercent sub nomine huius magisterii uarias seductiones quibus seducunt homines debiles [...].*

⁷⁴³ Ibid.: *Isti non quaerunt nisi lucrum. Et dicit cum isti interrogantur de aliqua retendunt in responsionem ad rem qua gratulatur quaerens et sibi congruit uolentes eum laetificare causa cupiditatis suae.*

and, therefore, bring legitimate astrologers into disrepute.⁷⁴⁴ The pursuit of profit, as well as boasting about one's competence, is consequently presented as an indication of a false astrologer.⁷⁴⁵

'True' astrologers should behave very differently towards wealth. In another passage, referencing Ptolemy instead of Albumasar, John of Saxony names three "qualities or conditions" (*proprietates uel condiciones*) that "a true philosopher and even more so an astrologer" ought to fulfil.⁷⁴⁶ Apart from possessing a "steadfastness of attention" (*stabilitas intentionis*) and "suitability of disposition" (*habilitas dispositionis*), he must also abdicate all worldly possessions (*abdicationis*).⁷⁴⁷ John of Saxony's rationale for this third condition is derived from Haly's commentary on the (pseudo-)Ptolemaic *Centiloquium*. Haly, writes John of Saxony, explains that the preoccupation with worldly concerns leads one away from attaining a knowledge of what is to come. However, if one were to separate oneself from all worldly matters – as, for example, hermits would do – one could have foreknowledge of the future.⁷⁴⁸ Invoking Aristotle, John of Saxony states that a philosopher – and thus also an astrologer – should consequently not be wealthy. Those who have worldly wealth would indeed be repelled by astrology.⁷⁴⁹

John of Saxony, however, along with other astrologers, seems to have been reluctant to follow this philosophical ideal of poverty. After arguing based on key authorities that an ideal astrologer should be poor or at least not interested in worldly wealth, he then surprisingly adds: "This condition does not please many, not even me."⁷⁵⁰ John of Saxony, along with other astrologers, thus seem to have been reluctant to follow the philosophical ideal of poverty. In support of this position, he cites Albumasar, who, according to John of Saxony, mitigates the three conditions of attention, disposition, and

⁷⁴⁴ He even explicitly states that the "common crowd" is not to be blamed for its opposition in this case. Ibid., fol. 33^{r-v}: *Dicit Albumazar quod isti non sunt culpandi in contradictione magisteriorum huius scientiae, [...]*.

⁷⁴⁵ This depiction is in line with the warnings against boasting by John Ashenden, see Chapter 4.2.2.

⁷⁴⁶ John of Saxony: Commentary, Paris 1521, fol. 30^v: *In quibus uerbis Ptolemeus tangit tres proprietates uel condiciones: quas debet uerus philosophus habere et maxime astronomus [...]*. See also footnote 558.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid. For the discussion of the other two conditions, see Chapter 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.: *Quantum ad tertiam conditionem dicit Haly in commento primae propositionis centiloquii. Quia oportet nos sollicitos esse circa mundana: aufertur a nobis futurorum cognitio: sed si a mundanis omnibus separaremus, possemus futura praecognoscere, sicut uidemus eremitarum qui plures qui futura predicunt. See for the further discussion of this passage and the question of different ways to obtain knowledge of the future also Chapter 5.3.2.*

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid., fol. 30^v–31^r: *Patet ergo quod philosophus non debet esse diues teste philosopho septimo politice. [...] Et sic habentes diuitias huius mundi ab astronomia sunt repulsi.*

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid., fol. 31^r: *Ista conditio non placet multis, nec etiam mihi.*

abdication, turning the third in particular “into its opposite”.⁷⁵¹ Still referencing Albumasar, John of Saxony explains that there is “greater benefit in astrology than in any other discipline” and mistakes made in astrology are “more tolerable and less harmful than in other disciplines”.⁷⁵² He corroborates this by comparing the practice of astrologers with that of physicians and sailors.⁷⁵³ At the end of his remarks, he concludes that it is “right and proper that all intelligent and knowledgeable men should receive astrologers, make use of them and agree to their truth in what they are saying.”⁷⁵⁴ It is important to note that John of Saxony here merely refers to the great benefits of astrology, which he does not describe in detail. He does not, however, explicitly comment on whether an astrologer is allowed to be wealthy or perhaps even should be and whether and to what extent the astrologer himself may profit from the benefits of astrology. However, the placement of his remarks as an explanation or mitigation of Ptolemy’s third condition, and especially the statement that he and many others were not pleased with it, shows that he is arguing that the renunciation of worldly possessions and success should not be obligatory for astrologers. The appeal to welcome astrologers everywhere and to take their statements seriously supports this thesis. Whether John of Saxony had secular patrons outside the university or earned money from his astrological expertise is unknown. However, his commentary shows that he was not opposed to it. His remarks indicate a development – or the desire for it – to no longer regard astrology merely as an unpaid intellectual pastime but rather as an activity that also offered material rewards.

In summary, the various statements by John of Saxony evoke traditional, primarily classical ideals, which call for the rejection of material wealth. The astrologer is portrayed as a philosopher and integrated into a long, venerable tradition. Likewise, it becomes apparent again how strongly the perceived criticisms of astrology and its practitioners shaped the discourse. In this instance, John of Saxony – by invoking Albumasar – not only highlights that an exclusive focus on money and possessions is

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.: *Quantum ad istas condiciones consolatur nos Albumazar in introductorio, et specialiter quantum ad ultimam: quia mutat eam ad oppositum.* John of Saxony later repeats this: Ibid.: *Et in hoc mutat tertiam conditionem ad oppositum.*

⁷⁵² Ibid.: *Et probat quod maior utilitas sit in astronomia quam in aliqua alia scientia. Et si contingat in ea error tolerabilior est et minus nocet quam in caeteris scientiis.*

⁷⁵³ Ibid., fol. 31^{r-v}. The comparison with sailors and physicians goes back to Ptolemy. See Ptolemy: *Tetrabiblos*, ed. / transl. Robbins, book 1, chap. 2, p. 10, p. 19. For more on the distinction between astrologers and physicians, see Chapter 5.1.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid., fol. 31^v: [...], *quare aequum est quantum decet omnes homines intellectuales et sapientes recipere astrologos et uti eis et acquiescere ueritati eorum in his quae dicunt.*

wrong but also points out that greed for money is a sign of false or incompetent astrologers. Despite those assertions, John of Saxony resented the demand for a complete rejection of wealth. He explicitly tries to soften or reverse Ptolemy's stipulation and emphasises astrology's usefulness. For John of Saxony, this usefulness apparently should also entail benefits for astrologers.

Many of these same concerns about wealth are also found a century later in the advice of John Ashenden, active at Oxford around the middle of the fourteenth century. In his chapter on the rules of conduct for the astrologer, he directly warns the astrologer against being seduced by money and worldly riches, which will only lead to danger. In contrast, turning away from worldly pursuits will result in a calm mind.⁷⁵⁵ He further cautions against greed, avarice and ambition – these should be avoided lest the “unworthy desire for money would taint the nobility of astrology.”⁷⁵⁶ Such statements come as little surprise in a text by John Ashenden, who was likely a “purely academic astrologer” without direct income for his astrological activities.⁷⁵⁷ As described above, he generally portrays the astrologer as morally virtuous, abstaining from all sins and more like a theologian in his conduct. The renunciation of money and ambition is thus entirely in keeping with his general characterisation of the ideal astrologer.

However, although he insists that monetary gains are insignificant for the astrologer, he is even more adamant than Guido Bonatti or John of Saxony in pointing out that astrology could lead to wealth if the astrologer chooses to employ it in this way. In the prologue of his *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, he includes several stories about astrologers to prove his point. Like Guido Bonatti and John of Saxony, he does this in response to the critics of astrology who failed to see the benefits of astrology and therefore despised it.⁷⁵⁸ His stories show different types of advantages. Two of them,

⁷⁵⁵ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 12, chap. 3, fol. 242^{vb}: *Numquam te pecunie augmenta sollicitent, ne ab hac preclara sciencia ueneranda sis distractus, si uis esse quietus, nihil seculi appetas et semper quietem mentis habebis, si a te mundi curas abieceris. Diuicie enim usque ad pericula ducunt. Diuitie ad exitum protrahunt. Multi propter opes periclitauerunt. Multi propter diuicias in discrimen uenerunt.*

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid.: *Non ergo sis cupidus, non avarus non ambiciosus, ne huius sciencie astronomie nobilitatem ignobilis pecunie cupiditas diffamet.*

⁷⁵⁷ Carey: *Courting Disaster*, p. 91.

⁷⁵⁸ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, prologue, fol. 1^{ra}: *Ista enim scientia astronomi tam nobilis est et tam alta, ut quotquot sibi inherent et eius fructus uberimos adquirunt, tot habent despicientes quot ipsam scientiam sunt ignorantes. Uideant autem omnes tales priusquam ipsam contempnant si aliqualem scintillam de ipsa possint apprehendere: quam si apprehendere possint si exinde emolumentum inueniant, cur eam contempnunt, si autem nullum emolumentum uel fructum reportent, hoc eorum ignorantie et ingeniorum eorum obtusitati imputandum est et non scientie cum multa miranda et pene incredibilia per ipsam scientiam presciantur.* While John

taken from Aristotle's "Politics", address the proper attitude of astrologers toward money more explicitly and show that the benefit astrology offers could also be of a financial nature.⁷⁵⁹ The first describes an astrologer (*astrologus*) who "out of love of philosophy and astrology despised all riches of this world and considered them of no value."⁷⁶⁰ However, when some "lovers of wealth" (*amatores diuitiarum*) reproached him that philosophy was "useless" (*inutile*), he decided to take action to convince them otherwise. Using his astrological knowledge, he was able to predict when the olive harvest would be particularly productive. During that year, he rented all the olive groves in the province, and when harvest time came, he was sought out by the entire population and made a great profit. The story's lesson is summarised as follows: "It is easy for philosophers to enrich themselves when they want to, but this is not what they strive for."⁷⁶¹ Similarly, the second story describes how an astrologer took all the iron in the province and made a great profit on the market.⁷⁶²

In John Ashenden's description of astrologers, we thus see that he wanted to portray them as modest philosophers who chose their simple life even though they could easily obtain wealth. The need to caution astrologers to renounce money indicates that

Ashenden writes here about the general benefit astrology could bring, the following stories he tells show that this also included material benefits.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid., fol. 1^{rb}. The two stories are based on the account by Aristotle. See Aristotle: Politics [Aristotle's Politics. Writings from the Complete Works: Politics, Economics, Constitution of Athens], ed. by Jonathan Barnes, with an introduction by Melissa Lane, Princeton / Oxford 2016, book 1, chap. 11, p. 19. While John Ashenden (see footnote 760) refers to the tenth chapter of Aristotle's "Politics", the stories appear in the modern edition in the eleventh chapter of the first book. John Ashenden generally follows Aristotle's account. However, it is noteworthy that John Ashenden employs those stories specifically to show the potential gain from astrology, and explicitly refers to the scholars as astrologers. In Aristotle's account, by contrast, the focus is on philosophy, which includes astrological knowledge among other things. Astrology only plays a role in the first story, in which the scholar, identified as Thales of Miletus, already knew in winter "by his skills in the stars" that the coming harvest would be fruitful. Both Aristotle and John Ashenden portray astrology as a part of philosophy, but they put a different emphasis.

⁷⁶⁰ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, prologue, fol. 1^{rb}: *Et aristotiles primo politicorum capitulo 10. refert de quodam astrologo qui amore philosophie et astronomie omnes diuitias mundi contempsit et pro nichilo habebat, [...]*.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid.: [...] *cui cum amatores diuitiarum exprobrassent et philosophiam tanquam inutilem reputassent quodam tempore pronosticavit per astronomiam ubertatem olivarum futuram et conduxit omnes olivetas illius provincie pro uno anno. Unde in tempore vindemie totus populus confluebat ad eum pro oleo redimendo ex quo ditissimus factus est ostendens quod philosophis facile est ditari si vellent: set non est hoc circa quod student.* While John Ashenden previously writes of *astrologi*, he here switches to *philosophi* and thus copies Aristotle's statement almost verbatim here. See Aristotle: Politics, ed. Barnes, book 1, chap. 11: "Thus he showed he world that philosophers can easily be rich if they like, but that their ambition is of another sort."

⁷⁶² John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, prologue, fol. 1^{rb}: *Et eodem capitulo refert aristotiles de quodam alio astrologo in cicilia qui reposito apud se nummismate: similiter ademit omne ferrum in illa prouincia, post hec autem advenerunt de nundinis mercatores et ipse solus uendebat eis ferrum nec multum faciens excessum precii, set tantum in 50 talentis super assumpsit centum.* It is not clear whether or how the scholar's astrological skills played a role in obtaining this profit. However, the denomination of the scholar as *astrologus*, the placement and context of the story in his *Summa* shows that the lesson behind it was clearly meant to be the same as in the first story.

astrologers have probably not always conformed to this ideal. One crucial aspect was the accusation of opponents that astrology had no financial benefit. It is evident from the insertion of stories in which astrologers demonstrated their ability to maximise profits and thus prove them wrong that John Ashenden himself was not indifferent to this reproach. The criticism must have been particularly vexing for an astrologer like John Ashenden, who, in all likelihood, did not make any money through his astrological work. However, the way he portrayed astrologers – and thus himself – in his text makes them appear even more morally outstanding and virtuous since they consciously choose not to use the benefits of astrology for themselves – even though they theoretically could.

4.3.3 The Misfortune of the Astrologer

While the astrologers discussed in the previous subchapter were mainly concerned with whether the discipline of astrology could be profitable – and from this, why the astrologer should avoid excessive wealth – an anonymous text, probably written between 1250 and 1350 in the environment of the University of Paris, provides additional information about the perception of the financial situation of astrologers themselves.⁷⁶³ The text can be classified as belonging to the genre of *Quaestiones*, in which various questions or statements are addressed by discussing affirmative and opposing arguments before coming to a conclusion.⁷⁶⁴ Although the text is thus not an introductory work by a well-known astrologer, the topics covered are similar and show the unknown author to be a proponent of astrology, if not an astrologer himself.⁷⁶⁵

In the context of the first question – whether astrology is a *scientia* – the author addresses the relationship of astrologers to wealth and fortune. He states that some people allege that astrology is not a *scientia* since all sciences are compatible with

⁷⁶³ Anonymous *quaestiones de astronomia* in CLM 14401, ed. by Søren Balle, in: *Cahiers de l'institut du Moyen Âge grec et latin*, Université de Copenhague 44 (1983), pp. 151–179. The text has received little attention so far. The most detailed discussion is found in the introduction to the edition. It was also mentioned by C. Philipp E. Nothaft in the context of another Parisian controversy about the value of astrology, see Nothaft: *Glorious Science or “Dead Dog”?*, p. 62, footnote 33.

⁷⁶⁴ About the text genre of *quaestiones*, see Brian Lawn: *The Rise and Decline of the Scholastic ‘Quaestio disputata’*. With Special Emphasis on its Use in the Teaching of Medicine and Science, Leiden / New York / Cologne 1993.

⁷⁶⁵ In contrast to the *Introductiones*, this text is much shorter (6 fols.) and accordingly does not go into detail about the various parts of astrology. However, it is similarly structured to introduce a novice to astrology and justify the discipline. In addition, the work was presumably written in the same environment and thus reflects the opinions with which the authors of the introductory works had to contend. The anonymous author analyses four questions in total: First, whether astrology is a *scientia*; second, whether astrology is nobler than *scientia naturalis* (“natural science”); third, whether *astronomia* and *astrologia* are the same; fourth, whether heaven is the cause of all things.

“good fortune” (*bona fortuna*), but astrology is not. As evidence, they would point out that all astrologers are “poor and destitute/beggarly” (*pauperes et mendici*).⁷⁶⁶ Thus we see here the culmination of the argument that astrology is not lucrative and the inversion of the ideal of poverty – the astrologer does not strive for this but is instead involuntarily poor because of his discipline. The author of the text, however, disagrees with this view which he finds “worthless, having no validity nor strength”.⁷⁶⁷ After all, he continues, it is certain that in antiquity, especially “rich and powerful men” (*homines diuites et potentes*) pursued astrology, such as “Ptolemy, who was chosen king of part of Egypt, the Roman emperor Julius Caesar, and many other nobles”.⁷⁶⁸

He admits, however, that times have changed: “As a result of the corruption of human nature through bad habits, few or even no powerful or rich men wanted to engage in astrology nowadays.” On the contrary, they would “completely abandon, reject, and abhor it”.⁷⁶⁹ This is, according to the author’s explanation, either because “they want to live idly and luxuriously” or because they prefer the “lucrative sciences” (*sciencie lucratiue*) to the “speculative sciences” (*sciencie speculatiue*). He goes on to say that the speculative sciences, which include astrology, do not have as their goal “the profit of worldly things” but rather “the contemplation of truth and the perfection of the rational soul”. In becoming more capable of recognising his miraculous workings, one becomes “more complete and more like God.”⁷⁷⁰ The author here, like the authors of the

⁷⁶⁶ Anonymous quaestiones, ed. Balle, p. 158: *Omnis sciencia compatitur se cum bona fortuna [...]. Sed astronomia non potest stare cum bona fortuna. Probacio: quia omnes astronomi et expedientes tempus suum in hac arte inueniuntur pauperes et mendici. Ergo uidetur quod astronomia non sit sciencia.* The author consistently employs the term *astronomia* in his explanations. He directly discusses his understanding of the term in the third *Quaestio*, in which he raises the question of whether *astrologia* and *astronomia* are the same *scientiae*. His conclusion is somewhat ambivalent, since he allows for three possibilities: either they can be seen as the same *scientia*, since they deal with the same matter, but for different reasons; or they are considered separate because of the aforementioned explanation; or they are seen as the same *scientia* but as different parts of it. In any case, he distinguishes between the two and uses the terms in reverse to current practice, i.e. he describes *astronomia* as concerned with predictive aspects and astrology with descriptive aspects. See Ibid., pp. 169–172. This understanding of the term is also evident in his earlier remarks, especially when he discusses the benefits of *astronomia* for kings. See below for this discussion. In the following subchapter, I use the term astrology throughout for the sake of clarity since what the author discusses under the term *astronomia* relates to judiciary astrology.

⁷⁶⁷ He adds that this argument was only invoked here to clarify a question that was raised because of those who exaggerate it. Ibid., p. 161: [...] *dicatur quod ista ratio friuola est et nullam habet efficaciam nec uigorem, nec est inducta nisi ad exponendum hic aliquid propter proteruientes.*

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid.: *Vnde certum est quod antiquo tempore dicuntur studuisse in astro<nomia> maxime homines diuites et potentes, sicut Ptholomeus, qui legitur fuisse rex vnus partis Egipti, et Iulius Cesar imperator Romanus, et alij nobiles multi.*

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid.: *Nunc uero propter deprauacione<m> nature humane ex mala consuetudine sic accidit quod pauci homines potentes siue diuites uel eciam nulli uolunt in hac sciencia laborare, sed penitus derelinquunt eam, respuunt et ab<h>orrent [...].*

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 161–162: [...] *uel quia uolunt ociose et delicate uiuere, uel quia magis placent eis sciencie lucratiue quam iste sciencie speculatiue, que non sunt propter lucrum rei temporalis, sed magis propter*

introductory works, thus takes up the question of what the true value of astrology is and emphasises that it lies not in worldly profit but in a better understanding of God's works. He continues with this theme and explains that, due to the current state of affairs, i.e. the lack of interest in astrology by influential men, he sees only two ways forward: Either astrology would disappear entirely or be revived and improved as much as possible by "poor and less powerful men" (*a pauperibus et minus potentibus*).⁷⁷¹ The text can thus be read as an appeal to scholars to preserve this discipline – even if this would initially involve neither money nor status. In conclusion, the author emphasises that the poverty of today's astrologers is by no means due to a "deficiency" (*defectus*) of astrology but merely to "the neglect of astrology by powerful men who did not care to honour the discipline".⁷⁷² To soften the blow, he adds that there were and are nevertheless many who are "honoured, celebrated and even enriched" through astrology.⁷⁷³

In the *Quaestiones*, we can recognise many elements already found in the texts discussed above. The author equally argues that the primary goal of an astrologer is not to become rich but to pursue nobler intellectual objectives, above all, to gain more understanding of God's work. At the same time, he also vehemently stresses that this does not mean that astrologers cannot or should not be wealthy or that the poverty of certain astrologers in any way diminishes the dignity or effectiveness of astrology. Again, the topic's discussion is prompted by the opponents' argument that astrology would be of no worldly use and should therefore be discarded. In this case, however, the criticism is exacerbated since it is aimed directly at the figure of the astrologer. While the author points out that astrology has higher aims than acquiring worldly wealth, he neither denies that astrologers were often poor nor explains this as a self-imposed decision to conform to a philosophical ideal. Instead, he believes that this state of affairs, i.e. the poverty of astrologers, should be changed. This becomes even more evident in later passages when the author presents astrology's "specific advantages"

speculationem veritatis et propter <per>fectionem anime rationalis; que tunc est perfectior et deo similior, cum suorum effectuum mirabilium per certam cognitionem est capacior.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid., p. 162: [...] non restat aliud nisi quod uel ipsa totaliter pereat uel a pauperibus et minus potentibus uiuificetur et, quantum est possibile, reformetur.

⁷⁷² Ibid.: Et sic breuiter patet quod, si astronomi hoc tempore sint pauperes, non est per defectum ipsius sciencie, sed potius per negligenciam ipsorum magnatum, qui non curant hanc scienciam honorare.

⁷⁷³ Ibid.: Uel posset <dici> diuersimode per negatiuam minoris: multi enim per hanc scienciam fuerunt et sunt honorificati, nobiles et ditati, [...].

(*speciales utilitates*) for universities, kings, and the Christian religion.⁷⁷⁴ He addresses those areas individually and describes the benefits that astrology, or the presence and advice of astrologers, can bring to each.

Concerning the university, he lists the “reputation” (*fama*) generated by astrology as advantageous.⁷⁷⁵ He explains that having *fama* means that even people in remote areas would talk about something with praise.⁷⁷⁶ A university like Paris, he continues, is accustomed to having *fama* in distant places because “there are excellent teachers there and study and learning flourishes in every faculty.” This, he says, results in many people seeking out the university “moved by the intention of hearing astrology or another discipline”.⁷⁷⁷ However, should their expectations of finding this discipline there be disappointed, “it would not only be their loss”, presumably meaning that it would also be detrimental to the university.⁷⁷⁸

According to the author, astrology and its famous teachers thus contribute to the *fama* of a university. It is remarkable that Paris is described as an example of a major centre of astrology. Although we do not know exactly when the text was written, the University of Paris was heavily shaped, especially in the thirteenth century, by the discussions about and the interdictions of Aristotle’s natural philosophical texts and, in this context, also the condemnation of certain astrological propositions.⁷⁷⁹ Yet, the prohibitions also testify to a lively discussion of these topics. The emphasis on *fama* for astrological studies at the University of Paris and the possible disappointment of scholars if they were not to find astrological teachings there, may constitute an appeal by the author that astrologers should, in his view, have a permanent place in universities

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 163: *Post hoc eciam est [[intelligendum dli]] diligenter considerandum quod astronomia non tantum est sciencia, ymo precipue inter alias est ad quasdam speciales utilitates ordinata. Ipsa enim est oportuna et conueniens ad laudem et famam studij generalis. Confert ad excellenciam monarchie regalis. Est eciam specialiter ordinata ad cognitionem et contemplacionem creatoris. Preterea confert multum ad laudem Christiane religionis*

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid.: *Primo quidem confert ad famam studij generalis.*

⁷⁷⁶ Following Aristotle, he distinguishes here between *fama* (“reputation”) and *honor* (“honour, high esteem”), which he applies more to people who are present. Ibid.: *Ad cuius euidentiam intelligendum est quod differencia est inter honorem et famam, sicut innuitur in primo Rethorice. Honor enim exhibetur presentibus: presentes enim honoramus assurgendo eis uel capucium deponendo et huiusmodi, quod non contingit sic facere pro absentibus. Fama uero est magis de rebus absentibus, ut, cum aliquis est bonus clericus et non tantum in locis propinquis sed in remotis fit de ipso frequens mencio cum laude, hoc solet dici fam[m]a. Vnde proprie fama est frequens de aliquo noticia cum laude.*

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.: *Contingit igitur quod de aliquo studio generali, ut de studio Parysiensi, solet esse fama in longinquis partibus, quod ibi sunt excellentes doctores et floret studium et doctrina in qualibet facultate; [[vel]] vnde multi, moti intencione audiendi astro<nomiam> vel aliam scienciam, ad tale studium solent toto conamine peruenire.*

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid.: *Si igitur non inueniant ibi hanc scienciam quam peroptant †in secundo scribitur† spes eorum et erit non tantum ipsorum dampnum.*

⁷⁷⁹ See Chapter 2.1.2.

in general and at the University of Paris in particular, which in turn would provide the university with further *fama*. Although astrology is thus described as not particularly lucrative at present, it seems to have been enticing enough – at least according to the anonymous author – for scholars to be drawn to specific universities offering its instruction.

The incentives that astrology can offer are made even more explicit by the author in his discussion of astrologers in the service of kings, to which he devotes considerably more space than to the description of the benefits for universities. As described before, he criticises the current situation, claiming that many powerful men would not appreciate the advantages of consulting astrologers and that many astrologers were impoverished as a result. Presumably for this reason, he seems to consider it even more important to emphasise the advantages of astrological advice for kings in particular. In detail, he sets out how astrology could contribute to the “excellence of a royal monarchy”, especially in three areas: astrology could make a king “richer in the abundance of worldly things, more fortunate in victories, and more blessed in the succession of his natural heirs”.⁷⁸⁰ This advertisement of astrology was likely directly addressed to the previously mentioned rulers who showed themselves opposed to astrology. The author here portrays the astrologer as the ideal advisor to the king in all aspects of life – whether concerning material matters, military conflicts or personal affairs: Through the “guidance of astrology” and God willing, a king could be “glorious in all things”.⁷⁸¹ He thus tries to convey in his discussion the argument that – even though astrologers were at his time, through no fault of their own, poor – they actually should have a place among the powerful and wealthy.

Although we do not know anything precise about the circumstances of the text’s composition, given its genre of *Quaestiones* and the reference to the University of Paris, it can likely be placed in a university context. All the more remarkable is the author’s strong emphasis on the astrologer’s role as royal advisor. It shows an effort to portray the astrologer not only as a university scholar but also as a potentially influential player in the court environment, which would entail both status and wealth.

⁷⁸⁰ Anonymous quaestiones, ed. Balle, p. 163: <Confert etiam ista> *sciencia ad excellenciam monarchie regalis, et specialiter in hiis tribus, ut rex sit in habundancia rerum temporalium copiosior, et in uictorijs fortunacior, et in successione sui naturalis heredis felicior*. As an example for material benefits through astrological counsel, the author mentions the prediction of the harvest of the coming year.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., p. 165: *Et sic rex per directionem astronomie, nutu dei tamen non resistente, poterit esse in omnibus gloriosus*.

Lastly, the author describes the religious benefits of astrology. Here he first points out that astrology could contribute to the recognition of God.⁷⁸² Furthermore, astrology would also lead to the praise and glory of the Christian religion because the sun was the planetary signifier of Christianity, showing its superiority to Judaism and Islam.⁷⁸³ The inclusion of the religious element as a use of astrology supports the claim that its most significant objective is not the accumulation of wealth but that it has a higher, more noble function. It also emphasises astrology's conformity with the Christian religion.⁷⁸⁴

In conclusion, what can be deduced from the discussions about the astrologers' appropriate relationship to wealth and income in terms of how they wanted to present their activity and thus themselves as astrologers? The texts analysed here come from different temporal and institutional contexts and approach the issue of wealth from different angles. Nevertheless, common features and concerns can be discerned. Firstly, it is crucial to notice that wealth and the associated status were issues that preoccupied the astrologers frequently enough to address them directly in their works. In their discussions, they drew heavily upon statements by classical or Arabic authorities. However, this does not mean their deliberations should be dismissed as merely repeating outdated stereotypes. On the contrary, the astrologers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries decidedly chose specific passages and often combined and commented on them to adapt them to fit their contemporary agenda. The most explicit example of this represents John of Saxony's text, in which he cites the ideal of philosophical poverty as advocated by (Pseudo-)Ptolemy and Aristotle, comments on this, and finally uses Albumasar's assertions to underpin his own opinion.

⁷⁸² Ibid.: *Preterea astronomia confert ad cognitionem summi creatoris.*

⁷⁸³ Ibid.: *Conferretur etiam astronomia ad laudem et gloriam Cristiane religionis, quod specialiter declaratur ex parte sui significatoris.* He explains that the three "main religions" (*sectae siue leges principales*), i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam have individual planetary signifiers that would indicate the characteristics of the followers of each religion. Christianity is assigned the Sun, Judaism Saturn, and Islam Mars. This seems to have been a simplified version of linking religions with planets, building on Albumasar's comments on the predictability of religions through conjunctions. For a more detailed explanation, see Chapter 3.3.1 and 5.3.2.

⁷⁸⁴ The compatibility of astrology and Christianity is directly addressed in several sections of the text, because as a second reason why astrology is not a *scientia*, the author lists the argument that it is forbidden under Christian law. See Anonymous quaestiones, ed. Balle, p. 158: *Item, nulla sciencia est prohibita in lege, precipue si sit optima. [...] Sed astronomia est prohibita in lege, et etiam optima, scilicet in lege christiana.* See for his rejoinder in which he argues that while magic and nigromancy are prohibited, the same is not true for astrology: Ibid., p. 162. The argument he makes here is that it is often falsely claimed that certain nigromantic or magical books are concerned with astrology. As an aid, he refers to the *Speculum astronomiae*, attributed to Albertus Magnus, in which the author distinguishes the 'right' from the 'wrong' books.

Secondly, in all the texts, the authors tried to reconcile different and sometimes contradictory demands and convey that astrologers could satisfy them all. On the one hand, the astrologers placed themselves firmly in the tradition of the ancient philosophers, who propagated the renunciation of worldly goods to devote themselves entirely to intellectual pursuits. Their self-inclusion in the group of philosophers showed them as morally superior and bestowed legitimacy to their discipline. The renunciation of secular matters was also in line with the Christian ideal, as can be seen, for example, in the references to Christian prophets and hermits, whose withdrawal from the world aided them in discerning the future. In the texts discussed here, however, it is primarily the views of the ancient philosophers that are cited as the rationale for renouncing wealth.

On the other hand, astrologers had to present their activity as a new, independent, and burgeoning discipline in order to advertise their services and themselves to potential clients. This included proving themselves capable advisors in worldly matters and knowing how to interact with high-ranking people, as is particularly evident in Michael Scot's text. Given the social context in which the latter operated, namely the court of Emperor Frederick II, this emphasis is hardly surprising. Yet, astrologers working in a university setting also underlined astrology's tangible and material benefits. The astrologers examined here did not consider their activity a purely intellectual task limited to the university context but tried to advertise themselves and their skills outside the university. In this respect, they resembled physicians and lawyers who, as university-educated scholars, also offered their services in return for payment or patronage.

A third observation from analysing the astrologers' texts is how strongly their self-fashioning was informed by the criticism they received. While the authors' diverse geographical, temporal, and institutional contexts naturally impacted the way they discussed the issues or the priorities they set, the discourse was consistently triggered or influenced by the assertion that astrology was not lucrative. Even Michael Scot's explanations as to why a poor man would not be able to study astrology could be interpreted as a reaction to the image of astrology as not lucrative or of the astrologer as destitute. Through his deliberations, he paints a counter-image of the astrologer as a wealthy intellectual of the higher classes who is not dependent on earning money but could very well do so once he has mastered astrology.

As for the criticism of astrologers, the mention of voluntarily renouncing wealth, the ‘false’ money-hungry astrologers, and the general warnings against focusing too much on money show that there was also a concern to portray the astrologer as not exclusively interested in profit. However, it is revealing that the main objection to astrology is not that astrologers would enrich themselves too much through their discipline, as was the case with the ‘lucrative sciences’ of medicine and law, but, on the contrary, that astrology would not enable such enrichment at all and would therefore have no value. This finding is all the more remarkable given the close connection between astrology and medicine and the frequent cases of practitioners pursuing both activities.⁷⁸⁵ Unlike medicine, astrology, therefore, seems to have had a reputation for being financially unprofitable.

A revealing insight into how this reputation was directly solidified and exploited by the opponents of astrology can be found in Nicole Oresme’s *Livre de Divinacions* (written c. 1361–1365). He devoted one chapter to showing that experience would show that all people who practised astrology or listened to the advice of astrologers would “come to a bad end and have evil fortune in this world”.⁷⁸⁶ Although he does not refer specifically to profit here but to worldly success as a whole, he echoes almost literally the statement made in the anonymous *Quaestiones* when he writes that “all, who by astrology or such arts strive to know the future, are unfortunate.”⁷⁸⁷ Nicole Oresme presents this misfortune as God’s punishment for those who practise astrology and try to penetrate fortune’s secrets.⁷⁸⁸ The misfortune of astrologers is thus directly framed as a sign that astrology is contrary to God’s will – astrology is, in fact, the cause of bad fortune. Nicole Oresme’s statements show that the image of the unfortunate astrologer was still prevalent in the late fourteenth century and was used as an opposing argument against astrology.

⁷⁸⁵ It is important to keep in mind that medicine formed a subfield of astrology, and *vice versa*. Many astrologers also served simultaneously as physicians. We can see in the texts of the astrologers that while on the one hand they took advantage of this overlap to promote their discipline, on the other hand they also tried to distinguish themselves from medicine in order to emphasise the exceptional nature of their own discipline. For this aspect, see Chapter 5.1.

⁷⁸⁶ Nicole Oresme: *Livre de Divinacions*, ed. Coopland, chap. 8, p. 70 (English translation, p. 71): [...] *je veuil moustrer evidaument mon propos principal, premierement, par experience at par induction du temps passe. Et dy que les princes ou autres qui on mis leur entente a telles choses ont fait mauvaïse fin, ou ont este mal fortune temporellement.*

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, chap. 8, p. 72, p. 74 (English translation: p. 73, p. 75): [...] *tous ceulx qui par astrologie ou par tieulx ars s’efforcent de savoir les fortunes a avenir sont infortunez.*

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 74: *Et bien en avons veu en nostre temps de tielx tout aussi comme se fortune se combatist aigrement contre ceulx qui folement s’efforcent de savoir ses secrez. Mais a parler veritablement c’est une raison que Dieu face punicion de tieulx gens.*

While the view of the astrologer as unfortunate was a key impetus for astrologers' preoccupation with wealth and the profitability of astrology, another reason for this concern, at least in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, was most likely that astrology had not yet established itself as a profession and was often still regarded merely as part of the seven liberal arts and a purely intellectual pursuit. The authors' exploration of the issue of money and profit thus indicates a desire to move towards a firmer definition of the astrologer as a representative of an activity that was gradually becoming a profession. This involved trying to balance maintaining the higher intellectual value of astrology independent of material gain while at the same time showing that worldly profit could nevertheless be achieved through the discipline. The astrologer had to embody the ideal between two extremes: he had to convey that he was able to create wealth through the practice of his discipline yet did not consider this essential for himself, instead employing his skills for the profit of his clients, whom he could thereby advise appropriately on worldly matters.

The analyses in Chapter 4 have shown how extensively and in depth the authors covered various facets of being an astrologer in their introductory works, besides addressing questions of astrological theory. Those range from the required intellectual prerequisites and qualities to moral disposition and daily behaviour to the practical considerations of having and earning money. It is also particularly noteworthy that those demands go beyond the mere need to acquire the necessary astrological skills but describe a specific persona and thus create a social role for the astrologer.

A form of group identity is created through the references to time and experience, that is, as in the origin stories, through a group identity over time. Moreover, the descriptions of what constitutes an astrologer also establish a bond between the author and the reader, as the aspiring astrologer is initiated into what it means to be a representative of the group of astrologers. However, there are no calls for contemporary astrological cooperation. The ideal astrologer is depicted as an exceptional individual scholar who builds on his predecessors' work but operates alone and focuses on his relationship with his clients. Nevertheless, by defining how such an individual should be and conduct himself, the group of astrologers – meaning the collective of individual practitioners – assumes a clearer shape.

5 Comparison with Other Activities and their Representatives

In order to establish their activity as a legitimate and distinct occupation and to strengthen their standing as a group, astrologers not only emphasised their existence over time and laid down specific rules of conduct, but they also defined their role in relation to other fields and their exponents, thus meeting the third defining feature of groups according to Oexle.⁷⁸⁹ However, such comparisons presented astrologers with a challenge. On the one hand, the frequent criticism of their discipline compelled them to point out similarities with groups recognised as established professions, thereby claiming the same recognition for their own pursuit. On the other hand, as astrologers sought to assert their place as a distinct group in medieval society, they needed to distinguish themselves from practitioners of other occupations. The introductory texts reflect the authors' attempts to strike a balance between conformity with prevailing norms and the need to stand out. The groups or disciplines that astrologers chose to illustrate differences or similarities with their own activity, and the features they considered significant in this context, provide valuable information about the astrologers' self-image. These comparisons covered both the disciplines and their representatives.⁷⁹⁰ Moreover, they included firmly established groups, such as physicians, as well as more loosely defined ones, such as the practitioners of various 'occult sciences'.⁷⁹¹

The following discussion examines three types of practitioners and disciplines with which astrologers have most often sought to draw comparisons. The most significant field is medicine, as astrological considerations were often incorporated into medical practice, and a dual occupation as astrologer and physician became increasingly common. It is particularly revealing to see whether and how the authors of the introductory works distinguished between the two roles and which they selected as their

⁷⁸⁹ See Chapter 1.4.2.

⁷⁹⁰ Since my interest is primarily in astrologers and not in astrology *per se*, I only address areas in this chapter where practitioners and their behaviour are at least occasionally mentioned. I have omitted comparisons where the discussion relates exclusively to the discipline, and no specific practitioners are mentioned. Such a comparison can be found, for example, in the anonymous *Quaestiones*, discussed above, where a comparison between astrology and *scientia naturalis* can be found. See Anonymous *quaestiones*, ed. Balle, pp. 167–169.

⁷⁹¹ The comparison with the practitioners of such 'occult sciences', who cannot necessarily be considered a coherent group, does not strictly follow Oexle's stipulation. However, since such comparisons occur frequently in the astrologers' texts and thus seem to have played an important role for them, their inclusion helps to shed further light on the astrologers' self-image.

primary identification. The second area of comparison is that of theology and theologians. Given the fraught relationship between theologians and astrologers, the question arises as to how astrologers sought to reinterpret this relationship in favourable terms. The third section focuses on practitioners of ‘occult sciences’ and prophets, i.e. individuals who claimed to offer knowledge about the future or to reveal hidden truths. The discussions of practitioners in fields such as alchemy and geomancy reveal a more nuanced attitude on the part of astrologers than a simple rejection of controversial disciplines. Comparisons with prophets posed a different problem for astrologers. Prophets claimed a certain God-given knowledge about the future and thus constituted serious competitors for interpretive sovereignty over the future. In the final section, therefore, I will examine how astrological writers distinguished between these different ways of accessing the future and what they believed separated or united the members of each group.

5.1 Competitors and Partners in Crime – Physicians

The most closely connected group or discipline was undoubtedly that of medicine. The thematic link between astrology and medicine in the form of astrological medicine – iatromathematics – had already existed in antiquity and gained wider recognition in the European West through the translations of Greek and Arabic texts on the subject in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁷⁹² Based on the premise of a correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm, astrological medicine explored how the stars and planets affected the human body. It included the assignment of each part of the body to a sign of the zodiac, and each ‘opening’ of the body to a planet.⁷⁹³ This was especially important for the practice of bloodletting (*flebotomia*) and surgery (*cirurgia*) but also

⁷⁹² Siraisi: *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 16. See for an overview of astrological medicine in the Middle Ages: Luis García Ballester: *Astrologische Medizin*, in: *LexMA* 1 (1980), col. 1145; Roger French: *Astrology in Medical Practice*, in: Luis García Ballester et al. (eds.): *Practical Medicine from Salerno to the Black Death*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 30–59; Monica Azzolini: *Reading Health in the Stars. Politics and Medical Astrology in Renaissance Milan*, in: Günther Oestmann / H. Darrel Rutkin / Kocku von Stuckrad (eds.): *Horoscopes and Public Spheres (Religion and Society 42)*, Berlin / New York 2005, pp. 183–205. On various aspects of astrological medicine from various time periods and regions: Anna Akasoy / Charles Burnett / Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (eds.): *Astro-Medicine. Astrology and Medicine, East and West*, Florence 2008. While specific texts or problems have received attention from researchers, there is no comprehensive study on medieval medical astrology. For this assessment and references to further research: Azzolini: *Reading Health in the Stars*, p. 187; also: Danielle Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, p. 121.

⁷⁹³ This idea was often illustrated by drawings of the so-called *homo signorum* or “zodiac man”. On this: Azzolini: *Reading Health in the Stars*, p. 187. See for a detailed study on this: Wolfgang Hübner: *Körper und Kosmos. Untersuchungen zur Ikonographie der zodiakalen Melothese (Gratia. Tübinger Schriften zur Renaissanceforschung und Kulturwissenschaft 4)*, Wiesbaden 2013.

for determining the days on which a crisis of disease was to be expected. In addition, the administration of medications was also adapted to the celestial conditions.⁷⁹⁴

The practice of astrological medicine reached its zenith in the West from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, when it became increasingly entrenched in universities and belonged to standard practice at court.⁷⁹⁵ In the astrological texts of the thirteenth and especially the fourteenth century, it was customary to claim that a competent physician must necessarily also possess astrological knowledge.⁷⁹⁶ The increased entwining of astrology and medicine also meant that scholars were often simultaneously acting in the roles of astrologer and physician. The scholars under study here showed varying degrees of interest in medical topics. Although they all affirmed the usefulness of astrology for medical concerns, not all were practising physicians. Accordingly, attitudes towards the medical profession and its practitioners were bound to vary.⁷⁹⁷

In the following analysis, I have categorised the astrologers studied into three groups according to the extent of their interest in medicine, in order to better contextualise their statements about medicine and physicians.⁷⁹⁸ The first section examines the attitudes of ‘full-time’ astrologers, scholars whose main interest was astrology and for whom there is no evidence that they also practised medicine. The second section deals with more ambivalent cases: scholars who, although known primarily as astrologers, also showed a strong interest in medical topics and may even have practised as physicians. Finally, the focus is on scholars who were at least as concerned with medicine as with astrology and, in some cases, are better known for their medical than their astrological works.

⁷⁹⁴ Burnett: *Astrology*, p. 376; Azzolini: *Reading Health in the Stars*, pp. 187–188 (particularly on the theory of “critical days”). See for this also: Glen M. Cooper: *Approaches to the Critical Days in Late Medieval and Renaissance Thinkers*, in: *Early Science and Medicine* 18 (2013), pp. 536–565.

⁷⁹⁵ García Ballester: *Astrologische Medizin*, col. 1145; Siraisi: *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 16. In the fourteenth century, the relation between astrology and medicine was strengthened by the outbreak of the Black Death of 1348, which was attributed to the 1345 conjunction between Jupiter, Saturn and Mars. See on this Jacquot: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, p. 123. On the medieval theories for the outbreak of the plague: Campbell: *The Black Death and Men of Learning*, pp. 34–92.

⁷⁹⁶ See below for examples.

⁷⁹⁷ As Siraisi: *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 36, has pointed out: “Not all astrologers were *medici*, but many *medici* practiced astrology.”

⁷⁹⁸ The classification is loosely based on that of Monica Azzolini, who distinguished different “professional categories” and assigned different terms (“physician/doctor” – “astrologer” – “physician-astrologer”) to scholars according to their “main field of competence”. As Azzolini points out, these classifications are “somewhat artificial” as the scholars “operated in multiple intellectual spheres and occupied different social roles.” Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars*, pp. 19–20. Nevertheless, such a classification allows to better assess the varying stances towards medicine. The astrologers I examine in the following are merely an exemplary selection to illustrate different points of view.

5.1.1 ‘Full-Time’ Astrologers – Demonstrating the Superiority of Astrologers

Medical topics appear in one form or another in all introductory texts on astrology examined here. However, interest in them varied, and not all astrologers were also practising physicians. Some scholars can indeed be described as full-time astrologers, who were interested more or less exclusively in astrological topics. This was the case, for example, with Guido Bonatti († 1296/7), who achieved renown as an astrological advisor to several Italian rulers, most notably Guido I da Montefeltro.⁷⁹⁹ Although it cannot be ruled out that Guido Bonatti also attended his patrons as a physician, there are no records of this, and, as far as we know, he did not compose any medical works.

Medicine nevertheless features in his main work, the *Liber astronomiae*. In several instances, he explores issues that fall within the scope of medical astrology, such as possible future pregnancies, the course of an illness, the chances of recovery and the timing for administering remedies.⁸⁰⁰ The way Guido Bonatti approaches these issues is strictly astrological, i.e. he does not describe a physical examination of the patient or devote much time to the analysis of bodily fluids. Instead, he explains how a question relating to a person’s health can be answered based on the position and movement of the heavenly bodies. Notably, in most cases involving medical questions, he describes how the astrologer does not give the answer directly to the patient but to the attending physician. This can be seen, for example, in multiple passages in the seventh treatise (“On Elections”) of the *Liber astronomiae*.⁸⁰¹ Advising how to “elect” the best hour for various medical procedures, Guido Bonatti begins his instructions with the words: “if you [i.e. the astrologer] wished to elect the hour for someone wishing to heal a sick person, [...]”⁸⁰² Clearly, he is presenting the astrologer not as a medical practitioner but

⁷⁹⁹ For more biographical information on Guido Bonatti, see Chapter 2.1.1.

⁸⁰⁰ For examples, see below.

⁸⁰¹ “Elections” were one of the four main types of astrological practice (along with “revolutions”, “nativities”, and “interrogations”) and were used to determine the most auspicious time to commence an enterprise or activity. See Rutkin: *Astrology*, pp. 543–544.

⁸⁰² Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 7, On the Sixth House, chap. 1, col. 448: *Cvm uolueris eligere horam alicui uolenti mederi alicui aegroto* [...]. Equally, *ibid.*, chap. 5, col. 449: *Cvm uolueris eligere horam alicui uolenti mederi oculis*, [...]. *Ibid.*, chap. 6, col. 450: *Cvm uolueris eligere horam alicui uolenti mederi alicui alteri parti corporis*. This becomes particularly clear when it comes to the question of choosing the ideal hour for bloodletting – the astrologer does not determine this to carry it out himself or to inform the patient, but for someone wishing to perform it on a patient, i.e. for a physician. See *ibid.*, chap. 8, col. 451: *Cvm uolueris eligere horam alicui uolenti celebrare flebothomiam ad hoc utilem*, [...]. There are also other cases in which Bonatti seems to describe how the astrologer directly advises a patient, for example: *Ibid.*, chap. 3, col. 449, where he explains how to choose the right hour for medicine used for the head: *Si quidem uolueris eligere horam ad aliquod medicamen*

as an astrological consultant to a physician who wishes to incorporate astrological expertise into his medical practice.

There are also passages in Guido Bonatti's work where the astrologer is consulted directly by a sick person. In these cases, however, the physician himself becomes the subject of the astrological enquiry. Answers are given on whether a consultation with a physician would be helpful or perhaps even harmful for the patient from an astrological point of view. Guido Bonatti clearly distinguishes between the astrologer, to whom he addresses his advice directly in the second person ("you should see, consider, etc."), and the physician, to whom he refers separately as *medicus*.⁸⁰³ The astrologer and the physician are thus depicted as two separate figures or roles.

