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**Review: Andreas Lerch, Scientia astrologiae: Der Diskurs über die Wissenschaftlichkeit der Astrologie und die lateinischen Lehrbücher 1470–1610**

von Stuckrad, K.

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totelis" (where the usual expression would be "salvandum verba" or "salvanda verba" [p. 50]). Punctuation could sometimes be clearer. On page 335, for example, "Commentatori potest bene contradici, sed Aristoteli non saltem, ubi non contradicit fidei" would be more comprehensible if punctuated "Commentatori potest bene contradici, sed Aristoteli non, saltem ubi non contradicit fidei": "The Commentator can well be contradicted, Aristotle cannot, at least when he does not contradict the faith." Mention of the relevant book of the *Physics* in the running heads would have been helpful.

The book is clearly set out. It includes a reproduction of the opening page of the manuscript (p. 3) and indexes of *quaestiones*, quoted authorities, and Latin terms. It is dedicated to the memory of Grazyna Rosinska, who had already written a preface to the book before she died (2013) and who is remembered by so many people with great affection.

Charles Burnett

Charles Burnett, Professor of the History of Arabic/Islamic Influences in Europe at the Warburg Institute, University of London, has studied the transmission of texts, techniques, and artifacts from the Arab world to the West, through editions, translations, and books such as *The Introduction of Arabic Learning into England* (British Library, 1997).

**Andreas Lerch.** *Scientia astrologiae: Der Diskurs über die Wissenschaftlichkeit der Astrologie und die lateinischen Lehrbücher 1470–1610.* (Acta Historica Astronomiae, 56.) 321 pp., illus., tables, index. Leipzig: AVA—Akademischen Verlagsanstalt, 2015. €29 (paper).

The strict and often polemical differentiation between astrology and astronomy, which many today take for granted, is in fact a quite recent phenomenon. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that astronomy as a scientific and exact discipline was generally distinguished from astrology as a hermeneutic and nonscientific discipline. While there has been a growing scholarly interest recently in the dynamics of this process of differentiation, the historical details and nuances still have to be explored. With his reconstruction of the debate about the scientific status of astrology in learned publications between 1470 and 1610, Andreas Lerch provides an important contribution to our understanding of the debates that dominated the Renaissance and Reformation periods.

*Scientia astrologiae* is the slightly revised doctoral dissertation that the author defended at the University of Cologne in 2014. In order to reconstruct the "discourse on the scientific status of astrology in Latin handbooks between 1470 and 1610," as the book's subtitle has it, Lerch reviews a large number of printed documents, some of which are explored here in detail for the first time. In his selection of data Lerch focuses on documents that reflect the learned discussion of the time, with a special interest in metadata that discuss the question of the status of astrology as a *scientia*, or "science." The documents include editions of ancient and medieval authoritative works on astrology (looking particularly at the introductions and comments by experts of the time) and new astrological handbooks and manuals, as well as ephemerides as a new genre that arose in the fifteenth century, often accompanied by commentaries and explanations that discuss the scientific status of astrology. On the basis of this corpus of texts, the author then identifies a number of discursive configurations that show how experts at the time thought about the scientific nature of astrology. Lerch also discusses the impact of papal bulls and the introduction of the Catholic Index of Forbidden Books.

One of the most important results of Lerch's research confirms the huge influence of Aristotelian understandings of science, along with a general agreement among learned authors that astrological knowledge is based on empirical evidence rather than on speculation. Lerch demonstrates this overall agreement by looking closely at authors as diverse as Lucio Bellanti, Giovanni Pontano, Girolamo Cardano, and Philipp Melanchthon. Because of the emphasis given to empirical methods, many experts were critical of the applicability of ancient authoritative works such as Ptolemy's, arguing that these ancient hypotheses have to be tested thoroughly and need to be adapted to central European climate zones, new

horoscope collections, and so forth. In fact, the revision of ancient handbooks in the light of new research eventually led to a declining popularity of the classic astrological literature.

Lerch also makes it clear that despite the differences between Catholic approaches to the status of astrology (mainly among Italian authors) and Protestant—or Lutheran—interpretations (mainly influenced by Melancthon's school in Wittenberg), there was a widespread theological acceptance of astrology, as long as this science was regarded as addressing natural phenomena (variously defined). Furthermore, Lerch argues that owing to the dominance of Aristotelian concepts, alternative Platonic readings of astrology—most significantly by Marsilio Ficino in Italy—played much less a role in manuals, handbooks, and ephemerides than earlier scholarship had assumed.

One of the greatest merits of *Scientia astrologiae* is the exploration of a vast amount of primary source material that Lerch makes accessible in a well-structured way. His conclusions are reasonable, although the interpretations he offers are limited in depth and depend on the selection of sources. For instance, if he had included the writings of Paracelsus (with their mocking polemics against experimental science), the literature that critiqued astrology, or magical applications of astrological practice, the overall picture would have been more nuanced (on other groups of texts that are excluded from the research see pp. 18–20). Another direction for further research is the interpretation of the discursive processes involved in the debate about astrology and science. Despite the notion of “discourse” in the book's title, Lerch does not provide a serious analysis of discourse and seems to understand the term (not defined at all in the book) simply as referring to concepts and argumentative constellations. Seriously studying the discourse on astrology and science would have included questions of power and the control of knowledge—by the Catholic Church, for instance—or the analysis of ephemerides as a new dispositive that by its very form (tables and calculations) creates an aura of objectivity and “scientificity” (Foucault) that aesthetically legitimizes the knowledge it presents.

*Scientia astrologiae* provides a treasure trove for all students interested in the history of astrology and science. The book offers interpretations that are an excellent starting point for further research.

**Kocku von Stuckrad**

*Kocku von Stuckrad is Professor of Religious Studies and Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Groningen. He has published extensively on topics related to the cultural history of religion in Europe, the diversity of knowledge systems, and the history of astrology.*

## Early Modern

**Didier Kahn.** *Le fixe et le volatile: Chimie et alchimie, de Paracelse à Lavoisier.* 233 pp., illus., bibl., index. Paris: CNRS, 2016. €22 (paper).

Following in the footsteps of Lawrence Principe (*The Secrets of Alchemy* [Chicago, 2012]) and Bernard Joly (*Histoire de l'alchimie* [Vuibert-Adapt, 2013]), Didier Kahn proposes his own history of early modern alchemy. Kahn's aim is to overturn a number of prejudices—especially the idea that alchemy was nothing more than an esoteric pseudo-science. On the contrary, he intends to show that chemistry did not appear by repudiating alchemy but that it in fact emerged from alchemy. Such claims are nowadays uncontroversial among historians of chemistry—Principe and Joly hold a comparable position. Kahn's history is thus aimed primarily at a nonspecialist audience that would benefit from either an efficient introduction to the history of chemistry or a clear presentation of what alchemy was in its own historical context.

However, Kahn considers the history of alchemy from an original point of view that helps to complete Principe's and Joly's views. Principe aims to offer what we might call an experimental history of alchemy, trying to reproduce alchemical experiments in order to assess their value precisely; Joly seeks to demonstrate the rationality of alchemy, aiming to show the consistency of alchemical doctrines. Kahn's history is