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Translations of Kepler's Astrological Writings

Part I, Section 2.2. Kepler's Astrological Interpretation of Rudolf II by Traditional Methods, 1602

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Translated by Cornelia Linde and Dorian Greenbaum; annotated by Dorian Greenbaum

*This section actually precedes the material in the previous section, but has been put here because the techniques discussed are easier to understand when the other material has been introduced first. Kepler provides what he describes as the 'common teaching of the more renowned astrologers', i.e. standard astrological techniques, for interpreting Rudolf's astrology in 1602 and 1603. Though he later adds his own, personal interpretation using techniques he considered valid (see **Part I.2.1** above), Kepler did send Rudolf this delineation based on standard techniques (perhaps to cover all the bases?). At the end of this section I have added some of the preliminary notes Kepler made for himself about Rudolf's astrology, including calculations, and the draft interpretation of the solar returns which was later incorporated into the letter to Rudolf.*

Taken from Opera Omnia *8.1, pp. 327-328;* Gesammelte Werke *21, 2.2, pp. 423-424, 426-428.*

Note: Words or phrases appearing in GW, but not in OO, are added between forward slashes (/).

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[*OO* 8.1, p. 327; *GW* 21, 2.2, p. 423]
From a letter to the Emperor Rudolf[1]

[*Pulkovo XXII, 299r*] /**Also the Emperor's**/
As we were ordered, from the *Progymnasmata*[2] of Tycho Brahe, which a short while ago were published and dedicated to Your Holy Imperial Majesty, and according to the instruction (*doctrina*) included on folios 105 and 112, we diligently sought out the moment in which the Sun returned to its natal point in the years 1602 and 1603; and with as much diligence as possible we established the positions of the planets from the same book and Tycho's observations. We transcribed the directions from the nativity which he constructed for Your /Imperial/ Majesty, which he indeed measured out in a special way laid out on folio 113 of the said book, so that he has lightened our work on this part.

From these 'sounder fundamentals' (*certioribus fundamentis*),[3] we then judged according to the common teaching of the more renowned astrologers, since in this judging part we do not hold with Tycho's special rules as he, who was not accustomed to attributing so much to these [*Pulkovo XXII, 299v*] conjectures, was always most occupied with the doctrine of motions.

The direction (*directio*) of the Sun [☉] is to the square with the [natal] Sun [□☉] and the trine with the Moon [F☽].
The direction of the Moon [☽] approaches her sextile and the opposition with Saturn [S♄]; she is turned (*conversa*) toward the sextile with Venus [♁].
The direction of Jupiter [♃] is to its square [□].

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[1] This is the title in *OO*. In *GW*, the editor has entitled this section 'No. 1150a Interpretation of the Solars for 1602 and 1603 according to traditional methods'. Actually, the techniques include not just solar revolutions but also profections and directions.

[2] Tycho Brahe's *Astronomiae Instauratae Progymnasmata* (2 vols., Prague, 1602-03), edited by Kepler.

[3] This is a sly reference to Kepler's own treatise, *De Fundamentis Astrologiae Certioribus* (1602), which was written at about the time Tycho died. See the translation of J. V. Field, 'A Lutheran Astrologer: Johannes Kepler', *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* (1984), vol. 31, no. 3 (1984), pp. 189-272.

The direction of the Asc<endant> is almost to its square [□].
The direction of the Lot[4] approaches the opposition with Jupiter [☍♃].
The direction of the Midheaven approaches the antiscion of Mercury [☿]
and the opposition with Venus [☍♀].[5]

Since the Sun is the principal *apheta*[6] and comes by direction to its square
and after that the ascendant (*ascendens*), according to the interpretations
(*decreta*) of the astrologers, granting faith in these authors, it signifies
some weakness of native warmth, and moreso in the second revolution,
which will be in July 1603, since then the lords of the geniture[7] and the
Ascendant are weak, and at the same time the profections (since indeed
they have to be employed in the consultation)[8] come to the square
places.[9]

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[4] In Kepler's treatise *On Directions*, he says that the Part of Fortune is 'fictional'
and should not be used in directions. See *On Directions*, *OO* 8, p. 298; *GW* 21,
2.2, p. 499 (translated in this volume in **Part III.1**, p. 247).

[5] Because of his terminology, it is difficult to figure out exactly what Kepler is
doing here. The word 'direction' is misleading, because the Sun in square to
itself is impossible by solar arc or direction (secondary progression). So, if these
are not directions, what could they be? It appears that they are profections (this is
a 'traditional method'). By profection, the Sun *will* square itself in 1603, and
thus trine the Moon; Jupiter will also square itself, as will the Ascendant, in the
1603 profections. In the 1602 profections the Moon will sextile itself and oppose
Saturn, and later in the year sextile Venus; the profected Lot of Fortune in 1602
will be in Aquarius and oppose natal Jupiter. The last set of aspects Kepler
mentions, the 'direction of the Midheaven' to the 'antiscion of Mercury and the
opposition of Venus' is also difficult. The Midheaven profects to Capricorn in
1602 and Aquarius in 1603. The antiscion of natal Mercury is 9°28' Gemini. A
profected Capricorn Midheaven will come to oppose natal Venus in Cancer, but
Capricorn is the contra-antiscion of Gemini, not the antiscion.