Guido Bonatti not only differentiates between the two activities but also comments on the difference in value between them. In the first treatise of the *Liber astronomiae*, he declares that the "occupation of the stars and their works" is "nobler and more perfect" than all other occupations, including that of the physician, which is itself "one of the terrestrial world's more noble occupations."⁸⁰⁴ He further elaborates on this comparison to explain how the work of physicians differs from that of astrologers. For him, the difference in value lies in the nature of the objects with which the two types of scholars are concerned. Whereas "the physician (*medicus*) deals with the inferior, corruptible, and mutable bodies, the astrologer (*astrologus*) studies the operations of the supercelestial bodies, which are neither corruptible nor changeable, since they themselves act in the inferior, corruptible bodies with which the physician is occupied."⁸⁰⁵ Guido Bonatti thus establishes a clear hierarchy based on the scholars'

uniuersaliter capiti adhibendum [...]. Nevertheless, the focus here is still exclusively on the astrological matter, i.e. giving information about the best moment to take the medicine according to the stars, not on which medicine should be given.

⁸⁰³ For example, in the fifth treatise of his *Liber astronomiae*, in which Guido Bonatti lists 146 "considerations" (*considerationes*) that he believes to be significant for astrological judgements, he discusses under the 68th consideration how an astrologer can determine whether it is advisable for a sick person to seek the care of a physician. Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 5, consideratio 68, col. 185. See for similar discussions: *Ibid.*, treatise 6, On the Sixth House, chap. 1, cols. 250–253; *ibid.*, treatise 7, On the Sixth House, chap. 17, col. 456.

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, treatise 1, chap. 1, col. 1: *Et sic earum operationes sunt nobilissimae atque perfectissimae caeteris operationibus omnium magisteriorum quae sunt in hoc mundo, licet magisterium medicorum sit de nobilibus, immo de nobilioribus magisteriis mundi terrestres, tamen magisterium stellarum et earum opera sunt nobilissima, et excedunt omnia alia magisteria et omnes alias operationes.*

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid.*: *Medicus enim intromittit se de corporibus inferioribus et corruptibilibus et alterationem suscipientibus et similibus. Astrologus uero intromittit se de operationibus supercoelestium corporum quae non corrumpuntur nec alterantur; ipsa enim agunt in inferiora corpora corruptibilia, de quibus medicus se intromittit.* Guido Bonatti takes this idea from Albumasar's "Great Introduction". See for the corresponding passage: Abū Ma'shar: *The Great Introduction*, vol. 1, ed. Yamamoto / Burnett, part 1, chap. 2, pp. 68–71. As Charles Burnett has pointed out, although Ptolemy already uses astrology as an

objects of study, a hierarchy in which medical practitioners rank below astrologers. This classification is also consistent with the passages described above in which the astrologer advises the physician. The astrologer is ultimately shown to have an additional level of knowledge that goes beyond the physician's expertise.⁸⁰⁶

Guido Bonatti's assessment of medicine as inferior to astrology is also evident in some side remarks in the *Liber astronomiae*. In his eighth treatise ("On Revolutions"),⁸⁰⁷ when discussing planetary influences on different climes and the people living there, he refers to an opinion expressed by Avicenna which he does not share, explaining that Avicenna "did not speak as an astrologer, but as a physician and was therefore deceived in his opinion."⁸⁰⁸ Similarly, in the sixth treatise on interrogations, Guido Bonatti remarks that physicians are sometimes mistaken in predicting a future crisis in an illness as they have predicted it "according to the medical art" (*secundum medicinam*) and failed to include astrological considerations.⁸⁰⁹

While he attributes superior knowledge to astrologers, he also shows high regard for medicine and its practitioners. Medicine, after all, is one of the "nobler professions of the terrestrial world".⁸¹⁰ The ranking of astrology as superior even to this "noble" discipline underlines the high esteem in which it should be held. Guido Bonatti also explicitly points out similarities between astrological and medical practice, most notably in the ninth chapter of the first treatise. Here, he presents arguments against those who maintain that foreknowledge of future events through astrology would be harmful since

example for comparison of different types of prognoses, he does not yet make a value judgement regarding astrology and medicine. The classification of astrology as a discipline superior to medicine developed later through Arabic texts, especially Albumasar's "Great Introduction". See Charles Burnett: Doctors versus Astrologers: Medical and Astrological Prognosis Compared, in: Kathrin Bauer / Alexander Fidora (eds.): *Die mantischen Künste und die Epistemologie prognostischer Wissenschaften im Mittelalter*, Cologne 2013, pp. 101–112, esp. pp. 102–107.

⁸⁰⁶ This additional knowledge can also be seen in the topics covered by the astrologers, for example, when Guido Bonatti discusses how to determine whether an absent person will be taken ill, which is clearly a matter that lies beyond the expertise of physicians. See Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 6, On the Sixth House, chap. 3, col. 258: *Vtrum aliquis absens infirmabitur*. The later case of Ambrogio Varesi da Rosate, Ludovico Maria Sforza's astrologer, suggests that such an advisory function of astrologers towards medical practitioners occasionally existed, at least in the fifteenth century, seeing that Varesi appears to have directed a team of physicians in his capacity as astrologer. See Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars*, pp. 167–209, esp. p. 202.

⁸⁰⁷ "Revolutions" concern predictions that relate to major changes and are predicted from the planet that is most important in the astrological chart when the sun enters Aries, i.e. at the beginning of the astrological year. See Burnett: *Astrology*, p. 375.

⁸⁰⁸ Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 8, chap. 7, col. 503: [...], *licet Avicenna uideatur aliud uelle dicere. Nam ipse ponit maiorem temperiem sub circulo aequalitatis quam alibi: ipse tamen non fuit locutus tanquam Astrologus, sed tanquam medicus et ob hoc fuit deceptus in opinione sua.*

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid., treatise 6, On the Sixth House, chap. 3, col. 257: *Et in hoc decipiuntur quandoque medici, quia cum predixerint crisim futuram in die cretico secundum medicinam, euenit crisis aliter quam ipsi dicant, quod accidit propter coniunctionem Lunae cum Planetis in illis diebus [...].*

⁸¹⁰ See footnote 804.

it would cause grief and worry for a person to learn about their future.⁸¹¹ The gist of his reasoning follows the dictum from (Pseudo-)Ptolemy's *Centiloquium*, which he also quotes directly: "The best astrologer is able to avert many evils that will happen according to the stars."⁸¹² To support this claim, he cites various examples where knowledge of future events would be beneficial. He repeatedly refers to physicians who, like astrologers, predict future events. With regard to universal phenomena that affect people regardless of climate or region, he points out that while these can be recognised in their entirety only by astrologers, parts of them can also be known by "experienced physicians" (*periti medici*).⁸¹³ Physicians are thus portrayed as scholars who, like astrologers, have access to parts of the knowledge of the future, albeit on a lower level.

After providing a range of examples of what specifically an astrologer can know beforehand and why this could be useful, Guido Bonatti again invokes a comparison with medical practitioners. He first explains how beneficial the prediction of future illnesses by physicians can be since it enables people to prepare for changing conditions and, in this way, possibly avert illness altogether.⁸¹⁴ Having established that physicians' knowledge of future events is legitimate and valuable, Guido Bonatti then extrapolates that this also applies to the work of astrologers: "Just as an experienced physician can save the bodies of people from the threatening diseases mentioned above, so can the astrologer avert many terrible things that are to come according to what the stars indicate."⁸¹⁵ Such comparison between medicine and astrology to validate astrological predictions was not new but derived from Ptolemy, who, in the third chapter of his *Tetrabiblos* (*Quadrupartitum*), also invoked the work of physicians as an analogy in

⁸¹¹ Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 1, chap. 9, col. 9: *Contra illos qui dixerunt, quod scientia stellarum non est utilis, sed potius damnosa eo quod inducit tristitiam et angustiam illis qui praesciuerunt accidentia futura, unde tristantur illa de causa antequam eueniat eis impedimentum.*

⁸¹² *Ibid.*, col. 10: *Ait enim Ptolemaeus in Centiloquio: Astrologus optimus multa mala potest auertere, que secundum stellas uentura sunt.*

⁸¹³ *Ibid.*, col. 11: *Alia uero uniuersalia, quae uniuersaliter eueniunt, uniuersis cuiuslibet climatis, uel cuiuslibet regionis, quaedam possunt euitari, quaedam non possunt euitari: possunt tamen eorum effectus diminui uel alterari taliter, quod poterit esse utilitas eorum qui praesciuerunt illa. Non possunt sciri, nisi a peritis huius scientiae omnia: quaedam tamen ex eis possunt sciri a peritis medicis [...].*

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*, cols. 12–13: *Similiter et periti medici, quando uident in uno tempore anni corruptionem aeris, per aliquam mutationem ipsius de uno esse in aliud, per aliquos uentus notos, uel per pluuiam multam, uel quacunque alia occasione, praedicunt pestes futuras, ut quartanas febres, acutas, dolores capitis, grauedinem auditus, lippitudines, et similia: unde possunt homines parare se ad expellendum accidentia illa futura nociua pharmacis, dietis, contrariis causis, ex quibus accidentia illa nociua sunt futura: quod si non praecauerent, sibi possent cadere in aegritudines et morbos pestiferos, et similes. [...] Et sic utilissima est praescientia futurorum accidentium.*

⁸¹⁵ *Ibid.*, col. 13: *Quoniam sicut peritus medicus potest praeseruare corpora hominum a morbis imminetibus supradictis, sic etiam Astrologus potest auertere multa horribilia futura, quae secundum significata stellarum uentura sunt [...].*

discussing the benefits of astrology.⁸¹⁶ The inclusion of this idea in Guido Bonatti's text shows the continuing importance of the argument and the attempt by astrologers to present themselves as an equally legitimate group of prognosticators alongside physicians. Overall, his remarks reveal that he presents the activity of the astrologer as a distinct occupation, closely related to the medical profession but superior to it. While he uses the similarities between medicine and astrology to underline the legitimacy of astrologers, he highlights the differences – especially concerning the shortcomings of medical practitioners – to show the exceptionality of the astrologer's occupation.

The example of Guido Bonatti shows that in his working context, i.e. at the Italian court of the thirteenth century, a comparison between the role of the astrologer and that of the physician was considered a significant topic of discussion. In the English university context, by contrast, demarcation from medical practitioners does not seem to have been a pressing concern for astrologers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This is reflected, for example, in the discussion of physicians – or rather the lack of it – by the English astrologer John Ashenden. He was active at the University of Oxford in the mid-fourteenth century and can equally be considered a 'full-time' astrologer in the sense that his interest was exclusively in astrology. In his *Summa*, he, too, addressed matters concerning medical astrology. The question that occupied him most in this area was how celestial bodies influenced the outbreak of epidemics. Given that the *Summa* was written shortly after the first outbreak of the Black Death, this interest is not surprising. Like many scholars, John Ashenden attributed the outbreak of the plague to the occurrence of a lunar eclipse and the conjunction of the three superior planets in March 1345.⁸¹⁷

Considering this preoccupation, one might have expected John Ashenden to explore the similarities and differences between astrologers and medical practitioners. However, though he is very interested in the role and reputation of astrologers, he does not

⁸¹⁶ Ptolemy: *Tetrabiblos*, ed. / transl. Robbins, book 1, chap. 3, pp. 20–35, esp. pp. 26–27. Burnett: *Doctors versus Astrologers*, pp. 101–112, analyses how Ptolemy's statements were used by later authors to create a hierarchy of "masters of prognosis" and to emphasise the superiority of astrology over medicine. See footnote 804.

⁸¹⁷ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, distinctio 9, fols. 164^{ra}–188^{va}: *Distinctio nona de pestilentia et epidimia et corruptione aeris*. See for the medical background of the *Summa*: Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, pp. 147–163. John Ashenden also addressed the subject of epidemics in his specific prognostications, especially in his prediction for the year 1345, to which he added – probably later – an addendum in which he emphasised above all a corruption of the air caused by the conjunction and a resulting high mortality. John Ashenden: *Prognosticatio of 1345*, BLO, MS. Digby 176, fol. 16^r. See on this text and his treatment of the outbreak of the Black Death also: Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 326–328; Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, pp. 185–193.

directly compare their activity with that of physicians. An explanation for this presumably lies in John Ashenden's writing context. As stated earlier, astrology was not institutionalised as a subject of study in English universities, neither by itself nor as part of medical studies. Moreover, it was not until the fifteenth century that it became more common in England for astrologers to be employed in the service of rulers.⁸¹⁸ John Ashenden likely did not consider it necessary to distinguish astrologers from physicians since neither a competitive situation nor a form of personal union between physician and astrologer had thus far developed.

Nevertheless, there are indications in his *Summa* that he at least distinguished between the areas of responsibility of astrologers and physicians. This is evident, for example, in the ninth *distinctio* of the second book, where he describes astrological influences on plagues and epidemics. In the first four chapters of this *distinctio*, he discusses astrological-medical topics before turning to strictly medical subjects in the fifth chapter, namely protection against and treatment of the plague. While chapters 1–4 address the reader directly in the second person, the fifth chapter marks a change in style, containing more general advice in the third person.⁸¹⁹ There is thus a degree of demarcation between the astrologically interested readers of the book on the one hand and medical practitioners on the other. However, we find no direct value judgements or comparisons between astrologers and physicians, in contrast of the writings of Guido Bonatti.

5.1.2 Ambiguous Cases – Leveraging the Legitimacy of Medicine

Guido Bonatti and John Ashenden placed clear focus on astrology in their works: when they discussed medicine and its practitioners, they did so from an astrologer's perspective. While both can be considered 'full-time' astrologers, the classification of other scholars proves more challenging. This is the case, for example, with Michael

⁸¹⁸ See Chapter 2.1.3.

⁸¹⁹ For example, John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 2, *distinctio* 9, chap. 3, fol. 185^{va}: *Et debes obseruare hanc regulam in omnibus aliis distinctionibus. Et debes obseruare hic omnes regulas prius positas [...]*. In contrast, in *ibid.*, chap. 5, fols. 186^{vb}–188^{va}, here fol. 186^{vb}, he states that he is going to talk about the "protection from and treatment of fevers and pestilential illnesses according to the medical authorities" (*Restat iam loqui de preseruacione et cura a ffribus et morbis pestilentialibus secundum medicorum auctoritates*). In this chapter, he does not use the direct address in the form of *debes* or similar phrases anymore, but rather third person denominations like *oportet* (see, for example, *ibid.*, fol. 187^{ra}). He also mentions some "very knowledgeable physicians" working in Oxford in 1348, but does not seem to include himself among this professional group. See *ibid.*, fol. 187^{va}: *Et anno Christi 1348 in tempore maxime mortalitatis peritissimi medici in oxonia hanc maxime approbant medicinam inter alias tamen ad reprimendum maliciam ipsius aloen aliquam alia addiderunt*.

Scot. Given his self-designation as an *astrologus* in his principal work, the *Liber introductorius*, and its thematic focus, it would appear that the activity as an astrologer was his main occupation or at least the role in which he wished to present himself.⁸²⁰ Nevertheless, he demonstrated a keen interest in medicine, and there are indications that he may even have practised as a physician.⁸²¹

So how does Michael Scot, the self-proclaimed astrologer, but potentially also a practising physician, address the similarities and differences between the disciplines and practitioners of medicine and astrology in his *Liber introductorius*? Although he does not draw a direct comparison between astrology and medicine, there are several passages mentioning the occupation of the physician which provide information about how Michael Scot perceived the two roles. First of all, it is significant that he clearly distinguishes between them despite his own potential medical practice. Nevertheless, he portrays their activities as resembling each other in some ways. This can be seen, for example, in a passage from the third *distinctio* of the *Liber quattuor distinctionum*. As part of his descriptions of how an astrologer should act, Michael Scot points out that both the astrologer (*astrologus*) and the medical practitioner (*medicus*) are often vilified (*dampnificatur*). He explains that the astrologer – like the physician and “his brother the surgeon” – is concerned with the life and health of many people. However, failure of their work could mean someone’s death, especially wealthy people such as barons, emperors, kings, bishops, and others.⁸²²

⁸²⁰ See Chapter 2.2.1.

⁸²¹ He wrote a brief work on uroscopy, he was associated with the invention of various remedies and was occasionally referred to as *medicus* in later writings. However, many of these attributions are dubious and difficult to verify. For his authorship of the treatise on uroscopy and medical recipes see Piero Morpurgo: Il capitolo “De informazione medicorum” nel “Liber introductorius” di Michele Scotto, in: Clio (Napoli) 20 (1984), pp. 651–659, here p. 651. See for an overview of Michael Scot’s interest in medicine: Thorndike: Michael Scot, pp. 72–78. The most tangible evidence of his possible practice as a physician is a note written by himself that was appended to his translation of Aristotle’s *De animalibus*. Here, he describes how a woman was brought to him during his stay in Bologna in 1220 who sought his opinion about two “stones” that had come out of her womb and had caused her difficulty urinating. Although the woman seems to have consulted Michael Scot for his medical expertise, and he studied the “stones” thoroughly, he does not offer a diagnosis, suggest a treatment, or describe himself as *medicus* – whether this note, therefore, really shows that he practised as a physician, or merely demonstrates his interest in medical matters, is unclear. See on this text: Ynez Violé O’Neill: Michael Scot and Mary of Bologna: A Medieval Gynecological Puzzle, in: Clio medica 8 (1973), pp. 87–112; Ynez Violé O’Neill: Michael Scot and Mary of Bologna: An Addendum, in: Clio medica 9 (1974), pp. 125–130. A facsimile of the text was printed, and the text translated in: John D. Comrie: Michael Scot a XIIIth Century Scientist and Physician, in: Edinburgh Medical Journal N.S. 25 (1920), pp. 56–57.

⁸²² Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, *distinctio* 3, fol. 118^{vb}: *Unde astrologus frequenter dampnificatur et medicus, Uita enim astrologi et medici physici cum fratre suo qui dicitur cyrurgicus est uita multorum et sanitas, Mors uero ipsius est mors reliquorum et principaliter diuitum ut baronum, imperatorum, regum episcoporum et cetera.*

The parallel Michael Scot draws here is instructive because he associates astrologers and physicians with the same high-status clientele, thus ascribing a similar social status to them.⁸²³ Moreover, the stakes in both occupations are high – after all, they deal with matters of life and death. These high stakes show the value of their work but also make practitioners vulnerable to criticism.⁸²⁴ It is revealing that Michael Scot inserted this statement about physicians and astrologers in the lengthy description of how an astrologer should conduct himself. Given that he repeatedly stresses how important it is for an astrologer to avoid scandal and maintain a good reputation, likening astrologers to physicians as scholars who often face criticism may well constitute an attempt to downplay the controversial nature of astrologers.

This portrayal of physicians and astrologers as two autonomous but similar occupations is even more pronounced in another part of his *Liber quattuor distinctionum*. In the second distinction, which is primarily concerned with medical astrology, Michael Scot inserts a lengthy digression on what a *medicus* should know and how he should conduct himself.⁸²⁵ These elaborations are strongly reminiscent of his statements on the rules of conduct for astrologers. Unlike the chapter on astrologers, however, the advice on how a physician should behave is identified not as a separate section but merely as part of a chapter containing explanations of the moon’s signification and its effects on living bodies of the terrestrial world.⁸²⁶ Nevertheless, the fact that Michael Scot includes such a section shows both his interest in the medical practitioner’s role and the fact that he considers this topic relevant in an introductory work on astrology.⁸²⁷ Indeed, at the end of the distinction, he emphasises that “every

⁸²³ That astrologers, in his opinion, should “have a place” with high-ranking people had already been emphasised by Michael Scot a few sentences earlier. See Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 3, fol. 118^{va}: *Habent quidem astrologi locum apud magnates et barones*, [...]. See also Chapter 4.2.1.

⁸²⁴ While he does not explicitly explain the reason for this opposition, the mention of the astrologer’s and physician’s responsibility for the life and health of their clients suggests that he meant that they were blamed if something went wrong.

⁸²⁵ Parts of this were transcribed by Morpurgo: *Il capitolo “De informazione medicorum”*, pp. 654–659.

⁸²⁶ Morpurgo: *Il capitolo “De informazione medicorum”*, p. 652, refers to it as a chapter but in the Munich manuscript it is not marked as such. Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 2, fol. 115^{ra} (*De noticia significationis et operationis lune in omnibus corporibus habentibus uitam in hoc mundo* [...]). In comparison, the section about the conduct of astrologers was titled: *De noticia regiminis astrologi, tam in habitando domum et uiuendo quam in audiendo questiones petentium ex industria huius artis et satisfaciendo sibi*. Ibid., fol. 118^{va}.

⁸²⁷ Morpurgo: *Il capitolo “De informazione medicorum”*, p. 653–654, connects Michael Scot’s interest in the behaviour of physicians with the legislation of his patron Frederick II in the *Constitutiones Melphitanae* of 1231, which included laws on the study of medicine. However, Morpurgo also refers to differences between the laws and Michael Scot’s statements, but unfortunately does not specify what exactly he is referring to here.

astrologer should take note of and at times profit” from the information given in the chapter.⁸²⁸ While this statement refers to the entire chapter, it underlines the importance that Michael Scot attaches to astro-medical knowledge expressly for the astrologer, knowledge that includes how medical practitioners should ideally conduct themselves.

Moreover, although he does not directly compare physicians with astrologers, the insertion of a similar discourse on the behaviour of *medici* just before his advice to astrologers suggests that he is encouraging the reader to compare the two activities. It also shows again that he distinguishes between the occupations: The *medicus* and the *astrologus* denote two different people or at least two different activities with their own rules of conduct; whether one scholar can or should assume both roles is not directly discussed. However, his statements on physicians also point to areas of overlap with astrology, both in terms of subject matter and the desired behaviour of practitioners. He repeatedly stresses the value of astrological knowledge for medical practitioners – “a physician would not be propitious or have much laudable knowledge unless he has understanding in the art of astrology”. A physician must become “like a prophet” (*quasi prophetam*) to perform his work properly.⁸²⁹ By emphasising the importance of astrology for the physician, he highlights their shared interest in future knowledge. Nevertheless, he keeps the two fields separate, classifying himself as an astrologer even here – he refers to astrology as “our art” (*nostra ars*) while describing medicine merely as “the art of medicine” (*ars medicine*).⁸³⁰ Furthermore, it is striking that in the remarks on medical practitioners, he states his recommendations in the third person (*medicus debet*), whereas in the chapter on astrologers’ behaviour, he addresses the reader

⁸²⁸ Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 2, fol. 118^{rb}: *Hec uero que diximus in presenti capitulo sunt secreta naturae atque utilia multum in arte astronomie et ideo quilibet astrologus ea notet et sibi proficiet quandoque si deus uoluit.*

⁸²⁹ Ibid., distinctio 3, fol. 115^{rb}: [...] *unde dicuntur aperte quod non erit medicus presens necque multum laudabilis scientia nisi multum nouerit in hac arte astronomie cum quemlibet medicum de neccesitate oporteat esse quasi prophetam* [...]. The need for astrological expertise also becomes evident later in the text when Michael Scot explains that the physician needs to know the position of certain planetary positions at the time the person fell ill. Ibid., distinctio 2, fol. 115^{vb}: *Cognito autem primo puncto casus infirmitatis hominem occupantis noticiam signi ascendentis diei et punctum lunationis ac regiminis planete alios superantis dignitate etc.*, [...]. See also Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 189, when he points out that astrology is “useful, necessary and agreeable” for many things and people, among others to “physicians for their patients”: [...] *eo quod est ars utilis, necessaria, et delectabilis in multis et pro multis ut medico pro infirmis*, [...].

⁸³⁰ Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 2, fol. 115^{rb}.

directly (*debes*). Both his readers and Michael Scot himself are thus distinguished from medical practitioners and categorised as astrologers.⁸³¹

In terms of specific advice, Michael Scot addresses essential knowledge that the physician must have, for example about urine, sweat or the pulse of healthy and sick people. He also advises the medical practitioner on interpersonal matters. It is especially here that similarities between his perception of the roles of astrologers and physicians become apparent. In both discussions, he emphasises how essential it is for practitioners to build a good reputation and establish as positive a relationship as possible with clients, who, as noted above, are composed mainly of high-ranking individuals in both cases.

One aspect that Michael Scot particularly stresses in this context is the way a physician should speak to his patient: a *medicus* should be “cautious and discreet” in his “healing and speaking” so that he would not “be brought into disrepute through his own fault”: it would be better to say nothing at all than to say something badly. Moreover, Michael Scot advises using “ambiguous words” (*uerba equiuoca*) in case the outcome is different than expected.⁸³² He even suggests suitable wording for the physician and assures him, use of this wording will guard against his being discredited, which could otherwise happen if a patient dies in the physician’s care.⁸³³ Michael Scot gives a very similar admonition to the astrologer, who is likewise exhorted to protect himself from criticism by using his words ambiguously (*dicere sua verba equiuoce*) when answering a question that involves great risk.⁸³⁴

The focus on building a good relationship with the patient is also evident in other passages. For example, similarly to his comments on astrological consultations, Michael Scot emphasises the importance of putting the patient in a good emotional state to

⁸³¹ See, for example, *ibid.*, distinctio 3, fol. 118^{vb}: *Sed debes [i.e. the astrologer] tibi eligere domum bene dispositam interius et exterius [...]*. *Ibid.*, fol. 115^{va}: *Similiter medicus debet considerare etatem infirmi [...]*.

⁸³² *Ibid.*, distinctio 2, fol. 115^{va}: [...] *quia homo potest mori multiplici causa, scilicet et naturaliter et accidentaliter, medicus nostro consilio sit pavidus et discretus in medendo et loquendo, non cadat in reprehensionem ex culpa sui, melius enim est bene taceri quam male loqui, et utilis est medico uerba proferre equiuoca quam unum affirmare, nec postea reperiatur fuisse uerum.*

⁸³³ The wording primarily aims at requiring the physician and patient to trust in God’s judgement. *Ibid.*: *Cum sepe contingat quod homo sanus et eundo per uiam moritur morte repentina et sic multis modis si autem homo moriatur in cura medici, non imputatur ei multum si studuerit loqui predicto modo alioquin grauiter infamatur quod ei est dire et nocens in perpetuum.*

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*, distinctio 3, fol. 120^{ra}: *Sed debet dicere sua uerba equiuoce quando quaestio est magni periculi, ut semper eadem uerba maneant cum dubietate intellectus scilicet interesse et non esse, causa est, ne astrologus ualeat uice aliqua reprehendi ab auditore, uel quia homo non intromittat facere rem magni mali [...]*.

enable the best possible outcome.⁸³⁵ Since the patient's frame of mind was commonly considered decisive for good health, this recommendation is unsurprising in a medical context. However, Michael Scot is concerned not only with the patient's health but also with advising the physician in such a way that he can earn a good reputation, be recommended to others, and consequently have a successful career. It is thus the physician's image in which Michael Scot is interested. Towards the end of the passages on the physician's conduct, he returns to the subject of how a physician should speak and act, stating that he should talk to the patient and the entire household "in a charming manner (*blande*) since people would rejoice from these things, show him affection, recommend him and be fond of him."⁸³⁶ Michael Scot then emphatically stresses the value of a good reputation for the medical practitioner. Interestingly, he invokes, among other things, the same proverb he cites for astrologers to emphasise that appropriate clothes help to cultivate a reputation as an expert.⁸³⁷ Hence, a good image and reputation play just as crucial a role in the activities of medical practitioners as they do for astrologers.

Overall, it is evident from Michael Scot's remarks that while he clearly distinguishes between the role of the physician and that of the astrologer, he is concerned to highlight the similarities between the occupations by juxtaposing similar rules of conduct. This parallelisation contributes to establishing astrologers as an equally legitimate group in their own right. In contrast to the statements of the 'full-time' astrologers discussed above, however, there is no direct evaluation of astrology as

⁸³⁵ He lists various measures which could comfort the patient and ultimately contribute to his recovery. Ibid., distinctio 2, fol. 116^{ra}: *Put a uestes delicatas, ut purpureas et coloris confortatiui, ramos arborum, picturas, uascula monstrosa, fabulas ridiculas, et quod ei pulsantur instrumenta delectus ut sunt uirole, psalterii, et aues in caueis aportentur que cantent suauiter ut cardi et faganelis, similiter solent ualere multis odores aromatum scilicet florum specierum fructuum, et herbarum, ut pomi coctoni, zafrani, saluie, maiorane, rose, dampnete, musci, et linteaminum que recenter in lixiuio sunt lauata ex quibus erit odor suauitatis. Nam ex talibus est certitudo quod animus iocundatur egroti et cor uirtutibus restauratur, unde cor solet fortificari.* In his statements about the conduct of astrologers he describes, for example, that the astrologer should decorate his house with fresh herbs or flowers as these would "delight by their sight and smell the hearts of men." See footnote 625.

⁸³⁶ Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 2, fol. 116^{tb}: *Item dicimus quod cum medicus peruenit ad egrum debet iungere domui honeste et secundum statum illius quem sentit in domo uel alterutrorum, se illi et reliquis debet alacriter presentare plenus doctrinis et loqui blande singulis, quia gentes ex talibus gratulantur et medico adhibent amorem quo eum recomendant et habent karum.* Similarly, a few lines below this, ibid.: [...] *ymmo debet medicus sapiens aliquantulum stare secum et loqui de uno et alio familiariter ut ex suis dictis captet beniuolentiam omnium et omni uice uerba sua fructificent utrique partium conuenienter.*

⁸³⁷ Ibid., fol. 116^{ra}: *Facit istud ad bene esse cum sit quidam hornatus consiliorum artis qui admodum sunt faxinature uestimentorum, unde dixit quidam, uir bene uestitus pro uestibus esse peritus, creditur a mille, quamuis ydiota sit ille.* See footnote 621.

superior to medicine.⁸³⁸ The absence of a direct assertion of the superiority of astrology over medicine may be due to Michael Scot's own activities in the medical field. However, although he may have occasionally assumed the role of a physician, and his comments suggest that many of his readers did as well – or were indeed physicians with an astrological interest – his self-image and perspective are clearly that of the astrologer.

While Michael Scot highlights the similarities between the behaviour of physicians and astrologers, many later texts by astrologers who can be classified as “ambiguous cases” focus on demonstrating the importance and necessity of incorporating astrological considerations into medical practice. Roger Bacon's remarks on medicine and astrology illustrate this concern vividly.⁸³⁹ As is typical for Roger Bacon, he expresses his ideas in the form of a complaint about the current state of learning. In several passages of his *Opus majus*, he states that contemporary physicians frequently neglect astrological considerations, which prevents them from truly understanding their subject, often causing harm to the patient.⁸⁴⁰ Roger Bacon's assessment that physicians do not possess sufficient astrological knowledge is even more evident in his work *De erroribus medicorum*, in which he discusses the 36 greatest failures (*defectus*) of physicians.⁸⁴¹ One of these is identified as “the failure to consider the celestial bodies on which the whole change of the lower bodies depends”.⁸⁴² If a physician, therefore, does not know how to “examine the positions and aspects of the planets”, his practice is entirely determined by “chance and fate” (*casu et fortuna*).⁸⁴³ Roger Bacon emphasises that although the importance of astrology for medical practice has been reliably proven and explained by both medical and astrological authorities, the “general mass of

⁸³⁸ Michael Scot explains in his *Prohemium* that astrology is more truthful than all other arts and sciences except theology, but he does not explicitly compare it with medicine. Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, p. 189.

⁸³⁹ Although there is no evidence that he ever practised as a physician, he shows a keen interest in medicine and its practitioners in his works. As he can be classified as a polymath with a particular interest in astrology rather than a ‘full-time’ astrologer, I have included him here as an ‘ambiguous’ case. On his stance on medicine in general, see Getz: *Roger Bacon and Medicine*.

⁸⁴⁰ See, for example, Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, p. 251: *Sed medici hujus temporis pauci sciunt astronomiam et ideo nec auctores suos multi intelligent nec possunt intelligere, et ideo negligent meliorem partem medicinae*. Ibid., p. 384: *Sed hoc medici astronomiam ignorantes non attendunt, saepius in praejudicium patientum*.

⁸⁴¹ Roger Bacon: *De erroribus medicorum*, ed. by Andrew G. Little / Edward Withington, in: Roger Bacon: *De retardatione senectutis cum aliis opusculis de rebus medicinalibus* (*Opera hactenus inedita Rogeri Baconi* 9), Oxford 1928, pp. 150–179.

⁸⁴² Ibid., p. 154: *4^{us} defectus est quod celestia non considerant, a quibus tota alteratio corporum inferiorum dependet; [...]*.

⁸⁴³ Ibid., p. 154: *Vnde medicus, qui nescit considerare loca planetarum et aspectus eorum, nichil potest facere in operibus medicine, nisi a casu et fortuna*.

physicians” (*vulgus medicorum*) do not adhere to this principle and are consequently at odds with their authorities.⁸⁴⁴

While his insistence that astrological knowledge is necessary for physicians is a default assertion of advocates of astrology, Roger Bacon’s remarks indicate that this was not uncontroversial or commonplace among physicians in the university context of Paris and Oxford in the second half of the thirteenth century.⁸⁴⁵ Furthermore, it is significant that Roger Bacon does not conflate the two disciplines but presents them as mutually beneficial. This can be seen, for example, when he discusses the argument of “some writer” (*aliquis auctor*) who claims that Avicenna and Haly argued that a physician, “insofar as he is a physician” (*medicus in quantum medicus*), does not have to consider “such things”, i.e. astrology. Roger Bacon, naturally, disagrees with this and offers a different interpretation of Avicenna’s and Haly’s statements. He explains that the two scholars merely meant that while a physician need not consider astrological matters in his capacity as a physician, he must nevertheless draw on other disciplines,

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 154–155: *Hoc docent auctores medicine, scilicet Ypocrates, Galienus, Constantinus, Rasy, Haly, Ysaac; et certissimis documentis hoc similiter experti medici, qui astronomiam sciunt, docent manifeste. Hoc Aristoteles, Ptholomeus, et omnes astronomi perfecti docent evidenter. [...] Sed vulgus medicorum istius temporis, querens precipue in hoc loco solatium pessimum et turpissimum ignorantie sue, contradicunt suis auctoribus et expertis medicis et philosophis et sensui, [...]*.

⁸⁴⁵ However, he notes that the “multitude of physicians” (*vulgus medicorum*) recognise and utilise the general influence of the stars in their practice, even if they do not understand anything about “the art”, i.e. astrology. Ibid., p. 168: [...] *et etiam vulgus medicorum hoc percipit in regimine acutarum, et in omnibus in quibus potest quilibet considerat solem et lunam et varietatem rerum per hec, quamuis nichil sciat de his secundum Artem, sed iuuat quilibet se, ut patet, secundum consuetudinem et vsum.* The medical Faculty at the University of Paris was still in the developing stages in the thirteenth century. See on the development of the Faculty of Medicine at Paris and the difficulties of regulating its practice: Pearl Kibre: *The Faculty of Medicine at Paris, Charlatanism, and Unlicensed Medical Practices in the Later Middle Ages*, in: *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 27 (1) (1953), pp. 1–20; Vern L. Bullough: *The Medieval Medical University at Paris*, in: *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 31 (3) (1957), pp. 197–211; on the role of astrology within the medical curriculum at Paris in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*; also: Danielle Jacquart: *La médecine médiévale dans le cadre parisien. XIV^e–XV^e siècle*, Paris 1998, pp. 448–465. At the University of Oxford, the practice of medicine is even more difficult to trace in the thirteenth century, see Bullough: *Medical Study at Mediaeval Oxford*.

such as astrology, to carry out his activity.⁸⁴⁶ Astrology is thus presented as a discipline separate from medicine but one to which physicians must inevitably have recourse.⁸⁴⁷

There are also indications that Roger Bacon places astrology – or rather the role of astrologers – above medicine. In his complaints about how few physicians of his time concern themselves with astrology in his *Opus majus*, he writes that they “neglect the better part of medicine because of this deficiency.”⁸⁴⁸ The part of medicine which includes astrological concerns is thus presented as superior. While this could simply mean that medicine which integrates astrological matters is better than medicine without it, it does show that astrology raises medicine to a higher level. The perceived superiority of astrology over medicine becomes even more apparent in a later passage. Here, he recounts how a famous French physician (*medicus*) had a surgeon (*chirurgus*) treat the tibia of his brother in the previous year. However, a “knowledgeable astrologer” (*astronomus peritus*) forbade him from doing so since the moon was in Aquarius, the sign corresponding to the tibia. The illness nevertheless worsened and ended in the patient’s death. According to Roger Bacon, “such cases happen frequently but are not understood due to ignorance of astrology.”⁸⁴⁹ It is puzzling that Roger Bacon describes that the patient’s condition deteriorated despite the astrological advice. He may have meant to imply that the astrologer was consulted too late or that his recommendation was not heeded. Regardless, it is evident in this passage that Roger Bacon differentiates between the *medicus*, the *chirurgus* and the *astronomus* and portrays the astrologer’s knowledge as superior. The example is strongly reminiscent of

⁸⁴⁶ Roger Bacon: *De erroribus medicorum*, ed. Little / Withington, p. 168: *Quod si aliquis auctor dicat medicum in quantum medicum non debere de talibus certificare, sicut Auicenna et Haly in quodam loco aiunt: primo ad hoc est quod ipsi sibi ipsis non debent contradicere, cum alibi velint medicum vti consideratione celi debere. Et ideo volunt quod medicum in quantum medicus non potest nec debet nec habet vnde hec consideret; sed tamen oportet quod per considerationem alterius scientie hoc faciat, quia sue operationes non dependent tantum ex scientia medicine sed ex aliis scientiis multipliciter, et maxime ex tribus, quarum vna est alkimia, secunda astronomia magis, et tertia maxime, de qua postea dicitur. The third discipline he means here is scientia experimentalis. In his Opus majus, he cites Haly as an authority who argued for the necessity of the physician to study astrology. See Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, p. 387: *Atque Haly medicus in libro de Regimine Regali docet praeclare quod medici indigent consideratione huiusmodi, unde ait, medicine eget astronomia, [...]*.*

⁸⁴⁷ In his *De laudibus mathematicae*, Roger Bacon reversely points out that also the astrologer must have knowledge of the other disciplines, among them medicine. Roger Bacon: *De laudibus mathematicae*, BLO, MS. Digby 218, fol. 100^{vb}: *Quapropter non potest esse sufficiens iudicator, nisi sciat alias scientias, [...]*.

⁸⁴⁸ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, p. 251: *Sed medici huius temporis pauci sciunt astronomiam et ideo nec auctores suos multi intelligent nec possunt intelligere, et ideo negligent meliorem partem medicinae.*

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 382: *Nam in anno praecedente medicus famosior in Francia tibiae fratris sui fecit chirurgum dare medicamen; sed astronomus peritus prohibuit ei ne faceret, quia Luna fuit in Aquario, quod est signum respondens tibiis. Et accidit quod continue invaluit infirmitas et languor usque ad mortem. Huiusmodi casus accidunt saepe, sed propter ignorantiam astronomiae non percipiuntur.*

the elaborations of Guido Bonatti, who, as seen above, represents the astrologer as an advisor to the physician.

Roger Bacon's statements already indicate that astrology and medicine were starting to become more closely connected. His observation that only a few physicians recognised the potential of astrology for their work, or the need to consult an astrologer, reflects the circumstances in which he was writing. In thirteenth-century Paris and Oxford, no close institutional link between astrology and medicine had yet been established. In Italy, however, the situation presents itself differently. Here, in the course of the thirteenth century, we can observe an institutional intertwining of medicine and astrology at the universities.

The writings of Cecco d'Ascoli (†1327) are an instructive example of this. He is known primarily as an astrologer but showed a strong interest in medicine and may have practised as a physician. Although he also briefly entered the service of Count Charles of Calabria (†1328) towards the end of his life, his main site of activity was the University of Bologna in the 1320s.⁸⁵⁰ He did not compose an introductory treatise on astrology *per se* but wrote two commentaries on standard astrological texts, John of Sacrobosco's *Sphaera* and Alcabitius' introductory work on astrology.⁸⁵¹ Cecco d'Ascoli taught as a lecturer of astrology at Bologna, which he explicitly emphasises in his commentary on Sacrobosco's *Sphaera*.⁸⁵² However, it is clear from his commentaries that his audience mainly comprised prospective physicians to whom he wanted to convey the importance of astrology. This is shown, for example, by the fact that almost the entire prologue of his commentary on Sacrobosco's *Sphaera* consists of a forceful exhortation that knowledge of astrology is essential for physicians. By quoting various medical and astrological authorities, he tries to impress upon the reader

⁸⁵⁰ See on his biography: Iolanda Ventura: Cecco d'Ascoli, in: Thomas F. Glick / Faith Wallis (eds.): *Medieval Science, Technology and Medicine. An Encyclopedia* (Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages 11), New York 2005, pp. 122–124, who states that he worked for Charles of Calabria both as physician and astrologer. Much of his biography is unclear or has been influenced by later accounts. See also: Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, pp. 948–968; Bònoli / Piliarvu: *I lettori di astronomia*, pp. 61–64.

⁸⁵¹ Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, p. 950. Both texts are included in the curriculum for astrology in the Bologna statutes of 1405. *Statuti delle università e dei collegi dello studio bolognese*, ed. Malagola, rubric 78, p. 276.

⁸⁵² In the context of a discussion on the nature of the elements he points out that he will not go into further details on this issue as he had been “elected to read astrology, not philosophy.” Cecco d'Ascoli: *Commentary on John of Sacrobosco's Sphere*, ed. Thorndike, p. 355: *In ista vero lectione non dilato spiritum meum, quia intendo legere astrologiam ad quam electus sum et non philosophiam*. Even though he separates his activity here from philosophy and not medicine, and he never refers to himself directly as an *astrologus*, this aside can at least be seen as an indication that he positioned himself primarily as an astrologer.

– or listener – that astrology is not just an optional add-on for a physician but the very foundation for being able to practise medicine properly.⁸⁵³

Cecco d’Ascoli’s intended audience is particularly apparent in his commentary on Alcabitius’s work, where he repeatedly addresses his listeners as “you physicians” (*uos medici*).⁸⁵⁴ This does not mean that his students did not possibly aspire to a career as astrologers, only that the official training for both roles was the same. This shared training made a dual career as both astrologer and physician increasingly common. The institutionalised convergence with medicine helped establish astrology as a legitimate and respected subject, and Cecco d’Ascoli’s commentaries sought to advance that aim.

When examining his texts, it is crucial to consider the different audiences being addressed. While the previously examined texts were explicitly addressed to astrologers, here it is to physicians. For scholars like Guido Bonatti, it made sense to emphasise the superiority of astrologers over physicians since he exclusively practised astrology and was seeking to secure the favour of rulers over his competitors. However, in Cecco d’Ascoli’s university environment and given his audience, it would have been ill-advised to pit the practitioners of the two activities against each other; this would have risked damage to astrology’s reputation by turning potential followers against it. For Cecco d’Ascoli, the focus was, therefore, on highlighting the benefits of astrology for medical practitioners. Nevertheless, the fact that he addressed his audience directly as physicians suggests that Cecco d’Ascoli still distinguished between the roles of astrologer and physician.

5.1.3 Physician-Astrologers – Mutual Benefits

While the scholars considered so far can be described as astrologers with a more or less pronounced interest in medical issues, others were equally active in both fields. It is particularly instructive to examine how, if at all, these practitioners distinguished between the role of astrologer and physician. A paradigmatic example of such a ‘physician-astrologer’ is the famous Italian scholar Peter of Abano († 1315/6).⁸⁵⁵ He

⁸⁵³ Ibid., pp. 344–348. See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 344 (quoting “Hermes”): [...] *primo necessitatem medici recte operantis ad istam scientiam capescendam, quia non potest medicus sine stellarum scientia perfectissime operari sed tanquam cecus ut plurimum ducitur et oberrat.*

⁸⁵⁴ Cecco d’Ascoli: Commentary on Alcabitius’ *Liber introductorius*, ed. Boffito 6 (4/6), p. 114, p. 122.

⁸⁵⁵ The literature on Peter of Abano is vast. Still fundamental is the account by Eugenia Paschetto: Pietro d’Abano. *Medico e filosofo*, Florence 1984 (on his astrological interests, esp. pp. 251–83). See also Graziella Federici Vescovini: *Pietro d’Abano tra storia e leggenda* (Apollinea 1), Lugano 2020. Specifically on Peter of Abano’s astrology: Federici Vescovini: *Peter of Abano and Astrology*; Seller:

taught medicine and astrology at the University of Padua, spent some time at the University of Paris, and was generally known for his interest in these fields as well as in philosophy.⁸⁵⁶ His two main original works are introductory in character and focus on the disciplines of medicine and astrology: the *Conciliator* (“Mediator”), in which he strives to settle the controversies between philosophers and physicians, and the *Lucidator* (“Enlightener”), through which he seeks to clarify difficulties and errors concerning astrology.⁸⁵⁷ The very fact that Peter of Abano wrote two different introductory works for the disciplines shows that he considered them separately. In both works, however, he also emphasises the interconnectedness between medicine and astrology and discusses the relationship between the disciplines several times.⁸⁵⁸

The more famous and extensive work of the two is the *Conciliator*, which comprises 210 chapters, so-called *differentiae*. In the first ten *differentiae*, Peter of Abano addresses general questions about medicine and its practitioners, such as the required knowledge of a physician and the status of medicine.⁸⁵⁹ While references to astrology appear throughout the work, two *differentiae*, in particular, provide insight into his attitude towards the relationship between the disciplines: the first and the tenth. In the first *differentia*, he explores whether a physician must also know “other theoretical

Scientia astrorum; Boudet / Collard / Weill-Parot (eds.): Médecine, astrologie et magie entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance.

⁸⁵⁶ On his biography: Paschetto: Pietro d’Abano, pp. 19–34; Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 2, pp. 876–881. It is noteworthy that he never describes himself directly as *medicus* or *astrologus*, though he uses both terms for the description of these occupations in general (see below). See for his classification as astrologer also Chapter 2.2.1 This could be interpreted as an indication that he did not want to present himself as belonging only to one group but rather perceived and fashioned himself as a polymath. On Peter of Abano’s medical views against the background of the development of medical studies at Padua: Siraisi: Arts and Sciences at Padua, pp. 143–172. Siraisi: Ibid, p. 147, points out that Peter of Abano’s medical teaching at Padua from c. 1306 was certainly significantly influenced by his previous stay at Paris.

⁸⁵⁷ For his reasons for writing the books, see Peter of Abano: *Conciliator* [controversiarvm, qvae inter philosophos et medicos versantvr], printed by Symphorien Champier, Venice 1565, prologue, fol. 1^{ra}. Peter of Abano: *Lucidator*, ed. Federici Vescovini, p. 105. The works were written and revised between 1303 and 1310. See for a discussion on the dates of composition: Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 2, pp. 879–880; Paschetto: Pietro d’Abano, p. 48.

⁸⁵⁸ In the *Lucidator*, he describes that he will proceed in the same way as in the *Conciliator*. See Peter of Abano: *Lucidator*, ed. Federici Vescovini, pp. 104–105. It can, therefore, be assumed that Peter of Abano planned the two works as parallel achievements in the fields of astrology and medicine. However, many themes are repeated, and Thorndike considers the *Lucidator* “not a great addition to Peter’s science”. See Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 2, p. 884. While Peter of Abano focuses even more on astrology, its status as *scientia*, and the explanation of its functioning in the *Lucidator* than in the *Conciliator*, he does not elaborate on the role of the astrologer in comparison to the physician any further than he already did in the *Conciliator*. Rather, this topic is discussed in more detail in the *Conciliator*. Therefore, the following analysis centres on his discussions in this work.

⁸⁵⁹ See, for example, Peter of Abano: *Conciliator*, Venice 1565, *differentia* 2, fol. 3^{rb}: “Whether a physician needs to be a logician or not” (*Vtrum medicum oporteat logicum esse, necne*); *differentia* 3, fol. 5^{va}: “Whether medicine is a science or not” (*Vtrum medicina sit scientia, necne*); *differentia* 4, fol. 8^{ra}: “Whether medicine is theoretical or not” (*Vtrum medicina sit theoricā necne*).

sciences”.⁸⁶⁰ While all of the seven liberal arts are listed, and their significance explained, logic and astrology are emphasised as particularly important and are discussed separately in later *differentiae*.⁸⁶¹ Astrology, he argues, is necessary to determine the right time for administering medicines and successfully performing certain operations. He incorporates quotations from (Pseudo-)Ptolemy, Hippocrates, and Albumasar in order to lend weight to his statements and to underline that “no one should place himself in the hands of a physician who does not know astrology.”⁸⁶² His objective is thus to demonstrate that it is imperative for medical practitioners to know and employ astrological methods.

Nevertheless, he also distinguishes between the roles of the physician and the astrologer. For example, after referring to Albumasar’s statements on the importance of astrology in medicine, he adds that “the physician (*medicus*) must also treat a patient to whom the astrologer (*astrologus*) has already made a prediction from the meaning of the stars.”⁸⁶³ Peter of Abano thus uses two different denominations – *medicus* and *astrologus* – that refer to two distinct roles or occupations with independent responsibilities exercised by different people. Peter of Abano’s remark is particularly intriguing when compared with the exact explanations given by Albumasar in his “Great Introduction”. Albumasar indeed emphasises the value of astrology for medical treatments and states that patients should consult an astrologer first and then be treated by a physician. However, he also stresses that if the astrologer concludes that there is no hope of recovery for the patient, a visit to the physician becomes superfluous.⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁶⁰ The first *differentia* was discussed, edited, and translated to German by Christian Kaiser / Peter M. Schenkel: Pietro d’Abano über die Bedeutung der theoretischen Wissenschaften für den Arzt (mit einer kritischen Edition und Übersetzung der *Differentia prima* des *Conciliator*), in: Christian Kaiser / Leo Maier / Oliver Maximilian Schrader (eds.): Die nackte Wahrheit und ihre Schleier: Weisheit und Philosophie in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit – Studien zum Gedenken an Thomas Ricklin (Dokimion 42), Münster 2019, pp. 191–247 (edition: pp. 208–223; translation: pp. 224–247). Peter of Abano: *Conciliator: Differentia prima*, ed. Kaiser / Schenkel, p. 208: *Utrum medico sit necessarium alias scire speculationis scientias necne*.

⁸⁶¹ Peter of Abano: *Conciliator: Differentia prima*, ed. Kaiser / Schenkel, p. 221: *Ille tamen, que medicine sunt necessarios, existunt iste. Logica cum sit omnium scientiarum velut sal ciborum conditiva, naturalis eius principiorum ostensive, et astrologia ipsius iudiciorum directiva*. The need for logic is addressed again in *differentia* 2, for astrology in *differentia* 10.

⁸⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 218–219 (in referring to a Hippocrates): *Cuiusmodi est medicus, qui astrologiam ignorat. Nullus debet se in eius manus ponere*.

⁸⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 219: *Quare Geofar dictus Albumasar Introductorii primo: Medici indigent necessario astrorum scientia, ut per eam sciant sui magisterii radices certissime. Oportet quoque medicum illum infirmum curare, cui ex significatione stellarum iam providit astrologus*.

⁸⁶⁴ As Kaiser / Schenkel: Pietro d’Abano über die Bedeutung der theoretischen Wissenschaften, p. 240, footnote 67, have indicated in their comments to the translation of this passage, the exact wording cannot be found in the Latin translation of Albumasar’s introductory work, but they point towards a similar discussion: Albumasar: *Introductorium in astronomiam Albumasaris abalachi octo continens libros*

Albumasar thus creates a hierarchy of prognosticators in which the astrologer comes first.⁸⁶⁵ Peter of Abano, by contrast, seems to recommend that treatment by the physician after a visit to an astrologer is advisable in any case. While his comment could, of course, simply be an abbreviation of Albumasar's statements, the phrasing may also indicate that he refuses to grant the astrologer a higher authority than the physician. Unfortunately, he does not further expand on the comparative value of the judgements of the two practitioners or explain how to proceed when they disagree.⁸⁶⁶

Another remark in the first *differentia* provides evidence that Peter of Abano did not equate astrologers and physicians but assigned them different spheres of competence. He states that "the skilled physician does not need to have excellent knowledge of the aforementioned sciences. It is sufficient that he knows something of them in general [...]."⁸⁶⁷ It would appear, then, that a physician, in his opinion, does not need to be a fully trained *astrologus*; basic astrological skills would suffice. As Christian Kaiser and Peter M. Schenkel remark in their edition of the first *differentia*, this reflects the ideal image that Peter of Abano wants to establish of the physician as a "physician-

partiales, printed by Erhard Ratdolt, Augsburg 1489, fol. 10^r (non-paginated): *Cum enim preuiderit astrologus cui medendum sit: et quare a quantum: demum medicus vtiliter accedit, [...]*. ("When the astrologer has foreseen who is to be cured and by what means and to what extent, the physician can then approach the case in a useful way.") However, Kaiser / Schenkel left out the next part of the passage in Albumasar's text which slightly modifies the meaning: [...] *eiusdem siquidem prouidentia similiter et laborem inutilem precauet*. ("[...] and accordingly, his foreknowledge likewise guards against useless work"). In other words, Albumasar points out that in some cases, after consulting the astrologer, it no longer makes sense for the patient to seek medical advice if the prognosis is hopeless. In the original work in Arabic this sentiment is even more pronounced: Abū Ma'shar: The Great Introduction to Astrology, vol. 1, ed. and transl. Burnett / Yamamoto, part 1, chap. 5, pp. 140–141: "Also, the doctor should only treat a patient for whom the astrologer has seen, from the indications of the planets, that his life has not yet reached its end, and that he will benefit from the treatment and recover from his illness. If the astrologer does not see life or recovery from his illness for him, then there is no point in the doctor's treating this patient."

⁸⁶⁵ See also footnote 805.

⁸⁶⁶ A remark in the tenth *differentia* suggests that in practice there were indeed disputes about which expertise should take precedence when astrological and medical judgements diverged. Peter of Abano writes that some scholars rejected astrology because they believed that the statements of physicians must always be followed. If there were disagreements between the judgements of medicine and astrology, those scholars would not be able to reconcile them and therefore oppose astrology. Peter of Abano: Conciliator, Venice 1565, *differentia* 10, fol. 16^b: *Quibusdam vero visum hoc fuit, propterea quia videtur eis, quod dicta medicorum semper sint attendenda, cum interdum diuersitas interdicat inter iudicium medicinae, et astrologiae nescientes diuersitates inter has apparentes ad concordiam reuocare*. On the hesitation of physicians towards astrology, see the end of this subchapter.

⁸⁶⁷ Peter of Abano: Conciliator: *Differentia prima*, ed. Kaiser / Schenkel, p. 221: *Attendendum tamen non oportere omnino peritum etiam medicum exquisitam predictarum cognitionem habere. Sufficit enim si aliqualem ipsarum habuit in communi, [...]*.

philosopher” (“Arztphilosoph”) to grant medicine the status of a theoretical *scientia*. Basic knowledge of the *artes* – and thus also of astrology – is part of this endeavour.⁸⁶⁸

The fact that Peter of Abano nevertheless grants astrology a unique significance for medicine is evident in the tenth *differentia*, in which he discusses in detail “whether or not a physician can contribute to the patient’s health through the science of astrology”.⁸⁶⁹ Several passages here shed light on whether and how he distinguishes between the roles of astrologer and physician. The first observation concerns the employment of the terms *medicus* and *astrologus*, which Peter of Abano sometimes combines. He does this, for example, in his explanation of a reason often given against the usefulness of astrology for medical practitioners. Astrology’s opponents argue, he writes, that astrologers only take into account 1029 stars in their predictions. In reality, however, there is an infinite number of other stars, of which the “physician in his capacity as astrologer” (*medicus existens astrologus*) is consequently unaware. As a result of his ignorance, so the argument goes, the physician has a faulty foundation for predictions and therefore cannot contribute to the health of a sick person.⁸⁷⁰ The linking of the two roles, i.e. the “physician as astrologer” or “physician-astrologer”, demonstrates, on the one hand, that Peter of Abano is emphasising the close connection between the two disciplines.⁸⁷¹ On the other hand, he also mentions the two designations separately, which at least points to the idea of two different areas of responsibility that can nevertheless be performed by one person.⁸⁷² His description of

⁸⁶⁸ Kaiser / Schenkel: Pietro d’Abano, pp. 192–193. See for Peter of Abano’s further discussion on whether medicine should be classified as *scientia*: Peter of Abano: Conciliator, Venice 1565, *differentia* 3, fol. 5^{va}: *Vtrum medicina sit scientia, necne*; *differentia* 4, fol. 8^{ra}: *Vtrum medicina sit theorica necne*. He argues for medicine as both *ars* and *scientia*, pointing out its practical and theoretical aspects. See Paschetto: Pietro d’Abano, pp. 70–73. See for the discussions about the status and classification of medicine at the University of Padua in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: Siraisi: Arts and Sciences at Padua, pp. 152–155.

⁸⁶⁹ Peter of Abano: Conciliator, Venice 1565, *differentia* 10, fol. 15^{vb}: *Vtrum quis medicus existens per scientiam astronomie possit conferre in salutem aegroti necne*.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid., fol. 16^{ra}: *Et fulcitur eo, quod stellae consideratae ab astrologis solum mille. 29. existunt: aliae vero sunt infinitae quae et velut esse habent et operari Metaph. 2. cum igitur eas medicus existens astrologus non cognoscat eisdem conferre non poterit. Itaque medicus existens astrologus non poterit in salute conferre aegroti*. Peter of Abano, of course, disputes this.

⁸⁷¹ It is not quite clear if the Latin should be read as “a physician acting as astrologer” or if Peter of Abano intended it to be read as “physician-astrologer”. The wording quoted above (*medicus existens astrologus*) is employed several times in the tenth *differentia*.

⁸⁷² In addition, there are other passages in the tenth *differentia* in which physicians or astrologers are mentioned separately. This also applies, for example, to the reference to authorities. Directly after the previously quoted passage, Peter of Abano begins to list the “opinions of philosophers, astrologers and physicians” and thus clearly separates the three types of practitioners. Peter of Abano: Conciliator, Venice 1565, *differentia* 10, fol. 16^{ra}: *IN OPPOSITVM sunt sententiae philosophorum astrologorum, et medicorum*. He also addresses people who only call themselves “astrologers” or “physicians and astrologers” but were in fact not real “astrologers” at all, but rather “liars and soothsayers” and brought the discipline into

how the physician acts either in his capacity as a physician or as an astrologer is reminiscent of Roger Bacon's discussion about the extent to which the physician needs knowledge of astrology.⁸⁷³

Peter of Abano also addresses the astrologer's specific sphere of work in later passages of the tenth *differentia* when he explains three ways in which the stars can signify matters of the sublunar world. The first way is "subtle and deep" (*subtilis et profundus*), but impossible to know because of the near infinity of the signified particulars which must be considered.⁸⁷⁴ Through the second way, an "astrologer" (*astrologus*) can learn the signification (*significatio*) of one species, of the number of people of a particular city and the like, but he cannot have the exact quality, number and quantity of the signification."⁸⁷⁵ The third way enables the astrologer to know "from the signification of things their quality and quantity, such as genera, species, elements and their transformations in themselves and defined individuals [...]."⁸⁷⁶ However, this *scientia iudicialis*, Peter of Abano writes, is very difficult: only a man "who knows well the power of the soul and the natural *complexio*" will be able to master it. It is nevertheless the "best part of the science" and "he who knows it well deserves to be called a "philosophical astrologer" (*astrologus philosophicus*) since "this kind of judicial science is adjacent and closely related to the astrology of movements, natural science, and medicine."⁸⁷⁷ The statement that the astrologer could merit the title of "philosopher" is particularly revealing given the previously discussed image of the

disrepute. Ibid., fol. 16^{rb}: *Alii vero id dixerunt, quia viderunt quosdam se appellantes astrologos, aut simul medicos, et astrologos in iudiciis errare: propter quos scientia astrologiae vituperari non debet, cum sic iudicantes non sint astrologi, sed mendaces et diuinatores.* Even though Peter of Abano here looks at it from a negative perspective, it still becomes evident that the concept of two different roles existed. While a scholar could be an *astrologus* and a *medicus*, this denominated two different occupations.

⁸⁷³ See footnote 846.

⁸⁷⁴ Peter of Abano: *Conciliator*, Venice 1565, *differentia* 10, fol. 17^{ra}: *Significant, enim, stellae super res huius mundi tribus modis: quorum primus subtilis est, et profundus, intamen quod non possit comprehendere scientia propter infinitatem fere indiuiduorum signatorum, qualia sunt naturae et accidentia determinata omnium indiuiduorum existentium in quolibet elementorum.*

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid.: *Secundus modus est, quam potest astrologus cognoscere significationem super vnam speciem, aut super numerum gentium alicuius ciuitatis, et similium, non tamen potest qualitatem, seu numerum, et quantitatem significationis precise habere.*

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid.: *Est autem et tertius modus, quo ex significatione rerum super eas qualitatem, et quantitatem cognoscimus: ceu sunt genera, et species, et elementa, et transmutationes eorum in seipsis, et indiuiduis determinatis, determinate tamen applicatione descendendo.*

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid.: *Quo circa et scientia iudicialis redditur valde difficilis: tamen propter multa sibi adminiculantia, quoniam non poterit dare iudicia secundum stellarum complexionem, nisi homo, qui vim animae et complexionem naturalem bene cognouerit in centiloquio, vnde Haly, commentator, Haec scientie pars melior est cunctis partibus, quae in hac continentur scientia: quam qui bene sciuerit astrologus, philosophicus meretur dici. Huiusmodi enim scientia iudicialis est conterminabilis, et affinis astrologiae de motibus naturali scientiae, et medicinae.*

physician as “physician-philosopher”. It is one of his main objectives of his *Conciliator* and his *Lucidator* to demonstrate that both disciplines are based on theoretical principles and thus qualify as *scientiae*.⁸⁷⁸

The remarks by Peter of Abano discussed here make several aspects of his attitude towards the practitioners of astrology and medicine clear. It is of utmost importance for him to emphasise the need for a physician to know at least the basics of astrology. The physician should take on the part of the astrologer to a certain extent. At the same time, it is evident that Peter of Abano portrays the physician’s activity and that of the astrologer as two distinct roles. Unlike the full-time astrologers, he does not create a hierarchy of prognosticators but calls for cooperation.

In his text, then, we can see the perspective of a physician trying to convince his medical colleagues of the benefits of integrating astrology into their practice. Moreover, his comments indicate a certain resistance to astrology from the medical community. Joël Chandelier sees the strong connection between astrology and medicine propagated by Peter of Abano as a possible explanation for the sparse and in some cases even hostile reception of the *Conciliator* among physicians in the first years after its publication. Its pronounced link to astrology, according to Chandelier, may have met with defensiveness on the part of physicians since they were in the process of fashioning themselves as high-status practitioners of a *scientia*.⁸⁷⁹ A closer relationship with astrology risked thwarting these efforts. For astrologers, by contrast, a closer relationship with medicine offered advantages for their cause to be recognised as

⁸⁷⁸ For Peter of Abano’s conception of astrology’s status as *scientia*, see Peter of Abano: *Lucidator*, ed. Federici Vescovini, pp. 106–151: *Differentia prima: An astrologia sit scientia cum eius appenditiis* (see also Federici Vescovini’s explanation to this on pp. 67–72). See on this also: Seller: *Scientia astrorum*, pp. 19–21; Graziella Federici Vescovini: *L’astrologie comme science théorique, rationnelle et autorisée dans le Lucidator de Pietro d’Abano*, in: Boudet / Collard / Weill-Parot (eds.): *Médecine, astrologie et magie*, pp. 3–20. See on the general medieval discussions on the status of medicine as *scientia*, and the influence of Aristotle in this context: Danielle Jacquart: *Die scholastische Medizin*, in: Mirko D. Grmek (ed.): *Die Geschichte des medizinischen Denkens: Antike und Mittelalter*, Munich 1996, pp. 216–259, esp. 237–238.

⁸⁷⁹ Joël Chandelier: *Pietro d’Abano et les médecins: réception et réputation du Conciliator en Italie dans les premières années du XIV^e siècle*, in: Boudet / Collard / Weill-Parot (eds.): *Médecine, astrologie et magie entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance*, pp. 197–198. With the emergence of the universities, a greater institutionalisation of medicine occurred. Moreover, in the late Middle Ages, a greater diversification took place between different groups of medical practitioners, accompanied by discussions about the status of the branches and the membership to each group. See for the discussions about the empirical and theoretical parts of medicine and its relation to philosophy at the University of Padua: Siraisi: *Arts and Sciences at Padua*, pp. 152–155. More generally on the professionalisation of medicine and the debates about its status: Bullough: *The Emergence of Medicine as a Profession*; Vern L. Bullough: *Medieval Medicine and the Search for Status*, in: Bullough (ed.): *Universities, Medicine and Science*, pp. 151–159. On the general development of medieval medical practice and the role of practitioners: Siraisi: *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine*, pp. 17–47.

legitimate. Peter of Abano, who was both an astrologer and a physician, therefore propagates the image of the “physician-philosopher” as well as the “philosophical astrologer”, thus emphasising the high status of both professions and elevating the astrologer to the same academic level as the physician – but not above it.

Although the integration of astrology into medical practice met with resistance in Italy, ‘physician-astrologers’ such as Peter of Abano became more commonplace, decisively influenced by the institutionalisation of astrology as a university subject and the intertwining in the training of astrologers and physicians. While such a development did not occur to the same extent in France, interest in astrological medicine seems to have increased there, too, from the fourteenth century onwards.⁸⁸⁰ Indeed, in the first half of the fourteenth century, we find a French scholar who can be classified as a ‘physician-astrologer’: Geoffrey of Meaux, active between 1310 and 1348.⁸⁸¹

Not much is known about Geoffrey of Meaux’s biography. His name first appears in a document from 1310, in which he is included among forty “masters and bachelors of arts and medicine” of the University of Paris, chosen to examine the *Ars brevis* written by Ramon Llull.⁸⁸² There are also indications in his writings that he gave lectures, though it is unclear whether he did so in an official position at the university or in a private capacity.⁸⁸³ In 1326, he is furthermore listed as one of the six royal physicians

⁸⁸⁰ Apart from Geoffrey of Meaux, there were also physicians like Pierre Chauchat, for example, who was a master regent at the university of Paris in the 1330s or the Italian Maino de Maineri, who taught at the Parisian Faculty of Medicine between 1326 and 1333, who both showed a strong interest in astrological considerations, but who were foremost physicians. See Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, pp. 132–134.

⁸⁸¹ See on Geoffrey of Meaux: Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 281–294; Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, pp. 124–134; Nothaft: *Glorious Science or “Dead Dog”?*, pp. 54–55; Pierre Charon, *Note sur Geoffroy de Meaux*.

⁸⁸² CUP, vol. 2, ed. Chatelain / Denifle, no. 679, pp. 140–141. While some of the scholars are explicitly designated as *baccalareus* or *magister* in either the arts or medicine, Geoffrey of Meaux is merely listed by name (*Gaufridus de Meldis*). It is thus not apparent whether he held a degree in medicine. However, the fact that he is mentioned by name at all – which is not the case for all forty scholars – shows that he seems to have been well-respected. Evidence that he was still part of the scholarly community of the University of Paris in the 1320s – or at least that his writings were taken note of – can be found in the form of a surviving controversy in which he does not appear to have been directly involved, but for which one of his writings was the starting point. See for the details of the controversy: Nothaft: *Glorious Science or “Dead Dog”?*; also: Otto Hartwig: *Henricus de Langenstein*, pp. 27–30.

⁸⁸³ For the references to teaching, see Geoffrey of Meaux: *Compendium astronomie iudicialis*, BL, MS. Sloane 1680, fol. 43^{ra}, 43^{vb}. Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, p. 283, concludes from them that Geoffrey of Meaux taught at the University of Paris. Danielle Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, pp. 126–127, however, points out that apart from the evidence mentioned above, there are no further references to Geoffrey of Meaux in any academic documents. Therefore, she considers it improbable that he was Master Regent at the Faculty of Medicine and raises the possibility of him giving lectures privately. She corroborates her assumption by comparing Geoffrey of Meaux’s assertions on medical astrology with those of scholars who verifiably taught at the university of Paris and detects clear differences (*Ibid.*, pp. 132–133).

who attended the coronation of the third wife of the French King Charles IV, Joan of Évreux, and he may also have served the king as an astrologer.⁸⁸⁴ Geoffrey of Meaux thus seems to have received his medical training at the University of Paris and possibly taught there before finding employment at the royal court.⁸⁸⁵ In addition, he appears to have spent some time at Oxford, possibly in the 1340s.⁸⁸⁶

His surviving writings reflect his medical training but reveal, above all, his interest in astrological topics.⁸⁸⁷ Geoffrey of Meaux did not write a comprehensive introductory work on astrology; he produced several shorter treatises in which he explains specific astrological theories and the influence of certain astronomical phenomena. Nevertheless, all his texts are, to some extent, introductory in character, expounding basic astrological principles and often containing brief justifications for astrology. Two of his works, in particular, shed light on how Geoffrey of Meaux – as a ‘physician-astrologer’ – understood his role(s) and how he sought to portray himself.

The first of these texts is the *Compendium astronomie iudicialis*, which provides an overview of medical astrology.⁸⁸⁸ After some general explanations about how heavenly influences affect the human body, he addresses how to astrologically determine crises in diseases, apply astrology in uroscopy, and elect the right time to administer medicine.⁸⁸⁹ The text is thus not a comprehensive introduction to astrology but is limited to its

⁸⁸⁴ The only evidence of this, which is referenced by other researchers, is found in the text of Achille Chéreau: *Les médecins de six rois de France, 1270–1350*, in: *L’Union médicale*, NS 24 (1864), pp. 573–580, 605–613, 621–628, for the mentions of Geoffrey of Meaux: p. 577, p. 613. Chéreau bases his information on the *Comptes de la maison* that are in the Archives générales. However, he does not give any more specific details and only paraphrases the mention of Geoffrey of Meaux. At a later point, Chéreau writes that Geoffrey of Meaux “combined the functions of physician and astrologer to the king” (*cumula les fonctions de médecin du roi et d’astrologue*). It would be instructive to know whether Chéreau simply deduced this from the existing texts of Geoffrey of Meaux, which show his interest in astrology, or whether there is a direct description of him as an astrologer in the documents.

⁸⁸⁵ It is unlikely that he was active at the university and the court simultaneously. As Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, p. 127, notes, the court of the King of France and the medical Faculty in the first half of the fourteenth century formed “two worlds that seemed to ignore each other” (“deux mondes qui semblent s’ignorer”) – no master regent is known to have acted as a royal physician before the second half of the fourteenth century.

⁸⁸⁶ In his letter on the astrological causes of the plague, written after 1345, which can be found in a manuscript that was compiled and produced by the circle of scholars interested in astrology/astronomy during that time in Oxford, Geoffrey of Meaux refers twice to the longitude of Oxford in his elaborations. See Geoffrey of Meaux: *Letter on the astrological causes of the plague*, BLO, MS. Digby 176, fol. 26^v, 27^r.

⁸⁸⁷ For a list of his writings with the respective manuscripts, see Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 715–717.

⁸⁸⁸ For the transcriptions, I use BL, MS. Sloane 1680, fols. 42^{ra}–45^{va}. Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, p. 716, lists two other extant fifteenth-century manuscripts that contain the text.

⁸⁸⁹ For a more detailed account of the text, see Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, pp. 292–293; Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, pp. 124–126; and Jacquart: *La médecine médiévale dans le cadre parisien*, pp. 461–462.

medical use. References to teaching in the text suggest that it was part of a lecture; whether the target audience was primarily aspiring physicians or astrologers is not explicitly stated.⁸⁹⁰

It is noteworthy, however, that Geoffrey of Meaux calls the practitioner of the explained procedures an *astrologus/astronomus* or – in one case – a *medicus astronomus*.⁸⁹¹ He states that the contents of the treatise were “extracted from books of astronomy” (*ex libris astronomie*), albeit “in as much as it applies to the art of medicine” (*quantum spectat ad artem medicine*).⁸⁹² In his discussion of the various topics, he subjects all medical procedures to astrological judgements.⁸⁹³ He is thus concerned with astrologers and their training in medicine – in other words, he offers an astrological perspective on medical issues.⁸⁹⁴ Yet Geoffrey of Meaux does not refer to himself directly as either *astrologus* or *medicus*.

Another of his works, a letter in which he discusses the causes of the Black Death, provides further clues to his view of the roles of the physician and the astrologer. As a ‘physician-astrologer’, Geoffrey of Meaux was naturally interested in the outbreak of the Black Death, the most momentous medical event of the time.⁸⁹⁵ Sometime after 1345, he composed a letter, which he said he wrote at the request of “some of his friends” who wanted to know more about the disease’s background and effects.⁸⁹⁶ Apart

⁸⁹⁰ Geoffrey of Meaux: *Compendium astronomie iudicialis*, BL, MS. Sloane 1680, fol. 43^{ra}: [...] *hoc totum uobis exponam sensibilibiter in legendo et tunc poteritis habere causam dubitandi et querendi et etiam respondendi* [...]. Ibid.: fol. 43^{vb}: *Et licet in istis tribus consistit scientia ualde grandis dico quod sensibilius uidebitur in legendo quod uobis exponam quidquid fuerit exponendum*. Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, p. 292, therefore assumes that the text was “the general introduction to a more detailed course of university lectures of the subject.” See also footnote 883.

⁸⁹¹ For example, Geoffrey of Meaux: *Compendium astronomie iudicialis*, BL, MS. Sloane 1680, fol. 42^{vb} (*astrologus*), 43^{ra} (*astronomus*), 43^{vb} (*medicus astronomus*).

⁸⁹² Ibid., fol. 45^{va}: *Explicit tractatus brevis et utilis de esse infirmorum et infirmitatum ex libris astronomie extractus quantum spectat ad artem medicine editus a magistro gamfredo de meldis*. He also states at the beginning of the work (Ibid., fol. 42^{rb}) that he agrees with the general assumption of “all astrologers” (*cum omnibus astronomis*) that the heavenly bodies influence earthly matters. Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, p. 126, confirms that all sources cited within the work are astrological.

⁸⁹³ Particularly in his elaborations on uroscopy, he draws on the *De urina non visa*, written in 1219 by William of England, who argued for the importance to first include astrological considerations before examining the urine to make a prognosis for the patient. See for a summary of Geoffrey of Meaux’s treatment of the subject: Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, pp. 125–126. Jacquart: *ibid.*, p. 134, also points out that Geoffrey of Meaux’s insistence on the significance of astrological considerations indeed goes beyond what physicians connected to the University of Paris at that time propagated.

⁸⁹⁴ Jacquart: *Médecine et astrologie à Paris*, p. 127, concludes that “l’ensemble du traité semble en effet plus concerner la formation de l’astrologue que celle du médecin.”

⁸⁹⁵ For literature on the Black Death and astrology, see footnote 795.

⁸⁹⁶ The letter has not been edited yet but a partial translation is included in: *The Black Death*, ed. Horrox, pp. 167–172. Geoffrey of Meaux: *Letter on the astrological causes of the plague*, BLO, MS. Digby 176, fols. 26^r–29^r, here fol. 26^r: *Rogatus a quibusdam amicis meis ut de causa huius generalis pestilentie aliquid scriberem causam eius ostendendo naturaliter*. Whether Geoffrey of Meaux was actually approached by friends about these issues or whether this was merely a *topos* that served as a fitting

from the general cause of its outbreak, they had asked him specifically about the duration of the disease and the reasons for the varying prevalence in different countries, cities, villages, and even streets and houses, and the lower susceptibility of great and noble families.⁸⁹⁷ They also wanted to know what “suitable remedy” (*remedium oportunum*) he would suggest according to his “own judgement and medical advice” (*iuxta iudicium meum et consilium medicinale*).⁸⁹⁸

At first glance, this appears to be a straightforward request made to a medical practitioner regarding the spread and the treatment of a disease. However, the explanations put forward by Geoffrey of Meaux are entirely astrological. This focus is clear from the outset: he begins with an exposition of general astrological principles, which includes an overview of the stars’ influence on earthly affairs, a description of the zodiac’s divisions, and an explanation of the conjunction theory.⁸⁹⁹ After these preliminary remarks, he turns to the enquiries of his friends, and here, too, addresses the disease’s occurrence through the influence of the heavenly bodies without resorting to medical explanations.⁹⁰⁰ He associates the general outbreak of the Black Death with a total lunar eclipse on the 18th of March, 1345 and a simultaneous conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars in Aquarius.⁹⁰¹ Regarding the more specific questions, he faced a common astrologer’s dilemma that was often raised by critics – why planetary constellations did not affect all places and people equally. In his answer, he invokes

beginning for the treatise is not clear as he does not name anyone specific. References to the longitude of Oxford in the letter, as well as its inclusion in MS. Digby 176, a fourteenth-century composite manuscript brought together sometime between 1369 and 1382, by the Oxford scholar William Reede († 1385) and containing texts by Oxford scholars of Merton College, suggest that he wrote the text in Oxford, or may have had contact with those scholars. For the references to the longitude of Oxford see footnote 886. For the background and content of the manuscript, see Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, pp. 55–59; Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 2, pp. 265–270. See also Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 58–78; Jean-Boudet / Miolo: *Alfonsine Astronomy and Astrology*, pp. 57–105.

⁸⁹⁷ Geoffrey of Meaux: Letter on the astrological causes of the plague, BLO, MS. Digby 176, fol. 26^r: *Et quare contingit tot prouinciis. Et quare illis prouinciis plus quam aliis. Et quare plus in quibusdam ciuitatibus et uillis earundem prouinciarum quam in aliis predictarum. Et in eadem uilla quare contingit plus in uno uico quam in alio ac etiam plus in una domo quam in alia. Et quare minus magnatibus et generosis quam alteri populo. Et quanto tempore duraret.*

⁸⁹⁸ Ibid.: *Et assignata causa de remedio oportuno scriberem iuxta iudicium meum et consilium medicinale.*

⁸⁹⁹ Ibid., fols. 26^{r-v}.

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid., fol. 26^v: *Modo istis uisis apponatis mentem ad causas habemus tante mortalitatis in tot prouinciis et infirmitatum veniencium per constellationem.*

⁹⁰¹ Ibid.: *Unde notum fuerit et est omnibus astrologis quod anno domini 1345 incipiendo annum a ianuari fuerit eclipsis lune uniuersaliter cum magna mora 18 die marcii una hora post ortum lune ad longitudine oxonie et similiter tempore fuerit duo superiores gradu per gradum coniuncti in aquario et mars cum eis in eodem signo infra lumen iouis.*

complex astrological factors that he considers responsible for the different manifestations of the disease.⁹⁰²

As in the *Compendium*, he bases his arguments exclusively on astrological or philosophical authorities, which he emphasises from the outset.⁹⁰³ The opinions of medical authors do not appear to have been relevant to him in this context. He also repeatedly invokes the general expertise of “astrologers” (*astrologi*).⁹⁰⁴ Furthermore, he engages critically with specific astrological opinions of contemporary scholars: He mentions certain “writers of the Roman curia”, one of whom had informed the French queen that the constellation's effects would last 35 years.⁹⁰⁵ Other Roman writers, he continues, had claimed that the conjunction of Jupiter and Mars was the only reason for the outbreak of the plague.⁹⁰⁶ While Geoffrey of Meaux explains that he does not agree with either statement, the mention of these astrologers and the discussion of their opinions in his letter shows that he participated in the astrological discourse of his time. The clear impression is that he fashioned himself as part of the astrological rather than the medical community.⁹⁰⁷

Although Geoffrey of Meaux focuses on astrological considerations and indirectly presents himself as an astrologer, the letter also demonstrates his medical expertise. A first indication of this is his remark that his friends sought his “medical advice” (*consilium medicinale*).⁹⁰⁸ At one point, he also uses the functioning of compound

⁹⁰² Geoffrey of Meaux addresses the questions one by one but attributes the differences mainly to the idea that places and people are ruled by different fixed stars and planets, which would entail a different susceptibility to the disease. Ibid., fol. 27^v: *Quelibet ciuitas uilla et domus habet stellas fixas et planetas dominantes super eas testante ptolomeo in centilogio suo [...] quacumque ergo illarum omnium quorum gubernatores sunt concordēs in uirtutibus et operationibus cum planetis et stellis praedictae coniunctionis signantes illam generalem mortalitatem erunt parate recipere illam influentiam celestem corporibus [...]*

⁹⁰³ He states that to “show the cause of all the aforementioned,” he will “take the foundation from the wise authors, philosophers, and astrologers who have spoken about such subject matter.” Ibid., fol. 26^v: *[...] ad hoc ut ostendam causam omni praedictorum capiam fundamentum auctorum philosophorum et astrologorum sapientum qui de tali materia sunt locuti.*

⁹⁰⁴ See, for example, ibid., fol. 27^v: *Notum fuerit et est omnibus astrologis quod [...]*. This or similar expressions appear repeatedly in the text.

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid., fol. 27^v: *Respexi scripta quorundam scribencium in curia romana quorum unus scripsit domine regine francie ut audiui et ipse scripsit quod duraret talis effectus per xxxv annos [...]*. As the letter was written after 1345, Geoffrey of Meaux likely refers to queen Joan of Burgundy (r. 1328–1349), the first wife of Philip VI (r. 1328–1350), although also his second wife Blanche of Navarre (r. 1350) or even John II's (r. 1350–1364) wife Joan I (r. 1350–1360) could be meant. The mention of the French queen in any case shows that he seems to have remained connected to the royal court in some way even after the death of Charles IV in 1328.

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid.: *Illii socii qui scripserunt in eadem ciuitate posuerunt causam huiusmodi accidentis coniunctionum iouis cum marte [...]*.

⁹⁰⁷ Even though he does not call himself or the Roman writers “astrologers”, it is clear that they are part of a discussion regarding specifically astrological questions. See for Geoffrey's astrological stance on the Roman writers' statements: Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, p. 291.

⁹⁰⁸ See footnote 898.

medicines to explain the interaction of the planets, presenting the mixing of the influence of the sun and moon with that of the superior planets as analogous to the way compound medicines work.⁹⁰⁹ Hence, he employs medical knowledge to clarify the seemingly lesser-known principles of astrology, addressing a readership that appears to be familiar with medical topics but not with astrology.

Geoffrey of Meaux's background as a physician is particularly apparent in the last part of his letter, in which he deals with "the most suitable remedies against this heavenly influence".⁹¹⁰ While this is principally a medical concern, Geoffrey of Meaux first returns to astrological deliberations. He explains that "not all things which befall men through the heavenly bodies are inevitable."⁹¹¹ The way people are affected by the plague also depends on their "own natures" (*ex propriis naturis*).⁹¹² This included not only the person's general state of health but, above all, their nativity, which, if it was clearly favourable or unfavourable to an illness, determined whether someone became ill or not.⁹¹³ However, if the nativity was ambiguous – i.e. a person's nativity neither wholly corresponded to the configuration nor was contrary to it – the patient's chances of recovery depended on the adoption of a good or bad *regimen* and the application of the right medication.⁹¹⁴ It is at this point that the physician's responsibility and the opportunity for medical intervention begin. Geoffrey of Meaux demonstrates in the remainder of his letter that he also fulfils this role of a physician since he gives specific medical instructions for treating the patient, such as requiring a concoction of linseed and camomile boiled in wine to be rubbed on the patient's chest.⁹¹⁵ However, his role as an astrologer always shines through and takes precedence as he explains that any determination of the correct *regimen* and medication at a specific time always depends

⁹⁰⁹ Geoffrey of Meaux: Letter on the astrological causes of the plague, BLO, MS. Digby 176, fol. 26^v: [...] *et conmixtione illorum et solis et lune una cum planetarum superioribus eis conmixtis generatur una uirtus celestis que operatur in inferioribus iuxta naturam superiorum trahencium ad se uirtutes solis et lune sicut naturaliter contingit in medicinis compositis* [...]. He then provides as an example the mixture of turbith and ginger.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid., fol. 28^r: *Nunc restat scribere remedium magis conueniens quod possit fieri contra istam influentiam celestem* [...].

⁹¹¹ Ibid.: *Quod omnia que proueniunt hominibus per corpora celestia non sunt necessaria* [...].

⁹¹² Ibid.

⁹¹³ Ibid.: *Et intelligere debetis quod nativitas cuiuslibet sit que contrariatur huic constellationi significanti habent mortalitatem non tanget mortalitas* [...] Here, again, he helps the reader understand this correlation by referring to medical knowledge: [...] *sicud noscunt medici et omnes naturales quod in qualitatibus symbolis facilis est transmutacio*.

⁹¹⁴ Ibid.: *Et cuius nativitas est minus affiliate huic constellationi et extoto non contrariatur est corpus quod potest cum bono regimine et certis medicinis quas dicam post ab ista pestilentia praeservari et si utatur malo regimine potest faciliter eam incurrere*.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid., fol. 28^v.

on what astrological influences prevail.⁹¹⁶ His only purely medical advice is contained in his last sentence, in which he advises people to avoid close contact with others because the disease is contagious.⁹¹⁷

Overall, Geoffrey of Meaux presents himself first and foremost as someone practising astrology, attributing the Black Death's causes and manifestations to astrological factors. He considers astrology crucial for assessing a patient's chances of recovery and selecting appropriate treatment, with medical intervention following only after an evaluation of astrological influences. He does not directly compare the roles of the physician and the astrologer in the texts analysed. However, the primacy of the astrologer, or rather of astrology, is made abundantly clear, reinforcing Geoffrey's self-fashioning as an astrologer. His identification as an astrologer is even more apparent in his other surviving texts, which focus exclusively on astrological topics.⁹¹⁸ Although he does not explicitly label himself an astrologer here either, he frequently draws on the expertise of *astrologi*.⁹¹⁹ In his treatise on the comet of 1337, Geoffrey examines the reasons for its appearance, stating that a "true astrologer" (*verus astronomus*) needs this knowledge for an accurate judgement.⁹²⁰ He thus implicitly presents himself as a "true astrologer" by demonstrating this knowledge. Furthermore, he details his own observations of celestial movements and their interpretations, essentially describing his work as an astrologer.⁹²¹

While Geoffrey of Meaux's texts mainly show his interest in astrology, the information we have about his life – scant as it is – mainly points towards his occupation as a medical practitioner. In the early fourteenth century, astrology was not

⁹¹⁶ Before suggesting specific treatments, he explains the effects that dominant planets in each case have. *Ibid.*, fol. 28^r.

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 29^r: *Uitet etiam unusquisque eorum stare diu uel communicare cum aliquo habente istam egritudinem pestilencialem quia contagiosa est pro eo quod uenenosa interficiens a tota specie.*

⁹¹⁸ In addition to the Letter and the Compendium, Geoffrey of Meaux composed shorter treatises on specific celestial phenomena and a calendar. See also footnote 887. Three of his treatises are edited in: *Latin Treatises on Comets*, ed. Thorndike, pp. 210–214 (*De stellis comatis*); pp. 215–218 (*Iudicium de eclipsis solis*); pp. 221–225 (On the Comet of 1337 [without Latin title]).

⁹¹⁹ See, for example, in his treatise on a comet in 1315: Geoffrey of Meaux: *De stellis comatis*, ed. Thorndike, p. 210, where he states that "this is the joint opinion of all astrologers. (*Et hec est communis opinione omnium astrologorum.*) He also refers to Ptolemy and Albumasar, "who were the most excellent in the science of the stars" (*qui fuerunt excellentiores in stellarum scientia*) and addresses his treatise to "all studying the science of the stars" (*omnibus in stellarum scientia studentibus*).

⁹²⁰ Geoffrey of Meaux: On the Comet of 1337, ed. Thorndike, p. 223: *Visis causis generantibus istam stellam inquisivi signum sub quo fuit generata, quibus ignotis a vero astronomo numquam verum iudicium debet dari.*

⁹²¹ See, for example, *ibid.*: *In primis dico quod in prima nocte qua vidi eam, licet iam fuerat visa me ignorante quasi per 12 dies ante, et vidi eam prope paralellum articum et nullam stellam prope eam, ita quod de loco suo fui totaliter desperatus.* See also Chapter 4.1.2.

well-established as a career or institutionalised at university in France, which could explain his need to practice as a physician. He uses medical knowledge either as an explanatory aid for astrological content or as an additional discipline that comes into play after astrological considerations. Geoffrey demonstrates in his texts his ability to fulfil both roles, but his passion seems to lie in astrology. His emphasis on astrology's primacy for medical issues corresponds, in fact, most closely to the 'full-time' astrologer Guido Bonatti's statements. Geoffrey's writings thus testify to a desire for a more elevated role for the astrologer in France and a call for greater incorporation of astrology into medical practice.

In all of the texts examined here, it is apparent that the authors perceived and propagated the activity of an astrologer as a distinct role with specific competencies. Depending on their circumstances, this was emphasised to varying degrees. The work of astrologers was placed on the same or even a higher intellectual level as that of physicians to bestow it with the same legitimacy. Astrology is unanimously credited with significant benefits in solving questions related to human health. It is recommended that the astrologer be consulted first to determine the general conditions and the best course of action before the physician applies his practical medical skills based on the astrologer's advice. Astrologers and physicians are thus presented as cooperating partners, with the astrologer having the first and superior say. The physician was exhorted to listen to an astrologer or be knowledgeable in astrology – thus assuming the role of the astrologer himself – before starting his treatment.

This image of harmonious cooperation and the voluntary subordination of physicians is, of course, an ideal image propagated by astrologers. The claimed superiority of astrology, the constant emphasis on the importance of integrating astrology into medical practice and the references to that fact that this was not always done point to a certain reluctance of physicians to incorporate astrology into their practice and hint at rivalry between astrologers and physicians. Danielle Jaquart demonstrates that such a rivalry persisted or even intensified in fifteenth-century Paris as astrologers increasingly found success. She refers, for example, to the physician Jacques Despars (†1458), active at the University of Paris and the Burgundian court, who criticized astrology and warned against placing astrological judgements above medical assessments. Intriguingly, he advised physicians to nevertheless include astrological considerations in their treatment, not because this was necessary for

medical practice but to accommodate clients' preferences.⁹²² Despars even suggested that physicians could feign astrological expertise to maintain a good reputation.⁹²³ Astrology was thus portrayed as a fashionable trend that physicians had to accommodate to satisfy clients, but their medical expertise remained paramount. The fact that medical practitioners felt the need to address the role of astrology in the fifteenth century testifies to astrology's increasing popularity and the growing prominence of astrologers: without them as competitors, such considerations would have been superfluous.

In summary, physicians and astrologers shared a joint education and had an overlapping subject area in the field of human health. However, their specific responsibilities and relationship with each other were still in a process of negotiation in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For medical practitioners, a connection to astrology could threaten their discipline's supremacy and expose them to the criticisms associated with astrology. Yet it also equipped them with an additional skill that was becoming increasingly popular with clients. For astrologers, linking their subject to medicine was beneficial, as it enabled them to distinguish themselves as respectable scholars with valuable knowledge for physicians. They portrayed their abilities as surpassing practical medical knowledge, claimed better access to theoretical knowledge, and presumed to be able to guide physicians in their actions.

5.2 Friend or Foe? – Theologians

While astrologers could present their activity as superior to that of physicians, this was not possible in the case of theologians. The starting point and central question here pertained to astrology's compatibility with theology, or rather, the Christian faith, which was addressed in virtually all astrological texts. However, the aim of the following subchapter is not to trace the various arguments in the discussions of the justification of astrology – these have already been the subject of numerous studies.⁹²⁴ Instead, this

⁹²² Jacquart: *La médecine médiévale*, pp. 464–465. See also her discussion of Jacques Despars' point of view in: Danielle Jacquart: *Theory, Everyday Practice, and Three Fifteenth-Century Physicians*, in: *Osiris* 6 (1990), pp. 140–160, esp. pp. 148–154. Unfortunately, I had no direct access to the work of Jacques Despars, a commentary on Avicenna's *Canon*, which seems to be available only in early modern editions. Jacquart cites the 1498 edition from Lyon.

⁹²³ Jacquart: *Theory, Everyday Practice, and Three Fifteenth-Century Physicians*, p. 149.

⁹²⁴ See, for example, d'Alverny: *Astrologues et théologiens*; Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, vol. 1, esp. pp. 173 – 270; Sorokina: *Les sphères, les astres et les théologiens*.

section will analyse in detail the positioning of astrologers vis-à-vis theologians, which took place within the framework of these discussions.⁹²⁵

In these comparisons, a twofold picture emerges: On the one hand, theologians are presented as a group that is often hostile or at least sceptical towards the astrologers and their discipline. Contradicting theologians in this matter poses a particular challenge, as astrologers needed to avoid any suspicion of heresy. On the other hand, astrologers claim a role similar to theologians, arguing that their work is in the service of God and that they fulfil a similar function to theologians in recognising and interpreting the divine order. These two poles of positioning towards theologians and theology will be examined in more detail. It is important to emphasise that these stances go hand in hand, and that both viewpoints are usually expressed by astrologers: they distinguish themselves from theologians with ‘wrong’ views of astrology while aligning their activities with those of ‘true’ theologians.

5.2.1 Theologians versus Astrologers

Roger Bacon was one of the astrologically minded scholars of the thirteenth century who discussed the opposition of theologians against the discipline and its practitioners in depth.⁹²⁶ The overall aim of his *Opus majus* was to demonstrate the compatibility between theology and philosophy, under which he also included “mathematics” (*mathematica*) in general and astrology in particular.⁹²⁷ In his discussions on *mathematica*, he points out that the criticism against it refers mainly to the “judgements of astronomy” (*iudicia astronomie*), i.e. astrology.⁹²⁸ As a group espousing this opposition, Roger Bacon identifies theologians (*theologi*) who invoked passages from the texts of sacred writers to argue against astrologers (*mathematici*).⁹²⁹

Roger Bacon believes two factors are to blame for what he considers a misguided opposition. First, the existence of “false mathematicians” (*mathematici falsi*) who use demonic help and ascribe absolute necessity to celestial influences: these practitioners

⁹²⁵ I understand theologians here to mean scholars who are primarily concerned with theology and who are referred to as such by astrologers. This therefore includes theologians in the narrower sense, i.e. those who are affiliated to a theological faculty, as well as members of religious orders or simple clerics.

⁹²⁶ See on Roger Bacon’s discussion of astrology and religion: Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, pp. 235–270.

⁹²⁷ See Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 33–65 (on philosophy and theology); *ibid.*, part 4 [no chapter numbers], pp. 175–404 (specifically on *mathematica* and theology).

⁹²⁸ *Ibid.*, part 4, p. 239: *Et illud in quo maxime percutitur mathematica est propter iudicia astronomiae.*

⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*: *Theologi igitur multa invenerunt a sanctis effuse contra mathematicos*, [...]. Roger Bacon often varies in his use of the terms for astrology and astrologers, but here *mathematici* clearly denotes astrologers rather than mathematicians in general.

discredit the discipline and are condemned by both the sacred writers and philosophers.⁹³⁰ They also initially made it difficult to establish the Christian faith: by attributing Christian miracles to this kind of *mathematica*, they were portraying Christians as *mathematici* and *magi* who seduced people.⁹³¹ This partly explains why Christian writers may be particularly wary of engaging in any type of *mathematica*. However, Roger Bacon insists on distinguishing between these “false mathematicians” and the “true mathematicians” (*veri mathematici*), which he explicitly identifies as “astronomers and astrologers” (*astronomos et astrologos*): the activities of this latter group are not to be condemned.⁹³²

Second, the opposition against astrology and its practitioners can, in his opinion, be explained by the theologians’ ignorance of astrological matters, who could not distinguish ‘true’ from ‘false’ *mathematici*.⁹³³ He again ties this into his story of the origin of knowledge. In the distant past, he explains, the ‘false’ *mathematica* had been eradicated by the Church, while at the same time, the “Catholic doctors” had supported and practised the ‘true’ *mathematica*, i.e. astrology. However, this only lasted until the arrival of “certain theologians” (*quidam theologi*) who knew nothing of the “power of philosophy and the fallacies of magic.” In their ignorance, they “have condemned it [i.e. ‘true’ *mathematica*] in their lectures, preaching, and public and private collations”.⁹³⁴ The consequences of this, according to Roger Bacon, were disastrous, for the rejection of astrology would not only lead to the “greatest destruction of philosophy” but would even damage the “dignity of theology” and harm “the Church and the entire community of believers as well as the conversion of unbelievers”.⁹³⁵ In order to show why these

⁹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 240–241.

⁹³¹ Ibid., pp. 241–242: [...] *tales mathematici impediverunt a principio ingressum fidei in hunc mundum, [...], sed opera miraculosa fidem Christi probantia ascripserunt isti mathematicae, dicentes, Christianos esse mathematicos et magos populum seducentes*. The *mathematici* and *magi* here are meant as magicians in general. On astrologers’ stances on the biblical Magi, see Chapter 3.3.1.

⁹³² Through Roger Bacon’s explanations it becomes clear that by *veri mathematici* he means astrologers, but he also writes this directly. Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, p. 242: *Sed veri mathematici, quos in hac parte vocamus astronomos et astrologos, [...]*. Ibid., p. 246: *Et ideo sancti contra hos [i.e. the “false mathematicians”] locuti sunt, et non contra veros mathematicos*.

⁹³³ He often repeats this argument. See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 239, p. 248.

⁹³⁴ Ibid., p. 248: *Sed postquam in ecclesia fuit evacuate falsitas magicae mathematicae, venit in usum catholicorum doctorum consideratione mathematicae verae, et duravit usque ad adventum quorundam theologorum, qui philosophiae potestatem et artis magicae fallacias ignoraverunt et ob hoc eam in lectionibus praedicationibus et collationibus publicis et privatis damnantes, [...]*.

⁹³⁵ Ibid., p. 248: *Primo in maximam philosophiae destructionem, deinde in laesionem theologicae majestatis, et in damna ecclesiae et totius reipublicae fidelium et infidelium conversionis, [...]*. He emphasises that ignorance of this part of *mathematica* would have a ripple effect: since *mathematica* is a key element of philosophy, its ignorance would preclude knowledge of the “whole potency of philosophy”, which in turn would lead to the damage of theology. It becomes clear that he means

condemnations are wrong, he explains various uses of astrology and spheres of influence of astrologers. Apart from more secular benefits, such as providing sound counsel to rulers, he stresses in particular how essential the astrologers' expertise is for the good of the Christian faith.⁹³⁶ This entails, among other things, the strengthening of belief in the Christian faith.⁹³⁷ Roger Bacon links this with the conjunction theory, through which he explains the rise and fall of religions. He includes Christianity among the "six principal sects / religions" (*sectae principales*) which were distinguished by the *astronomi* and expounds why Christianity is superior to the others.⁹³⁸ In addition, he asserts that this astrological theory makes it possible to predict the coming of the Antichrist, i.e. the last "sect / religion".⁹³⁹ According to Roger Bacon, the Antichrist would resort to the power of astrology, just as the "Tartars" and "Saracens" were already doing at that time. In order to prevail, Christians should urgently overcome their scepticism and likewise use astrology to their advantage.⁹⁴⁰ In connection with his remarks, Roger Bacon repeatedly refers to the opposition by "theologians of the present time" (*theologi nunc temporis*), who could not distinguish between magic and astrology and therefore rejected astrology and other useful disciplines.⁹⁴¹

Roger Bacon's ideas about the relevance of astrological expertise to theological matters placed him in dangerous territory. The question of whether philosophical approaches might be applicable to theological concerns, and whether non-theologians should be allowed to engage with theological issues at all, was at the heart of the

astrology in particular by *mathematica* when he refers explicitly here to the "knowledge of the future through mathematics". Ibid.: [...] *quia ignorata mathematica, tota philosophiae potestas ignorabitur. Et si veritas philosophiae laedatur, damnum infertur theologiae, cujus est uti potestate philosophiae, non solum absolute, sed prout ordinat ecclesiam, dirigit rempublicam fidelium, et juvat ad infidelium conversionem praedestinatorum et reprobationem praescitorum. Sed non solum errant in hoc quod futurorum cognitionem per mathematicam fiendam imprudenter damnant, sed quia pro parte, quam licet ex sua abhorrent ignorantia, totum reprobant.*

⁹³⁶ See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 251.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

⁹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 254: *Et hujusmodi nobilissima perscrutatio fit per revolutionem omnium sectarum principalium a principio mundi, nec possunt esse plures, et sunt sectae Hebraeorum, et Chaldaeorum, et Aegyptiorum, et Agarenorum seu Saracenorum, qui fuerunt de Agar et Ismaele, secta Christi, ac secta Antichristi.* *Ibid.*, p. 262: *Sic igitur astronomi discutiunt sectas [...]. [...] Et si comparemus eam ad alias, manifestum est per nobiles conditiones legislatoris et ipsius sectae quod nulla alia digna est, sed sunt hominum figmenta.*

⁹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 254: *Et per hanc viam mathematicae non solum certificamur de professione nostra, sed praemunimur contra sectam Antichristi, de qua simul cum secta Christi fit consideratio in mathematica.* In addition to the study of astrology, he also calls for the use of the sacred texts and various prophecies, the history books, and the books of the philosophers, to achieve a better idea regarding the coming of the Antichrist. See *ibid.*, p. 269.

⁹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 399–402.

⁹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 395–396.

discussions that took place at the University of Paris in the thirteenth century.⁹⁴² Roger Bacon argues not only generally for the compatibility and mutual interdependence of philosophy and theology but directly for the application of astrological theories to Christian matters. Although he maintains that astrology reinforces and supports theology and certainly does not contradict it, such an approach is certainly controversial. However, his aim here is clearly to show that (Christian) astrologers and theologians are on the same side and have the same goal. Astrologers are not portrayed as theologians themselves but as misunderstood allies and potential advisors to theologians. Astrologers do not need to undertake the work of theologians, nor does Roger Bacon ever claim that they should or could; rather they offer additional expertise which is essential to Christian concerns and must be acknowledged by theologians. While Roger Bacon also argues that theologians should engage with astrological content, this is merely to ensure that they understand what astrologers are proposing and to avoid misguided opposition on their part. There is no conflation of roles: his remarks on the usefulness of astrology refer specifically to the activity of *mathematici* or *astrologi / astronomi*. The representation of astrologers in this way once again strengthens the formation of a profile of the astrologer by assigning them the distinct role of allies of theologians. His comments on false and true astrologers, and on the lack of understanding of astrology by some theologians, provide the basis for the emergence of such a role.

Roger Bacon's discussion of the relationship between astrologers and theologians highlights the importance he attached to cooperation between the two groups. It also shows the frequent opposition of theologians and how astrologers should position themselves in this regard. His Italian contemporary Guido Bonatti was even more explicit in his criticism of theologians who were hostile to astrology and used a direct comparison between the activities of theologians and those of astrologers to counter the attacks. Throughout his entire *Liber astronomiae*, Guido Bonatti refers to certain opponents of astrology, whom he mostly calls "fools in tunics" (*fatui tunicati*), whose

⁹⁴² For literature on the debates and condemnations at Paris in the thirteenth century, see Chapter 2.1.2. In 1272, for example, the Paris Faculty of Arts issued a statute forbidding artists to discuss theological questions and, in the case of questions concerning faith and philosophy, to decide them in contradiction to faith. CUP, vol. 1, ed. Denifle / Chatelain, no. 441, pp. 499–500: *Statutum facultatis artium contra artistas tractantes quaestiones theologicas, et ne quis quaestiones, quae fidem attingunt simulque philosophiam, contra fidem determinare audeat*.

“frivolous reasons” (*frivolae occasiones*) for rejecting astrology he intends to refute.⁹⁴³ Although, in some cases, he seems to have specific people in mind,⁹⁴⁴ he generally outlines the behaviour and attitudes of a particular group. It becomes clear, however, that these are not just the long-standing theological arguments of the Church Fathers but constitute real opposition in Guido Bonatti’s environment. The characterisation of his opponents as “wearing tunics” and the description of their views identify them as theologians. Moreover, certain remarks make it likely that he had members of the Dominican Order in mind.⁹⁴⁵

These “fools in tunics” are portrayed as ignorant and eager to ridicule astrologers. In his treatise on elections, for example, Guido Bonatti warns that astrologers should beware of electing something impossible since many people, including “certain wearers of tunics”, were actually “eager to deride the astrologers” and would indeed “invent outrageous lies for their derision”.⁹⁴⁶ While Guido Bonatti is referring here to general scepticism towards astrologers, his specific mention of “wearers of tunics” accords them the status of leading opponents. He repeatedly advises against trying to convince them or argue with them since “they have no discernment, they do not understand or believe, and to such people nothing is acceptable.”⁹⁴⁷ However, he concedes that among those “fools in tunics” there are some exceptions – “albeit only a few” – with whom it is

⁹⁴³ Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, treatise 1, chap. 4, cols. 3–4: *Qvi hanc scientiam uilipendendam esse dixerunt, licet friuolas, aliquas tamen inuenerunt occasiones ut reprobent. Quarum prima est quod scientia stellarum non potest sciri tota, dicentes, quod coelum empireum sit totum stella, et quod influat et imprimat, sicut influunt caeterae stellae, sicut sunt quidam fatui tunicati*. The term *fatui tunicati* is used frequently in his work, see for further examples below.

⁹⁴⁴ In one instance, for example, he refers to “some tunic-wearing people, one of whom was that fool”, which suggest a personal acquaintance: *Ibid.*, chap. 9, col. 10: *Sed possent insurgere aliqui tunicate, unus quorum fuit ille fatuus, [...]*. It is likely that he alludes to John of Vicenza, a contemporary Dominican preacher active at Bologna, who opposed astrology. Guido Bonatti refers to him specifically as one of the “fools” (*fatui*) in a later passage. See *ibid.*, chap. 13, col. 18: *[...] tamen fuerunt quidam insipientes fatui, quorum unus fuit ille Ioannes Vicentinus hypocrita, de ordine Praedicatorum, [...]*. He again discusses him and his activities in more detail in his fifth treatise, see *ibid.*, treatise 5, *consideratio* 141, cols. 210–211.

⁹⁴⁵ The identification as theologians is used here in a broad sense, i.e. clerics representing theological arguments against astrologers. He refers in the context of the “fools in tunics” at least twice to Dominicans – John of Vicenza and Conrad of Brescia. See footnote 948 for the mention of Conrad of Brescia.

⁹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, treatise 7, chap. 5, col. 393: *Non ergo eligas impossibile alicui, quoniam laici, et etiam quidam tunicati, et quasi omnes indifferenter nituntur deridere Astrologos, et fingunt ad eorum derisionem mendacia inaudita*.

⁹⁴⁷ He explains this in the context of a *consideratio* of the clime, in which the question is asked. *Ibid.*, treatise 5, *consideratio* 97, col. 190: *Sed possent forte insurgere aliqui fatui tunicati, et dicere si iudicia diuersificantur secundum situs regionum, ergo sunt falsa, ignorantes quid lateret: nec est eis aliquid respondendum, nec cum eis altercandum, nec enim habent discretionem, nec intelligent, nec credunt, et talibus nihil est probabile*. See also *ibid.*, treatise 1, chap. 9, cols. 10–11: *Se possent insurgere aliqui tunicati, [...], et dicere quod ista non eueniunt ab impressionibus planetarum, unde non est disputandum cum illis [...]*.

worth engaging, as they are discerning and have a good understanding of intelligible matters. Guido Bonatti even provides an example for this, a certain Dominican friar and later bishop of Cesena, called Conrad of Brescia, with whom he seems to have been in contact.⁹⁴⁸

Additionally, Guido Bonatti points to a further potential reason besides lack of intellect why the “fools in tunics” contradict astrologers. In a discussion about the existence of fate (*fortuna*), he points out that some of them argue against it. The wise among them, however, secretly disagree with this sentiment but do not dare voice their true opinion publicly out of fear (*prae timore*) of being despised for it.⁹⁴⁹ Even though Guido Bonatti is commenting here specifically on views about fate, it is clear that he is using this example to convey a certain image of astrologers in general. The astrologer represents the intellectual truth and stands up for it, even if this might lead to attacks against him. The truth is recognised by the wise among the “fools in tunics”, but they are not as courageous as the astrologers and do not profess it for fear of public opinion.

In the examples given so far, Guido Bonatti uses the “fools in tunics” as counterparts to the astrologers to invalidate the arguments of the former and put the latter in a particularly good light. While he presents the two groups as opponents, it is important to emphasise again that the “fools in tunics” do not represent theologians in general but merely a misguided group among them. This is made particularly clear in the fourth chapter of his first treatise, where he directly refers to “theologians” (*theologi*). He addresses those opponents of astrology who claim that sufficient knowledge of the stars cannot be obtained.⁹⁵⁰ In his reply, he states that no one still reprehends astrology except certain people “who call themselves theologians (*theologi*)”. He furthermore adds derisively, “if that is what they are.”⁹⁵¹ Guido Bonatti thus clearly questions the legitimacy of theologians who oppose astrologers, portrays them as the primary critics and implies that they are in fact ‘false’ theologians. Such people, he argues, claim that

⁹⁴⁸ Ibid., treatise 5, Consideratio 97, col. 190: *Sunt tamen inter eos quidam discreti, et bene intelligentes intelligibilia, et cum illis potes bene conferre, licet sint pauci, quorum unus fuit uenerabilis frater Conradus Brixienensis de ordine Predicatorum, quem inueni ualde discretum, et bene intelligentem omnem ueritatem, et utentem ea, qui propter suae scientiae profunditatem effectus est episcopus Cesenas.*

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid., treatise 7, chap. 1, col. 388: *Volo enim te scire quod fortuna dominatur in omni re, licet quidam ex tunicatis idiotae dicant quod fortuna non est, sed solum quod deus uult. Sapientes uero eorum in hoc discrepant in occulto, licet in publico uideantur eis assentire, quod est potius prae timore, ne ipsorum ordines uilipendantur, quam quod credant eos dicere ueritatem.*

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid., treatise 1, chap. 4, cols. 3–5: *Contra illos qui dicunt, quod scientia stellarum non potest sciri ab aliquo.*

⁹⁵¹ Ibid., col. 5: *Praeterea potest iri contra eos hoc modo, quoniam non sunt qui reprehendant modo Astronomiam, nisi quidam qui dicunt se Theologos, cum sint illud quod sunt, [...].*

astrologers lack sufficient knowledge of their field, being unable to name the almost infinite number of stars and that, consequently, no correct predictions can be made on this basis.⁹⁵²

In his response, Guido Bonatti supports the legitimacy of astrologers by comparing their activity to that of theologians. First of all, astrologers might not name all the stars, but they still operate with them, as the stars are subsumed under the twelve signs. An astrologer does, therefore, know a great deal about his subject.⁹⁵³ Moreover, this is comparable with the work of the theologian who preaches every day even though he does not know everything about theology. So, if theologians can preach even though they know very little about theology, the astrologer, who knows a great deal about astrology, is actually more qualified to make astrological judgements. Guido Bonatti concludes: „Astrologers know more about astronomy than theologians know about theology; therefore, astrologers can judge better than theologians can preach.“⁹⁵⁴

Guido Bonatti thus draws a direct comparison between the activity of theologians and astrologers, thereby granting astrologers the same legitimacy or even assessing their activity as standing on a more secure foundation. As in the previous examples, Guido Bonatti uses the confrontation with certain theologians to present the astrologers' activity as legitimate and the theologians' hostility as groundless. This throws into stark relief the profile of the astrologer as an outstanding intellectual who does not allow himself to be discouraged by personal hostility on his way to proclaiming intellectual truth. At the same time, Guido Bonatti avoids the danger of presenting astrology as if it is in opposition to 'real' theology and its representatives by referring only to certain groups of theologians whose legitimacy he doubts. Like Roger Bacon, Guido Bonatti also discusses astrological matters pertaining to Christian issues.⁹⁵⁵ However, he does so

⁹⁵² Ibid.: [...], *qui dicunt, quod Astrologi non nouerunt totam Astronomiam, et si non sciunt eam totam, non possunt secundum eam iudicare nec aliquid praedicere de futuris, cum stellae sint quasi innumerabiles, et Astrologi non faciunt mentionem, nisi de mille et uiginti duabus earum, praeter Planetas.*

⁹⁵³ Ibid.: *Ad quod potest responderi, quod Astrologus licet non denominet omnes stellas, quia ualde prolixum esset, tamen utitur eis omnibus, quoniam ipse utitur duodecim signis, sub quibus fere omnes stellae comprehenduntur.*

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid.: *Et potest eis dici, quod ipsi etiam nesciunt totam Theologiam, nihilominus tamen praedicant tota die, si enim ipsi praedicant sciendo paucam Theologiam, multo fortius potest Astrologus iudicare sciendo multam Astronomiam, non enim potest sciri de Astronomia ita parum, quin sit multum respectu eius quod potest sciri de Theologia. [...] restat ergo quod Astrologi sciunt plus de Astronomia, quam ipsi de Theologia, multo fortius igitur possunt iudicare, quam ipsi praedicare.*

⁹⁵⁵ This refers to personal issues such as a person's faith, but also to more general issues of the church such as the good fortune of bishops or religious sub-groups. See, for example: Ibid., treatise 9, On the ninth house, chap. 2, col. 781: *De fide nati ac ipsius scientiae profunditate.* Ibid., treatise 8, chap. 110, col. 608: [...] *significat gaudium et laetitia et bonum status episcoporum et aliorum religiosorum, et deo*

to a much lesser extent and without emphasising the astrologer's role for the future development of Christianity. This difference is due to the different backgrounds of the authors and the diverging purposes of the works: while Roger Bacon, as a Franciscan friar writing to the Pope, is primarily interested in presenting the astrologer as an indispensable ally of the Church, Guido Bonatti, a political advisor to secular rulers and author of a handbook for aspiring astrologers, is much more concerned with portraying the astrologer as a legitimate scholar, free from theological suspicion. For the most part, the astrologers' engagement with opposing theologians does not include a direct comparison of the two activities. Nevertheless, the statements about the behaviours and characteristics of the group members offer insight into how they understood their role in relation to others.

5.2.2 Astrologers as Theologians

Astrologers' concerns were not limited to the opposition of theologians. They also addressed the extent to which they were allowed to engage with issues that would typically fall within the purview of theology. There were several thematic meeting points between theology and astrology that exacerbated the controversy over astrology: these became key points on which the astrologers needed to position themselves. The main areas of contention were the question of free will and the extent to which contingent events were predestined or known by God, along with the role of natural causes and the relation of astrology to eschatological prophecy.⁹⁵⁶ While these issues were central to the work of astrologers, they traditionally fell within the remit of theologians. The question astrologers faced, therefore, revolved around what was permissible for them to discuss: How far were they entitled to venture into the theologians' sphere of responsibility, and what were the limits of their activity?

On the one hand, they needed to project an image of being experts in their field, capable of giving satisfactory answers to central concerns. On the other hand, they had to be careful not to overstep their disciplinary boundaries to such an extent as to risk accusations of heresy. The attempt to find an ideal balance between these two concerns is reflected to varying degrees in astrologers' writings. Their positions on these issues depended greatly on their individual backgrounds. While some were cautious, stressing

seruientium, [...]. [...] et augmentabuntur sectae seu religiones approbatae ab ecclesia Romana: et erunt deo seruientes et laudantes eum [...].

⁹⁵⁶ Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, pp. 229–259, discusses those issues regarding John Ashenden's stance.

that astrologers should not take on the role of theologians, others were more focused on highlighting the relevance of astrologers' opinions on theological issues. In both cases, however, the astrologers' preoccupation with their remit raised their profile. It gave greater legitimacy to their role, either by broadening their area of expertise or by clarifying where their competencies lie and where they end.

A particularly remarkable example of an astrologer who extensively discussed theological questions is Michael Scot. It is significant that he did not do this in separate treatises dedicated to theology but included his theological deliberations in his introductory work on astrology, thus presenting them as a vital concern for astrologers. His comments on theological matters are made specifically in his capacity as an astrologer. Michael Scot's theological views were recently discussed in an article by Oleg Voskoboynikov with the suggestive title "Michel Scot, le théologien".⁹⁵⁷ Voskoboynikov's objective, of course, was not to claim that Michael Scot was a professional theologian.⁹⁵⁸ His argument is that the elaborate theological discussions in the prologue of the *Liber introductorius* should not be treated simply as digressions, as previously suggested by Thorndike.⁹⁵⁹ Instead, Voskoboynikov argues that they were "an integral part of the science of the stars and the mentality of Michael Scot" and served as a means of Christianising astrology.⁹⁶⁰ Michael Scot's specific thoughts on theological issues are of only secondary interest here. Instead, what is significant for the question of the astrologer's profile is how he comments on the relationship between astrology and theology and how he circumscribes the astrologer's role in these passages.

While religious issues permeate the entire *Liber introductorius*, the most extensive discussions of theological matters are found in the prologue. They encompass topics that have an obvious connection to astrology. For example, Michael Scot addresses the world's creation and, as is often the case in texts on astrology, refers to the passage

⁹⁵⁷ Oleg Voskoboynikov: Michel Scot, le théologien, in: Nicolas Weill-Parot (ed.): De l'homme, de la nature et du monde. Mélanges d'histoire des sciences médiévales offerts à Danielle Jacquart (École pratique des hautes études, Sciences Historiques et Philologiques 5 / Hautes études médiévales et modernes 113), Geneva, pp. 153–164. See also on Michael Scot's views on theology: Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 2, pp. 316–317; Thorndike: Michael Scot, pp. 40–44; Barbara Obrist: The Physical and the Spiritual Universe: *Infernus* and Paradise in Medieval Cosmography and its Visual Representations (Seventh–Fourteenth Century), in: Studies in Iconography 36 (2015), pp. 41–78, on Michael Scot pp. 53–63.

⁹⁵⁸ Voskoboynikov: Michel Scot, le théologien, p. 153.

⁹⁵⁹ Thorndike: History, vol. 2, p. 317; Thorndike: Michael Scot, pp. 40–41.

⁹⁶⁰ Voskoboynikov: Michel Scot, le théologien, p. 155: "[...] une partie intégrante de la science des astres et de la mentalité de Michel Scot, [...]."

from Genesis according to which God created the heavenly bodies as signs.⁹⁶¹ He employs this to support the claims of astrology and clarify that the stars are simply signs and not causes – “just like a symbol hanging in front of a tavern is not the wine itself but only a sign for it.”⁹⁶² However, he also inserts discussions of topics that fall even more clearly within the exclusive realm of the theologian. He thus discusses, among other things, the Holy Trinity and adds a detailed angelology and demonology.⁹⁶³ Thorndike commented that these passages read “more like a theological *Summa* than an introduction to astrology.”⁹⁶⁴

Michael Scot’s inclusion of such a detailed commentary on theological issues clearly shows that he not only considered himself qualified in his role as an astrologer to provide explanations on these topics but also that he deemed this knowledge necessary for astrologers in general. At the beginning of the prologue, and repeatedly throughout the work, he makes it abundantly clear that his work is intended for aspiring astrologers, and that as astrologers they are required to be concerned with and knowledgeable about these issues.⁹⁶⁵ In a discussion of the nature of angels, he writes that he raises this subject in order not to appear “ignorant and incredulous” (*inscius et incredulus*) on this topic and because he wants “every astrologer thereafter to understand something about the nature of angels” since this is “part of the knowledge of the art of astrology itself, like the knowledge of the stars, the heavens and the planets.”⁹⁶⁶ By discussing theological content, he shows himself knowledgeable in the field, identifies the

⁹⁶¹ Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 5: *Et quod corpora superiora non sint causae sed signa tantum dicitur in Genesi: Deus fecit solem et lunam et stellas ut sint in signa et tempora et dies et menses et annos*. The passage (Gen. 1:14) often formed the starting point for discussions on astrology – for supporters as well as for opponents. See, for example, Peter Abaelard, who included a refutation of astrology in his commentary on Genesis. Peter Abaelard: Expositio in Hexameron, ed. Romig / Luscombe, pp. 47–51.

⁹⁶² Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 5: *Ergo ista corpora superiora non sunt causa eorum quae sunt sed signa tantum veluti est circulus pendens ad tabernam, quia non est idem vinum sed signum vini*.

⁹⁶³ These mainly theologically oriented discussions take up considerable space in the Prohemium. They extend in the edition (Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, Prohemium) from p. 12 to p. 180, where the title of the chapter reflects the different character of the preceding topics by announcing a “return” (*reversio*) to the main theme of astrology.

⁹⁶⁴ Thorndike: Michael Scot, p. 44.

⁹⁶⁵ See, for example, Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 1: *Quicumque vult esse bonus astrologus [...]*.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 110–111: *Et quia fecimus mentionem superius de angelica natura, eam volumus diffinire ac eam sufficienter determinare, [...], ne huius sciencie videamur inscii et increduli, volentes quod omnis astrologus deinceps sciat de angelica natura quod ceteri cognoverunt, et est de arte astronomie cognitio ipsius, velud stellarum celi et planetarum*. However, he does not specify why exactly this knowledge is necessary for astrologers.

knowledge as essential for astrologers and emphasises the close interconnectedness of theological and astrological content.

Although Michael Scot ventures into the theologians' area of expertise with his exposition, he never goes so far as to call himself anything other than an astrologer. There are passages in the *Liber introductorius* that indicate a demarcation between the sphere of action of astrologers and theologians and an explicit hierarchical subordination of astrology to theology. One such instance is found in his discussion of the "essence" (*essencia*) of God. While he does not directly compare theology and astrology, Michael Scot notes how difficult and audacious it is to address this topic at all, asserting that "none of the philosophers" (*nemo philosophorum*) are able to define God fully, nor are they able to do so through the "path of natural philosophy" (*via physica*).⁹⁶⁷ He furthermore cautions that someone who tries to know too much about God risks going astray in his faith.⁹⁶⁸ Michael Scot shows here that there are limits to what astrologers, or natural philosophers in general, are able and allowed to know.⁹⁶⁹ He does not directly state the limits of what a theologian can and should know about God, but his emphasis that God cannot be known by philosophers and through the *via physica* suggests that he intends his statements to indicate a distinction between the areas of competence of theologians and astrologers.⁹⁷⁰ It is remarkable that although Michael Scot warns against delving too deeply into such theological topics with the help of natural philosophy, he himself, as an astrologer, nevertheless treats them in detail. The passages, therefore, read more like mere lip service to ward off possible objections by theologians.

Michael Scot's prologue asserts the direct subordination of several other disciplines to astrology. He states that astrology is useful, necessary, and enjoyable for many different groups of people, and emphasises its crucial and indispensable role in understanding other disciplines. According to Michael Scot, astrology is worthier

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 67: *De Deo et eius essencia. Grandis audacia est in homine quando se introit sic loqui de Deo et eius essencia.* Ibid., p. 69: *Nemo enim philosophorum potuit scire quid perfecte sit Deus diffinitione, nec potuit aliqua via physice invenire quid non sit Deus eternus eo quod inveniunt penitus creaturam non a se posse creari nec esse creatam.*

⁹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 70: *Si quis autem videretur ipsum plenius intueri, visum perderet ut patet de Talpa: [...]. Ita de Deo ille contingeret idem quia cetus fieret et ita in fide erraret.* He supports this with various biblical quotations.

⁹⁶⁹ Although he does not explicitly address his warning to astrologers, the fact remains that he directs his work overall to astrologers and that astrology is at the centre of it. Furthermore, in his explanations on the definition of astrology, he classifies it under the term *physica*. See *ibid.*, p. 201. The abovementioned passage can therefore be understood as pertaining primarily to astrologers.

⁹⁷⁰ Voskoboynikov: Michel Scot, le théologien, p. 161, equally sees this passage as an attempt by Michael Scot to distinguish astrology from theology.

(*dignior*) than geometry, more profound (*altior*) than *physica* and truer (*verior*) and more useful (*utilior*) than all other disciplines – with the sole exception of theology (*preter theologiam*).⁹⁷¹ Beyond this remark, however, there is no further explanation of the relationship between theology and astrology. Michael Scot’s main concern here was clearly to emphasise the primacy of astrology over the other disciplines.

While it is to be expected that astrology would be presented as secondary to the discipline of theology, two passages from the *Liber particularis* provide further insights. Here Michael Scot directly demarcates the areas of expertise of astrologers and theologians, referring to the practitioners and not only the disciplines. In both cases, he shows that the astrologer’s right to discuss theological questions has certain limits. The first demarcation occurs in the 32nd chapter, where he discusses the nine celestial spheres.⁹⁷² After explaining them, he points out that astrologers know very little about the ninth celestial sphere, except that it is the abode of the angels and the souls of the righteous in the sight of God.⁹⁷³ The ninth sphere is thus considered, at least indirectly, to be outside the astrologer’s field of competence and presumably to belong to that of the theologian. However, he makes no explicit reference to theologians here. Moreover, Michael Scot’s statement merely expresses a current state of affairs – he does not comment on whether this is warranted or needs to be changed. Voskoboynikov nevertheless sees this as an attempt by Michael Scot to distance himself from theology.⁹⁷⁴

The demarcation between the competencies of astrologers and theologians is even more apparent in another passage in the *Liber particularis*. In the 40th chapter, Michael Scot addresses whether the stars have souls.⁹⁷⁵ In this context, he also raises the question of what will happen on Judgement Day when the rational souls are resurrected. Here Michael Scot seems to see the limits of his expertise and competence, for he writes that he will leave this issue to the “experienced theologians, who have been profoundly

⁹⁷¹ Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, pp. 188–189.

⁹⁷² Michael Scot: *Liber particularis*, ed. Voskoboynikov, pp. 120–124. For a discussion of Michael Scot’s cosmology, see Page: *A Late Medieval Demonic Invasion of the Heavens*, pp. 240–244.

⁹⁷³ Michael Scot: *Liber particularis*, ed. Voskoboynikov, p. 122: *De nono celo est pauca scientia apud astrologos, nisi in genere, ut habetur quod ibi est habitatio angelorum et animarum iustorum ante faciem Dei*. For Michael Scot’s idea about the existence of a ninth sphere within his cosmology, see Thorndike: Michael Scot, pp. 40–50. On the origin of this idea: Paul Hullmeine: *Was there a Ninth Sphere in Ptolemy?*, in: David Juste et al. (eds.): *Ptolemy’s Science of the Stars in the Middle Ages* (Ptolemaeus Arabus et Latinus 1), Turnhout 2020, pp. 79–96.

⁹⁷⁴ Voskoboynikov: Michel Scot, le théologien, p. 162.

⁹⁷⁵ Michael Scot: *Liber Particularis*, ed. Voskoboynikov, pp. 145–147. This topic continued to preoccupy scholars, see for example on the discussions of Albertus Magnus: Zambelli: *The Speculum astronomiae and its Enigma*, pp. 83–94.

instructed in divine spiritual law”.⁹⁷⁶ Michael Scot separates the areas of responsibility of astrologers and theologians and places astrological competence below that of theologians in this area. Overall, Michael Scot clearly writes from the point of view of an astrologer, whom he grants broad competence in theological questions, and not as a theologian.

Questions concerning the soul’s fate in the afterlife, it seems, were a thematic boundary that astrologers were unwilling to cross. This can also be seen in a remark made by the astrologer John of Saxony (mid-14th century) in his commentary on Alcabitius’ introductory work, which follows a similar line to that of Michael Scot. In connection with electing the right hour to start a war, he refers to the text of Alcabitius, which states that some claim that one must fear the “loss of the soul” if the wrong choice is made. John of Saxony explains that Alcabitius did not mean by this that the devil would take the soul into the depths of hell after the separation of body and soul, but simply that earthly life would be lost. He states that astrologers are allowed to comment on the latter but that the former issue falls under the jurisdiction of theologians.⁹⁷⁷ It is even more explicit here than in Michael Scot’s remarks that while astrologers are entitled to talk about events in this world, including parting from it, their competency ends when discussing the hereafter.

Michael Scot may be an exceptional case regarding the scope and extent of his elaboration on theological issues. However, many scholars show a preoccupation with theological questions as part of their astrological writings. In most cases, though, they are seeking, like Roger Bacon, to highlight the usefulness of astrology for theology. John Ashenden, for example, devotes the entire first *distinctio* of his first treatise to establishing the beginning and age of the world by comparing “the opinions of theologians, of astrologers, and according to various chronicles”.⁹⁷⁸ Like Roger Bacon,

⁹⁷⁶ Michael Scot: *Liber Particularis*, ed. Voskoboynikov, p. 146: *Sed cum iste anime sint ut patet, nunc querendum est, quid sint future in novissimo die temporalitatis, cum cetera anime, scilicet rationales, resurgent ad sonum tube archangeli. Hanc autem solutionem reservamus peritis theologis qui lege divina spiritualis immittantur.*

⁹⁷⁷ John of Saxony: *Commentary*, Paris 1521, fol. 90^r: *Et dicunt quidam quod qui incoeperit bellum in quatuor primis horis combustis timenda est perditio animae suae. Auctor non intelligit perditionem anime post uitam istam ita quod post separationem animae a corpore rapiant eam diaboli et deducant ad inferos. Sed intelligit anime perditionem, idest amissionem uite presentis, et hoc modo intelligitur in omnibus locis iudiciorum astronomie. De ista enim perditione pertinet ad eos loqui. De prima autem perditione pertinet theologis.*

⁹⁷⁸ John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, prologue, fol. 2^{rb}: *Primo enim determinabo de principio mundi, deinde ponam etatem mundi iuxta opiniones theologorum et astrologorum et secundum diuersas cronicas.* The first *distinctio* begins on fol. 3^{va}. Snedegar: John

whom he even cites directly, John Ashenden is endeavouring to demonstrate the advantage of combining astrological and theological ideas.⁹⁷⁹ While he makes a clear distinction between astrologers and theologians, the discussion of this subject also shows that he considers himself qualified to address theological viewpoints.

Overall, the writers of the introductory works were faced with the challenge of demonstrating how much insight astrologers could offer into theological matters while at the same time not overstepping their bounds into the theologians' sphere of competence. There was a fine line to be drawn in balancing these two objectives. In their expositions, the astrologers were strongly influenced by the theological criticism levelled against them, which stated that astrology was not compatible with the Christian faith. In response, they emphasised the subordination of astrology to theology. This stands in marked contrast to the comparison of astrologers with physicians, which also revolved around the method and utility of the disciplines. In the case of theology, attacking the discipline itself was naturally impossible. Therefore, the astrologers' starting point for confronting the opposing arguments lay in discussing the practitioners, not the discipline. An exception was Guido Bonatti, who hazarded a comparison in terms of what can be known, but even here, the focus was more on the practitioners and their lack of understanding. The astrologers used the criticism of the theologians to paint a positive picture of their role, to refute the criticism of what they saw as the 'wrong' theologians, and at the same time to present themselves as active advisors to the theologians. Their self-portrayal, therefore, depicted them as counsellors to theologians, possessing knowledge of basic theological matters but, above all, offering additional knowledge that was useful and necessary for the concerns of theologians.

5.3 Contenders for the Knowledge of the Future – Magicians, Diviners, and Prophets

Astrologers used the comparison with physicians and theologians to support the legitimacy of their work, either by showing that their 'scientific' approach was equivalent or even superior to that of physicians or by illustrating that theologians and

Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, p. 7, suggests that John Ashenden may have studied theology, although without earning a degree.

⁹⁷⁹ For the mention of Roger Bacon, see John Ashenden: *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, BLO, MS. Digby 225, book 1, distinctio 1, chap. 1, fol. 5^{ra}. Roger Bacon equally highlights astrology's use for corroborating and clarifying biblical chronology, see Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, pp. 187–192.

astrologers should act as mutually beneficial allies rather than adversaries. In both cases, the astrologers drew comparisons with more reputable disciplines and their institutionally established practitioners to validate their own role. Astrologers faced very different challenges when comparing themselves to practitioners who claimed to have knowledge of the future through supernatural or divine means and who can only loosely be defined as ‘groups’, such as magicians, diviners, and prophets.

Comparisons with magicians and diviners, whose knowledge was usually viewed as forbidden and unchristian, naturally raised different questions than the comparison with prophets, whose insights into the future were considered divine messages. In both cases, however, astrologers had to show how their approach to access future knowledge compared to that of these practitioners. The way in which astrologers distinguished themselves from magicians, diviners, and prophets thus reveals how they sharpened their profile and which character traits and behaviours astrologers considered particularly important for their occupation.

First, I will analyse astrologers’ attitudes towards magicians and diviners. This is followed by a discussion of their stance towards prophets. It is crucial to emphasise that astrologers’ relationship to magic, divination and prophecy is complex and multifaceted. This analysis, therefore, is not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of astrologers’ views on these practices.⁹⁸⁰ Instead, I will focus exclusively on those parts of the discussions where a comparison between the different practitioners and disciplines allows for a clearer picture of the role astrologers wanted to convey of themselves.

5.3.1 Magicians and Diviners – Between Fascination and Damnation

When exploring how astrologers distinguished themselves from magicians and diviners, we must first take into account that these two terms are themselves intersecting umbrella categories which, moreover, do not represent firmly defined groups.⁹⁸¹ Not only are there no official occupations for their practitioners, but there is no evidence of

⁹⁸⁰ For discussions on the general relationship between astrology and magic/divination, see Boudet: *Entre Science et nigromance*; Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, vol. 1, esp. pp. 271–362.

⁹⁸¹ For the definition and development of the term and concept of ‘magic’ in the Middle Ages, see the articles in: Sophie Page / Catherine Rider (eds.): *The Routledge History of Medieval Magic* (Routledge Histories), Abingdon / New York 2019, esp. those of Part I: Conceptualizing magic, pp. 13–67. The distinction between magic and divination is not clear cut and is interpreted differently in the Middle Ages. I have included both overarching terms and concepts here, as the medieval authors address them partly separately, partly together. Therefore, I do not use a universal definition here but explain in the individual sections what exactly the respective authors understood by the terms and which Latin equivalents were used.

self-descriptions as magicians or diviners in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁹⁸² However, astrologers were often grouped with followers of such arts by their critics. They were accused of behaving in an equally shameful and fraudulent manner, acquiring knowledge through forbidden, magical, and even demonic means.⁹⁸³ Astrologers thus had to distinguish themselves from certain behaviours of practitioners of divinatory or magical arts.

The most obvious route for astrologers would thus have been to separate their activities completely from magic and divination. However, their comparison with magicians and diviners was not as unambiguous as it might seem at first glance. This is due in part to the changing attitude toward divinatory arts and magic in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Firstly, the influence of the Arabic texts that reached Latin Europe in the twelfth century led to a greater systematisation and scientification of these areas, which came to fruition in the following centuries.⁹⁸⁴ Secondly, from the thirteenth century onwards, magic was increasingly studied from the point of view of natural philosophy, heralding the birth of ‘natural magic’, which was primarily concerned with the workings of occult powers but was not necessarily considered to be harmful.⁹⁸⁵ Consequently, divinatory arts and magical practices experienced a renewed popularity in learned circles in the late Middle Ages, just as astrology did. These developments allowed astrologers to take advantage of the increased interest in such disciplines to

⁹⁸² Nicolas Weill-Parot detects in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, at least for northern and central Italy, the “birth of the ‘author-magician’”, i.e. the observation that authors did not attribute their own magical texts to legendary authorities any longer but stood by them with their own name. See Nicolas Weill-Parot: Cecco d’Ascoli and Antonio da Montolmo: The Building of a “nigromantical” cosmology and the Birth of the Author-Magician, in: Page / Rider (eds.): The Routledge History of Medieval Magic, pp. 225–236; also: Boudet: Entre science et nigromance, pp. 393–408. See for examples and further elaborations: Weill-Parot: Les “images astrologiques”, pp. 591–638.

⁹⁸³ The joint mention of astrologers with or as diviners and magicians can already be seen in Isidore of Seville: *Etymologiae*, vol. 1, ed. Lindsay, book 8, chap. 9. On Isidore’s categorisation: Klingshirn: Isidore of Seville’s Taxonomy of Magicians and Diviners. See also Nicole Oresme: *Livre de Divinacions*, ed. Coopland, prologue, p. 50 (French), p. 51 (English translation), who sets out to show the dangers of attempting to know the future “by astrology, geomancy, nigromancy, or any other such arts, if they can correctly be called arts; [...]” ([...] *par astrologie, par gromance* [sic!], *par nigromance, ou par quelxconques tielx ars, se on les doit appeller ars*; [...]) The involvement of demons or the devil in astrological judgements was addressed, in particular, by Thomas Aquinas: *Summa theologiae*. Pars IIa IIa, in: Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia, vol. 9 (Leonine edition), Rome 1897, quaestio 95, articulus 5, pp. 319–322 (*Utrum divinatio quae fit per astra sit illicita*); Thomas Aquinas: *De iudiciis astrorum*, ed. by Hyacinthe François Dondaine, in: Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia, vol. 43 (Leonine edition), Rome 1976, pp. 187–201. See on Thomas Aquinas’ stance on divination and astrology: Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, pp. 183–199.

⁹⁸⁴ See Charles Burnett: Arabic magic. The impetus for translating texts and their reception, in: Page / Rider (eds.): The Routledge History of Medieval Magic, pp. 71–84.

⁹⁸⁵ Marrone: Magic and Natural Philosophy, pp. 291–292.

better showcase themselves and their activities, in terms both of similarities and of differences.

One author who discusses magic and divination in considerable detail in his introductory work is Michael Scot. Particularly revealing are his reflections in the penultimate chapter of his *Prohemium*, in which he discusses the classification of astrology in comparison with related disciplines and explores the nature of divinatory practices and magical arts.⁹⁸⁶ He begins by defining the “class” (*genus*) of astrology. It is first *mathematica*, second *theorica* and third *phylosophia*, which latter is further divided into *theorica* and *practica*. This *theorica*, in turn, is divided into *theorica*, *physica*, and *mathematica*. Finally, *mathematica* is divided into *arismetrica* [*arithmetica*], *musica*, *geometria*, et *astronomia*.⁹⁸⁷ While the multiple uses of terms such as *mathematica* and *theorica* leave some ambiguity as to what exactly he is referring to in each case, it is noteworthy that Michael Scot classifies astrology as part of the quadrivial arts and as a discipline associated with both mathematics and philosophy. His statement that it is both theoretical and practical in nature also indirectly parallels medicine, which equally was considered to have a theoretical and a practical side.⁹⁸⁸

This first classification thus firmly anchors astrology in the canon of legitimate disciplines. However, Michael Scot then describes various subdivisions of astrology that blur the lines and position it closer to magical and divinatory practices. He discusses two different types of subdivisions for astrology: firstly, it can be divided into *scientia sperica*, *gnomonica*, et *horoscopica*, secondly, into *astronomia fabulosa*, *superstitiosa*, et *yimaginaria*.⁹⁸⁹ His explanations on *astronomia horoscopica* and

⁹⁸⁶ Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, pp. 199–223. While Michael Scot distinguishes between a wide variety of practices, he switches between the terms for “divination” (*scientia divinandi*) or “magic” (*artes magici*) and mostly uses *matematica* as an umbrella term and *matematici* for its practitioners. The distinguishing feature seems to have been the involvement of demons in magical practices. See below for his discussion of the terms *mathematica* – *matematica*. See for a more detailed analysis on Michael Scot’s general discourse on magical and divinatory practices: Thorndike: Michael Scot, pp. 116–121; Boudet: *Entre science et nigromance*, pp. 181–187; Page: *A Late Medieval Demonic Invasion of the Heavens*, pp. 240–244.

⁹⁸⁷ Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, p. 201: *Genus huius artis est primo loco matematica, secundo loco theorica, tercio phylosophia, que dividitur in theoricam et practicam. Theorica dividitur in tria, scilicet in theoricam, physicam, et mathemeticam. Mathematica iterum dividitur in arismetricam [sic!], musicam, geometriam, et astronomiam.*

⁹⁸⁸ See Jacquart: *Die scholastische Medizin*, esp. 237–238.

⁹⁸⁹ “Spherical” and “gnomical” astrology refer to astronomical, i.e. descriptive knowledge of the heavens. *Astronomia fabulosa* refers to astrology as used in stories by poets; *astronomia ymaginaria* concerns the knowledge of things that are not observable but can only be understood by the intellect. Michael Scot does not explain how these different subdivisions relate to each other, but simply places them side by side. Michael Scot: Liber introductorius, ed. Edwards, *Prohemium*, pp. 201–204.

astronomia superstitiosa are particularly enlightening since they comprise the interpretative aspect of astrology and include references to magic and divination. According to Michael Scot, *astronomia horoscopica*, which deals with the hours “according to certain calculations of the art of astronomy”, can not only “teach someone to truthfully (*veraciter*) predict the future of many people” but is also useful for “experiments” (*experimenta*) to “invoke demons” (*demonēs invocare*) or to “form an image” (*ymago informare*) for various purposes.⁹⁹⁰ Although a link to demons is mentioned, he makes no negative value judgement and portrays *scientia horoscopica* as a truthful method of gaining information about the future. The case is different with *astronomia superstitiosa*.⁹⁹¹ While the practitioner here also seeks to gain knowledge about the future “by reliable investigation” (*certa indagatio*), Michael Scot adds that this often involves questions about people’s affairs that were “more evil than good” (*plus in malo quam in bono*). He also points out that by this art practitioners presume to obtain knowledge about the future and the present that belonged to God.⁹⁹² This part of astrology is called *superstitiosa*, he continues, because the “astronomer and astrologer” (*astronomus et astrologus*) – “like the geomancer and the soothsayer” (*ut geomanticus et sortilegus*) – want to be “just like God” (*tamquam deus*) among the people of the world, discerning the future and hidden things in the present. He concludes that the “earthly man” (*homo terrenus*), knowing that he is by nature utterly inadequate for possessing such great knowledge, tries to attain at least a part of these things.⁹⁹³

Michael Scot thus seems to be slightly ambivalent about the assessment of this branch of astrology. On the one hand, it is clearly shown as presumptuous and likened to divinatory practices; on the other hand, the connection to God underlines its value, and he seems to argue that it is possible to obtain parts of this divine knowledge. His

⁹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 202: [...] *Unde horioscopica [sic!], id est intelligibilis hora vel intellecta eo quod per horas hec sciencia hominem veraciter docet prescire futura multorum et experimentorum quedam ut demonēs invocare, ymaginem informare, ad mercatum ire, gratiam petere a domino civitatis vel castelli, amorem a domina, et cetera*. On “astrological images”, see Weill-Parot: Les “images astrologiques”.

⁹⁹¹ Isidore of Sevilla most famously coined the differentiation between *astrologia naturalis* and *superstitiosa*. Isidore of Seville: *Etymologiae*, vol. 1, ed. Lindsay, book 3, chap. 27.

⁹⁹² Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, pp. 202–203: *Superstitiosa astronomia est illa que nomina litterarum, feriarum lune, etatis rationem certa indagatione presencia et futura preiudicat; et sic de multis questionibus que prescire a quibusdam desiderantur in negociis personarum tam bonis quam malis et plus in malo quam in bono, et in eo quod quidam nituntur arte fungi, scilicet auctoritate Dei altissimi cui proprium est scire futura et presencia et ea similiter iudicare*.

⁹⁹³ Ibid., p. 203: *Ideo dicitur superstitiosa, quia astronomus et astrologus ut geomanticus et sortilegus vult esse in hoc mundo apud singulas gentium nationes tamquam Deus volens potenter scire futura ut preterita comissa et cetera velud presencia que sibi latent aliqua occasione ac futura. Et quia terrenus homo se cognoscit deficere ac deficit omnino a tanta sciencia per naturam, explorat partem horum omnium singula obtinere*.

objection to it is more about the scope and the certainty with which predictions are made than about the fact that they are attempted at all. The astrologer practising *astronomia superstitiosa* resembles practitioners of divination in so far as he aims to obtain certain and complete knowledge about hidden things which it is God's prerogative to know.

In the following sections, Michael Scot directly addresses different types of divinatory practices, and it becomes clear that it is, above all, their evil purpose that distinguishes them from astrology. He begins by asserting that “many sciences or arts” (*sciencie siue artes*) are “disguised” (*palliantur*) under the name of *astronomia*.⁹⁹⁴ However, in reality, he states, they are employed to perform divination, and through them, “many bad things” (*mala plurima*) were done and “very few good things” (*bona parum*) were achieved because they did not even produce the desired knowledge.⁹⁹⁵ Divinatory practices are presented as a multitude of disciplines that have neither the same respectability nor the same validity as astrology.

A later passage returns to the issue of the – intentional or accidental – conflation of astrology with divinatory or magical practices by others. As was often done by astrologers, Michael Scot attributes this to a terminological confusion over the term *mathesis*, from which *mathematica* is derived. *Mathematica*, he explains, consequently has a twofold meaning: first, its meaning comes from *mathesis* with an aspirated h and a short ascend, indicating the quadrivium and, consequently, also astrology. This art could be taught “freely and publicly” (*libere ac publice*). Secondly, it could also stand for *matesis* without an h, which equalled divination (*scientia divinandi*) and should not be

⁹⁹⁴ The accusation that other less reputable disciplines operated under the descriptor of astrology to give the appearance of respectability, even though they were performing forbidden or ineffective practices, is also found in numerous other writings by astrologers. Most prominent here is the *Speculum astronomiae*, attributed to Albertus Magnus, which explicitly aims to expose which books only pretend to be concerned with astrology but actually contain necromancy. Those books, according to the *Speculum astronomiae*, would cause the licit ones that address astrology proper to fall into disrepute. See Albertus Magnus: *Speculum Astronomiae*, ed. and transl. Zambelli et al., Prooemium, p. 208: *Quoniam enim plures ante dictorum librorum necromantiam palliant, professionem astronomiae mentientes, libros nobiles de eadem fetere fecerunt apud bonos, et graves et abominabiles reddiderunt. Quare quidam vir zelator fidei et philosophiae, [...], applicuit animum ut faceret commemorationem utrorumque librorum, exponens numerum, titulos, initia et continentias singulorum in generali, et qui fuerunt eorundem auctores, ut scilicet liciti ab illicitis separentur, [...]*.

⁹⁹⁵ Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 204: *Sunt etiam multe sciencie sive artes que sub nomine astronomie quodammodo palliantur, ut geomancia, ydromancia, aeremancia, phyromancia, auguriomancia, physionomancia, nigromancia, prestigomancia, alchimia nothoria sors, incantacio, constellatio, et cetera. Hec autem artes sunt sciencie in divinandi et earum insinuatione mala plurima faciendi, bona vero parum cum nemo reperiatur quod velit utrum sit salvaturus vel dampnaturus, et cetera.* The inclusion of nigromancy or enchantment show that Michael Scot did not clearly separate between divinatory and magical practices. In the next sentence he explains that there were in total 28 different types of divination.

taught “by a good Christian” (*a bono christiano*). He explains that this prohibition applies not because this art is untrue – “as every art is true” (*cum omnis ars vera sit*) – but because of the “malice it would show in doing or knowing things that are forbidden by the Roman Church”.⁹⁹⁶

Michael Scot thus explicitly separates divinatory practices from astrology because he wants to distance himself from the non-Christian behaviour of such practitioners. He makes similar comments about the malice of magic but, in this case, also emphasises its deceit. *Ars magica*, he writes, is not an accepted part of philosophy; rather it is “the teacher of all iniquity and malice, often deceiving and seducing the souls of the practitioners”.⁹⁹⁷ Indeed, it would “destroy reverence for the divine law, induce the worship of demons, enforce a corruption of morals and drive the mind of its followers to every wickedness.” Finally, it would “blind and fool both the teaching master and the learning disciple.”⁹⁹⁸

However, these decidedly negative assessments do not deter Michael Scot from delving deeper into divinatory and magical practices. Not only does he elaborate on various forms of divination, such as geomancy, hydromancy, aeromancy and others, but he also discusses in detail the techniques of nigromancy (*nigromancia*), which involve the use of blood sacrifices and the invocation of demons.⁹⁹⁹ His detailed descriptions are particularly noteworthy because his discussion of *matesis* just a few paragraphs earlier

⁹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 205: *Notandum est etiam quod duplex est sciencia, scilicet mathesis et matesis, quia cum aspiratione h significat quadrivium cum trivio et eius penultima scandendo est brevis, set sine h significat scienciam divinandi. [...] Ars ergo mathematica libere doceri potest ac publice, set mathematica non debet doceri a bono christiano, nec potest libere aliquem informare eo quod est infamis, non propter sui falsitatem, cum omnis ars vera sit, set propter malicias quas ostendit facere seu scire et que prohibite sunt ab ecclesia romana [...].* The same distinction between *mathesis* and *matesis* is described by Hugh of St Victor in his *Didascalicon*. However, it is noteworthy, that he defines *matesis* with particular focus on astrology, namely “the superstition of those who make people’s fates dependent on the constellations of the stars.” Hugh of St Victor: *Didascalicon*, ed. and transl. Offergeld, p. 160: *Mathesis enim quando t habet sine aspiratione, [...] significant superstitionem illorum, qui fata hominum in constellationibus ponunt.*

⁹⁹⁷ Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, p. 207: *Et est sciendum quod magica ars in phylosophia non reperitur, nec recipitur eo quod est magistra omnis iniquitatis et malicie sepe menciens et seducens animas agentium [...].*

⁹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 208: *Magica quidem ars destruit religionem divine legis et culturam demonum persuadet, morum corruptionem ingerit et ad omne scellus mentes sequacium impellit. Unde eos cecat et infatuat, scilicet magistrum docentem et discipulum adiscentem.*

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid., esp. pp. 208–209. While he uses the term *nigromancia* and not *necromancia*, he still refers to divination practiced by the spirits of the dead, i.e. the even more disreputable discipline. For the differentiation between nigromancy, i.e. magic with the aid of demons, and necromancy, see Boudet: *Entre science et nigromance*, pp. 92–94. See for more details on Michael Scot’s exploration of magical practices: Boudet: *Entre science et nigromance*, pp. 181–187.

contains the assertion that a good Christian should not teach or inform about such content.¹⁰⁰⁰

In connection with the discussion of diviners (*divini*), he also revisits a topic he had already raised in his explanation of *astronomia superstitiosa*. Diviners pretend to have access to divine knowledge while, in truth, they are merely deceiving “ignorant people” (*ydiotae*) by making conjectures about their future. They receive money for their practice and sometimes even defile simple women.¹⁰⁰¹ The despicable behaviour of the diviners is thus in sharp contrast to that of the astrologer he describes later.¹⁰⁰² Consequently, it is foremost the behaviour, the moral conduct and the intent of the practitioners that distinguishes astrologers from diviners or magicians. This is also evident in Michael Scot’s references to astrology being used by magicians and diviners. In his *Liber particularis*, for example, he points out that the astrolabe, the instrument of astrologers, was sometimes misused to summon evil spirits. Such behaviour, he explains, is condemned by the Roman Church and forbidden to every good Christian under penalty of excommunication.¹⁰⁰³

In summary, according to Michael Scot, astrology and divination or magic may have overlapped in content or practice, but their practitioners were different kinds of scholars. The possible misuse of astrological knowledge made it even more urgent for the legitimate and Christian astrologer to devote himself to good, Christian causes and to practise his discipline for this purpose. For the astrologer to recognise and discern evil practices – as was the case in the origin story of astrology as told by Michael Scot – he had to be informed about them. Moreover, Michael Scot considered the existence and influence of demons as part of the natural world, and as such, their activities could not

¹⁰⁰⁰ See footnote 996. However, Boudet: *Entre science et nigromance*, pp. 185–187, also points out the complicated transmission history of the *Liber introductorius*, which makes it difficult to determine which statements genuinely originate from Michael Scot and which are later additions. See for the transmission history of the work: Edwards: *The Two Redactions*.

¹⁰⁰¹ Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, pp. 219–220: *Divini dicitur quasi Deo pleni, quia divinare se plenos fore simulant et astutia quadam fraudulenta hominibus ydiosis futura coniecturant. Et propter illius exercitationem peccuniam recipiunt ab ydiosis, corpora mulierum simplicium quandoque deturpant, et cetera.*

¹⁰⁰² For Michael Scot’s description of the astrologer as a cultured, morally upright scholar whose expertise is based on years of hard work and who spends money primarily on furthering his education, see Chapter 4.2.1.

¹⁰⁰³ Michael Scot: *Liber particularis*, ed. Voskoboynikov, pp. 64–65: *Vel astrolabium est instrumentum astronomorum, [...] et quandoque invocant tunc spiritus malignos ad aliquid peragendum, quod ecclesia romana dampnat et contradicit omni bono christiano sub vinculo anathematis.* See also: Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, ed. Edwards, Prohemium, pp. 188–189: *Set cum astronomia sit una sciencia de 7 liberalibus artibus et nobilior ceteris, [...], est utilis et delectabilis omni homini cupienti esse sapienti eo quod est ars utilis, necessaria, et delectabilis in multis et pro multis ut [...] nigromanticis, et operantibus artem notoriam, et propter aliaque constellationibus exercentur.*

be ignored.¹⁰⁰⁴ By contrasting the behaviour of the magicians and diviners, who either deceived themselves or were deceived, with that of the astrologers, the latter's qualities as moral scholars working for good Christian purposes are highlighted even more clearly. Astrology is presented as a way of legitimately approaching at least part of God's knowledge, which the magicians and diviners falsely claimed to possess completely.

Michael Scot's views on magic and divination as compared to astrology, with an emphasis on the practitioner's responsibility to employ his skills to serve the Christian common good, are not unique. Very similar sentiments can be found, albeit several decades later, in the *Opus majus* of the English scholar Roger Bacon, who places an even stronger focus on the behaviour and intention of the practitioners.¹⁰⁰⁵ Like Michael Scot, he addresses the etymology of the term *mathematica*. He cites the confusion between *mathesis* and *masesis* – which he designates as “true and false mathematics” (*vera et falsa mathematica*) – as a reason why many people, especially theologians, mistakenly also reject the truthful parts.¹⁰⁰⁶ “False mathematics” derives from the Greek terms for divination, he explains, but is ultimately a subdivision of the “art of magic” (*ars magica*).¹⁰⁰⁷

However, Roger Bacon does not portray divination and magic as entirely detached from astrological considerations. Rather, he emphasises the wrongful appropriation of astrology by “false mathematicians”. Their practice serves to “usurp (*usurpat*) the consideration of the heavenly bodies and corrupt it by characters, incantations, conjurations, superstitious sacrifices and various frauds.”¹⁰⁰⁸ Moreover, they postulate a necessity in astrological matters that allows the practitioner “to judge about all future

¹⁰⁰⁴ See on this also Page: A Late Medieval Demonic Invasion of the Heavens, p. 244, who sees in Michael Scot's interest in magic and divination “his intention to reveal hidden things in the cosmos rather than a sign of approval of this art, [...]”

¹⁰⁰⁵ Apart from the discussions on magic and divination discussed here in the *Opus majus* and in the prologue to his edition of the *Secretum secretorum*, Roger Bacon also wrote an “Epistle on the Secret Works of Nature and Art and on the Nullity of Magic”. The distinction between astrologers and magicians, diviners, or ‘false’ practitioners, however, does not play a major role here. See Roger Bacon: *De nullitate magia*, ed. Brewer.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, p. 239. See for a detailed discussion on Roger Bacon's views on “true” and “false” *mathematica*: Rutkin: *Sapientia astrologica*, pp. 121–132. For Roger Bacon's stance on magic in general: Andrew G. Molland: Roger Bacon as Magician, in: *Traditio* 30 (1974), pp. 445–460.

¹⁰⁰⁷ He lists five types of magic: “divination, mathematics, enchantment, illusions, soothsaying/sorcery”. Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, p. 240: *Nam numerantur quinque species artis magicae, scilicet mantice, mathematica, maleficium, praestigium, sortilegium. Mathematica ergo est secunda pars artis magicae.*

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 240: *Haec sibi usurpat considerationem coelestium characteribus, carminibus, conjurationibus, sacrificiis superstitionis, et fraudibus variis deformatam.*

events infallibly.”¹⁰⁰⁹ Roger Bacon is adamant that both the sacred writers and the philosophers condemn this position.¹⁰¹⁰ He contends that the leading astrological authorities have never endorsed such ideas: they neither ascribe absolute necessity to the influence of the stars, nor do they include free will under that influence, nor do they hold astrological judgements to be infallible. Philosophers, he writes, “collectively condemn the madness (*insania*) of those false mathematicians.”¹⁰¹¹ The first reason Roger Bacon offers here against “false mathematics” thus concerns the extent and certainty of their astrological predictions.

He also provides a second reason for their condemnation: the practitioners “summon demons of a celestial nature through conjurations and sacrifices” and “corrupt their considerations of the heavenly bodies” through various methods such as “circles, figures, highly untrustworthy characters, very foolish incantations and irrational speeches”.¹⁰¹² As in Michael Scot’s account, Roger Bacon thus describes how the “false mathematicians” misuse astrology. He goes even further and states that they would often deliberately try to deceive their audience and knowingly attribute heavenly influence to matters in which it is not operative.¹⁰¹³ In the prologue to his edition of the (pseudo-)Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum*, where Roger Bacon equally tackles the distinction between “false” and “true mathematicians”, he further expands on the argument that practitioners of deceptive and magical practices invoked astrological principles to appear more legitimate and scholarly. As an example, he refers to

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid.: *Unde haec scientia ista omnia ponit per coelum de necessitate contingere, ut praesumit per hanc necessitate infallibiliter de omnibus iudicare futuris.*

¹⁰¹⁰ Ibid: *Sed ista mathematica damnata est non solum a sanctis, sed a philosophis, [...].*

¹⁰¹¹ Ibid., pp. 240–241: *Ptolemaeus etiam et Aristoteles et Avicenna et Messehale et Haly et Albumazar, qui prae aliis maiori auctoritate de his locuti sunt, necessitatem absolutam in rebus inferioribus non ponunt per virtutem coeli, quia liberum arbitrium non subjacent rebus naturalibus, nec aestimant iudicium debere fieri infallibile, immo nec aliquam libero arbitrio ponunt necessitate, cum nec rebus naturalibus eam ascribant, ut patebit. Et ideo philosophi universaliter damnant istorum falsorum mathematicorum insanias.*

¹⁰¹² Ibid., p. 241: *Nec solum damnant quantum ad principale, scilicet propter errorem quem habent de coelestibus, sed quia mathematici isti daemones advocant in adiutorium coelestium dispositionum per conjurationes et sacrificia, quod est omnino nefandum, atque nihilominus maculant suas considerationes in coelestibus per circulos et figuras et characteres vanissimos et carmina stultissima, et orationes irrationabiles [...].*

¹⁰¹³ Ibid.: *Praeterea fraudes operum adiungunt, scilicet per consensum, per tenebras, per instrumenta sophistica, per subtilitatem motionis manualis, in quibus sciunt illusionem esse, et multa stultis miranda faciunt per haec in quibus virtus coeli nihil operator, et ideo sibimetipsis contradicentes, quod coelo attribuant coram aliis, apud seipsos sciunt non habere veritatem. Similiter licet alias in quibusdam conjurationibus et sacrificiis et carminibus et characteribus et figuris variis confidunt tanquam cooperantibus constellationi secundum eorum iudicium, tamen pluries fraudulenter ista componunt secundum species fraudis predictas, et coram sibi credentibus ascribunt plurima constellationi, respectu quorum ipsa nullam habet potestatem. Et hoc eos non latet.*

geomancers who pretend (*fingunt*) to work with the power of the stars and use astrological terms. Other types of divination, he writes, employ similar means.¹⁰¹⁴

The distinction Roger Bacon makes between “true” and “false” *mathematica* thus refers to astrological determinism, demonic involvement, and deliberate deception. A link to astrology is mentioned in all three cases. Roger Bacon’s account aims to expose and prohibit the appropriation of astrology for untrue or improper purposes by “false” *mathematici* who would bring the discipline and its “true” practitioners into disrepute. The behaviour of “true” *mathematici*, whom he explicitly identifies as *astronomi et astrologi*, is presented as diametrically opposed to those of the “false” practitioners.¹⁰¹⁵ They are described as decidedly Christian scholars who submit their work to God’s will.¹⁰¹⁶ Instead of invoking demons “like magicians” (*sicut magici*), “Christian astrologers” (*astronomi Christiani*) should call “upon God and the saints for help in their works”; instead of resorting to such methods as incantations, sacrifices, or characters, they should use “speeches of the saints of both testaments and add characters and figures of the cross and the crucified.”¹⁰¹⁷

Furthermore, as stated above, Roger Bacon emphasises that “true mathematicians” would never claim necessity or infallibility in their judgements. While these issues are at the heart of most discussions about the validity of astrology, it is significant that Roger Bacon also takes them as an opportunity to stress astrology’s “hidden profundity” (*occulta profunditas*), which “cannot be wholly grasped by natural human capacity” and seem to contain a certain “divinity” (*divinitas*).¹⁰¹⁸ This knowledge is “far removed

¹⁰¹⁴ Roger Bacon: *Secretum secretorum*, ed. Steele, prologue, chap. 3, p. 7: *Sic geomantici faciunt karacteres et figuras in pulvere, et credunt se per artem scire futura et presentia occulta et preterita, [...]. Et fingunt se operari per virtutem stellarum, et ideo faciunt figuras suas ad similitudinem stellarum, et utuntur vocabulis astronomicis, [...]. Et similiter alie magice artes [...].*

¹⁰¹⁵ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, p. 242: [...] *veri mathematici, quos in hac parte vocamus astronomos et astrologos, quia indifferenter a Ptolemaeo et Avicenna et aliis pluribus sic vocantur, [...].*

¹⁰¹⁶ For example, he points out that astrologers would always add “This shall happen if God wills it” to their judgements, because they know that the divine rule can change all things according to His will. *Ibid.*, p. 246: *Et iterum sciunt, quod ordination divina potest omnia mutare secundum sui voluntatem, et propter hoc adjungunt semper in suis sententiis in fine hoc verbum, quod ‘sic erit, si Deus voluerit.’*

¹⁰¹⁷ Roger Bacon: *Secretum secretorum*, ed. Steele, prologue, chap. 4, p. 8: *Et astronomi Christiani debent pia devocione uti oracionibus ad Deum et sanctos, et eos invocare in omnibus operibus suis in auxilium, et non demones sicut magici, quibus oracionibus sancti utriusque Testamenti usi sunt, et addunt karacteres et figuras crucis et Crucifixi [...].* In the prologue to the *Secretum secretorum* he elaborates further on the form and function of demons. See *ibid.*, pp. 6–8.

¹⁰¹⁸ He refers here to statements by Ptolemy: Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, pp. 244–245: *Et Ptolemaeus in primo capitulo quadripartite dicit, ‘hujus autem tam excellentis artis occulta profunditas ejusque tam augusta et incomprehensibilis exercitatio, ut ab humano ingenio eam impossibile sit penitus amplecti, ex ineffabili subtilitate, ejusque admiranda quasi quadam divinitate videtur contingere.*

from human sense, and transcends the corporeal nature, as it were far beyond man.”¹⁰¹⁹ He thus shows astrology as something which is in its entirety beyond the grasp of scholars as it exceeds the human intellect. Nevertheless, he emphasises that it is possible to judge many things with “reasonable certainty” (*certitudo rationabilis*).¹⁰²⁰ However, to do this, Roger Bacon argues with reference to Ptolemy, one must practise daily, be free of other worries, and full of zeal.¹⁰²¹

The astrologer is thus depicted as an exceptional scholar in more ways than one: he is dedicated, intellectually and morally superior while still recognising his limits. Above all, he strives for the good of Christianity. The comparison with the “false mathematicians”, who are magicians and diviners, highlights these qualities. At the same time, the proximity and danger of confusion with divinatory and magical practices shows the desirability of this knowledge. The astrologer can obtain at least parts of the hidden knowledge that magicians or diviners long for, or pretend to have, by Christian and legitimate means.

An essential aspect of Roger Bacon’s account is the astrologer’s conscious decision to use his art for Christian interests. In later passages, Roger Bacon describes that astrology can also be employed for the benefit of the Antichrist and that the “Saracens” and “Tartars” had done this to their advantage. Astrology, he writes, is like a table knife, which has the potential for much utility but also poses the danger of misuse. He also makes a comparison to lawyers: the fact that some might take advantage does not justify a condemnation of laws in general, and the same applies to astrology. He concludes that “evil men always convert things to evil, from which good men can produce various blessings.”¹⁰²² It thus depends on the user, i.e. the practitioner, to employ the ‘weapon’ of astrology for the right purposes. Like Michael Scot, Roger Bacon attributes a great responsibility to astrologers. Their impeccable behaviour and correct handling of such powerful knowledge is a crucial part of what distinguishes them from “false” practitioners.

¹⁰¹⁹ Ibid., p. 245: *Longe etiam ab humano sensu remota est, et corpoream transcendens naturam quasi ultra hominem minus transcenditur.*

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid., p. 244.

¹⁰²¹ Ibid., p. 244–245: ‘[...] quod talis artis est difficilis et laboriosa assecutio, ut absque diuturna exercitatione penitusque secularibus libera et infructuosis expedita curis ad hanc nequaquam valeat quis aspirare.’ *Et quia liberis a curis aliis et studiosis est bona spes proficiendi in hac scientia, [...]*

¹⁰²² Ibid., pp. 394–395: *Nam semper mali in malis convertuntur, ex quibus boni utilitates varias producant.* For the references to the use of astrology by the Antichrist, “Saracens”, and “Tartars”: Ibid., p. 399.

Similar views, albeit with different expressions, are found in most texts written by astrologers. We see a fascination with divinatory and magical practices, and references are made to the shared aspirations of obtaining knowledge of the future, along with frequent exploitation of the name of astrology to give forbidden or ineffective practices the appearance of a legitimate ‘science’. Prominent examples of an interest in such practices can be found in texts by Peter of Abano, who explicitly addressed incantations in one of his *differentiae* in the *Conciliator*, and in the works by Cecco d’Ascoli, who, like Michael Scot, was particularly interested in the role of demons and outlined a “nigromantical cosmology”.¹⁰²³ Indeed, astrologers increasingly inscribed demons into a cosmological system that formed the basis for astrological predictions, a phenomenon Sophie Page called the “late medieval demonic invasion of the heavens”.¹⁰²⁴

The fact that astrologers deliberately drew connections between their own activities and magical or divinatory practices is particularly revealing for the self-fashioning of the astrologer. While they consistently distanced themselves from unchristian practices and presented astrology as natural and pleasing to God, the inclusion of demons and magical or divinatory practices in their deliberations portrayed the work of astrologers as extraordinary and close to the impossible or forbidden, thereby enhancing its appeal. The astrologer is portrayed as someone who offers insights into areas that can otherwise only be reached by illegitimate or supernatural means. He is also knowledgeable in these areas yet manages not to be seduced by them.¹⁰²⁵ That this self-fashioning as an exceptional scholar who operated on the margins of legitimacy did not always end well is evidenced by the case of Cecco d’Ascoli, who was burned at the stake in 1327. Notably, there are indications that Cecco’s condemnation may have been based primarily on personal enmity and envy. Possibly, we see here an example of “self-fashioning gone wrong”, in that Cecco d’Ascoli ventured close to forbidden areas in his

¹⁰²³ For Peter of Abano’s treatment of incantations, see Béatrice Delaurenti: Pietro d’Abano et les incantations. Présentation, édition et traduction de la differentia 156 du *Conciliator*, in: Jean-Patrice Boudet / Franck Collard / Nicolas Weill-Parot (eds.): *Médecine, astrologie et magie entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance: autour de Pietro d’Abano* (Micrologus’ library 50), pp. 39–52. See for Cecco d’Ascoli: Weill-Parot: Cecco d’Ascoli and Antonio da Montolmo; Nicolas Weill-Parot: *I demoni della Sfera: La “nigromanzia” cosmologico-astrologica di Cecco d’Ascoli*, in: Antonio Rigon (ed.): *Cecco d’Ascoli. Cultura, scienza e politica nell’Italia del Trecento*, Rome 2007, pp. 103–132; Page: *A Late Medieval Demonic Invasion of the Heavens*, pp. 244–245.

¹⁰²⁴ Page: *A Late Medieval Demonic Invasion of the Heavens*.

¹⁰²⁵ This became particularly evident in Michael Scot’s narrative of the history of astrology. See Chapter 3.2.1.

texts while simultaneously placing himself above contemporary scholars in personal asides. This combination may have proved deadly.¹⁰²⁶

Besides clearly forbidden magic involving the invocation of demons, the astrologers, as already briefly discussed in the previous examples, also address less problematic divinatory practices. The boundaries between demonic magic and divination are fluid, however, and astrologers generally caution against any of these practices. One divinatory practice frequently addressed in more detail is geomancy, in which figures marked on the ground are used for predictions.¹⁰²⁷ Geomancy is traditionally listed as one of the divinatory arts, and the authors of the introductory works also do this.¹⁰²⁸ Nevertheless, it seems to have drawn more attention, as it is often highlighted and discussed separately. The heightened interest of astrologers in geomancy can be explained, at least in part, by the fact that astrological ideas were increasingly integrated into this practice from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries onwards, and the discipline generally enjoyed growing popularity.¹⁰²⁹

Roger Bacon's description of geomancers sitting in public places, offering their services, and trying to attract clients by "pretending" (*fingunt*) that the power of the stars guides their work is an indication that practitioners of geomancy were perceived as potential competition of astrologers.¹⁰³⁰ He denigrates geomancers by highlighting their perceived dishonesty and pointing out their greed for profit. Such a devaluation, especially in juxtaposition with astrologers, is even more explicit in John of Saxony's prologue to the commentary on Alcabitius' introductory work. In his list of the eleven groups (based on the ten groups according to Albumasar) who oppose astrology, he names as the tenth group the common crowd who reject astrology because they see how many mistakes astrologers make. Following Albumasar, John of Saxony blames this

¹⁰²⁶ See Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 2, pp. 966–968 on the possible personal reasons for his condemnation. Thorndike (*ibid.*, p. 968) proposes that Cecco's condemnation "may be a good example of the way in which the Inquisition could be manipulated for private ends." Giovanni Villani: *Nuova Cronica*, vol. 2, ed. Porta, book 11, chap. 41, p. 571, indeed describes Cecco d'Ascoli as *uomo vano e di mondana vita*, suggesting that he may have displayed the arrogance that the other astrologers warned against in their introductory works.

¹⁰²⁷ For the principles and development of geomancy, see Thérèse Charmasson: *Recherches sur une technique divinatoire: la géomancie dans l'Occident médiéval* (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Sciences Historiques et Philologiques 5 / 44), Geneva 1980. For a short overview: Thérèse Charmasson: *Geomancy*, in: André Vauchez / Richard Barrie Dobson / Michael Lapidge (eds.): *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*, vol. 1, Chicago 2000, p. 594. See also the articles in: Alessandro Palazzo / Irene Zavattero (eds.): *Geomancy and Other Forms of Divination* (Micrologus' Library 87), Florence 2017.

¹⁰²⁸ See, for example, as the standard reference work listing geomancy as a divination: Isidore of Seville: *Etymologiae*, vol. 1, ed. Lindsay, book 8, chap. 9.

¹⁰²⁹ Charmasson: *Geomancy*, p. 594.

¹⁰³⁰ See footnote 1014.

mainly on those practitioners who are “foolish, unskilled, and unreliable” (*insipientes et imperiti atque caduci*). Many also merely exercise “various seductions” (*variae seductiones*) under the name of astrology, which tempt weak men. These practitioners, he writes, seek only profit and, out of greed, tailor their answers to please the person asking. While Albumasar remains generic in his descriptions of the “seductions” of those false practitioners, John of Saxony mentions geomancy as an example.¹⁰³¹ Thus, geomancers seem to be increasingly coming into the field of vision of astrologers as competing prognosticators. They are devalued by remarks about their greed for money, lack of knowledge and missing integrity.

However, the assessment of geomancy was not entirely negative. In the *Speculum astronomiae*, attributed to Albertus Magnus, for example, the author appears to regard geomancy as less harmful than other types of divination. Geomancy is initially listed along with hydromancy, aerimancy, pyromancy and chiromancy, discussions of which are often found in necromantic books, and it is emphasised that these disciplines “do not deserve to be called sciences (*scientiae*),” but are, in fact, “garamancies” (*garamantiae*).¹⁰³² Nevertheless, the author points out that while hydromancy and pyromancy could involve idolatry, he could not assert this for geomancy, which, by contrast, “relies on Saturn and the lord of the hour, which are put down as its root, and it rejoices to be based on the ratio of number.” Furthermore, there were “many who bear testimony in its favour.”¹⁰³³ While this is not an endorsement of geomancy, the statement that no idolatry is involved, its connection to astrological considerations and numbers, and the remark that many people find reasons to support it identifies it as

¹⁰³¹ John of Saxony: Commentary, Paris 1521, fol. 33^r–33^v: *Decima secta est etiam vniuersalis vulgi. Et isti repulerunt scientiam huius magisterii propter hoc quod viderunt de multitudine erroris eorum qui se iactant de ea [...]. Dicit Albumazar quod isti non sunt culpandi in contradictione magisteriorum huius scientiae, quia plurimi eorum qui se iactant de ea, sunt homines insipientes et imperiti atque caduci. Et quibusdam interpositis dicit quod isti exercent sub nomine huius magisterii varias seductiones quibus seducunt homines debiles; vult dicere quod quidam operantur geomanticam: vel per sortilegia sub nomine huius scientiae. Isti non quaerunt nisi lucrum. Et dicit cum isti interrogantur de aliqua retendunt in responsionem ad rem qua gratulatur quaerens et sibi congruit volentes eum laetificare causa cupiditatis suae.* See the Arabic original: Abū Ma‘shar: The Great Introduction to Astrology, vol. 1, ed. and transl. Burnett / Yamamoto, part 1, chap. 5, pp. 144–149.

¹⁰³² Albertus Magnus: *Speculum astronomiae*, ed. Zambelli, chap. 17, p. 272 (Latin), p. 273 (English translation): *Sunt praeterea quidam libri experimentales, quorum nomina necromantiae sunt conterminalia, ut sunt geomantia, hydromantia, aerimantia, pyromantia et chiromantia, quae ad verum non merentur dici scientiae, sed garamantiae.* He does not specify further what exactly he means by *garamantiae*; he seems to use the term simply as an umbrella term for divinatory arts.

¹⁰³³ Albertus Magnus: *Speculum astronomiae*, ed. Zambelli, chap. 17, p. 272 (Latin), p. 273 (English translation): *Sane hydromantia in extis animalium abluendis inspiciendisue fibris, et pyromantia in figura ignis, quo consumitur holocaustum, procul dubio idololatriae speciem non excludunt. In geomantia vero nihil tale inuenio, sed confidit in Saturno et domino horae, qui ei pro radice ponuntur, gaudetque numeri ratione fulciri, et multi sunt qui ei testimonium perhibent.*

partly rational, links geomancy to ‘scientific’ astrological factors, and gives it an exalted place among the traditional divinatory arts.

Some authors also directly compare astrology and geomancy in terms of hierarchy. For example, when Peter of Abano explains different types of divinations, he states that geomancy is subordinate to astrology, both in terms of its subject matter and the way it proceeds and makes judgements. After explaining how astrological considerations figure into the work of the geomancer, he notes that it is difficult to make a judgement in this discipline because of the various and infinite concurrent compositions of figures. The need for long experience and extensive training allows only a few to attain full knowledge of this discipline, while its simple construction leads many people to try it.¹⁰³⁴ Like the author of the *Speculum astronomiae*, Peter of Abano does not endorse geomancy, but he appears to appreciate its complexity and recognises its connection to astrology.

The works of the Italian astrologer Bartholomew of Parma are especially insightful for an assessment of geomancy in relation to astrology. In addition to his works on astrology, he also composed an introductory work, or rather three different versions of one, specifically on geomancy. He finished the first and most extensive text in 1288 (*Summa* or *Ars geomantica*) and produced abridged versions in 1294 (*Breviloquium*) and 1295 (*Verba collecta*).¹⁰³⁵ The very existence of such a work testifies to an increased interest in geomancy, and the fact that it was written by a scholar who was otherwise primarily concerned with astrological questions shows that geomancy certainly offered astrologers something worth exploring. The *Summa* / *Ars geomantica* and its two abridged versions adopt the same format as the introductory works on astrology studied so far and display many similar features. For example, besides explaining the definition of geomancy, its underlying theory, functioning and purpose, Bartholomew of Parma also addresses the behaviour of the practitioner and his client and remarks on the discipline’s origin.¹⁰³⁶

¹⁰³⁴ Peter of Abano: Lucidator, ed. Federici Vescovini, p. 119: *Ipsaque subalternatur astronomie, tam in subiecti ratione, cum in figuras celestes et planetas huius reducat karateres, quam etiam ratione modi processus et iudicii. [...], difficilis tamen est iudicii propter varios et infinitos quasi modos compositionis figuratum concurrentes, longa egens experientia et plurimo exercitio: a paucissimis quidem perfecte scita et a multis, propter facilem eius constructionem, temptata.*

¹⁰³⁵ On the different versions, see Charmasson: *Recherches sur une technique divinatoire*, pp. 141–155. In the following sections, I draw on Bartholomew of Parma: *Breviloquium artis geomantiae*, BSB, Clm 489, fols. 61^r–79^v.

¹⁰³⁶ Bartholomew of Parma: *Breviloquium artis geomantiae*, BSB, Clm 489, fols. 62^r–63^v, provides an overview of the topics he addresses in his work. The story of origin is discussed on fol. 75^v. Like in

Most instructive, however, is how he establishes a direct link between the practices of astrology and geomancy. From the outset, it is clear that Bartholomew of Parma sees the practices of geomancy and astrology as closely interwoven, or rather, that he considers astrological considerations to be the basis for the practice of geomancy. He defines geomancy as *ars punctorum et linearum, loco quatuor elementorum sphaerae quarundam stellarum coeli, planetarum coniunctione*, [...] and explains how each geomantical “point” (*punctus*) and “figure” (*figura*) relates to the elements or the stars.¹⁰³⁷ He even goes one step further: according to Bartholomew of Parma, geomancy is not only based on astrological assumptions, but it actually is “another kind of astrology” (*altera astrologia*). He introduces an unusual three-part division of astrology in *astrologia superior*, which is “heavenly” (*coelestis*), *astrologia inferior*, which is “terrestrial” (*terrestris*), and *astrologia media*, which is “neutral” (*neutralis*) and stands for alchemy.¹⁰³⁸ Geomancy is thus presented as another type of astrology (*astrologia inferior*) alongside ‘astrology proper’ and alchemy. The disciplines seem united in that their practice depends on the influence of the stars, but they employ it in different ways. He repeatedly refers to this subdivision and, in some cases, calls geomancy “the practice or daughter of astrology” (*practica seu filia astrologiae*), indicating a subordination and dependence of geomancy under astrology.¹⁰³⁹ He also emphasises that astrology is one of the seven liberal arts, thereby implicitly placing geomancy in this category too.¹⁰⁴⁰

astrological treatises, the divine origin of all knowledge – and thus also of geomancy – is emphasised. In addition, various theories about specific worldly origins are also put forward - including a fallen angel who came to earth, Sem and Cain as the first inventors, a Sibyl and Ptolemy. The specification of how the geomancer should be is kept very brief and includes that he should be a knowledgeable man, an experienced master and not lazy. See *ibid.*, fol. 78^r: *Questio debet fieri homini perito et experto magistro in arte et non ignauo*, [...].

¹⁰³⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 64^r.

¹⁰³⁸ *Ibid.*: *Nec aliud est Geomantia quam altera Astrologia vere sciendo quod sunt tres artes quarum quaelibet vocatur Astrologia, scilicet superior, inferior et media. Nam Astrologia superior est coelestis, inferior est terrestris, media vero neutralis videlicet alchimia*. In his introductory work of astrology, his *Breviloquium de fructu totius astronomiae*, he refers to a similar subdivision, but leaves out geomancy. He explains that among the people alchemy is called *astronomia minor siue inferior*, in comparison to astrology proper which is called *astronomia maior*. While alchemy deals with terrestrial matters, involves more deeds than words and is private, astrology proper deals with celestial bodies, involves more words than deeds and is public. Bartholomew of Parma: *Breviloquium de fructu totius astronomiae*, ed. Narducci, p. 35: *Similiter est alia scientia siue ars, que dicitur alchimia, et vt eius nomen penitus occultetur, apud gentes vocatur astronomia minor siue inferior; quia superior astronomia dicitur maior, quia tractat de celestibus, sicut inferior de terrestribus. Superior exercetur plus verbis quam factis, et inferior plus factis quam verbis; celestis est publica, terrestris est priuata*.

¹⁰³⁹ Bartholomew of Parma: *Breviloquium artis geomantiae*, BSB, Clm 489, fol. 61^r, 75^r.

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 61^r: [...] *eamque bene addiscere artem Geomantiae quae est practica seu filia Astrologiae, quae quidem connumerant ars liberalis inter septem artes liberales*. In a separate section, he also directly addresses the classification of geomancy as part of philosophy. *Ibid.*, fols. 65^r–65^v: *Parti Philosophiae sopponitur, quod reddit hominem magis sapientem ingeniosum facit et doctum in usu eorum qui sunt facta et facienda publice vel priuatim qui nescirent*.

The insistence on the similarities between astrology and geomancy continues when he writes that geomancy follows astrology “in all things and in every respect”. However, this happens “in a different way, with different words, and without so many books and instruments”.¹⁰⁴¹

The reference to the absence of books and instruments implies that geomancy is a simpler and less learned discipline than astrology. This is further elaborated in a later section devoted to the reason for the invention of geomancy. After asserting once again that geomancy is “another, short astrology” (*altera astrologia brevis*), Bartholomew of Parma briefly discusses the basic requirements for the practice of astrology proper. The first requirement, he writes, is the necessary equipment: an astrologer needs geometrical instruments, a quadrant, an astrolabe and many different books and tables – without them, astrology could not be practised.¹⁰⁴² In addition, astrology was highly dependent on the weather – the astrologer needed “clear weather” (*tempus serenum*) so that the bright sun could be seen during the day and the fixed stars at night and they could be correctly interpreted with the help of the instruments. If one of these conditions was not fulfilled, “no complete advice about anything could be obtained through the art of astrology.”¹⁰⁴³ In order to practise astrology, a scholar thus had to overcome several challenges, both in terms of preparation and dependence on external factors.

The high degree of difficulty of astrology, according to Bartholomew of Parma, actually constituted the reason for the invention of geomancy, as it would supply answers to similar questions but under simpler conditions. Geomancy would offer the possibility of giving “advice at any time, i.e. day and night and at any hour, whether the weather is fair or cloudy”. Furthermore, there is no need for instruments that involve

¹⁰⁴¹ Ibid., fol. 61^r: *Pensare debes quia ipsa Geomantia sequitur Astrologiam in omnibus et per omnia licet per alium modum per alia verba et sine tot libris et instrumentis*, [...].

¹⁰⁴² Bartholomew of Parma: *Breviloquium artis geomantiae*, BSB, Clm 489, fol. 74^{r-v}: *Quae fuit causa inuentionis huius artis. [...], quae nominatur Geomantia, quae est altera Astrologia brevis. Nam ars Astronomie est ars quedam de septem artibus liberalibus, et per ipsam habetur consilium ueritatis ad omnem questionem motum ab homine, et haec habet certas conditiones ad eius necessitatem si debet locum habere, quare requirit prius instrumenta quedam Geometricalia et quadratum et Astrolabium multos libros et tabulas numerum libros aliarum regularum et iudiciorum et iudicium Ptolomei et aliorum, sine quibus non potest exerceri*. This is reminiscent of Michael Scot’s remarks advising poor men against studying astrology because it requires long study and the purchase of many books. See Chapter 4.3.1.

¹⁰⁴³ Bartholomew of Parma: *Breviloquium artis geomantiae*, BSB, Clm 489, fol. 74^v: *Id est perfectae et ad huc est plus quia requirit tempus serenum, ut ex serenitate in die possit videri sol clarus et eius radii recipiant per duo foramina tabularum et instrumenti quadrati et Astrolabii et stelle fixe in nocte, nam si horum aliquid deficiat per ipsam artem Astronomie, non potest consilium perfectum haberi de aliquo*.

much effort and expenses.¹⁰⁴⁴ It was thus “convenience” (*commoditas*) that had led to the invention of geomancy since it could still offer “great consolation” (*grandis consolatio*) to the person seeking answers and “much enlightenment” (*magna illuminatio*) about what he should say or do.¹⁰⁴⁵ Bartholomew of Parma then reiterates the connection with astrology proper, defining geomancy as the “daughter and practice of astrology” (*filia astronomiae et practica ipsius*) as well as its “proxy” (*procuratrix*), which “follows astrology in all things and in every way according to a clear and probable opinion”. This was established by “wise philosophers” such as Hermes, Messahala, Albumasar, “Lord Abraham” and Ptolemy. Geomancy, according to Bartholomew, would consequently “imitate all judgements concluded by astrology”.¹⁰⁴⁶

In Bartholomew of Parma’s account of geomancy, we see an attempt to establish and promote a discipline traditionally classified as a form of divination as a valid art based on ‘scientific’ principles. For this purpose, he draws on astrology and presents geomancy as a subcategory that promises similar results but with less effort and difficulty. This is not only instructive for the status of geomancy but also sheds light on how astrology and its practitioners are perceived. Through this presentation of geomancy, astrology is shown to be a highly academic, difficult, and theoretical subject, requiring much intellectual preparation through the study of various books and the ability to use the instruments properly, and even when these requirements are met, it is dependent on external circumstances such as the weather. Scholars who want to practise astrology must consequently be highly educated, invest much money and time, and be persistent.

Despite Bartholomew of Parma’s enthusiasm and advocacy for geomancy, he clearly regards geomancy as subordinate to astrology proper – it is the “daughter” of astrology, a “short” variant focused on practical aspects and linked to philosophy only because of

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ibid., fols. 74^v–75^r: *Ideo ars Geomantie fuit inuenta et locum habet, potest formari et consilium haberi per eam omni tempore scilicet die ac nocte, ac omni hora, siue sit serenum tempus, siue sit nubilum sine instrumentis alterius generis magni laboris et expense*. In the section specifically about the type of instruments needed for geomancy, Bartholomew of Parma equally emphasises that they are “few and of little value/of low cost”. See *ibid.*, fol. 65^v: *Instrumenta huius artis sunt pauca et pauci ualoris, [...]*.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ibid., fol. 75^r: [...] *causa commoditatis fuit inuenta, quia dat grandem consolationem homini querenti, et magnam illuminationem in his qui debet dicere uel facere, quando ei reuelat secreta fortunae ostendens ei quid sit melius et utilius a priori*.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ibid.: *Vnde sciendum quod Geomantia est filia Astronomiae et practica ipsius et procuratrix in omnibus et per omnia eam sequitur secundum manifestam sententiam et probabilem secundum eorum dicendum quod in ea sunt a philosophis sapientibus determinata, vt ab Hermete, Mescala, Albumasare, Domino Abraam et Ptolomeo. Nam Geomantia imitatur omnia iudicia quae terminat Astronomia sed de coelo et mundo de spheris coeli, de stellis, de signis, de planetis, et de quatuor elementis, et de omnibus passionibus et actionibus hominum uiuorum et mortuorum*.

its astrological foundations. Moreover, he does not seem to have understood himself primarily as a geomancer but stays in his role as an astrologer.¹⁰⁴⁷ While in most of his texts – both those about astrology as well as those about geomancy – he refers to himself only as *magister*, the opening words of one manuscript of the abridged version of his geomantic treatise (*Verba collecta*) twice describe him as *astrologus*.¹⁰⁴⁸ Although the manuscript dates from the sixteenth century and the opening words could be a later addition, the evidence we have of his life, the focus of his overall work and his description of the relationship between astrology and geomancy suggest that he wanted to present himself as an astrologer.

The example of Bartholomew of Parma thus shows an increasing interest of astrologers in other predictive disciplines. In this case, geomancy is presented as a discipline with many of the same or similar principles as astrology but was seen as situated at a lower intellectual level than astrology and therefore depicted as more accessible. The account testifies to a genuine interest in the rediscovery of a form of geomancy closely linked to astrology. In addition, the way other scholars discuss geomancy also provides valuable information on the self-fashioning of astrologers who wanted to present themselves as superior scholars as distinct from practitioners of geomancy.

5.3.2 Prophecy – Competition and Collaboration

Besides practitioners of magical and divinatory arts, prophets were another non-institutionally defined ‘group’ promising access to hidden, future knowledge – albeit using a very different approach. While the foundation for medieval prophecy remained the Bible with its numerous examples, new prophets and prophecies also kept appearing during the Middle Ages.¹⁰⁴⁹ Moreover, older prophecies offered much room for different readings and were adapted to fit contemporary concerns. The popularity of prophecies was decisively shaped by significant events or developments that provoked new prophecies or new interpretations of earlier ones.¹⁰⁵⁰ The continued relevance of

¹⁰⁴⁷ There also never seems to have developed an independent activity as a geomancer, i.e. a group that presented itself primarily as geomancers. Rather, it remained a divinatory discipline practised alongside others. Bartholomew of Parma also does not describe the practitioner in his works as a geomancer.

¹⁰⁴⁸ See footnote 229.

¹⁰⁴⁹ For an overview of prophecy in medieval Western Christianity, see Anke Holdenried: Prophecy and Visions. Traditions and Practices in the Medieval Western Christian World, in: Heiduk / Herbers / Lehner (eds.): Prognostication in the Medieval World, vol. 1, pp. 329–341.

¹⁰⁵⁰ In the late Middle Ages, it was particularly the Great Western Schism (1378–1417) that acted as a catalyst for prophecies. See on the impact of the Schism on astrological and prophetic predictions,

prophetic predictions and their claim to convey knowledge that came directly from God made this branch of prognostication a serious competition to astrology in the contest for interpretive sovereignty over the future. Astrologers, therefore, had to explain how their role differed from that of a prophet and why their astrological services deserved a place alongside prophecy in medieval society.

At first glance, there seems to be a clear distinction between prophecy and astrology relating to how knowledge about the future is obtained: prophets are inspired by God, while astrologers acquire their knowledge through calculation, observation and experience: one type of knowledge is given, the other learned.¹⁰⁵¹ Thus, as Anke Holdenried points out, prophecy is not an active practice as individuals cannot induce a prophecy, and there are no specific techniques for accomplishing it. Consequently, and in stark contrast to astrology, there were no medieval introductory works on how to ‘practise’ prophecy.¹⁰⁵² Moreover, prophets were not only not a clearly defined group, but their heterogeneity was an essential characteristic of medieval prophecy. The reception of a divine message was not limited to a specific group of learned experts. Instead, prophets came from across all social classes.¹⁰⁵³ Indeed, it was often precisely people who did not belong to the academic elite who emerged as prophets. Jean Patrice Boudet and Anke Holdenried highlight the particular significance of women as prophets. The reason they identify for the prevalence of female prophets is that prophecy was not a learned practice – unlike astrology, for which there were practically no female representatives in the Middle Ages.¹⁰⁵⁴

especially those of the French cardinal Pierre d’Ailly (†1420): Smoller: *History, Prophecy, and the Stars*. On the role of prophecy in the historiography of the high Middle Ages: Hans-Christian Lehner: *Prophetie zwischen Eschatologie und Politik. Zur Rolle von Vorhersagbarkeit von Zukünftigem in der hochmittelalterlichen Historiografie* (Historische Forschungen 29), Stuttgart 2015.

¹⁰⁵¹ Jean-Patrice Boudet: *Simon de Phares et les rapports entre astrologie et prophétie à la fin du Moyen Âge*, in: *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome* 102 (2) (1990), pp. 617–648, here p. 619.

¹⁰⁵² Holdenried: *Prophecy and Visions. Traditions and Practices*, p. 329. Oschema: *Irren ohne zu scheitern*, p. 169, footnote 84, also points to the competitive advantage astrologers have over other forecasters, as their expertise is always available and does not rely on divine inspiration.

¹⁰⁵³ Holdenried: *Prophecy and Visions*, p. 329. Holdenried refers to the biblical example of Balaam and the ass (Num. 22:28) to show that even animals were considered viable to act as prophets.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Holdenried: *Prophecy and Visions*, p. 332, who identifies this particularly in relation to the production of autobiographical prophetic texts and sees the reason for the lack of male authors of such texts in their greater “access to education and the formal study of theology, as well as to other, more scientific branches of knowledge.” Boudet: *Simon de Phares et les rapports entre astrologie et prophétie*, pp. 627–628, addresses this using the example of Simon de Phares’ *Recueil des plus célèbres astrologues*. Simon de Phares does name four female astrologers, three of whom, however, refer to mythological figures: the Queen of Sheba, two Sybils, and Tiphaine Ragueneau, the first wife of the French military commander Bertrand du Guesclin (†1380). To my knowledge, there has not yet been any in-depth research on Tiphaine Ragueneau. A closer look at her astrological activity promises a different perspective and an

Even though the reception of prophetic wisdom was not considered a scholarly activity, there were highly specialised discussions about the nature, causes and manner of prophetic knowledge. In the context of the reception of Aristotelian ideas in the thirteenth century, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, among others, engaged extensively with the epistemological background of prophecy as a form of knowledge acquisition.¹⁰⁵⁵ These discussions involved the role of sensory perception but also addressed the prophets themselves, especially with regard to their physical and intellectual capabilities.¹⁰⁵⁶ Such deliberations were motivated, above all, by the desire to find a method of discerning whether a revelation was true or false. The trend towards more rigorous examination of supernatural phenomena such as prophecies intensified markedly during the late Middle Ages.¹⁰⁵⁷

The astrologers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were likewise concerned on an academic level with the ways in which their own acquisition of knowledge about the future differed from that of prophets and what consequences this had for their role. A key text that frequently served as a starting point for their discussions was the (pseudo-) Ptolemaic *Centiloquium* and its appertaining commentary.¹⁰⁵⁸ Before examining the later interpretations of these passages, it is expedient to consider first the original text of the *Centiloquium* – in its Latin translation – to which the astrologers refer. In the work's first proposition (*uerbum*), the author determines who can give a “true judgement” (*uerum iudicium*) regarding the future. He explains that an astrologer is limited in his

insight into the opportunities women had at that time to practise a discipline that was usually only accessible through university education.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Holdenried: *Prophecy and Visions*, pp. 337–338. See also Jean-Pierre Torrell: *Recherches sur la théorie de la prophétie au Moyen Âge, XII^e–XIV^e siècles: études et textes* (Dokimion 13), Fribourg 1992, who includes chapters with further explanations on the stances of both Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus and provides an edition and commentary of the *Quaestio de prophetia* of Albertus Magnus (ibid., pp. 119–167 [edition]; pp. 169–204 [commentary]).

¹⁰⁵⁶ Holdenried: *Prophecy and Visions*, p. 338, refers especially to Thomas Aquinas' discussion of this topic in his *Summa theologiae*. See Thomas Aquinas: *Summa theologiae. Pars IIa IIa*, in: Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia, vol. 10 (Leonine edition), Rome 1899, pp. 365–401: quaestio 171 (*De prophetia*), quaestio 172 (*De causa prophetiae*), quaestio 173 (*De modo cognitionis propheticae*), quaestio 174 (*De divisione prophetiae*).

¹⁰⁵⁷ Holdenried: *Prophecy and Visions*, pp. 338–339.

¹⁰⁵⁸ The *Centiloquium*, which comprises hundred astrological aphorisms, was ascribed to Ptolemy throughout the Middle Ages and had an enormous circulation and influence, see Juste: *The Impact of Arabic Sources*, p. 177. Originally written in Greek, the work was transmitted to the West through its Arabic translation by the 9th-century Egyptian scholar Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf, who also added a commentary. It was translated multiple times into Latin in the twelfth century. For a discussion of the different Latin versions and the influence of the work in the Latin West, see Jean-Patrice Boudet: *Astrology Between Rational Science and Divine Inspiration. Pseudo-Ptolemy's Centiloquium*, in: Stefano Rapisarda / Erik Niblaeus (eds.): *Dialogues among Books in Medieval Western Magic and Divination* (Micrologus' Library 65), Florence 2014, pp. 49–75; also: Boudet: *The Medieval Latin Versions of Pseudo-Ptolemy's Centiloquium*. The content of the two articles largely overlaps.

predictions to universal occurrences, “as if seeing something from a distance”. Astrology, he writes, leads not to “a certain knowledge” (*certa cognitio*) but to a kind of knowledge that falls between the necessary and the possible.¹⁰⁵⁹ However, people who derive their recognition of the future from the “best part of the soul” (*ex meliori parte anime*) are nearer to the truth.¹⁰⁶⁰

The accompanying commentary ascribed to “Haly” gives details of the two ways of obtaining knowledge about the future.¹⁰⁶¹ To gain knowledge through astrology, one must observe the movements of the stars and their effects on earth, study the “books that the ancients wrote,” and add new findings from one’s own time.¹⁰⁶² The second way is “through divine inspiration”. For the “true judgements” people give this way, one can find “neither signs nor reasons”; they simply “flow from the practitioners’ hearts”.¹⁰⁶³ According to Haly, however, the two ways are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, he adds that someone capable of undertaking both approaches would be counted among the wise and found truthful in his judgements, while a person knowing only one way would be considered less wise.¹⁰⁶⁴ Haly subsequently elaborates on what the “best part of the soul” means and how it could be used to predict the future. It is that part of the soul, he writes, “from which we are rational”,¹⁰⁶⁵ and it can be accessed when one separates this power from everything worldly, as certain hermits do. Such hermits employ not the corporeal or sensible but only the power of the soul when they

¹⁰⁵⁹ (Pseudo-)Ptolemy: Centiloquium [Claudius Ptolemaeus: Liber Ptholomei quattuor tractatum cum Centiloquium eiusdem Ptholomei et commento Hali], printed by Erhard Ratdolt, Venice 1484, fol. 46^{vb}: *Uerbum primum in cognitione eorum que verum iudicium perhibent. [...] astrologus autem non debet dicere rem specialiter sed vniuersaliter vt qui eminus videt aliquam rem, [...] et non uenit ad eius certam cognitionem. [...], quod dixi hec iudicia esse inter necessarium et possibile hoc est apud eum qui rerum naturas et stellarum opus considerat.*

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid.: *Sed illi qui ex meliori parte anime cognitionem habent futurorum, propinquiore sunt veritati [...].*

¹⁰⁶¹ Although the commentary had been composed by the ninth-century Egyptian scholar Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf, it was attributed to a certain *Haly* in the Latin translations. Boudet: *Astrology Between Rational Science and Divine Inspiration*, p. 51, suggests that this could be due to a confusion with the tenth-century astrologer Ali ibn Aḥmad al-Imrani.

¹⁰⁶² (Pseudo-)Ptolemy: Centiloquium, Venice 1484, fol. 47^{ra}: *Significat quod qui res futuras scire desiderat duabus viis oportet incedere: Una vt aspiciat motus stellarum, et opera que fiunt in rebus secundum earum motum, et libros quos antiqui scripserunt, designationem motuum ipsarum, et adiungat his quecunque probabit in suo tempore.*

¹⁰⁶³ Ibid.: *Alia via est quoniam aliquis per diuinam inspirationem habuit istam scientiam multa vero poterit dare iudicia. Multi enim sunt qui dant vera iudicia quorum scilicet iudiciorum nec significationes nec rationes inuenimus in operatione nec in operato, sed quod dicunt ex eorum cordibus manat.*

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibid.: *Cum vero aliquis homo simul has duas vias habuerit inter sapientes reputabitur et in iudiciis veridicus inuenietur. Si vero aliqua istarum caruerit minus sapiens iudicabitur.*

¹⁰⁶⁵ It is remarkable that the commentator here connects the “best part of the soul” with both rationality and divine inspiration. See for a discussion of this passage in the context of the Arabic original: Boudet: *Astrology Between Rational Science and Divine Inspiration*, p. 61, who interprets this as a “theocentric conception of rationality”.

predict the future.¹⁰⁶⁶ The same power of the soul, he clarifies in a later passage, is also used, for example, when people recognise signs in their dreams.¹⁰⁶⁷ The authors of the *Centiloquium* and its commentary thus explicitly differentiate between astrological forecasts on the one hand, which require learning and continuous improvement to make general predictions, and divine inspirations on the other, which can predict specifics when the soul detaches from worldly concerns. Despite this distinction, the soul's connection to rationality and the idea that someone is particularly wise if utilizing both astrology and divine revelation show that combining the two is possible and desirable.

Thirteenth and fourteenth-century astrologers frequently invoked these passages from the *Centiloquium* to compare their methods of prediction with those of prophets. Michael Scot, for example, discusses them in the third distinction of his *Liber introductorius* when explaining how an astrologer should approach specific questions and how he should interact with his clients. Quoting (Pseudo-)Ptolemy, he states that an astrologer should never make specific predictions.¹⁰⁶⁸ Instead, Michael Scot advises astrologers to speak ambiguously, especially when addressing potentially dangerous questions, so that their words leave room for interpretation. This approach, he explains, could save astrologers from being reprehended by their clients when events turn out differently than predicted – after all, God maintains the power to intervene and change events at any time.¹⁰⁶⁹ The last statement leads Michael Scot to discuss how God reveals His will to people and how this kind of foreknowledge differs from astrological predictions. Referring to (Pseudo-)Ptolemy's description of people who make true judgements without having recourse to “signs or reasons”, he specifies who belongs to this group, which he calls the *amici dei* (“friends of God”). Like (Pseudo-)Ptolemy, Michael Scot lists hermits, but he also mentions “good old men, well-disposed melancholics as well as the voice of people of the region to whom many things are

¹⁰⁶⁶ (Pseudo-)Ptolemy: *Centiloquium*, Venice 1484, fol. 47^{ra}–47^{rb}: *Quod dixit ptholomeus. Ex meliori parte. Dixit secundum vim anime qua rationales sumus [...]. et quia oportet nos esse sollicitos circa mundana aufertur a nobis futurorum cognitio sed si hanc vim a mundanis omnibus separemus possemus futura precognoscere sicut vidimus heremitarum quamplures qui futura predicunt: quia tunc corporeis sensibilibus non utuntur sed sola vi anime unde quandoque futura prenunciant.*

¹⁰⁶⁷ Ibid., fol. 47^{rb}: *Et significationes rerum quas videmus in somniis ex vi ista contingit.*

¹⁰⁶⁸ However, he adds that knowledge of particulars is possible if something is very certain. Michael Scot: *Liber introductorius*, BSB, Clm 10268, distinctio 3, fol. 120^{ra}. *Dicit enim scilicet primo uerbo ptholomeus in centiloquio, astrologus numquam debet rem dicere alteri specialiter uelut est affirmando sic et sic erit omnino tali die et tali hora nisi sit res magne certitudinis ut puncti renouationis lune et solis mutationis de signo in signum et cetera.*

¹⁰⁶⁹ Ibid.: *Sed debet dicere sua uerba equiuoce quando quaestio est magni periculi, ut semper eadem uerba maneat cum dubietate intellectus [...], causa est, ne astrologus ualeat uice aliqua reprehendi ab auditore, [...], et deus omnipotens mutet res per causam principalem, quam uiuens homo ignorat frequenter, [...].*

revealed in the spirit or visions”. To this group, he adds “others who boldly speak as it seems to them from the emanation of the heart, such as simple people, boys, melancholics and the sick.”¹⁰⁷⁰

It is therefore evident, Michael Scot explains, that some people receive their knowledge “through divine inspirations” (*per divina inspiratio*) – certain prophets and apostles, for example – and some “through art” (*per artem*), a group including certain philosophers. However, he stresses that all things are gifts of God’s graces and powers, i.e. all knowledge ultimately comes from God.¹⁰⁷¹ He continues by contrasting the two types of knowledge further and – in keeping with the two different ways of obtaining knowledge – describes the knowledge of prophets and apostles as “natural” (*naturalis*) and that of the philosophers as “artificial” (*artificialis*).¹⁰⁷² This is a crucial difference because, according to Michael Scot, natural knowledge does not require artificial proof, while artificial knowledge does require proof from natural knowledge.¹⁰⁷³ Finally, Michael Scot references the statement from the *Centiloquium*, albeit without acknowledging the source, that the man who possesses both types of knowledge should be considered complete and included among the ranks of philosophers such as Job, Solomon, Aristotle and Plato.¹⁰⁷⁴

Michael Scot thus employs the statements on prophecy and astrology from the *Centiloquium* in a very similar way to the original but also adds new elements. Remarkably, he places the discussion within the context of delivering astrological answers to clients. His recommendation for ambiguous speech sets the stage for depicting astrology as less certain than predictions based on divine inspirations. However, Michael Scot also believes that the best scholars have access to both types of

¹⁰⁷⁰ Ibid.: *Item dicit ptholomeus, sunt enim multi qui dant uera iudicia fortunate, quorum nec significationes, nec rationes habent, uelut sunt amici dei sicut heremite sancti, boni senes, melancholici bene dispositi et uox populi regionis quibus multa in spiritu vel uisionibus reuelantur quandoque sunt et alii qui loquuntur animose sicut uisum est sibi ex emanatione cordis ut sunt stulti, pueri, melancolici et infirmi, [...].*

¹⁰⁷¹ Ibid.: *Quare dicendum quod hominum quidam habent scientiam per diuinam inspirationem ut cuiusdam prophete et apostuli et quidam per artem, ut phylosophi cuiusdam, et qui hodie sunt in mundo et tamen totum est istud ex parte infudentis dona gratiarum et uirtutum.* It is noteworthy that Michael Scot switches here from using the term “astrologers” (*astrologi*) to writing about “philosophers” (*philosophi*) or “artificial knowledge” (*artificialis scientia*). It is not quite clear if he does this on purpose to also include other types of “artificial” knowledge about the future which can be obtained by philosophers or if he simply uses the terms interchangeably.

¹⁰⁷² Ibid., fol. 120^b: *Igitur prophetarum et apostulorum dicitur scientia naturalis, philosophorum uero artificialis.*

¹⁰⁷³ Ibid.: *Et est sciendo quod scientia naturalis non indiget probatione artificialis, sed artificialis scientia requirit omnino probationes alterius uidelicet naturalis, [...].*

¹⁰⁷⁴ Ibid.: *Cum uero aliquis hominum has duas habuerit, uidelicet naturalem et artificialem ipse perfectus est et in philosophorum compoto reputandum, ut, Iob, salomon, aristotiles, plato, et cetera, [...].*

knowledge. His explanation that natural knowledge requires no proof, while artificial knowledge does, clearly shows a hierarchical relationship. All else being equal, true prophetic knowledge trumps astrology as it provides certain knowledge, but the two should ideally be used complementarily.

His elaborations on how the different types of knowledge can be attained, therefore, also highlight the advantages of astrology. Astrology, or artificial knowledge in general, does not need divine inspiration but is rational, verifiable, and learnable. What this means for the practitioners is reflected in the examples of those receiving exclusively prophetic knowledge: unlike astrologers, they are not learned scholars, but simple, young, or sick. His mention of Aristotle and Plato as figures who obtained both natural and artificial knowledge is notable as this suggests that he considers part of their knowledge to be natural, i.e. God-given. Michael Scot's statement that all knowledge ultimately comes from God, whether natural or artificial, aligns with this view. Overall, he assigns prophecies particular importance while presenting astrology or artificial knowledge in general as a valuable, albeit not equal, means of predicting the future, one which is equally divine in origin.

In terms of distinguishing between 'natural' and 'artificial' knowledge about the future, we also find an insightful side note in Bartholomew of Parma's commentary on John of Sacrobosco's *Tractatus de Sphaera*, albeit without a reference to the *Centiloquium*. When discussing conjunctions, he describes two types of "prophecy" (*prophecia*): one natural, which is known and written down before the conjunction has taken place, and the other artificial, which is recorded afterwards. The first thus foresees the conjunction and its meaning; the second only interprets it. Natural prophecy, he explains, can be received by both men and women, and relies on divine inspiration without requiring any art. He cites the illiterate hermit Cerdonus as an example, a "friend of God" through his "perfect faith and good works". In contrast, artificial prophecy is derived from an art such as astrology. In his analysis, astrologers' judgements are "artificial prophecies" (*prophecie artificiales*), discovered through the art "by means of the power of God, who enlightens every man who comes into this world".¹⁰⁷⁵ Bartholomew of Parma's statements thus highlight the view that prophets do

¹⁰⁷⁵ It is designated as a *notula doctrinalis*. Bartholomew of Parma: *Tractatus Sphaerae*, ed. by Enrico Narducci, in: *Intorno al Tractatus sphaerae di Bartolomeo da Parma, astronomo del secolo XIII, ed ad altri scritti del medesimo autore*, in: *Bullettino di bibliografia e di storia delle scienze matematiche e fisiche* 17 (1884), pp. 43–171, here p. 127: *Nota, quad [sic!] a significatione coniunctionum planetarum potest extrahi iudicium futurorum, quod post factam coniunctionem si scribatur. Vel si ante quam fiat*

not need education or learning but only a strong faith. While he explicitly describes astrology as a learned art, he also emphasises that this is possible only due to God's power and initial enlightenment. Astrology is, in fact, defined as a subcategory of prophecy.

The subordination of astrology to prophecy with reference to the *Centiloquium* is also addressed in detail by Roger Bacon in his *De laudibus mathematicae*. He states that irrespective of how fitting an astrologer's qualifications are – regarding his astrological suitability, training, composition, complexion or morals and preparation – his predictions could never be certain “unless he is inspired and specifically illuminated by God”.¹⁰⁷⁶ Roger Bacon also highlights the significance of faith in those receiving divine knowledge, referencing (Pseudo-)Ptolemy and his commentator Haly, who only “speak as if stammering” (*tanquam balbutiens loquitur*) due to their lack of faith in Christ.¹⁰⁷⁷ Although they rightly stated that God chooses when and to whom he reveals His knowledge, Roger Bacon argues, they did not understand that God prefers to select people adhering to the Christian faith for this.¹⁰⁷⁸

While Roger Bacon does not elaborate on this idea here, it is consistent with his general attitude towards non-Christian scholars. His works evince considerable reverence for non-Christian scholars like Aristotle, Avicenna or Albumasar; he ascribes to them an essential role in recovering the divine knowledge that was originally complete but has since been lost. However, he denies them the possibility of attaining

*cognoscatur et scribatur, propheta uocatur. Nam species prophetae sunt due, quarum una est naturalis et altera artificialis. Naturalis est illa propheta que reuelatur ab homine per uirtutem spiritus sancti, absque doctrina alicuius artis, sed sola inspiratione diuina; ut per heremitam Cerdonem, qui non nouit litteram, sed est amicus dei per perfectam fidem et per eius bona opera, que sunt opera sanctitatis. Sic etiam per mulierem potest istud deuenire, sicut per uirum; ut patet per Helyam, Ieremiam, David et Sibillam. Artificialis propheta est illa, que fit ab homine per doctrinam alicuius artis, ut astrologie. Vnde iudicia Astrologi, que sunt de futuris, prophetae sunt artificiales, que inueniuntur per artem mediante uirtute dei, qui illuminat omnem hominem uenientem in hunc mundum. The similarity with Michael Scot's statements in the *Liber introductorius* could be another indication that Bartholomew of Parma either drew on this work or that he was even the author of parts of it. See on the relationship between the texts of the two astrologers: Burnett: Michael Scot and the Transmission of Scientific Culture, pp. 111–115.*

¹⁰⁷⁶ Roger Bacon: *De laudibus mathematicae*, BLO, MS. Digby 218, fol. 102^{ra}: *Quantumcumque igitur sit homo natus astronomice, per inuentionem et per doctrinam informatus, et fuerit compositionis et complexionis bone morigeratusque tempusque constellationis impediens modicum declinauerit, consilium apponat in preparandis bonis significationibus et mitigandis malis, nunquam ut dicunt pertinet astrologus ad certitudinem sui officii et certitudinaliter et perfecte cognoscat futura et eorum remedia et adiutoria, nisi sit a Deo inspiratus et specialiter illuminatus.* See also Chapter 4.1.2.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Roger Bacon: *De laudibus mathematicae*, BLO, MS. Digby 218, fol. 102^{ra}: *Est autem reuelatio specialis per aliquod bonum intentus uel sapientie uel alicuius raptus uel huiusmodi, de qua tanquam balbutiens loquitur hic Ptholomeus, similiter eiusque commentator quia fidem Christi neuter recepit.*

¹⁰⁷⁸ *Ibid.*: *Posuerunt tamen quod Deus illuminat mentes hominum quando uult et quorum uult, sed non intellexerunt quod hic maxime facit Deus supposita fide Christi in prophetantibus ante Christum uel post.*

complete knowledge.¹⁰⁷⁹ This blend of admiration for non-Christian authors and their participation in divine wisdom and the rejection of their full enlightenment is evident in his description of the “stammering” Ptolemy and his commentator.

After this statement, Roger Bacon again refers to the *Centiloquium*, reiterating the commentator’s statements on people who provide judgements for which “neither signs nor reasons” can be found. In addition to hermits, Roger Bacon cites epileptics as an example of divinely inspired people, saying they can predict future events because they are separated from their physical senses during an epileptic seizure and thus have access to the soul’s power.¹⁰⁸⁰

The importance of distancing oneself from worldly matters to make better predictions is emphasised by John of Saxony, who invokes the passages from the *Centiloquium* in his commentary of Alcabitius’ “Introduction to Astrology”. When he discusses the third condition of being a good astrologer, the renunciation of worldly possessions, he cites Haly to argue against excessive focus on worldly concerns, explaining that separation from mundane matters would enable the recognition of future events, as is seen in the case of hermits or epileptics, who rely on their souls’ power rather than their corporeal senses.¹⁰⁸¹ John of Saxony concludes that a philosopher, and consequently an astrologer, should not be wealthy.¹⁰⁸² He thus uses the first proposition of the *Centiloquium* to assert that the same condition which is usually cited as favourable for receiving divine inspirations – abstaining from worldly matters – should equally apply to the astrologer.

In the various ways the astrologers employ and expand on the passages of the *Centiloquium*, we can thus identify different attempts to distance their discipline and its practitioners from prophecies as well as to connect or even merge the two. This process of distinction and entanglement has been addressed in more detail by Jean-Patrice Boudet and Laura Ackerman Smoller, who both note a general shift towards arguing for greater complementarity between prophetic and astrological predictions over the course

¹⁰⁷⁹ On this stance, see also Chapter 3.2.2.

¹⁰⁸⁰ This, he adds, is likewise what can happen during a dream. Roger Bacon: *De laudibus mathematicae*, BLO, MS. Digby 218, fol. 102^{ra-b}.

¹⁰⁸¹ John of Saxony: *Commentary*, Paris 1521, fol. 30^v: *Quantum ad tertiam conditionem dicit Haly in commento primae propositionis centiloquii. Quia oportet nos sollicitos esse circa mundana: aufertur a nobis futurorum cognitio: sed si a mundanis omnibus separaremus, possemus futura praecognoscere, sicut videmus eremitarum que plures qui futura predicunt. Et epilepticorum quidam dum epilepsia torquentur futura praedicunt: quia tunc corporeis sensibus non vtuntur sed sola vi animae.*

¹⁰⁸² *Ibid.*: *Patet ergo quod philosophus non debet esse diues teste philosopho septimo politice.* See also Chapter 4.3.2.

of the late Middle Ages.¹⁰⁸³ Smoller sees especially the way late medieval astrologers have portrayed astrology's origin as indicative of a closer intertwining between astrology and prophecy than previously assumed by modern historians.¹⁰⁸⁴ The merging of astrology and prophecy is evident in the fact that astrology was portrayed as being initially revealed to chosen men by God. Astrology's revealed and divine origin is especially pronounced in the account of Roger Bacon, who repeatedly emphasises that knowledge was first given to the prophets and patriarchs by God and that all parts of philosophy ultimately derive from divine revelation.¹⁰⁸⁵ The ascription of philosophy's origin to divine inspiration at the beginning of time was used by Roger Bacon to endow it with legitimacy and display philosophy – and equally astrology – as being in accordance with God's will.¹⁰⁸⁶ However, Roger Bacon's account of the loss and recovery of this once complete knowledge, bestowed upon the forefathers by God, also shows the importance he attaches to progress and learning. For the most part, this restoration of knowledge takes place not through divine inspiration but through arduous work. Roger Bacon also explicitly stresses the need for progress in stating that as “nothing is complete in human discoveries”, people can and should always strive to increase their knowledge through new findings.¹⁰⁸⁷ Roger Bacon's view of knowledge in general thus corresponds to what Jean-Patrice Boudet has observed in the depiction

¹⁰⁸³ Both Laura Ackerman Smoller and Jean-Patrice Boudet have done this based on texts by fifteenth-century astrologers, respectively Pierre d'Ailly († 1420) and Simon de Phares († after 1499). See Smoller: *History, Prophecy, and the Stars*; Boudet: *Simon de Phares et les rapports entre astrologie et prophétie*. Laura Ackerman Smoller: *Teste Albumasare cum Sibylla*: astrology and the Sibyls in medieval Europe, in: *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 41 (2010), pp. 76–89, also analysed the confluence of the Sibylline prophetic tradition and astrological predictions. This does not mean, however, that astrologers did not consider astrology and prophecy as two clearly separate disciplines. Complementarity here does not imply equation. See for this also Boudet: *Simon de Phares et les rapports entre astrologie et prophétie*, pp. 626–627.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Smoller: *Teste Albumasare*, p. 78, opposes explicitly the view that in the Middle Ages astrology and religious prophecy were seen as two strictly distinct genres without much interpenetration and refers as an example for such a view to an article by Hilary Carey: *Astrology and Antichrist*, esp. p. 516. Boudet: *Simon de Phares et les rapports entre astrologie et prophétie*, p. 630, equally identifies an ambiguity towards prophecy in the work of Simon de Phares on the basis of his version of astrology's mythical origin. See for this argument also: Bokdam: *Les mythes de l'origine de l'astrologie*, p. 61, who focuses on the late medieval and particularly the early modern interpretations of the history of astrology's origin. For the astrologers' narratives about the history of astrology, see Chapter 3.2.

¹⁰⁸⁵ See Chapter 3.2.2.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 2, chap. 5, p. 41, even spells this out explicitly: *Cum igitur Deus illuminaverit animas eorum in percipiendis veritatibus philosophiae, manifestum est quod eorum labor non est alienus a sapientia divina*.

¹⁰⁸⁷ He explicitly warns against relying solely on the findings of the ancestors and calls for progress. Ibid. chap. 14, p. 57: *Praeterea semper crescere potest in hac vita studium sapientiae, quia nihil est perfectum in humanis inventionibus. Quapropter antiquorum defectus deberemus nos posteriores supplere, quia introivimus in labores eorum, per quos, nisi simus asini, possumus ad meliora excitari; quia miserrimum est semper uti inventis, et nunquam inveniendis, ut dicit Boetius, [...]*.

of astrology presented by fifteenth-century astrologer Simon de Phares, who likewise describes it as having divine origins, but emphasises that it has been enriched by observation and experience over time.¹⁰⁸⁸

Another indication both Boudet and Smoller see as a decisive step towards an increased complementarity of astrology and prophecy is the employment of astrological predictions for eschatological purposes.¹⁰⁸⁹ Part of the reason for the growing connection between astrology and eschatological prophecy was the general rise of interest in eschatology from the thirteenth century onwards, which was strongly influenced by the prophecies of Joachim of Fiore and involved recourse to pagan and Christian prophecies as well as to astrological predictions.¹⁰⁹⁰ The so-called conjunction theory of Albumasar served as a basis for the employment of astrology to calculate major religious events and the end of days.¹⁰⁹¹

The ideas of Roger Bacon were particularly influential in this regard.¹⁰⁹² As discussed in Chapter 3.3.1, he uses Albumasar's theory to explain the arrival of different religions. In doing this, he tries to show the superiority of Christianity, which he considered to be apparent from these astrological considerations.¹⁰⁹³ For Roger Bacon, the exact calculation of the rise and fall of the major religions was of the utmost importance and urgency since it would also entail knowing the time for the appearance of the Antichrist. He postulates that there could only be six religions or "sects" in total, the last being that of the Antichrist, who will appear when Islam is defeated.¹⁰⁹⁴ Since his deliberations suggested that the end of Islam was approaching very soon, and with it

¹⁰⁸⁸ Boudet: Simon de Phares et les rapports entre astrologie et prophétie, p. 630; see also: Bokdam: Les mythes de l'origine de l'astrologie, p. 61.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Boudet: Simon de Phares et les rapports entre astrologie et prophétie, pp. 641–642, names as contributing factors for this development the popularisation of astrology from the fourteenth century onwards and the various crises in the late Middle Ages, which led to a surge of prophetic predictions. Smoller: *Teste Albumasare*, p. 81. Smoller: *History, Prophecy, and the Stars*, esp. pp. 85–101, also examines in detail the views of Pierre d'Ailly in regard to the Great Schism as a potential sign of the coming apocalypse. She was able to show that Pierre d'Ailly's views on the subject changed over time and astrological considerations strengthened his conviction that the schism did not herald the end of the world after all.

¹⁰⁹⁰ For this shift, see Richard W. Southern: *Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing*: 3. History as Prophecy, in: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Ser. 5, 22 (1972), pp. 159–180, here p. 166, 173. For an overview of the main tenets and discussions concerning the prediction of the end of the world in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries up to the beginning of the Great Schism: Smoller: *History, Prophecy, and the Stars*, pp. 85–92. On the work and reception of Joachim of Fiore: Marjorie E. Reeves: *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism*, Oxford 1969.

¹⁰⁹¹ See Chapter 3.3.1 on the theory of conjunctions in the context of religions.

¹⁰⁹² See Burnett: *The Astrological Categorization of Religions*; North: *Astrology and the Fortunes of Churches*, pp. 189–191; Carey: *Astrology and Antichrist*, esp. pp. 526–527.

¹⁰⁹³ Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, pp. 255–257, pp. 262–263.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 266–269. For more details on his astrological reasoning: Carey: *Astrology and the Antichrist*, p. 526–527, North: *Astrology and the Fortunes of Churches*, pp. 198–191.

the coming of the Antichrist, he considered it imperative for the Christian Church to prepare itself for this with every means at its disposal, including, above all, astrology.¹⁰⁹⁵

In Roger Bacon's account, it is part of the astrologer's task to find mathematically verifiable indications of a more precise time of arrival of the Antichrist and thus to confirm and specify the claims of prophecies. As was the case in the comparison with the theologians, Roger Bacon thus portrays the astrologer as a rational supporter of the Christian faith, here in relation to the confirmation of the statements of prophets. In doing this, he argues not for astrology to take the place of prophecy but to see astrology as an additional tool in the Church's efforts to determine the time of the Antichrist. This is particularly evident in a passage in which he emphasises that the Church should draw on a range of different sources to obtain as precise an estimate as possible of when the Antichrist will appear. These sources, he writes, should include biblical, pagan and more recent prophecies, such as that of Joachim of Fiore, but also the books of philosophers and, above all, the study of astrology.¹⁰⁹⁶

While Roger Bacon strongly advocates using all possible means to determine the time of the coming of the Antichrist, the question of whether it was even permissible, let alone possible to obtain this knowledge was the subject of much controversy in the Middle Ages. The metaphorical descriptions of the Apocalypse in the Bible had invited speculation from the early Middle Ages onwards, but this was reignited in the thirteenth century, especially by the writings of Joachim of Fiore († 1202), who predicted the

¹⁰⁹⁵ For the calculation of the end of Islam, see Roger Bacon: *Opus majus*, ed. Bridges, vol. 1, part 4, p. 266. Already before his more detailed explanations, he points out that *mathematica* (here: astrology) can not only certify one's Christian confession of faith but also fortify against the "sect" of Antichrist. Ibid., p. 254: *Et per hanc viam mathematicae non solum certificamur de professione nostra, sed praemunimur contra sectam Antichristi, [...]*.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 269–270: *Nolo hoc ponere os meum in coelum, sed sic scio quod si ecclesia vellet revolvere textum sacrum et prophetias sacras, atque prophetias Sibyllae, et Merlini et Aquilae, et Sestonis, Joachim et multorum aliorum, insuper historias et libros philosophorum, atque juberet considerari vias astronomiae, invenitur sufficiens suspicio vel magis certitudo de tempore Antichristi*. It is important to note that Roger Bacon advocates this use of astrology to calculate and confirm key events not only for predicting future events, but also for astrologically explaining historical developments of the past. Only on the basis of a correct dating of significant events with the help of astrology is a prediction of future developments possible at all. Roger Bacon cites the verification of biblical chronology as one of the principal uses of astrology when discussing the application of *mathematica* to sacred subjects. He cites not only astronomical considerations here, but also refers to the conjunction theory of Albumasar and astrological aspects. Ibid., pp. 187–193. See for a general overview of the discussion of using astrology to explain historical developments, albeit with a particular focus on Pierre d'Ailly: Smoller: *History, Prophecy, and the Stars*, pp. 61–84.

coming of Antichrist by 1260.¹⁰⁹⁷ The use of astrology to confirm or specify the arrival of the Antichrist formed part of the ensuing theological discussions with varying points of view.¹⁰⁹⁸

On the part of astrologers, not everyone shared Roger Bacon's views. The writings of John Ashenden offer an intriguing insight into a different perspective. Although he relies heavily on Albumasar's conjunction theory in his *Summa* and advocates its use to verify biblical and historical chronology, he is highly critical of the possibility of determining the exact date of the Antichrist.¹⁰⁹⁹ He does not address this issue in his *Summa*. However, he turns explicitly and at length to the question of the predictability of the Antichrist in a theological codicil that directly follows his prognostication of 1365.¹¹⁰⁰ He begins his deliberations by remarking that he has written his previous expositions on the great conjunctions for „the common benefit of students of the science of astrology“ (*pro communi utilitate studentium in scientia astronomie*).¹¹⁰¹ He further points out that the predicted events would not “inevitably” (*inevitabiliter*) or “necessarily” (*necessarie*) happen; rather, the conjunctions would be signs of these matters occurring according to the view of astrology and in line with the opinions of the astrologers mentioned. In order to emphasise the theological foundation of his astrological views, he cites Genesis 1:14, which describes the celestial bodies as signs.¹¹⁰² John Ashenden thus sees his statements as validated both astrologically and from a Christian point of view. However, in his opinion, this was not true of all

¹⁰⁹⁷ As Smoller outlines, the biblical basis of the beliefs and discussions about the Apocalypse was founded mainly on the Book of Revelation, which describes how the Apocalypse will take place, on Daniel 12, which provides clues about the timing of the Apocalypse, and on Acts 1:7, which led to the view that one should not strive to know the time of the Antichrist. The fact that the prediction of 1260 did not come true, however, did not put an end to the speculation, but rather seems to have fuelled it. Smoller: *History, Prophecy, and the Stars*, pp. 86–88 (on the biblical basis), pp. 89–90 (on Joachim von Fiore's discussion).

¹⁰⁹⁸ This was mainly done in reference to the notion of the “Great Year” and not specifically to the theory of great conjunctions. See, for example, the treatises by Arnold of Villanova, John of Paris or Henry of Harclay discussed by Smoller: *History, Prophecy, and the Stars*, pp. 90–91; Carey: *Astrology and the Antichrist*, pp. 532–534. See also on the different attempts of calculating the end of the world: Laura Ackerman Smoller: *The Alfonsine Tables and the End of the World: Astrology and Apocalyptic Calculation in the Later Middle Ages*, in: Alberto Ferreiro (ed.): *The Devil, Heresy and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages: Essay in Honor of Jeffrey B. Russell* (Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions 6), Leiden / Boston / Cologne 1998, pp. 211–239.

¹⁰⁹⁹ See for the use of Albumasar's conjunction theory in John Ashenden's *Summa*: North: *Astrology and the Fortunes of Churches*, pp. 193–194, also: Snedegar: *John Ashenden and the Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, pp. 100–102. For the theory's applicability to verify (biblical) chronology: *Ibid.*, pp. 78–90.

¹¹⁰⁰ John Ashenden: *Prognosticatio coniunctionis 1365*, ed. by Keith V. Snedegar, in: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 2, appendix IIb, pp. 393–433; theological codicil: pp. 422–433.

¹¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 422. He repeats a similar statement at the end of the text, with a special reference to his associates at Merton: *Ibid.*, p. 433.

¹¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 422.

predictions circulating then. He reports that “in these days”, many were making predictions through “false prophecies” (*falsae prophetiae*), other “illicit sciences” (*scientiae illicitae*) or “from their own false imaginations and audacities” (*de falsis suis imaginationibus propriis confidentiis*), deceiving both themselves and others.¹¹⁰³

The kind of predictions John Ashenden is alluding to here becomes apparent when he turns to Joachim of Fiore’s predictions for the years 1357, 1360 and 1365, the very times about which John Ashenden had made his astrological predictions immediately beforehand. He reports that “abbot Joachim”, in his work *De concordantiis*, predicted the appearance of two popes in 1357, a dire state of the Church and clergy in 1360, and, in 1365, the return of Greece under the obedience of the Roman Church and the emergence of news of the coming of Antichrist.¹¹⁰⁴

Although these predictions could be more or less reconciled with those made by John Ashenden on the basis of his own astrological calculations, he firmly rejects Joachim’s claims, stating that they are not supported by any astrological considerations – “neither by the science of astrology nor by any celestial constellations is it signified that the foretold effects will occur at the predicted times in the way Joachim said they would”.¹¹⁰⁵ The point of contention seems to have been, above all, the prediction of the Antichrist, which John Ashenden then discusses further. He notes that some people, including Joachim of Fiore, have tried to deduce the Day of Judgement and the coming of the Antichrist from the Scriptures. However, John Ashenden is convinced that the time of Christ’s second coming cannot be discerned by “any investigative science nor by the Holy Scriptures, which can be proven in many ways”.¹¹⁰⁶ In his subsequent

¹¹⁰³ Ibid.: *Multi vero hiis diebus quidam videlicet per falsas prophetias et quidam per alias scientias illicitas et quidam etiam de falsis suis imaginationibus propriis confidentiis, multa mirabilia nituntur predicere et seipsos et populum pessime decipientes.*

¹¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 423: *De isto enim anno Christi 1357 in quo apparebit predicta coniunctio Saturni et Martis in Cancro. Loquitur Abbas Joachim in suo maiori volumine De concordantiis, dicens quod isto anno erunt duo Pape unus Lugduni et iustus, et alius Rome et iniquus. Dicit etiam idem Abbas in eodem libro quod anno Christi 1360 erit ecclesia et clericus in tanta vilitate in quanta non fuit a tempore Constantini imperatoris. Item in eodem libro dicit quod anno Christi 1365 in quod videlicet anno apparebit predicta coniunctio magna Saturni et Jovis de qua tractatum est prius, redibit tota Grecia ad obedientiam Romane ecclesie, et tunc audientur nova de predicatione Antichristi.* The work *De concordantiis* is not a genuine work by Joachim of Fiore. Joachim of Fiore had made his predictions for the previous century, i.e. in relation to the years 1254, 1256, 1260 and 1265. See Reeves: *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 84. North: *Astrology and the Fortunes of Churches*, p. 196, points out that a copy of *De concordantiis* is in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 393, fol. 80^v, following an excerpt of John Ashendens *Summa*.

¹¹⁰⁵ John Ashenden: *Prognosticatio coniunctionis 1365*, ed. Snedegar, p. 423: *Sed firmiter credo quod nec per scientiam astronomie nec per aliquas constellationes supercelestes significabuntur predicti effectus evenire predictis temporibus prout dixit Joachim.*

¹¹⁰⁶ Ibid.: *Quidam etiam de quorum numero fuit idem Abbas Joachim nituntur investigare quando erit dies iudicii ex scripturis et tempus determinatum limitatur quando videlicet veniet Antichristus et quando*

remarks, he quotes several passages from the Bible and from biblical commentators to underline his point, stressing again that the prediction of the end of the world cannot be made either by “investigative science or prophecy”.¹¹⁰⁷ He also elaborates on how some people drew on certain Bible passages to come to their conclusions about the date of the arrival of the Antichrist or the Last Judgement and tries to refute them based on Scripture.¹¹⁰⁸ The method of Joachim of Fiore’s predictions is one of those examined more closely. John Ashenden judges it to depend more on “false imagination than on any reason” and concludes that “there is not much to be believed in Joachim’s statements, especially in what he foretold about the end of the world.”¹¹⁰⁹

Having discussed the statements of Joachim of Fiore, John Ashenden next refers to the viewpoint of a colleague of his who had come to Oxford to study theology in the year in which the treatise was written. As was related to him, this “venerable teacher and colleague” had publicly claimed in a lecture that the time between the “general flood at the time of Noah” and the future “flood of fire”, i.e. the Apocalypse, could be precisely determined to be 7,500 years. This colleague furthermore promised to show John Ashenden how he had arrived at this number “through prophecies, the Holy Scriptures and through astronomy and philosophy”.¹¹¹⁰

Even though this Oxford theologian thus seems to have included astrological considerations in his prediction, John Ashenden rejects his theory, too, and concludes that this colleague has taken the same wrongful path as Joachim of Fiore.¹¹¹¹ While John Ashenden does not seem to know at the time of writing exactly how his colleague

veniet Christus ad iudicium omnes tales pessime decepti sunt, eo quod non poterit tempus secundi adventus Christi per aliquam scienciam inquisitivam sciri, neque per scripturas quod probatur multipliciter.

¹¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 425–426: *Non est ergo humane virtutis per aliquam scientiam inquisitivam investigare aut per aliquas prophetias veraciter prefinire seu predicere tempus 2 adventus Christi.*

¹¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 426–431.

¹¹⁰⁹ He writes that Joachim of Fiore claimed that just as the Hebrew kingdom lasted as many hundreds of years as there are letters in the Hebrew alphabet, the Roman kingdom will last as many hundreds of years as there are letters in the Latin alphabet. Ibid., p. 429: *Sed certum est quod ista qua in nullo valet unus quicquid idem Joachim loquitur ibidem de literis plus dependit in eo iudicio ex falsa imaginatione quam ex aliquam ratione, [...].* Ibid., p. 430: *[...] non est ergo multum credendum ipsi Joachym in predictis et precipue in hiis que ipse predixit de fine mundi.*

¹¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 431: *Sed inter cetera nova inaudita que hiis diebus proferuntur multum admiror de quodam reverendo magistro et socio qui isto anno Oxonie intravit ad Bibliam, qui etiam in principio lecture sue, prout mihi erat relatum a fide dignis, publice asseruit et determinavit in scolis certum et determinatum numerum annorum a diluvio universalique quod erat tempore Noe usque ad diluvium ignis futurum videlicet 7500 annos; 7500 annos quem quidem numerum annorum dixit se esse ostensurum prout mihi erat intimatum ex prophetiis et Scriptura Sacra per astronomiam et philosophiam.*

¹¹¹¹ Ibid.: *Sequitur quod iste magister incidit modum idem inconveniens in quo incidebat abbas Joachim et alii quamplures qui nitebantur determinare certum et determinatum numerum annorum usque ad finem mundi.*

arrived at the figure of 7,500, he uses the rest of the text to argue, through biblical and patristic quotations, that a prediction of the end of the world is not possible. He avers that the exact calculation of the first Flood, in contrast, is indeed possible and that he had already done this thoroughly in his *Summa* on the basis of astrological calculations.¹¹¹² However, this does not entail that the same applies to the second flood; on the contrary, John Ashenden considers the attempt to calculate the second flood to be “a great audacity and a great presumption”.¹¹¹³ Finally, he concludes his treatise by stressing again that he wrote it “for the general benefit of students in astronomy” and especially for the “exercise and aid” of his fellows at Merton College.¹¹¹⁴

John Ashenden’s statements yield insights into how he fashioned his role as an astrologer as distinct from a prophet. Although his assessment of the predictability of the end of the world differs from that of Roger Bacon, common tendencies can be discerned with respect to how the astrologer’s role was imagined. First, John Ashenden, too, highlights the importance and use of the theory of great conjunctions for determining and verifying biblical chronology. His text presents the astrologer’s activity as supporting or complementary to the work of the theologians.¹¹¹⁵ John Ashenden applies this mainly retrospectively, that is, he is using astrology to specify and explain past events rather than future developments, although he also concedes the astrological predictability of future religious changes and the appearance of prophets. The prediction of the coming of the Antichrist, however, is beyond human knowledge in his view.

While he rejects any possibility of predicting the exact time for the end of the world, his displeasure is directed explicitly against specific prophecies. In the way he categorises and describes wrong predictions, it becomes clear what he conversely considers essential for correct predictions. The prophecies or the false interpretation of them that he addresses in his text are referenced along with “illicit sciences” and, in his opinion, are based solely on “imagination” instead of reason. In the case of the

¹¹¹² Ibid., pp. 431–432: *Nam tempus a diluvio aque usque modo est satis certum et determinatum prout patet ex canonibus tabularum Alfonsi et prout etiam modo meo declaratum in parte primo Summe mee iudicialis de accidentibus mundi distinctione prima capitulo 2º, [...]*.

¹¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 432–433: *Patet ergo quod magister in nitens probare certum et determinatum tempus usque ad diluvium universalem ignis perfundit ergo demonstrare et probare certum determinatum et cognitum tamen tempus usque ad finem mundi quod meo iudicio magne temeritatis est et magne presumptionis, [...]*.

¹¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 433: *Ista scripsi de significationibus predictarum coniunctionum magnarum ad commune valitatem studentium in astronomia et precipue ad exercitium et solacium sociorum meorum Aule de Merton in Oxonia, [...]*.

¹¹¹⁵ When he determines the beginning of the world in his *Summa*, he repeatedly emphasises that he bases his reasoning on the “opinions of the theologians and the astrologers”, thus showing them to be partners whose fields of work complement each other. See Chapter 5.2.2, especially footnote 978.

predictions of Joachim of Fiore, they furthermore cannot be supported by any astrological evidence. The implication here is that astrologers, by contrast, base their forecasts on rational grounds. Even if astrologers could not determine an exact date for the coming of the Antichrist, they could at least expose false prophetic predictions. The direct comparison of his own predictions, which are based on astrological calculations and rational considerations, with Joachim of Fiore's prophecies for exactly the same years highlights this difference between the two ways of claiming knowledge about the future.

John Ashenden's discussion of circulating prophecies shows not only that he was actively engaging in the current debates of his time but also that astrologers saw contemporary prophets or prophecy interpreters as competitors in the 'marketplace' of future predictions. It is important to stress that John Ashenden does not criticise prophets or prophecies in general here or even dispute the possibility of genuine prophecies. Rather, he is referring to specific prophecies that were based not on direct divine revelations but merely on the interpretation of scriptural passages. In these cases, he criticises the lack of a rational basis and, above all, the object of the predictions: the determination of the time of the Antichrist. In rejecting any possibility of calculating the exact date of the Antichrist's arrival, John Ashenden proves to be "theologically conservative", which is not surprising given his background – he was affiliated with an English university and possibly even studied theology.¹¹¹⁶ Although an astrologer himself, he was not prepared to propagate astrology at any price but shied away from certain particularly controversial areas.

Hilary Carey noted a general reluctance on the part of Latin Christian astrologers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to use the theory of the major conjunctions to predict religious developments and attributes this mainly to theological and academic objections to it.¹¹¹⁷ However, as the examples of Roger Bacon and John Ashenden show, this does not mean that it was not discussed or promoted at all.¹¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, it was only at the end of the fourteenth century, following the beginning of the Western Schism (1378–1417), that interest in this subject notably intensified. The Schism

¹¹¹⁶ For his assessment as "theologically conservative" see North: *Astrology and the Fortunes of Churches*, p. 197. For John Ashenden's background and potential study of theology: Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, p. 7.

¹¹¹⁷ Carey: *Astrology and the Antichrist*, p. 535.

¹¹¹⁸ Hilary Carey herself discusses these examples and does not argue that there was no engagement with the theory in regard to religious events but that it was not widely accepted and propagated. See Carey: *Astrology and the Antichrist*.

reignited the discussion about an imminent end of the world and, with it, the discourse about the predictability of the future. It was most famously the French Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly who employed Roger Bacon's Christianised interpretation of Albumasar's theory of the great conjunctions to assess the current situation. While supporting the validity of the theory, he concluded that astrology showed that the Schism did not herald the end of the world but could indeed be resolved.¹¹¹⁹

Even though predicting the coming of the Antichrist remained a highly controversial issue, the use of astrology to verify prophecies and foresee religious changes increased significantly in the fifteenth and especially in the sixteenth century in connection with the Lutheran Reformation.¹¹²⁰ The confluence between astrology and prophecy offered, as Jean-Patrice Boudet points out, advantages for both types of prediction: while astrology provided a scientific corroboration for prophecies, the prediction of the prophesied end time gave astrologers additional motivation and the prospect of a wider readership.¹¹²¹ Laura Ackerman Smoller further notes that this merging of traditions ultimately led to a kind of "natural theology", sacralising both nature and science.¹¹²²

However, despite these tendencies towards complementarity, Boudet also notes an ambiguity on the part of astrologers regarding the relationship between astrology and prophecy, which has much to do with how astrologers wanted to present themselves.¹¹²³

¹¹¹⁹ See Smoller: *History, Prophecy, and the Stars*, p. 85. His reflections are therefore in a way not that different from those of John Ashenden, who also used astrology to show that prophecies about the imminent coming of the Antichrist – from an astrological point of view – could not be true. However, Pierre d'Ailly still thought it possible to predict the time for the coming of the Antichrist, which he dates to 1789. See Smoller: *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹¹²⁰ Carey: *Astrology and the Antichrist*, p. 515. See, for example, the articles in: Zambelli (ed.): *"Astrologi hallucinati"*. North: *Astrology and the Fortunes of Churches*, p. 203, discusses Pico della Mirandola's († 1494) oppositional stance, which he sees as the "beginning of the end of the doctrine of great conjunctions", but concedes that it was used "maybe more than ever before" in the sixteenth century.

¹¹²¹ Boudet: *Simon de Phares et les rapports entre astrologie et prophétie*, p. 642. Boudet here also points out that some prophecies were attributed to well-known astrologers – presumably to increase the prophecies credibility. As an example for this, he cites a prophecy which was ascribed to the French astrologer Jean de Murs (*c. 1300, † c. 1360) in the chronicle of Jean de Venette (*1307, † after 1368).

¹¹²² Smoller: *Teste Albumasare*, p. 86, points out two ways of this sacralisation advocated by the astrologers: first, by claiming that God inscribed his wisdom in nature, i.e. used the stars to convey his message, they sacralised nature itself; second, by assigning a divine origin to astrology, they sacralised science. Dietrich Kurze expressed similar views in his study of the fifteenth-century astrologer Johannes Lichtenberger, who also argued for the complementarity of astrology and prophecy in his astrological work. Dietrich Kurze: *Johannes Lichtenberger* (gest. 1503). *Eine Studie zur Geschichte der Prophetie und Astrologie* (Historische Studien 379), Berlin 1960, p. 43, sees in Johannes Lichtenberger's text an attempt "to secure and support one by the other". Prophecy would be withdrawn by astrology from the "sphere of uncontrollable subjectivity", while astrology would receive a "sacral consecration" through fitting biblical quotations and prophetic words.

¹¹²³ He observes this ambiguity in the case of Simon de Phares. Boudet: *Simon de Phares et les rapports entre astrologie et prophétie*, p. 642.

He attributes the astrologers' wish to distance themselves from the prophets primarily to their desire to preserve their intellectual identity and social status.¹¹²⁴ Based on the case of Simon de Phares († after 1499), Boudet points out that in his work, Simon de Phares attempts to portray astrologers as “men of science” and “holders of officially recognised knowledge”, which was connected to their “integration into university society and the political world.”¹¹²⁵ While Boudet acknowledges that Simon de Phares' claims of the astrologers' high standing in society are exaggerated, he suggests that Simon de Phares aims to contrast astrologers, as official experts, to prophets, who were portrayed as more marginal figures who were not capable of advising rulers wisely.¹¹²⁶ Boudet points out that there was greater integration of astrologers than prophets into political and intellectual society in medieval Europe. However, he stresses that the standing of astrologers could differ significantly according to the exact period and political entity in which they worked.¹¹²⁷

Although Boudet's observations refer to the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the beginnings of similar developments can also be found in the thirteenth- and earlier fourteenth-century texts examined here. The discussions about prophecy based on the statements of the (pseudo-)Ptolemaic *Centiloquium* show that there was a desire to position oneself in relation to a group that equally claimed knowledge about the future. Furthermore, what Hilary Carey called the “rise of a heightened eschatological consciousness”, combined with a greater prevalence and institutionalisation of astrology, led to the attempt to leverage prophecy for the purposes of astrologers.¹¹²⁸ However, the aim of astrologers was by no means to equate the two ways of predicting the future: rather, they sought to emphasise that astrology could help in specifying and interpreting prophecies.

Although the astrologers discussed here thus cannot be seen as a monolithic entity – they worked at different times and in different contexts, had different emphases in their discussions, and sometimes even held opposing positions – the image of the role of an astrologer they presented, as opposed to that of the prophet, is consistent. They mark the hierarchy of future knowledge in terms of the certainty that can be achieved. True prophetic knowledge comes directly from God and can thus be certain; astrological

¹¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 627.

¹¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 627–628: “[...] hommes de science, détenteurs d’un savoir officiellement reconnu grâce à leur intégration – fortement magnifiée d’ailleurs – à la société universitaire et au monde politique, [...]”

¹¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 628.

¹¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 628.

¹¹²⁸ Carey: *Astrology and the Antichrist*, p. 535.

knowledge, however, always remains uncertain. The writers of the introductory works emphasise that prophets have a particularly strong faith and are often people who have turned away from worldly things. However, it is also underlined that prophets do not need any special intellectual aptitude – indeed, their simplicity often qualifies them as a prophet. Moreover, prophecy cannot be actively practised. In contrast, the astrologer is portrayed as an active and intellectual scholar who cannot make predictions with the same certainty as a prophet but who does so in a rational and verifiable manner within the bounds of what is humanly possible.

In conclusion, this chapter showed that the authors of the introductory works were profoundly concerned with the positioning of astrologers and their discipline vis-à-vis other groups. When describing and delimiting the astrologer's role, the themes identified in Chapters 3 and 4 played an integral role throughout, especially the intellectual and moral aptitude of the astrologer, his commitment to Christianity and the reliance on learned and rational knowledge. The authors pointed to similarities of their occupation with other groups in order to reinforce their own legitimacy or to arouse greater interest. However, it was paramount for the astrologers to emphasise that their activity had an independent value that was useful and even necessary for other disciplines. By describing their activity and role as compared to others, the astrologers thus created a group identity of their own. Again, this did not involve direct collaboration between astrologers but rather the recognition that astrologers as a group or occupation conformed to specific guidelines unique to their own group. This does not mean that astrologers could not act in other capacities. In general, astrologers are portrayed as capable of speaking on issues relating to medicine, theology, magic and even prophecy. However, it is evident that the authors imagined a distinct role for 'the astrologer' – a role that can be clearly distinguished from that of other practitioners.

6 The Successful Fashioning of the Astrologer?

In the way the astrologers described their occupation and its representatives, it is evident that they envisioned the astrologer as a respectable part of medieval society. Firstly, astrologers were portrayed as scholars with a long tradition of early and venerable practitioners. Secondly, they were shown to fulfil a distinct role that involved specific prerequisites and behaviours. Thirdly, they were characterised as members of the established scholarly community of the late Middle Ages, who nevertheless had an autonomous *raison d'être*. Although the external perception of astrologers and the real conditions for their practice influenced the astrologers' texts, their depictions primarily represented an ideal image of the astrologer's role. Based on the foundational Greek and Arabic texts of astrology and supplemented by their own ideas, the authors of the introductory works delineated what they believed the role of an astrologer should be. The introductions to astrology thus served not only to convey the theoretical foundations of the discipline to aspiring astrologers but also to reinforce and propagate the outlined image of the astrologer and to demand its implementation. While the texts of the astrologers set out their aspirations, the question arises as to whether these came to fruition. In other words, was the astrologers' self-fashioning successful?

Finding an answer to this first requires considering how such success could be measured or how it would manifest itself. The most direct approach to this question is to examine the practical working conditions of astrologers. First of all, then, I will address the extent to which the role of a specialised professional astrologer was consolidated in the three geographical areas studied here in the period following the composition of the introductory works, i.e. roughly the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. Secondly, success – at least regarding the establishment of the image of the professional astrologer – can also be measured in terms of reception. For this purpose, I will explore whether and how the astrologer as a figure formed part of the scholarly and literary discourse and to what extent this can be viewed as a success or a failure for implementing the ideal image described in the introductory works. The developments outlined – whether deemed a success or failure – were, of course, influenced by a myriad of different circumstances and happened for various reasons. The “Introductions to Astrology” nevertheless constituted an instrumental part of these processes. Thirdly, therefore, I will discuss their specific role and impact on the establishment of the astrologer in late-medieval and early modern society.

Before delving into this analysis, it is essential to emphasise that the following observations are not intended to provide a comprehensive account of the history of professional astrologers and their reception in fifteenth- to seventeenth-century Europe. Rather, the aim is to offer an outlook on later developments and to identify trends or exemplary insights that allow a first assessment of whether the self-fashioning of the astrologers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries can be considered successful.

6.1 Real-Life Successes and Failures – The Establishment of Astrology and Professional Astrologers

Whether late-medieval astrologers can be considered successful in reality naturally depends strongly on the temporal perspective, the geographical and institutional context and the exact criteria applied. Nevertheless, regarding the general development of astrology and the establishment of astrologers in this study's three geographical focal points, some overarching trends can be identified in the subsequent centuries.¹¹²⁹ They will be examined in the following section to determine whether they support or oppose an assessment of astrologers as a successfully established group.

What can undeniably be counted as a success is that interest in astrology, which had already begun to increase in the twelfth century, only continued to grow and intensify. As a result, more and more people became involved in the discipline and can thus, to some extent, be identified as astrologers or at least as advocates of astrology. Moreover, the self- and external designations of scholars as astrologers, which appeared only occasionally in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, seem to become more common from the fifteenth century onwards, suggesting a greater recognition of this role.¹¹³⁰

¹¹²⁹ There is a wealth of literature on the role of astrology in the early modern period. For an overview of the early modern development see William Eamon: *Astrology and Society*, in: Brendan Dooley (ed.): *A Companion to Astrology in the Renaissance* (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 49), Leiden / Boston 2014, pp. 141–192. A brief survey with a broad temporal and geographical scope, but centred on the practitioners, is provided by Boudet: *Les astrologues européens*. With a focus on England, see the pivotal studies by Keith Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic. Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England*, Aylesbury, Bucks 1973 (London 1971), esp. pp. 335–458; and Patrick Curry: *Prophecy and Power. Astrology in Early Modern England*, Cambridge 1989. Astrology's history in early modern Italy (from the second half of the fifteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century) was analysed by Casali: *Le spie del cielo*. A comprehensive bibliography, compiled by David Juste, can be found on the website of the project "Ptolemaeus Arabus et Latinus". It contains a separate section on the "Early Modern Period (1450–1800)", which in turn is divided into "Renaissance and the 16th century" and "17th–18th century", URL: <https://ptolemaeus.badw.de/astrobibl/start>, last accessed 02/12/2024.

¹¹³⁰ This assumption is based on random samples from texts by various astrologers of the fifteenth century. A comprehensive analysis of the development of self- and external designations as astrologers would promise informative results. See Chapter 2.2.1 for a discussion of this and pertinent examples.

Even more significant for assessing the actual ‘success’ of astrologers is the increasing evidence that they were not only informally called astrologers but also held official positions as such. This is most apparent in the establishment of chairs of astrology at Italian universities such as Bologna and Padua. As outlined in Chapter 2.1.1, the University of Bologna, for example, had defined precisely what the professional duties of a professor of astrology were by the beginning of the fifteenth century at the latest. Thus, at least in Italy, a distinct profession of university astrologers was emerging.

Similarly, there is evidence of an increasingly official, or at least widespread, recourse to astrological expertise at the courts of Italian rulers. As evidenced by cases such as that of Michael Scot or Guido Bonatti, connections between rulers and astrologers can be detected in Italy as early as the thirteenth century. Over time, those employments became further consolidated. Monica Azzolini, for example, was able to show the crucial political role of astrologers in Italian Renaissance court culture, using the example of the Sforza of Milan.¹¹³¹ In France, King Charles V famously recruited astrologers such as Thomas de Pizan to his court, and similar commissions occurred under his successors; a development which has been studied in particular by Jean-Patrice Boudet.¹¹³² Finally, as Hilary M. Carey has shown, it is also possible to identify a growing number of astrologers associated with rulers at the English court in the fifteenth century.¹¹³³

Another factor that played a central role in the further establishment of astrology and astrologers was the spread of printing from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards. Printing opened up the possibility of reaching a larger audience, most notably the potential clientele in cities. It also led to an upsurge in the production of certain

¹¹³¹ Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars*. See also Anthony Grafton: *Cardano’s Cosmos. The Worlds and Works of a Renaissance Astrologer*, Cambridge (MA) / London 1999, pp. 109–126, for a discussion of Girolamo Cardano’s († 1576) activities as an example of a famous sixteenth-century Italian astrologer who was active as a political adviser.

¹¹³² Boudet: *Simon de Phares: Le Recueil des plus celebres astrologues*, vol. 2, pp. 240–291. Boudet furthermore published several articles on the use of astrology under the late-medieval French kings. For the compilation of some of these articles, see the collective volume by Jean-Patrice Boudet (ed.): *Astrologie et politique entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance* (Micrologus’ Library 102), Florence 2020 (see, for example, Jean-Patrice Boudet / Emmanuel Poulle: *Les jugements astrologiques sur la naissance de Charles VII*, pp. 273–292; or Boudet: *Les astrologues et le pouvoir sous le règne de Louis XI*, pp. 293–349).

¹¹³³ Carey: *Courting Disaster*, pp. 154–164. For examples of English monarchs and their advisors who sought astrologers’ counsel in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 342–346.

types of astrological media, especially almanacs and annual forecasts.¹¹³⁴ This development created new work opportunities for astrologers and contributed to the rise of the city as an important site of astrological practice.¹¹³⁵ Although advising people of higher rank remained part of the astrologers' professional portfolio, astrological counselling was increasingly made available to the general population.¹¹³⁶

Overall, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are regarded by researchers as the heyday of astrology and its practitioners. In an article on the social role of European astrologers, Jean-Patrice Boudet, for example, describes the period from 1450 to 1600 as “un relatif âge d’or des astrologues universitaires et des astrologues de cour”, which only truly ended in the seventeenth century.¹¹³⁷ According to Boudet, it was in this “golden age”, especially in the sixteenth century, that the influence of astrologers reached its peak.¹¹³⁸

Thus, at first glance, the historical facts would seem to indicate that astrologers succeeded in establishing themselves as sought-after scholars in the centuries following the writing of the “Introductions to Astrology”. On closer inspection, however, this ‘success story’ reveals certain imperfections or at least ambivalent characteristics. From the outset, it should be stressed that the level of institutionalisation of astrology and its practitioners in Western Europe never was, nor ever became, uniform – it occurred at different speeds and to different degrees in Italy, France, and England. These disparities are particularly apparent when it comes to the university as a place of work for

¹¹³⁴ On this aspect, see Green: *Printing and Prophecy*; particularly on almanacs and their impact on making astrological knowledge accessible to a broad spectrum of people, see Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 347–356; Eamon: *Astrology and Society*, pp. 161–172. On the genre of the *iudicia anni*, the annual forecasts, see Tur: *Hora introitus solis in Arietem. Iudicia anni* were examined as to the role of Europe in such by Oschema: *Bilder von Europa im Mittelalter*, pp. 415–428.

¹¹³⁵ While Italian cities were already a field of activity for astrologers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a similar development took place in France and England only towards the end of the fourteenth and especially in the fifteenth century. A particularly valuable source on the actual practice of astrologers is provided by notebooks or casebooks. See, for example, for the informative account given by Richard Trewythian (*1393), an astrologer active in fifteenth-century London: Sophie Page: Richard Trewythian. Rich material on astro-medical practice in sixteenth-century England is provided by the casebooks of Simon Forman (*1552, †1611) and his pupil Richard Napier (*1559, †1634) which have been studied in detail by the “The Casebook Project”, led by Lauren Kassell. See <https://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk/> (last accesses 23/01/2023). On Simon Forman and his practice: Lauren Kassell: *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London. Simon Forman: Astrologer, Alchemist, and Physician* (Oxford Historical Monographs), Oxford 2005. For a study of the notebooks of an astrologer active in fifteenth-century France, although it is uncertain what his main field of activity was, see Carvalho: *An Astrologer at Work*.

¹¹³⁶ Thomas: *The Decline of Magic*, pp. 378–379, emphasises that the clients visiting astrologers came from “every walk of life” and also included people of nobility.

¹¹³⁷ Boudet: *Les astrologues européens*, paragraph 7. Boudet refers in his assessment in particular to France, Italy and the Holy Roman Empire. In his later monograph, Jean-Patrice Boudet extends his assessment of a “golden age” for astrologers at university and court by 100 years to the period between 1350–1600. See Boudet: *Entre science et nigromance*, p. 283.

¹¹³⁸ Boudet: *Les astrologues européens*, paragraph 6.

astrologers. Whereas the establishment of professional astrologers at Italian universities in the form of specific chairs of astrology began to appear as early as the fourteenth century, there was no such development in France and England. As outlined in chapter 2.1, this does not mean that astrology was not taught or practised at French and English universities in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but merely that an institutionally sanctioned and paid role of university professor of astrology did not emerge in France and England in the same way as it did in Italy.¹¹³⁹

Concerning the establishment of astrologers at court, the development in all three countries followed more of a similar trend, albeit at different paces, with Italy leading the way in terms of time and frequency of employment of astrologers, followed by France and then England.¹¹⁴⁰ However, while there were increasing contacts between astrologers and rulers or individuals close to rulers, the specific employment arrangements remain challenging to trace. A complicating factor in this context is that astrologers were often not directly remunerated monetarily for their astrological advice but received patronage in other forms, for example, by being offered other positions at court. Most commonly, astrologers active at court also, or even mainly, served as physicians.¹¹⁴¹ This circumstance illustrates that astrology did not necessarily have to be someone's primary occupation but could equally be used as a sideline or simply another skill that could be offered to increase the chances of employment. Against this background, the question again arises as to whether these scholars even perceived themselves chiefly as astrologers.

Indeed, it is often difficult to determine which specific expertise a scholar was called upon and paid to provide. However, at the royal court in France, for example, there seems to have been at least an increasing tendency from the mid-fifteenth century onwards to employ and pay scholars specifically as astrologers. Jean-Patrice Boudet has

¹¹³⁹ See Chapter 2.1. Boudet: *Entre science et nigromance*, pp. 286–287, also provides a comparative assessment of those developments.

¹¹⁴⁰ See Chapter 2.1.

¹¹⁴¹ The difficulty of documenting such patronage for astrologers are discussed for the Italian Renaissance context by Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars*, pp. 117–118. For the discussion of astrological patronage in the fifteenth century, see Klaus Oschema: *Zukunft gegen Patronage? Spätmittelalterliche astrologische Prognostiken und die Kontaktaufnahme mit Mäzenen*, in: Bernd Bastert / Andreas Bihrer / Timo Reuvekamp-Felber (eds.): *Mäzenaten im Mittelalter aus europäischer Perspektive: von historischen Akteuren zu literarischen Textkonzepten* (Encomia Deutsch 4), Göttingen 2017, pp. 267–291. For the Burgundian context, see also Klaus Oschema: *Entre superstition et expertise scientifique: l'astrologie et la prise de décision des ducs de Bourgogne*, in: Alain Marchandisse / Gilles Docquier / Nils Bock (eds.): *Les cultures de la décision dans l'espace bourguignon. Acteurs, conflits, représentations* (Publication du Centre Européen d'Études Bourguignonnes 57), Neuchâtel 2017, pp. 89–104.

demonstrated this using the accounts of the *Hôtel du roi*.¹¹⁴² While previously listed solely as physicians, from 1451 onwards, scholars were regularly included here with the title of “astrologer to the king” (*astrologien du roy*) and were paid as such.¹¹⁴³ Yet this finding does not mean that the roles of physician and astrologer were always carried out by different individuals. This can be seen, for example, in the case of the scholar Miles de Brégy, who was active under the French king Charles VII († 1461). He was usually recorded as “physician to the king” (*physicien du roy*), yet in 1452 and 1453 was also listed and paid as “astrologer of the said lord” (*astrologien dudit seigneur*), although only under the heading of “New Year’s gifts” (*étrennes*). Jean-Patrice Boudet, therefore, assumes that Miles de Brégy was mainly employed as a physician but received periodic rewards for additional astrological tasks.¹¹⁴⁴ The circumstances at the French court in the second half of the fifteenth century exemplify that rulers apparently called upon astrological expertise in various ways.

The connection of astrology with medicine and the resulting frequent dual role as physician and astrologer can indeed be assessed differently. On the one hand, this association constituted a facilitating factor for the successful establishment of astrologers in influential positions at court and provided astrology with further legitimacy. On the other hand, the blurring of boundaries between the roles of astrologer and physician weakened the emancipation of astrology as an independent subject and of the astrologer as a distinct figure with his own *raison d’être*. The astrologers’

¹¹⁴² Boudet: Les astrologues et le pouvoir, esp. pp. 15–19.

¹¹⁴³ The first mention of such a scholar was Arnoul de la Palu, who had already been appointed astrologer to the queen Marie d’Anjou in 1450 and received an annual pension of 200 *livres tournois* from 1451 to 1466, as well as occasional additional benefits. Boudet links this creation of an office of royal astrologer to the establishment of the office of royal historiographer in 1437, which leads him to believe that the king sought to obtain official knowledge of both the past and the future, thus consecrating the use of astrology politically. See Boudet: Les astrologues et le pouvoir, pp. 15–16. Boudet’s observation refers to the regular payment as astrologers and not to the general occasional designation as such. Thomas of Pizan, for example, was already referred to as *nostre astronomen* (“our astrologer”) in a donation from Charles V dated 21st April 1372. However, in another donation, dated October 1372, he is called *nostre amé et feal phisicien* (“our beloved and faithful physician”). In his condemnation (8th January 1373) he is also called *phisicien du roy* (“physician of the king”), and in a further donation to him by Charles V, dated 20th May 1380, he is listed as *nostre amé et feal conseiller et phisicien* (“our beloved and faithful counsellor and physician”). See Cadden: Charles V, Nicole Oresme, and Christine de Pizan, p. 216; Suzanne Solente: Introduction, in: Christine de Pizan: Le livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V, ed. by Suzanne Solente, vol. 1, Paris 1936, pp. i–ciii, here p. iv, footnote 2. His case thus exemplifies the close connection between the roles and the alternating designation as astrologer and physician.

¹¹⁴⁴ Boudet: Les astrologues et le pouvoir, p. 16. See on the practice of *étrennes*: Jan Hirschbiegel: *Étrennes. Untersuchungen zum höfischen Geschenkverkehr im spätmittelalterlichen Frankreich der Zeit König Karls VI. (1380–1422) am Beispiel der Neujahrsgeschenke* (Pariser historische Studien 60), Munich 2002.

ambivalent stance towards medicine could already be seen in the introductory texts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹¹⁴⁵

Although there is thus growing evidence of scholars practising astrology at court in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, their exact working conditions and sphere of influence tend to remain elusive. Furthermore, it is crucial to emphasise that while there was an increasing trend towards employing astrologers at court, this was not a linear development. Interest in astrology in general was subject to a constant ebb and flow and was contingent on various factors. At court, in particular, astrologers' success naturally depended heavily on the inclinations of individual rulers. In addition, the general popularity of astrology and its practitioners was affected by specific events – be they political or religious upheavals or specific celestial phenomena that inspired a multitude of predictions about their meaning.¹¹⁴⁶ In the sixteenth century, the conjunctions of 1524 and 1583, for example, led to a surge of interest in astrology and numerous astro-prophetic writings announcing terrifying incidents, along with the end of the world.¹¹⁴⁷

¹¹⁴⁵ See Chapter 5.1.

¹¹⁴⁶ Already in the late Middle Ages, events such as the occurrence of the Black Death, the Hundred Years' War and the Great Schism led to a rise in the number of astrological but also prophetic predictions. See, for example, Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 3, p. 585: "The Hundred Years war provided the astrologers with as happy a predicting ground as did the Black Death." For the prophetic and astrological predictions prompted by the Great Schism, see Ackerman-Smoller: *History, Prophecy, and the Stars*, esp. chap. 5 and 6. The importance astrology had in interpreting significant events continued or even intensified in the early modern period. See, for example, Eamon: *Astrology and Society*, pp. 184–186, for the role astrology played in certain political and religious conflicts in Italy and France in the sixteenth century. For the exploitation of astrological forecasts during the English Civil War (1642–1651): Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 406.

¹¹⁴⁷ Eamon: *Astrology and Society*, pp. 141–143 (on the conjunction of 1524), pp. 181–183 (on the conjunction of 1583). The conjunction of 1524, which was supposed to herald the end of the world through a second Flood, received widespread media coverage. William Eamon: *Astrology and Society*, p. 141, describes it as "the biggest media event of the sixteenth century – perhaps of the entire early modern period." For an overview of the various discussions and reactions to the 1524 conjunction, see Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 5, pp. 178–233; Ottavia Niccoli: *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, transl. by Lydia G. Cochrane, Princeton (NJ) 1990, pp. 140–167. For discussions of more specific topics regarding the astro-prophetic predictions at that time, see the articles in: Paola Zambelli (ed.): "Astrologi hallucinati". *Stars and the End of the World in Luther's Time*, Berlin / New York 1986. It must be emphasised, however, that the degree of interest in such phenomena could vary from country to country, depending on whether the general atmosphere was conducive to astrological predictions and the expectation of dire occurrences. In Germany, for example, where astrology only gained momentum in the fifteenth century and general uncertainty prevailed due to the Reformation, predictions about the coming end of the world fell on very fertile ground at the beginning of the sixteenth century. For a detailed discussion of the predicted Flood and other disasters in German pamphlets, see Heike Talkenberger: *Sintflut. Prophetie und Zeitgeschehen in Texten und Holzschnitten astrologischer Flugschriften 1488–1528* (Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur 26), Tübingen 1990. In England, on the other hand, interest in the conjunction of 1524 does not seem to have been as pronounced as in mainland Europe. See Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 341, who points out that no English writings were produced on the subject, although the fear of what was to happen was also felt in England. Thomas attributes this to the "general torpor of English science" which, he writes, was revived during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I († 1603). By contrast, the conjunction of 1583, which was associated with an ancient prophecy predicting the end of the world or great upheavals in 1588, seems to

Events of this kind and the ensuing heightened concern with predicting the future illustrate that interest in astrology came in waves and did not grow continuously. Rather, periods of astrological flourishing were often accompanied or followed by intensified efforts against the discipline and its practitioners.¹¹⁴⁸ Moreover, it should not be overlooked that astrologers, for all their popularity and opportunities for successful advancement and influence, also often came into conflict with religious or political authorities for making overly audacious predictions. This applied, above all, to predictions of the death of influential figures, which in some cases would lead to punishment or even death.¹¹⁴⁹ Astrologers and their practice were thus far from being on a steady trajectory towards success.

Another ambivalent development was the increasing popularisation of astrology. The great excitement caused by celestial phenomena, such as the conjunction of 1524 and the extensive media coverage that accompanied it, vividly illustrate the wider reach of astrological predictions, made possible mainly by the spread of printing. The proliferation of astrology and its easier accessibility to the general population led to a widening of the astrologers' clientele and, owing to new and more varied work opportunities, especially in the cities, to an overall rise in the number of practitioners. Altogether, therefore, we see a greater integration of astrologers and their practice into early modern society.

However, as their clientele changed, so did the role of astrologers. They were no longer exclusively the advisers of the upper classes and the erudite guardians of a secret and difficult-to-learn art. Instead, astrology became a mass product, and so did

have caused considerable alarm in England. On this, see Margaret Aston: *The Fiery Trigon Conjunction: An Elizabethan Astrological Prediction*, in: *Isis* 61 (2) (1970), pp. 158–187.

¹¹⁴⁸ This could already be seen in the second half of the fourteenth century at the French court of Charles V. For the discussions about astrology and the astrologers employed by Charles V, see Cadden: Charles V, Nicole Oresme, and Christine de Pizan. Such criticism did not cease in the sixteenth century, as shown in particular by Pope Sixtus V's bull *Coeli et terrae*, which denounced the practice of astrology, or Pope Urban VIII's bull *Inscrutabilis*, issued in 1631, which confirmed and extended Sixtus' condemnations. See on this: Eamon: *Astrology and Society*, pp. 186–188, or, in more detail on the exact contents of the bulls and their context: Germana Ernst: *Astrology, Religion and Politics in Counter-Reformation Rome*, in: Stephen Pumfrey / Paolo L. Rossi / Maurice Slawinski (eds.): *Science, Culture and Popular Belief in Renaissance Europe*, Manchester / New York 1991, pp. 249–273.

¹¹⁴⁹ For the "risky business" of predicting the death of powerful people, see Monica Azzolini: *The Political Uses of Astrology: Predicting the Illness and Death of Princes, Kings and Popes in the Italian Renaissance*, in: *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 41 (2010), pp. 135–145. A particularly famous later case is that of the Italian astrologer Orazio Morandi († 1630), who predicted the death of Pope Urban VIII and was sent to prison for his predictions, where he died. The papal bull *Inscrutabilis* mentioned above (see footnote 1148) was the reaction to these events. See for his case: Brendan Dooley: *Morandi's Last Prophecy and the End of Renaissance Politics*, Princeton / Oxford 2002.

astrologers.¹¹⁵⁰ This is not to say that learned court and university astrologers did not continue to exist and flourish.¹¹⁵¹ However, alongside them, other types of astrologers emerged who offered quick solutions for a broad stratum of the population. These included more or less ‘respectable’ city astrologers but also a growing number of unlearned practitioners who had hardly any astrological knowledge and had little in common with the erudite and morally impeccable astrologers imagined in the introductory works of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹¹⁵² Hence, on the one hand, astrology evolved into a more professional occupation in the narrower sense as a paid and potentially full-time activity.¹¹⁵³ On the other hand, we can also discern a diversification of various sub-groups of astrologers who differed in terms of education, prestige and clientele.

This development raises the question of whether astrologers established themselves as a group. First of all, it is significant to note that despite occasional collaborations, such as student-teacher relationships and collegial exchanges, no official, long-lasting associations were formed among astrologers.¹¹⁵⁴ The absence of any serious attempts to

¹¹⁵⁰ The enormous number of clients received by the astrologers working in the city is illustrated by the casebooks of the English astrologers Simon Forman (†1611), William Lilly (†1681) and John Booker (†1667), which show that each astrologer had between 1,000 and 2,000 cases per year. See for this Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 364. In fact, Thomas points out that these practitioners were not even necessarily the most industrious, referring to Nicholas Culpeper († 1654), who is said to have had an average of forty clients in a morning.

¹¹⁵¹ For examples of the continued use of astrologers in aristocratic circles well into the seventeenth century in England, see Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 342–345. Famous examples of such astrologers are John Dee (†1608/09), the astrological adviser to Queen Elizabeth I, and the Italian scholar Girolamo Cardano (†1576), who acted as political counsellor for several influential people. For his activity in this role, see Grafton: *Cardano’s Cosmos*, pp. 109–126.

¹¹⁵² Eamon: *Astrology and Society*, pp. 148–149, remarks that while in the sixteenth century the vast majority of prominent astrologers in Europe had a university education, this trend gradually diminished over time. By the mid-seventeenth century, he writes, the leading scientific figures were no longer involved in astrology. The authors of astrological publications during this period, meanwhile, had significantly lower levels of formal education than their predecessors, and often had minimal to no astrological knowledge. See also Eamon: *ibid.*, pp. 173–178, specifically on these “street-corner prognosticators” who offered their various forecasting services in public places. Furthermore, even if the practitioners had similar levels of education, their social status was strongly influenced by their place of work, that is, whether they were active at court, at university or in the city. See on this aspect: Biagioli: *The Social Status of Italian Mathematicians*, p. 52.

¹¹⁵³ As already mentioned, astrology was not always the only paid activity of the scholars. This applies to the astrologers working at court as well as to the city astrologers, who also usually offered medical advice or were interested in alchemy, for example. See the discussion of these different facets of a practitioner using the example of Simon Forman: Kassell: *Medicine and Magic*. Nevertheless, astrology increasingly became a monetised occupation. See on the earnings of astrologers in the seventeenth century: Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 380–382.

¹¹⁵⁴ A notable exception, albeit short-lived, was the creation of the Society of Astrologers in London in the middle of the seventeenth century. See on this and on student-teacher relations and their correspondences: Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 361–362. The society’s activities were recently analysed in more detail by Michelle Pfeffer: *The Society of Astrologers (c. 1647–1684)*:

establish a more formal group presumably reflects an adherence to the astrologer's own understanding of his role as an exceptional scholar acting alone and offering client-specific individual counselling. Overall, therefore, astrologers continued to work independently. An establishment as a group can only be considered to have taken place insofar as astrologers were recognised as representatives of a specific professional group. However, given the different categories of astrologers – ranging from uneducated street-corner prognosticators to university-trained court astrologers – it is even debatable whether these astrologers, particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, can be understood as representatives of the same group at all.¹¹⁵⁵

Finally, it must, of course, also be pointed out that the success in the societal establishment of astrologers was not permanent. The decline of astrology and the general loss of confidence in astrologers, especially from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, was prompted principally by new astronomical findings and ideas.¹¹⁵⁶ Several scientific discoveries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries slowly eroded the belief in existing astrological practices and theories so that “the solutions which they [i.e. the astrologers] offered came to appear less convincing”.¹¹⁵⁷ The astronomical revolution, which had already begun with the discoveries and studies of Nicolaus Copernicus († 1543) and was to culminate in those of Isaac Newton († 1726/27), irrevocably destroyed the foundational premises of astrological theory. While even the introduction of heliocentrism could have been overcome by adjusting astrological calculations, it was, above all, the dissolution of the Aristotelian separation between earthly and heavenly bodies that proved to be an insurmountable obstacle for astrologers. This division had provided the basis for astrology – without such a fixed relationship of influence between heaven and earth, astrological predictions were no longer plausible.¹¹⁵⁸

sermons, feasts, and the resuscitation of astrology in seventeenth-century London, in: *The British Journal for the History of Science* 54 (2) (2021), pp. 133–153.

¹¹⁵⁵ Pursuing this matter further and exploring the extent to which distinctions were made here between different groups of astrologers would certainly be a fruitful subject of enquiry but cannot be further addressed within the scope of this study.

¹¹⁵⁶ Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 414. The following remarks draw on his account of the causes of the decline of astrology. While the scientific advances were the main catalysts, societal factors naturally also played a role. Moreover, it is important to emphasise that the rejection of astrology was a gradual process and not an abrupt event. Whether, for example, the reactions to the failed predictions about the coming flood of 1524, or the papal bulls of 1586 or 1631 were already signs of the end of astrology has been interpreted differently by modern scholars. See Eamon: *Astrology and Society*, p. 143, pp 187–189.

¹¹⁵⁷ Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 414.

¹¹⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 414–415, for more detailed explanations of these astronomical discoveries and their repercussions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The ramifications of this scientific paradigm shift made themselves felt only slowly in the wider scholarly community, the courts, and the population at large.¹¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, it ultimately signified the end of astrology as a legitimate scientific discipline and the astrologer as a credible scientist. Even though almanacs continued to be published and astrological advice was still sought after 1700, the production of astrological writings plummeted around this time, and astrologers became less likely to be successful in interesting high-ranking people in their consultations.¹¹⁶⁰ While astrology has experienced several revivals in recent centuries, and there are still astrologers offering their services today, the discipline is no longer part of the academic mainstream, and its practitioners are generally no longer seen as trustworthy scientists to be consulted for important political or social decisions.¹¹⁶¹ As Keith Thomas phrased it, astrology had lost its “scientific prestige” by the end of the seventeenth century and subsequently never regained the “intellectual vitality” it once possessed.¹¹⁶²

Should astrologers thus be considered successful in establishing their own role in the centuries following the composition of the introductory works to astrology? It must first be emphasised again that the developments outlined here have been painted with a broad brushstroke. Their brief exploration has shown that questions about whether astrologers formed a cohesive group, their prestige, general acceptance, and the comprehensiveness of their establishment are complex and lack unequivocal answers. However, if we narrow our focus to whether astrologers, in various manifestations, managed to establish themselves as part of society in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, they can undoubtedly be deemed successful in their endeavours.

6.2 Reception – The Astrologer as a Topic of Discussion

In addition to the factual circumstances in which scholars practised astrology, the reception of astrologers is another important indicator of their success. Examining whether and how astrologers were discussed is highly informative for understanding

¹¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 416–424. There were also attempts to reform astrology and to reconcile it with the new findings. See also *ibid.*, p. 344 for examples of nobles still consulting astrologers in the seventeenth century.

¹¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 424.

¹¹⁶¹ Even in the twentieth century, there were exceptions to this, of course, such as, most famously, the American First Lady Nancy Reagan († 2016), who sought the advice of astrologer Joan Quigley. See Joan Quigley: “What Does Joan Say?” *My Seven Years as White House Astrologer to Nancy and Ronald Reagan*, New York 1990.

¹¹⁶² Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 418, p. 424. See *ibid.*, pp. 794–800, for a discussion of why magical and astrological practices persist to this day.

their role in late medieval and early modern society and the status assigned to them. To what extent can the efforts of the introductory works to establish an *image* of the astrologer as a learned, respectable, and distinctive scholar be considered successful?

The subject of how astrologers were portrayed in different sources is extensive. Depictions of astrologers were not uniform and could vary greatly depending on the text genre as well as the temporal, geographical, institutional, and individual context in which the writings originated. A comprehensive analysis of such representations is, of course, not feasible within the framework of this subchapter. In the following remarks, therefore, I will not focus on specific representations of astrologers but rather on the question of whether astrologers were discussed as figures at all.

The first finding, already alluded to in the previous subchapter, is that the proliferation of astrologers did not lead to their universal acceptance but rather provoked an invigorated countermovement that shaped the image of astrologers. Criticism of astrology was, of course, not new. It had already been authoritatively voiced by the Church Fathers and had never completely ceased in the Middle Ages. However, with the revival of interest in astrology from the twelfth century onwards, we can observe a renewed rise in critical discourse against astrology. Even more significant is that, from the second half of the fourteenth century, a growing number of tracts were devoted exclusively to attacking astrology and its adherents.¹¹⁶³ Prior to this, refutations of astrology usually constituted only one aspect of a work on a different overall theme.¹¹⁶⁴

A famous early example of a text primarily focused on refuting astrology is the *Livre de Divinacions* by Nicole Oresme, written between 1361 and 1365.¹¹⁶⁵ What is particularly remarkable about this text is that Nicole Oresme does not condemn judiciary astrology from a theological point of view but adduces mathematical and

¹¹⁶³ See below for examples.

¹¹⁶⁴ See, for example, Peter Abelard, who included a long excursus on the pitfalls of astrology in his commentary on the Hexameron: Peter Abelard: *Expositio in Hexameron*, ed. Romig / Luscombe, pp. 47–51. An early work which focused completely on the refutation of astrology is the *Summa de astris* written c. 1265 by the Dominican Gerard da Feltre. See on this work: Maria Sorokina: *Un tournant dans la critique de l'astrologie ? La Summa de astris de Gérard de Feltre*, in: *Medieval and Renaissance Astrology* 7 (1) (2015), pp. 71–92; Martin Grabmann: *Die "Summa de astris" des Gerardo da Feltre O.P.*, in: *Archivum fratrum praedicatorum* 11 (1941), pp. 51–82.

¹¹⁶⁵ On the context of this work, see esp. Coopland: *Nicole Oresme and the Astrologers*. Nicole Oresme also discusses other divination arts such as geomancy, palmistry, nigromancy, and magic in his *Livre de Divinacions* but focuses thematically mainly on astrology. On Nicole Oresme, see also Chapter 3.3.2.

social, or rather political, reasons against it.¹¹⁶⁶ His declared main objective is to convince rulers not to rely on the advice of astrologers in their political dealings or to engage in the discipline themselves.¹¹⁶⁷ Relying on astrologers, Nicole Oresme argues, would involve great political risks for rulers and would always end in disaster for them. He underlines this point by citing historical examples where he believes this has happened.¹¹⁶⁸ In addition, he describes typical behaviours and strategies of astrologers to better show what he sees as their fraudulent activities.¹¹⁶⁹

Although Nicole Oresme's treatise was aimed at preventing astrologers from gaining power and influence, it can also be seen as evidence of the success of astrologers and even as a contribution to the further rise of astrologers, at least in terms of their visibility. His forceful warnings against astrologers as political advisors reflect the growing popularity of astrologers at the court of the French King Charles V, whom Nicole Oresme served as a counsellor.¹¹⁷⁰ Without astrologers' – actual or perceived – success, such admonitions would not have been necessary. Moreover, the treatise drew attention to the astrologer as a potential royal advisor and further popularised this idea, irrespective of Nicole Oresme's objections. It also marked the starting point for the increased output of similar treatises against astrology, in which Nicole Oresme's work and arguments were often referenced or sections directly adopted.¹¹⁷¹ His discussion thus paved the way for subsequent debates that further raised the astrologer's visibility and profile.

Among the best-known examples of the ongoing attempt to curb the use of astrology and the recourse to astrologers are the treatises against astrology by Henry of Hesse (*Questio de Cometa*, 1368/69; and *Tractatus contra astrologos coniunctionistas*, 1373),

¹¹⁶⁶ Rapisarda: *Doubts and Criticism on Astrology*, p. 756, writes that Nicole Oresme was the first to combine astrology and politics in such a way.

¹¹⁶⁷ Nicole Oresme emphasises this throughout the work. He makes his intention to show that astrology and related arts are particularly dangerous for political leaders clear from the beginning. See Nicole Oresme: *Livre de Divinacions*, ed. Coopland, prologue, p. 50: [...] *telle chose est plus perilleuse a personnes d'estat comme sont princes et seigneurs auxquels appartient le gouvernement publique*.

¹¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, chap. 8, pp. 70–74.

¹¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, chap. 12, pp. 92–102. He describes here, for example, that astrologers often pretend to have predicted something after it has occurred, or deliberately express themselves in an ambiguous way.

¹¹⁷⁰ The treatise thus echoes the factual success of astrologers such as Thomas de Pizan and Pèlerin de Prusse at the court of Charles V. For the conducive atmosphere for astrologers at the court of Charles V, see Cadden: *Charles V, Nicole Oresme, and Christine de Pizan*.

¹¹⁷¹ Most famously, large parts of Nicole Oresme's *Livre de Divinacions* were included in Philippe de Mézières' *Le Songe du Vieil Pèlerin*. See for this and the work's general influence: Coopland: *Nicole Oresme and the Astrologers*, pp. 7–13. Nicole Oresme is also listed as an important adversary of astrology in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem*, ed. Garin, vol. 1, book 1, p. 58.

Laurens Pignon (*Contre les devineurs*, 1411), and, most famously, the *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* (written 1493/4, published posthumously in 1496) by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.¹¹⁷² Although such texts varied to some extent in their approach, a commonly shared concern was the perceived threat to rulers posed by the employment of astrologers.¹¹⁷³ The notion of the astrologer as a counsellor to powerful people – and the apprehension about his potential influence – was thus prevalent.

The attacks on astrology and its practitioners naturally also provoked rebuttals, which further fuelled the debate and ensured that the astrologer as a figure attracted more attention.¹¹⁷⁴ The fact that the role of astrology and its practitioners was discussed frequently and at length by leading scholars of the time shows that astrologers were seen as worthy of discussion and to be taken seriously – either as helpful advisors or as threats to society. Paradoxically, it is this controversial character of astrologers that also indicates their status as experts in late medieval and early modern society. As Frank Rexroth has pointed out, scepticism is an inherent part of the establishment of experts, which always involves a dialectical relationship between trust in the system and scepticism or criticism of experts.¹¹⁷⁵

Scholarly debate about astrology's merits and pitfalls and its practitioners' role did not cease in the sixteenth century.¹¹⁷⁶ In addition to being discussed in the context of these serious discourses, however, the figure of the astrologer also increasingly featured and was criticised, often in a humorous way, in various forms of literature such as plays, poems and novels.¹¹⁷⁷ Of particular significance, moreover, is the production of mock

¹¹⁷² Rapisarda: Doubts and Criticism on Astrology, pp. 756–758. For Henry of Hesse (Langenstein) see Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 3, pp. 472–510; for Laurens Pignon: Jan R. Veenstra: Magic and Divination at the Courts of Burgundy and France. Text and Context of Laurens Pignon's *Contre les devineurs* (1411) (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 83), Leiden / New York / Cologne 1998; for Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: Ovanes Akopyan: Debating the Stars in the Italian Renaissance. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* and Its Reception (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 325), Leiden / Boston 2021.

¹¹⁷³ Veenstra: Magic and Divination, p. 28; Rapisarda: Doubts and Criticism on Astrology, p. 756.

¹¹⁷⁴ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's work, in particular, prompted several immediate rebuttals by astrologers, for example, by Lucio Bellanti (†1499). See Akopyan: Debating the Stars, pp. 176–188.

¹¹⁷⁵ Rexroth: Systemvertrauen und Expertenskepsis, esp. p. 21. For a discussion of the term 'expert' and the classification of astrologers as such, see Chapter 1.4.3. On the modern discomfort with the increasing need to rely on experts, especially in light of their repeated failures and yet continued success, see Oschema: Heaven Can Tell, p. 193.

¹¹⁷⁶ As Thorndike: A History of Magic and Experimental Science, vol. 5, p. 159, put it: "The warfare over astrology which had blazed forth in the last decade of the fifteenth century with the attacks upon the art by Pico della Mirandola and Savonarola, and the defense offered by such men as Lucius Bellantius, continued into the sixteenth century."

¹¹⁷⁷ For an overview of the "use and abuse of the astrologer in literature of the 16th and 17th centuries", see Eileen Reeves: Astrology and Literature, in: Brendan Dooley (ed.): A Companion to Astrology in the Renaissance (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 49), Leiden / Boston 2014, pp. 287–331. In

astrological writings, in which the astrologer's practice and his conduct were satirically inverted and ridiculed.¹¹⁷⁸ How exactly the astrologer is described and staged in literary portrayals is strongly dependent on the writing context of the author as well as on the literary genre.¹¹⁷⁹ The depictions were also deeply embedded in broader social and religious discourses and concerns. Criticising or ridiculing astrology and astrologers was not even necessarily the main aim of these writings, although this was, of course, always implicit.¹¹⁸⁰ Rather, the discipline and its practitioners were often instrumentalised, serving as emblems of a particular behaviour, set of people or social issue.¹¹⁸¹

The specific ways in which the figure of the astrologer was used in literature cover a broad spectrum. However, crucial to the question of the successful establishment of the astrologer's image is the fact in itself that astrologers appeared in a variety of different textual genres and were invoked to advance particular arguments. Their literary presence reflects that the astrologer had become an established and recognisable figure in the general perception of the early modern period. Their humorous inversion, in particular, could only work if a set of shared cultural references existed about what

this article, she focuses on the astrologer's depiction in short stories, verse, news writings, drama, and the novel. Eamon: *Astrology and Society*, pp. 188–189, notes that this change in the tone of criticism – from strictly serious, philosophical refutations of astrology to more humorous portrayals – becomes discernible especially in the second half of the sixteenth century.

¹¹⁷⁸ Eamon: *Astrology and Society*, pp. 189–190. For the production of those texts in France, see Hugh Roberts: *Mocking the Future in French Renaissance Mock-Prognostications*, in: Andrea Brady / Emily Butterworth (eds.): *The Uses of the Future in Early Modern Europe* (Routledge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture 12), New York 2010, pp. 198–214. Roberts draws on Franck Manuel's doctoral thesis on the subject in Europe, which unfortunately I could not access. See Franck Manuel: *L'âne astrologue: Les Pronostications Joyeuses en Europe (1476–1623)*, PhD dissertation, Université de Toulouse le Mirail 2006. For the English context, see Frank P. Wilson: *Some English Mock-Prognostications*, in: *The Library*, ser. 4, 19 (1938), pp. 6–43; for the Italian context: Casali: *Le spie del cielo*, pp. 237–248. Outside the geographical scope of this study, but with detailed explanations of this text genre in Germany: Silvia Pfister: *Parodien astrologisch-prophetischen Schrifttums (Saecvla spiritalia 22)*, Baden-Baden 1990.

¹¹⁷⁹ Reeves: *Astrology and Literature*, p. 287.

¹¹⁸⁰ Roberts: *Mocking the Future*, p. 208.

¹¹⁸¹ Roberts: *Mocking the Future*, p. 199, places the writing of mock predictions, among other things, in the trend of the rise of absolutism in seventeenth-century France. Reeves: *Astrology and Literature*, *passim*, discusses the inclusion of the astrologer in various literary genres primarily as an instrument for the writer to reflect on his own role. In this context, she also points to the issue of the democratisation and vernacularisation of science, which is broached through the negative juxtaposition of the learned astrologer and the practice-oriented rustic with common sense. *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 295–296. Pfister: *Parodien astrologisch-prophetischen Schrifttums*, esp. pp. 406–407, has explored the various functions of astrological parodies most thoroughly. In particular, she places them in relation to the general scolding of vices ("Lasterschelte"), the criticism of astrologers specifically for their practice but also as part of the prevalent general reproach of scholars ("Gelehrtschelte"), the controversy surrounding the new medium of single- and multi-sheet printing, and the confessional dispute.

constituted an astrologer.¹¹⁸² Moreover, the parodies of astrologers and their works, like the serious anti-astrological writings, also demonstrate the continuing relevance of genuine astrological practice and texts because, as Hugh Roberts emphasises in his article on French mock-prognostications of the Renaissance, “parody cannot function in the absence of the thing parodied.”¹¹⁸³ The existence of mock-prognostications should not, therefore, be taken as a sign that the astrologer had become a complete laughingstock.

The continued large-scale production of genuine almanacs and annual predictions testifies to the popularity of these texts in the sixteenth century.¹¹⁸⁴ While it is difficult to determine how seriously astrological predictions were taken, there are certainly cases in which they entailed severe consequences for the practitioner.¹¹⁸⁵ These were usually predictions of a political nature. The possible propagandistic use of astrological writings played a role here: people might lose confidence in a ruler, for example, if his imminent death had been predicted. Such cases illustrate the potential influence and power of astrologers and thus also demonstrate that their statements were taken seriously to some extent – be it by virtue of the actual prediction or by fear of the population’s reaction to it.¹¹⁸⁶

As far as the image of the astrologer, his appearance and mannerisms are concerned, the humorous representations are particularly valuable sources. While the writings may have differed in their specific objectives, the underlying idea of the astrologer seems to be essentially the same, namely that of a boastful individual who presents himself and his discipline in a pretentious, grandiloquent manner and who, knowingly or unknowingly, delivers the wrong answers. An exceptionally revealing and detailed account, which intriguingly touches on several issues that were discussed in the introductory works of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, is the satirical anti-astrological treatise *Astrologaster or the Figure-Caster* (1620) by the English writer

¹¹⁸² Roberts: *Mocking the Future*, p. 209.

¹¹⁸³ Ibid. p. 198. An impressive pictorial example of the direct reference of parodies to the originals is provided by a German prognostic for the year 1585. Its parody uses almost the exact same cover image as the original. See about this Fritz Juntke: *Über eine satirische astrologische Praktik für das Jahr 1585*, in: *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 1979, pp. 193–198.

¹¹⁸⁴ Eamon: *Astrology and Society*, pp. 167–172.

¹¹⁸⁵ See footnote 1149.

¹¹⁸⁶ See Eamon: *Astrology and Society*, pp. 176–177, on the governmental concern that astrological predictions could provoke fears amongst the population. (“Fear itself was to be feared.”)

John Melton († 1640).¹¹⁸⁷ In this work, the author recounts his visit to an astrologer and paints a vivid picture of the traits and general demeanour attributed to the astrologer, albeit, of course, exaggerated and from a negative point of view.¹¹⁸⁸ The fact that this work was written in the seventeenth century, i.e. towards the end of the ‘golden age’ of astrology, and yet features a number of characteristics already mentioned in the introductory works suggest that the image of the astrologer presented here at least roughly reflects the prevailing image of the time. It is, therefore, worth taking a closer look at his work to serve as an example.

The author’s account of his first impression of the astrologer and his consulting room provides us with an idea of the typical physical features associated with an astrologer and his house. John Melton describes a square table covered with a green cloth on which lay an impressive open book in which strange characters are written. In the room were various astronomical instruments, and the astrologer himself, dressed in an extravagant robe and headdress, held an astrolabe and a “mathematical glass” in his hands. The astrologer’s clothing and the overall setting are meant to illustrate the showmanship and self-importance of the astrologer. They are framed negatively – his clothing, for example, is said to have been chosen to *put a fairer colour on his black and foule Science*.¹¹⁸⁹ However, the description of an engagingly decorated consulting room and of clothing chosen to impress and attract attention is also reminiscent of the advice Michael Scot gave in his *Liber introductorius*.¹¹⁹⁰

After this description, John Melton continues with the story, writing that he told the astrologer he had lost a golden chain and was looking for help to find it. The astrologer then embarks on a long monologue written in direct speech.¹¹⁹¹ This oration takes the

¹¹⁸⁷ John Melton: *Astrologaster or The Figvre-Caster*, printed by Barnard Alsop for Edward Blackmore, London 1620. For a summary of the work, see Don Cameron Allen: *The Star-Crossed Renaissance. The Quarrel about Astrology and Its Influence in England*, Durham (North Carolina) 1941, pp. 135–139.

¹¹⁸⁸ John Melton may have drawn on real experiences with astrologers and even directly identified the astrologer in question as a Dr. P.C. at Moorfields, but his narrative is fictional, at least in terms of its framing and embellishment. However, a reference to Simon Forman, among others, shows that John Melton at least had knowledge of actual practising astrologers. See *ibid.*, p. 21.

¹¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8, for the description of the astrologer’s consultation room: *Before a Square Table, couered with a greene Carpet, on which lay a huge Booke in Folio, wide open, full of strange Characters, such as the Aegyptians and Chaldeans were neuer guiltie of; not farre from that, a siluer Wand, a Surplus, a Watering Pot, with all the superstitious or rather fayned Instruments of his cousening Art. And to put a fairer colour on his black and foule Science, on his head hee had a foure-cornered Cap, on his backe a faire Gowne (but made of a strange fashion) in his right hand he held an Astrolabe, in his left a Mathematicall Glasse.* On the title page there is also an illustration of this description of the astrologer and his consultation room.

¹¹⁹⁰ See Chapter 4.2.1.

¹¹⁹¹ John Melton: *Astrologaster*, London 1620, pp. 9–14.

form of a long-winded justification of astrology and a self-congratulatory exposition of his abilities in a pompous, grandiose style. His self-fashioning resembles the remarks in the introductory works. He first explains how far-reaching and extraordinary his abilities as an astrologer are and underlines this with demonstrations of his instruments.¹¹⁹² He then emphasises the sublimity of astrology, points out its long history and even offers an extensive list of famous practitioners, ranging from Adam to the patriarchs to Albumasar, Regiomontanus and Georg von Peuerbach.¹¹⁹³ Next, he expounds on some astrological principles and stresses his extraordinary erudition, acquired through the careful study of numerous books, which would also extend to other fields such as medicine and alchemy.¹¹⁹⁴ It is worth noting that while the astrologer stresses the large historical community of astrologers, he does not invoke any kind of group identity or kinship with contemporary astrologers. On the contrary, he highlights his own exceptionality, presenting himself as superior to his fellow astrologers, whom he apparently sees only as competitors.¹¹⁹⁵ The astrologer is thus portrayed as someone working alone.

Once the astrologer has finished his speech – which ends not with a clear answer to the initial query for the golden chain but with an invitation to the querent to return the next day – John Melton first adds a short comment, emphasising how verbose, tedious, and deliberately over-complicated he found the astrologer's speech.¹¹⁹⁶ Then he turns to the astrologer, announces that he will now refute the latter's statements and expose his deception, revealing that his question about the golden chain was, in fact, a test.¹¹⁹⁷ Melton's refutation, again written in direct speech, makes up the rest of the entire work

¹¹⁹² See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 10: *Looke here Sir (with that, hee aduanced his Mathematicall Glasse) with this Instrument [...], I can see all things done in Christendome.*

¹¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 11: *And all this is done by Astrologie, by sacred Astrologie, Diuine Astrologie, the Arts of Arts, the Science of Sciences, for it is the Ancient, the most Authentike, the most excellent Art in the World.* This is followed by the account of famous practitioners, which runs from pp. 11–12.

¹¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14. He also points out that his knowledge of planets is superior to that of the author: *Ibid.*, p. 13: *And I my selfe (but that I know this kind of Learning is out of your Element) could discourse to you [...].*

¹¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14: *But for Astrologie, I can doe that none of my Profession, besides my selfe, could euer reach vnto [...].* In the author's response to the astrologer, the internal disagreement and rivalry between astrologers is also emphasised several times, thus again painting the astrologer as working on his own and not in a community: *Ibid.*, p. 29: *There cannot be a greater argument of the falsenesse of Astrologers, then the deadly Antypathie that is betweene them concerning the Art it selfe [...].* *Ibid.*, p. 30: *Thus is there such a deadly enmitie betweene these Heavenly Doctors, that like so many Masters of the Noble Science of Defence, they striue to breake the head of each others reputation, and stand at defiance with each other.* *Ibid.*, p. 31: *Nay, doe but looke into the humours of our Moderne Calculators, and you shall finde them rayle one against another as bitterly as Nash against Haruy; [...]*

¹¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

¹¹⁹⁷ For the refutation: *Ibid.*, pp. 15–80; his explanation that he was only there to test the astrologer is on p. 21.

and, thus, its longest part. By revisiting each of the previously made arguments in favour of astrologers and their discipline, the astrologer's association with certain characteristics and pretensions is even more consolidated.

These traits include his appearance, the arrogance and pretentiousness attributed to him, his verbose and complicated manner of speaking, his extraordinary learning not only in astrology but also in other disciplines, the recourse to secret and foreign knowledge, the invocation of a long tradition of practitioners, and the emphasis on his professed exceptionality. The discussion of these features in the *Astrologaster*, which were all already addressed in the introductory works of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries – albeit, of course, in a positive way – shows that the figure of the astrologer outlined in the introductory works retained its influence for a long time, at least as a basis for debate.¹¹⁹⁸

The *Astrologaster* was written at the beginning of the seventeenth century, that is, at a time when the practice of astrology and the reputation of astrologers were already in decline. The fact that such a work, while written in a humorous and narrative manner, contained at its core a lengthy, serious critique of astrologers and a refutation of astrology testifies to the continuing relevance of the figure of the astrologer and his practice at that time.¹¹⁹⁹ More or less contemporaneous events in Europe, such as the trial of the French astrologer Noël-Léon Morgard, who was sentenced to death in 1614 for his predictions about the death of King Louis XIII, or the issuing of the anti-astrological papal bull *Inscrutabilis* (1631), by Pope Urban VIII, furthermore attest to the fact that at the beginning of the seventeenth century, astrologers were still taken seriously as a threat and not dismissed outright as ridiculous.¹²⁰⁰

Can the establishment of the astrologer's image be considered a success? If we understand success as the uncritical and complete adoption of the ideal image described in the introductory works, the subsequent developments – given the continued production of anti-astrological writings, mock predictions, or the inclusion of astrologers as figures of ridicule in literature – would undoubtedly have to be

¹¹⁹⁸ As repeatedly underlined, the image of the astrologer given in the introductory works is, of course, itself strongly based on earlier traditions and templates. The extent to which the introductory works can nevertheless be considered to have played a key part in establishing this image of the astrologer will be discussed in the next subchapter.

¹¹⁹⁹ He also does not deny the influence of planets in itself: John Melton: *Astrologaster*, London 1620, p. 56: *Yet I will not denye, but that the Influences of the Starres haue an operation in the differences of Bodyes [...]*

¹²⁰⁰ On the trial of Noël-Léon Morgard, see Roberts: *Mocking the Future*, pp. 205–207; on the papal bulls see footnote 1148.

interpreted as a failure. However, it would be unrealistic to expect such a unanimous acceptance of an ideal image. Moreover, the critical debate and literary use of the figure of the astrologer do not suggest that astrologers failed to become established in the general perception; they indicate the opposite. The ongoing discussions about the astrologer and his inclusion as a stock figure in literature testify that he was part of the discourse and had thus successfully entrenched himself in the society of the late Middle Ages and to an even greater extent in the early modern period. His controversiality and the ridicule he was subjected to were an integral part of being a scholar – just as they were for lawyers or physicians – and the fact that the astrologer remained a subject of discussion demonstrates his continuing relevance.

However, as described above, the situation gradually changed, and the effects of the collapse of the scientific framework of astrology became particularly evident from the middle of the seventeenth century when astrologers were increasingly being excluded from the scientific community. While astrology and its practitioners never completely disappeared, they lost their relevance – in both a positive and a negative sense.¹²⁰¹ They were simply no longer considered a topic worth discussing in leading academic circles or among the political elite. The astrologer's ultimate failure was thus reflected not in the heated discussions or parodies about his role and discipline but rather in the moment when they ceased.

6.3 The Impact of the “Introductions to Astrology”

Finally, independently of whether astrologers can be deemed successful or not, there is the question of whether the “Introductions to Astrology” played any role at all in the process of the establishment of astrologers. The impact of the introductory works on either the actual behaviour or the perceived image of astrologers is challenging and perhaps even impossible to measure, but there are some indications that point to their relevance. The clearest evidence is undoubtedly the dissemination of the works. At least some of the introductory works became widely circulated. Their success is reflected in the ranking of the 50 most popular astrological works in Latin that David Juste has compiled on the basis of the extensive manuscript collection from his CCLA-database

¹²⁰¹ Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 423, writes that “astrology had ceased, in all but the most unsophisticated circles, to be regarded as either a science or a crime: it had become simply a joke.”

(*Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Latinorum*).¹²⁰² While the most popular works in this list are Latin translations of Arabic or Greek texts, we also find Guido Bonatti's introductory work in 22nd place with 54 extant manuscripts, Michael Scot's *Liber introductorius* in 27th place with 49 manuscripts, and John Ashenden's *Summa* in 36th place with 36 manuscripts.¹²⁰³ The central point this list illustrates, and the purpose of Juste's article, is the extensive impact of Arabic astrological texts in Latin Europe.¹²⁰⁴ After all, even the introductory texts of the Latin authors drew heavily on the expositions of the primary Arabic texts. Nevertheless, the list also demonstrates that not only the translated original Arabic – or Greek – texts themselves were popular, but also the compilations and explanations by the Latin authors.

Juste furthermore makes an intriguing observation regarding the time of composition of the 50 texts. He notes that most were produced or translated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and that the list does not include any work dating from the fifteenth century. This, he argues, is not simply because the earlier works had more time to be copied. In fact, the statistics show that astrological works (including the 50 titles) were copied much more frequently in the fifteenth century than before. Juste concludes from this that fifteenth-century astrologers relied primarily on earlier works in their practice.¹²⁰⁵ Although this finding does not apply exclusively to the "Introductions to Astrology" by Latin authors, it generally points to the continued or even increased relevance of their contents in the fifteenth century.

While the ranking represents a valuable indication of the popularity of the introductions, some qualifying factors must be mentioned. Firstly, given that the ranking is based exclusively on manuscripts, the results are valid only until the late fifteenth century since, afterwards, printing gradually replaced manuscript production.¹²⁰⁶ Secondly, as Juste points out, while the number of surviving manuscripts

¹²⁰² See Juste: The Impact of Arabic Sources. He (ibid., p. 174, note 2) states that the database contained 3000 manuscripts at the time of writing the article. Two volumes have been published so far on this basis, cataloguing the Latin astrological manuscripts held at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris. See David Juste (ed.): *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Latinorum*, vol. 1: Les manuscrits astrologiques latins conservés à la Bayerische Staatsbibliothek de Munich (Documents, études et répertoires de l'Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes 81), Paris 2011; David Juste (ed.): *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Latinorum*, vol. 2: Les manuscrits astrologiques latins conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale de France à Paris (Documents, études et répertoires de l'Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes 84), Paris 2015.

¹²⁰³ Juste: The Impact of Arabic Sources, pp. 177–178.

¹²⁰⁴ For the role of Arabic astrological texts at Italian universities, see Azzolini: The Duke and the Stars, pp. 22–50, who shows that the use of such texts went far beyond the works listed in the official syllabus.

¹²⁰⁵ Juste: The Impact of Arabic Sources, pp. 182–183.

¹²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 174.

is a relatively reliable measure of the popularity of medieval texts, there are also other indicators.¹²⁰⁷ These include evidence of the use of the texts, such as the adoption of quotations or more extensive passages in later works and their inclusion in university teaching, and also revisions or glosses in the manuscripts themselves.¹²⁰⁸

Although such factors cannot be measured in the same way as the number of surviving manuscripts, there is exemplary evidence that at least some of the introductory works continued to be used. An example of this is John Ashenden's *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*. Not only was the work printed in 1489, but, as Keith V. Snedegar has shown, it seems to have been a transnational success in Europe from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century.¹²⁰⁹ Copies of the manuscript and the print edition could be found all over Europe, and the owners ranged from famous scholars to members of the court or book collectors.¹²¹⁰ Moreover, there is evidence that John Ashenden was greatly respected and that several famous scholars engaged intensively with the text.¹²¹¹ This is evident, for example, in a letter from Regiomontanus (†1476) to Jacob of Speyer, an Italian court astrologer in Urbino, in which Regiomontanus recommends, among other works, the *Summa iudicialis de accidentibus mundi* of John Ashenden, or in the extensive handwritten comments made in the sixteenth century to one of the copies of the incunabulum.¹²¹² The emended version eventually came into the hands of the seventeenth-century astrologer William Lilly (†1681), who noticed that a long passage of the original *Summa* had been omitted from the printed edition and

¹²⁰⁷ Juste (ibid., pp. 175–176) also discusses factors that may have influenced the ranking itself, such as the incompleteness of the CCAL database, the limitation of the ranking to 50 titles, the size of the works, and his decision to count certain homogeneous bodies of texts as one item.

¹²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 175.

¹²⁰⁹ Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, pp. 260–264. For the incunabulum: John Ashenden: *Summa astrologiae iudicialis de accidentibus mundi*, Venice 1489. For the dissemination and use of the texts, see Carey: *Courting Disaster*, p. 74.

¹²¹⁰ Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, pp. 262–263, states, for example, that a luxury edition of the *Summa* was produced for the French King Charles V (†1380), that the famous Italian book collector Francisco Cicereo of Milan added a manuscript copy to his library and that John, Lord Lumley, (†1609) owned a copy of the 1489 printed edition. For the geographical dissemination of the work, Snedegar mentions England, France, and Italy, but also the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and Poland.

¹²¹¹ For example, the *Summa*'s editor, Johannes Santritter, describes John Ashenden in his foreword as the leading astrologer among those active in recent times. See John Ashenden: *Summa astrologiae*, Venice 1489, *Ad lectorem: Est autor recentior sed qui inter recentiores astrologos obtineat principatum*.

¹²¹² For further context and the history of the comments, see Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, p. 263. The heavily annotated edition is BLO, MS. Ashmole 576. Regiomontanus' letter is printed in: *Der Briefwechsel Regiomontanus mit Giovanni Bianchini, Jacob von Speier, und Christian Roder*, ed. by Maximilian Curtze, in: *Urkunden zur Geschichte der Mathematik im Mittelalter und der Renaissance*, vol. 1 (*Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der mathematischen Wissenschaften* 12), Leipzig 1902, pp. 185–336, the letter is on pp. 302–309, the mention of John Ashenden on p. 306.

included this section in his almanac for 1674.¹²¹³ Similar observations regarding the continuous popularity of introductory works in the fifteenth century and beyond can also be demonstrated for other works, such as Guido Bonatti's *Liber astronomiae*, which was printed at least three times (Augsburg 1491, Venice 1506, Basel 1550).¹²¹⁴ It was furthermore used by later scholars and seems to have attracted interest in court circles from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries.¹²¹⁵

In the university context, Alcabitius' *Liber introductorius*, in particular, developed an enormous reach and influence.¹²¹⁶ Since the text was incorporated into teaching at many universities, it can be assumed that it profoundly impacted the professional formation of aspiring astrologers and physicians.¹²¹⁷ As the principal and most exhaustive commentary on the work, John of Saxony's explanations and reflections – including those on the role of the astrologer in his prologue – formed part of this influence. Indeed, 32 of the 200 manuscripts and 9 of the 12 printed Renaissance editions of Alcabitius' work contain John of Saxony's commentary, reflecting its lasting relevance.¹²¹⁸ It is clear, then, that at least some of the introductory works were highly popular, even becoming established as standard reference works and often remaining so

¹²¹³ Snedegar: John Ashenden and the *Scientia astrorum Mertonensis*, vol. 1, p. 263.

¹²¹⁴ There may have been three further editions (Basel 1530, 1536, and Augusta 1581), which are either not extant or have never existed but were solely mentioned in a catalogue of the seventeenth century. In addition, an abridged German translation of the work was printed in Basel in 1572. For a description of the editions, see Boncompagni: *Della vita e delle opere di Guido Bonatti*, pp. 74–77. The 1491 edition was revised by the astrologer Johannes Angelus (Johannes Engel), who taught at the University of Ingolstadt from 1492 to 1497 and also redacted other astronomical-astrological works from Ratdolt's press. It is not known exactly which changes he made to Guido Bonatti's treatise. On Johannes Angelus, see Christoph Schöner: *Mathematik und Astronomie an der Universität Ingolstadt im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Ludovico Maximiliana. Forschungen 13), Berlin 1994, pp. 223–232.

¹²¹⁵ For example, the Polish astronomer John of Glogau (†1507) drew heavily on Guido Bonatti's work in his own introductory treatise, the *Summa astrologiae*. See Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 4, p. 452. A copy of Guido Bonatti's *Liber astronomiae* was also held in the royal library of the French King Charles V. See Jean-Patrice Boudet: *Charles V, Gervais Chrétien et les manuscrits scientifiques*, p. 35. The prestige of the work at the end of the fifteenth century is also attested to by its inclusion in a sumptuous manuscript, which was probably made for the English King Henry VII and even contains a miniature of the king within Guido Bonatti's text. See Thorndike: *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 4, p. 437. The manuscript in question is BL, MS. Arundel 66, fols. 48^r–248^v; the image of Henry VII is on fol. 201^r. Another indication of continued interest in the work in English court circles is the fact that the 1550 edition of the *Liber astronomiae* was dedicated to William Paget, 1st Baron Paget (†1563), who served in the employ of the English kings Henry VIII and Edward VI, as well as Queen Mary I. See Guido Bonatti: *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, preface. For this reference, see also Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 343.

¹²¹⁶ Alcabitius' work is at the top of Juste's ranking of the most popular astrological works before 1500. See Juste: *The Impact of Arabic Sources*, p. 177. For the reception of Alcabitius' work beyond 1500, see Gaida: *Encounters with Alcabitius*.

¹²¹⁷ For the integration of the work into university teaching, see Burnett: *Al-Qabisi's Introduction to Astrology*. See also Azzolini: *The Duke and the Stars*, pp. 22–50, for its role and place in Italian university education.

¹²¹⁸ Burnett: *Al-Qabisi's Introduction to Astrology*, pp. 52–53. In Juste's ranking the number of manuscripts is given as 211. Juste: *The Impact of Arabic Sources*, p. 177.

until the seventeenth century. The principles set out in them remained broadly valid and relevant, were passed on to aspiring astrologers and thus formed the basis for astrologers' practical knowledge and conduct.

However, it is crucial to stress that this applies only to some of the texts treated as "Introductions to Astrology" in this study. Thus, for instance, works such as Michael Scot's *Liber introductorius* were never printed or fell into oblivion altogether, a fate that also befell the shorter treatises by Geoffrey of Meaux. Even in the case of the more widely disseminated works, the examples mentioned above provide only sporadic evidence of their practical use. In order to make more precise statements about the dissemination and use of these works, their reception in the different geographical, temporal and institutional contexts would have to be examined separately. Moreover, the general circulation of the works alone does not indicate how specifically the statements on the role of the astrologer were received and whether they impacted the practical behaviour of astrologers. Presumably, the success and dissemination of the introductions to astrology are mainly due to their synoptic nature. They were likely read primarily to learn about the 'scientific' foundations of astrology and not specifically about the astrologer's role.¹²¹⁹ Nevertheless, assertions about the astrologer's role were also passed on with the overall text, especially as they were not only contained in separate chapters but were often embedded in the main text. Conscious or unconscious transmission of the appropriate behaviour and role of the astrologer thus certainly took place through the general circulation of the texts.

The possible influence of these ideas can also be seen in the discussion of certain role models or subjects, as was the case, for example, in the *Astrologaster*, even though there is no direct reference to any of the introductory works.¹²²⁰ Overall, the introductory works alone cannot, of course, be credited with the success of astrologers. However, their widespread distribution and long-standing use in the centuries following their composition suggests that the ideals set out in them and disseminated through them shaped the development of the astrologer's image and contributed to the successful establishment of the figure of the astrologer.

¹²¹⁹ It would be worthwhile to explore whether there are manuscripts or prints in which later commentaries were added specifically to the sections discussing the astrologer's role.

¹²²⁰ For examples, see Chapter 6.2.

7 Conclusion

I began this study with a quote from the modern astronomer Philip C. Plait. Puzzled by the enduring popularity of astrology, he wondered how astrologers were still able to convince a considerable number of people to trust their claims, considering the total absence of any scientific basis for the predictive elements of their discipline. He followed that the astrologer's "best weapon" was, in fact, "us" – our human willingness to believe in the possibility of knowing the future and to consequently, consciously or unconsciously, overlook and disregard inconsistencies. However, Plait's insight applies not only to astrology but to many forms of forecasting – today as much as in the Middle Ages.¹²²¹ The question that remained, and to which I have devoted myself in this study, was, therefore, how astrologers, in particular, managed to establish themselves as 'future experts' in the late Middle Ages. After all, they were not the only scholars offering guidance on how to make good decisions with an eye to the future, and the contemporary 'marketplace' for counsellors was competitive. How did they convince large swaths of the late medieval and early modern population, especially highly influential people, that *they* were the ones to turn to?

There is, of course, no simple answer to this question. The astrologers' rise depended on several factors. Firstly, their success was rooted in the nature and history of the discipline itself. Astrology conformed to the late medieval understanding of science and catered to contemporary trends and concerns. The (re-)discovery of Greek and Arabic astrological texts and the anchoring of astrology in Aristotelian thought lent the discipline a certain *gravitas* but also a degree of novelty. This impression was reinforced by the interest of leading scholars in the discipline – whether they were for or against it – and the debates between them.

While these aspects laid the foundation for the rise of astrology in late medieval Europe, a second decisive element was the practitioners' shrewd exploitation of astrology's potential. In order to be successful, they had to tap into the current trends of the time, harness them for their own advantage and present themselves and their discipline as the best possible option for obtaining counsel for the future. Highlighting the utility and characteristics of the discipline played a role in this context, but equally

¹²²¹ Oschema: Heaven Can Tell, elaborates on this idea. By drawing on approaches and insights from the social sciences, he could show that the success of late medieval astrologers was indeed premised on many of the same principles as that of modern-day economic or political forecasters today – whose success rate in making accurate predictions is indeed comparable to that of medieval astrologers.

important was the ideal representation of its practitioners. Astrologers had to convey that not everyone could make astrological predictions but that a specialised expert was needed, necessitating clear delineations on what being such an expert entailed.

This element of astrology's success formed the focus of my study. My research objective was, therefore, to explore how practitioners imagined the role and behaviour of astrologers, or rather how they chose to portray and advertise them and themselves, in short: their self-fashioning. Obtaining such information is particularly difficult for the early stages of the astrologer's emergence as a distinct 'professional' figure in medieval Western Europe. This makes the "Introductions to Astrology" from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which I used as primary source material, even more valuable. They were written at a time when the astrologer's role – in the late medieval Latin-Christian context – was only just beginning to take shape. As my study showed, this role was subject to various negotiation processes. The requirements and aspirations for the occupation had to be fleshed out first in order to promote the creation of the envisaged role.

However, even the introductory works did not focus exclusively or primarily on the astrologer's role. While the description of the figure of the astrologer was an integral part of the texts, the extent to which the topic was addressed varied. This circumstance explains the need to draw exemplarily on particularly informative works from a relatively wide geographical and temporal range and to use a broad definition of "introductory works". Based on this approach, I could identify overarching aspects and concerns of astrologers that offer revealing insights into their role and self-understanding. In the following section, I will briefly review the main findings of each chapter before drawing an overall conclusion and providing an outlook on further research avenues.

In Chapter 2, I began by examining the professionalisation of astrology in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries across three geographical focal points – Italy, France, and England. This provided a framework for assessing astrologers' positions and roles while considering each region's unique context. Although the integration of astrology and its practitioners into society varied among the three countries, I was able to demonstrate that interest in the field grew universally. The most significant difference was the degree of astrology's institutionalisation at universities, which was most extensive in Italy. Such integration of astrology into the university curriculum did not occur in France until the second half of the fourteenth century and was far less

pronounced there. In England, the subject and its practitioners never became as firmly established in universities as in Italy or France. Astrological practice in the three countries was also influenced by idiosyncratic aspects: in Italy by the local power structures and influential rulers' interest in astrology, especially the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II; in France by the philosophical-theological discussions at the University of Paris and eventually the patronage of the French King Charles V; and in England by the intellectual curiosity of individual scholars at the University of Oxford. Overall, the popularity of astrology and reliance on astrologers heavily depended on individual preferences, whether those of rulers or individual scholars, and could fluctuate considerably.

These fluctuations, and the only gradually emerging institutional structures, made it challenging to determine whether the term 'professional astrologer' might be applied to the scholars practising astrology in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. I have explored this question in the second part of the chapter. A 'professional' role of the astrologer in the narrower sense of an exclusive, permanent, and paid practitioner could indeed only be ascertained in a few cases – if any – for this period. However, as I have illustrated, an increasing number of scholars showed a profound interest in astrology and presented the activity of astrologers as an important role they fulfilled. Moreover, they were also perceived in this capacity by others. Consequently, the gradual emergence of a distinctive role for the astrologer could be discerned as at least part of the scholars' identities.

The diversity and fluidity of astrologers' activities also raised the questions of whether they should be understood as a cohesive group and whether they understood themselves as such – questions that formed a common thread across the chapters of my study. My analysis revealed that three of the defining criteria for groups listed by Otto Gerhard Oexle were frequently addressed by astrologers in their introductory works, which testifies to the will of astrologers to evoke at least some form of group identity. I devoted a chapter to each criterion, i.e. existence over time, specific rules of conduct and preconditions, and differentiation from other groups.¹²²² It is important to note that I discussed these features based on the opinions of the authors of the introductory works. Their statements do not necessarily reflect reality; rather, they shine a light on the authors' aspirations.

¹²²² For Oexle's definition of groups and the application of the concept to astrologers, see Chapter 1.4.2.

Thus, in Chapter 3, I examined whether and how the authors depicted a continuous existence of astrologers over time. Using Michael Scot's and Roger Bacon's detailed narratives, I could show that astrologers attempted to legitimise their practice through elaborate origin stories of astrology, claiming a long tradition of practitioners. Their stories mainly invoked famous biblical figures as predecessors; these embodied ideals like superior intelligence, resilience, and devotion to God. Yet, astrology's controversial associations with magic, demons, and its 'foreign' nature were not concealed. Rather, they were used to generate intrigue and underscore the discipline's unique history and practitioners. Astrology was depicted as a learnable, divinely sanctioned skill which only exceptional individuals could master. The narratives about the discipline's history created a group identity that did not advocate contemporary cooperation but instead highlighted a group of outstanding individuals over time. Emphasis was placed on astrology's progressive development and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, providing a foundation for its 'scientific' legitimisation and positioning the authors within this tradition. The analysis of the origin stories thus showed that the authors practised a form of scholarly *memoria* to bolster the standing of their discipline, its practitioners, and ultimately themselves.

While the authors also included controversial figures and topics in their narratives, they did so very deliberately, taking care not to cross certain theological boundaries. This became evident in examining why the Magi – who at first glance could be considered the most famous historical stargazers – were excluded from those stories. The theological debates surrounding these figures and the lack of pertinent positive identifying features for astrologers would have made their inclusion counterproductive to the authors' aims. Finally, a closer reading of the opposing writings against astrology, exemplified by Nicole Oresme's remarks, revealed that the astrologers' attempts to invoke a long tradition of venerable predecessors as a means of lending legitimacy to their practice were recognised by their opponents as a tactic of self-fashioning that needed to be challenged.

In Chapter 4, I explored how the authors of the introductory works envisioned the ideal astrologer in terms of intellectual requirements, moral and social behaviour, and relationship to income and wealth. The analysis showed that while the emphasis on specific aspects and requirements varied according to the authors' fields of activity, a generally consistent image of the astrologer emerged. The ideal astrologer was depicted as someone born with an intellectual aptitude for the activity who additionally invested

much time and effort in fully mastering the discipline. His behaviour conformed to philosophical and Christian ideals, but he was also adept at navigating worldly situations. Particularly, the authors' discussions about the rules of conduct highlighted the crucial role of the astrologer's relationship with his clients, offering insights into the "performative dimension" of the occupation.¹²²³ The need for a personal, tailored relationship between astrologers and clients also explains why astrologers usually worked independently rather than collaboratively in practice. Concerning the astrologers' relationship to income and wealth, the authors tried to reconcile the different demands on their newly developing role. On the one hand, they propagated the philosophical-Christian ideal of poverty and the value of intellectual wealth; on the other, they had to show astrologers as scholars of a high social status who offered services that could potentially lead to material benefits for their clients. Their solution was to depict the astrologer as a scholar who could, theoretically, easily attain wealth but who chose to put little value to it. However, their discussions also revealed that astrologers were only in the process of finding their role and stance on this issue.

Overall, it became apparent that the authors' expositions were strongly influenced by opponents' negative portrayals of astrologers. The astrologers, therefore, tried to create a positive counter-image. Group identity played a role in the themes of this chapter only insofar as it resulted from identifying the qualities and behaviours required to belong to the 'group' of scholars described. Establishing such a code of conduct for their 'group', which corresponded to accepted overarching ideals of Christian scholars, strengthened their claim to legitimacy.

Chapter 5 demonstrated how astrologers compared their position with other groups. As an evolving occupation under scrutiny, astrologers needed to identify their distinct role while fitting into the scholarly community. I analysed this interplay of demarcation and conformity by examining how the authors of the introductory works compared astrologers with representatives of the three groups with which they were most closely associated, i.e. physicians, theologians, and other prognosticators of the future, such as magicians, diviners, and prophets.

The comparison to physicians was particularly noteworthy, as scholars were often active in both fields. Despite slightly different perspectives of the authors, which depended mainly on whether they were practising as physicians themselves, it became

¹²²³ See Oschema: *Heaven Can Tell*, pp. 197–198, who points this out as a research desideratum.

evident that astrologers were assigned a unique role and competence. The distinction referred primarily to the astrologer's expertise, not the individual, i.e. one scholar could assume both roles. Aligning themselves with physicians lent astrologers credibility while enabling them to present their subject as either superior to medicine or at least as a necessary complement.

In their comparison with theologians, the authors had to counter the traditional claim of astrology's incompatibility with Christianity, which positioned theologians and astrologers as adversaries. My analysis showed that as a countermeasure, astrologers were presented in the introductory works as quasi-theologians, promoting Christian goals and fostering a greater recognition of the faith through their activity. At the same time, theologians opposing astrology were depicted as lacking sufficient 'scientific' understanding.

As for magicians and diviners, the authors' deliberations showed that they primarily sought to distance astrologers from such practitioners. However, a closer analysis of the texts revealed that they equally exploited the fascination with supernatural knowledge to suggest that astrology could offer similarly valuable future insights through a legitimate, God-approved tool. The introductory texts incorporated debates on learned magic and its legitimate aspects, generating interest while portraying astrologers as knowledgeable in these matters yet using only licit practices for Christian purposes.

The comparison with prophets posed other challenges for astrologers. Here, God's approval was implicit, and the astrologers subordinated their activity to that of prophets. However, I could show that the astrologers also used the comparison to showcase the merits and characteristics of their discipline, especially its mathematical foundation, verifiability, and constant accessibility not reliant on divine inspiration. This difference also applied to the practitioners – astrologers, unlike prophets, were highly skilled and educated scholars whose activity was approved by God but who acquired their knowledge by study. Moreover, the texts revealed the early phases of an idea that became prevalent, mainly in the fifteenth century, i.e. the compatibility and mutual use of astrology and prophecy. Overall, by highlighting the similarities and differences to practitioners of other disciplines, the authors aimed to create an independent group identity for astrologers within the medieval scholarly community.

Finally, Chapter 6 provided an outlook on whether the authors' efforts to establish astrology as a distinct and respectable profession can be considered successful for the centuries after the works were written. Here, it was shown that astrologers did indeed

successfully assert themselves in late medieval and early modern society, at least in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. However, this process of integration was neither uniform nor continuous. It was subject to fluctuations and varied in scale and manifestation across the study's three geographical focal points. The institutionalisation of astrology at universities continued to differ significantly. Likewise, the occupation of astrologers at court still largely depended on the preferences of individual rulers, making employment details often challenging to trace.

This somewhat complicated picture of the astrologers' success was also echoed in their reception. Their appearance as stock characters in literary texts showed they had become familiar figures in the public consciousness. However, a growing backlash, initially spearheaded by prominent scholars, increasingly turned into outright ridicule; paired with new astronomical findings, it eventually resulted in the astrologers' exclusion from the larger scholarly community by the seventeenth century, marking the end of their success in the 'scientific' mainstream. As for the reception of the introductory works of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, their widespread distribution, continued use, and appreciation into the seventeenth century indicate that these texts profoundly shaped the self-image and perception of astrologers far beyond their period of origin.

In summary, this study's findings suggest that the skilful self-fashioning in the introductory works was crucial to the rise of astrologers as a distinct professional group. Their authors thoroughly and extensively explored what it meant to be an astrologer, thus consciously pursuing the creation of a specific role for practitioners. Three central themes emerged in defining the Latin Christian astrologer's role: firstly, the authors emphasised astrology's basis in mathematical and verifiable principles, derived from centuries of observations and calculations, constantly advanced by new findings and methods. Astrologers were presented as rational, learned experts with knowledge validated through both tradition and cutting-edge scholarship, setting them apart as exceptional scholars whose level of knowledge could only be achieved by a few. Secondly, astrologers' activities were Christianised, with astrology portrayed as approved by God and its foundations as divinely conceived. Astrologers embodied Christian ideals and promoted Christian goals through their activities. Thirdly, the authors highlighted the occupation's moral and social purpose, reflected in astrologers' interactions with clients and their integration into medieval society as university scholars and trusted advisors to influential people. Astrologers were shown to provide

tailored advice and exhibit socially appropriate behaviour in all circumstances. Their services were thus not limited to the ‘factual’ answers they could give clients but included comprehensive client care, ultimately based on their successful self-fashioning as experts. The self-fashioning of the astrologers in the introductory works constituted an essential component of a “communication situation”, which Frank Rexroth deemed central to the attainment of the status of an expert.¹²²⁴

This study shed light on the early development processes of an occupation that became an integral part of society and exerted influence on many levels. The authors’ self-fashioning, based on a mixture of the adoption, interpretation and adaptation of earlier texts and ideals, as well as the inclusion of their own experiences, formed the conceptual foundation for the astrologer’s role in subsequent centuries. To fully understand astrologers’ position and conduct in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, it is essential to recognise these foundational elements of the occupation’s ethos. The presented findings, therefore, offer an optimal frame of reference for further research.

A natural progression of this work would be to examine external perspectives on astrologers in addition to the insider perspective. A systematic analysis of the portrayal of astrologers in opposing writings and historiographical texts could lead to a better understanding of the development of the scholarly controversy as well as establish whether the ideal images influenced the broader portrayal of astrologers. Moreover, it would be fruitful to examine pictorial representations in addition to textual descriptions. So far, research on astrological imagery has focussed on depictions of the zodiac signs or other astrological ideas.¹²²⁵ Analysing images that specifically depict the figure of the astrologer could unveil another layer of their perception – an approach that the results of this study might facilitate.¹²²⁶

Furthermore, understanding astrologers’ ideal conceptions of their role could help identify previously overlooked aspects in other astrological texts, such as correspondences between astrologers and clients, which might reveal how individual astrologers sought to implement and embody these ideals in specific situations. As far as the actual behaviour of astrologers is concerned, another starting point for further possible research would be to study the practical cooperation between astrologers. The explanations in the introductory works show that contemporary collaboration was not

¹²²⁴ Rexroth: *Systemvertrauen und Expertenskepsis*, p. 20. See also Chapter 1.4.3.

¹²²⁵ See especially Blume / Haffner / Metzger: *Sternbilder des Mittelalters*.

¹²²⁶ The study on depictions of scholars by Hülsen-Esch: *Gelehrte im Bild*, could provide ideal guidelines for this.

the astrologers' focus; here, the invocation of any group identity primarily served to bolster their claim to legitimacy. However, there were also indications of lively informal exchanges between astrologers. Exploring these further would be a promising approach to evaluate if and how astrological cooperation manifested in practice. A particularly fruitful starting point for research into potential cooperation would be, for example, the Italian university scholars who taught astrology. Overall, extending the analysis of these different approaches to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries may also be beneficial in light of the more extensive source material. This would also allow for a closer examination of the later reception of the introductory works and their use, enhancing our understanding of the long-term impact of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century ideas on astrologers and their theories.¹²²⁷

In conclusion, I would like to revisit Plait's assessment of the reason for astrologers' success and refine it slightly: their key 'weapon' appears to be the ability to fashion themselves in a way that convinces 'us' of their expertise. Medieval astrologers achieved this by drawing on aspects deemed significant and 'scientific' in their time – just as astrologers today utilise themes of self-optimisation and technological progress. 'Our' human willingness to believe in the possibility of knowing the future, combined with the astrologers' adept exploitation of the trends of the time, ultimately made their history a late medieval success story.

¹²²⁷ For references which could serve as starting points of such an analysis, see Chapter 6.3.

Abbreviations

BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
BL	British Library, London
BLO	Bodleian Library, Oxford
BSB	Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich
BU	Biblioteca Universitaria, Bologna
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CUP	Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, 4 vols., ed. by Heinrich Denifle / Emile Chatelain, Paris 1889–1897.
LexMA	Lexikon des Mittelalters, 9 vols. and index volume, Munich / Zurich 1980–1999.
LThK	Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, 11 vols., third, completely revised edition, ed. by Walter Kasper et al., Freiburg i. Br. 1993–2001.
ODNB	The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 60 vols. and index volume, ed. by H.C.G. Matthew et al., Oxford 2004.
PG	Patrologiae cursus completus, seu bibliotheca universalis, [...] Series Graeca. 167 vols., ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, Paris 1857–1876.
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus, seu bibliotheca universalis, [...] Series Latina. 217 vols., ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, Paris 1844–1865.
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie, 36 vols., ed. by Gerhard Krause / Gerhard Müller, Berlin / New York 1976–2000.

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