[6] For a discussion of this term, see Kepler's letters to Fabricius, *OO* 1, pp. 314-
315; *GW* 14, pp. 323-324 (translated in **Part III.2** in this volume, pp. 274-276).

[7] Jupiter and Mars as in Kepler's notes (*Pulkovo XXII, 305v*); see p. 115 below.

[8] Though Kepler theoretically rejects profections, he seems well acquainted with
how to use them.

[9] '...come to the square places' is a clue that the 'directions' Kepler writes of
above are really profections. In Rudolf's 1603 profections, his planets,

But should malefics now occupy the places of the directions [*i.e. profections*] by ingress, astrologers could make inferences about sickness. But since none of the malefics which could bring the matter to actuality (*in actum*) are present [*Pulkovo XXII, 300r*] either by ray or by body[10] – on the contrary, since Jupiter dwells in Scorpio, **[GW 21, 2.2., p. 424]** warming the [innate] nature with his friendly energy (*vigor*) and illuminating with a beautiful light the places of the direction [*i.e. profection*] of the Sun – these interpretations vanish, and it signifies that a good health regimen (*diaeta*) will support the [innate] nature at this time, especially since the period of life at this time is strong and lively. For these directions have a stronger influence on old people and [those] weaker by nature and enfeebled by age.

The next three paragraphs delineate the 1602 and 1603 Solar Returns. These are based on the notes Kepler made following his calculations of the returns; see pp. 115-116.

As far as the kingdom is concerned, since Jupiter has rolled down to its square[11] just like the Sun and by its ingress makes the Midheaven fortunate, and is lord of the Midheaven in both revolutions,[12] in the earlier of which it is harmoniously situated with its original [position][13] (in which it rejoices in the 7th [house] and in the ray of Mars), from these [positions] the astrologers will say that there will be a good state of the kingdom and something memorable **[OO 8.1, p. 328]** will be done in it. The Moon with the North Node [l] in the 9th, the house of Jupiter [y],

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Ascendant and Midheaven will square their natal positions; e.g., the profected Ascendant will be in Aries, the profected Sun will be in Scorpio, etc.

[10] Lit., 'neither rays nor bodies of the malefics which could bring the matter to actuality are present'. The 'body' refers to a conjunction, the 'ray' to any other accepted aspect from the malefic in question.

[11] Jupiter is in Scorpio in the 1603 Solar Return, which squares its natal position in Leo.

[12] In both the 1602 and 1603 Solar Returns (Sagittarius is the M.C. in 1602, and Pisces in 1603).

[13] In the 1602 Return, Jupiter is at 16° Libra, in sextile to its natal position.

[denotes] a journey because of the law.[14] But in the past month of November, Saturn was in the Midheaven,[15] signifying losses and futile efforts; it is well that [*Pulkovo XXII, 300v*] Jupiter follows after it, wherefore success can be hoped for in those matters which so far have been tried with loss and toils.

If the least interpretations of the astrologers are to be followed, enemies are signified in the earlier revolution by Mercury, lord of the 7th, in the later revolution by Saturn and Mars, who are lords although they are on either side in degraded places (*in locis abjectis*);[16] the lord of the figure in the earlier revolution, on the other hand, [and] the [lord of] the Ascendant in the later revolution, are on angles and enjoy other advantages of /terms (*fines*)[17] and/ friendships;[18] from this position, the astrologers will say there will be a tiring of enemies and weakness or imprisonment. Yet in the prior figure Jupiter and Mars fall in the 7th, which means an attack by enemies, but since Jupiter is the lord of the geniture, therefore it is prefigured that the Emperor will not lack

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[14] Jupiter rules the law and the 9th house rules journeys, and Jupiter also is lord of the 9th in the 1602 Solar Return under discussion.

[15] In 1602, transiting Saturn was moving back and forth over Rudolf's natal Midheaven.

[16] Normally the adjective *abjectus* is applied to cadent houses. In the 1603 Return, Mars is in the 12th house just above the Ascendant, but Saturn, which rules the Descendant, is actually in the 5th house. Kepler's notes acknowledge that Jupiter is in the 5th, with Saturn, so presumably he knows that Saturn is also in the 5th: 'the lords are Jupiter and Mars, one in the 12th, the other in the 5th. The former [*the one in the 12th, i.e. Mars*] cadent, the latter peregrine and with Saturn' (see below, p. 115). Perhaps a *locus abjectus* in this context is either cadent or with a malefic.

[17] The usual Latin for the astrological 'terms' is *termini*; but Kepler sometimes prefers *fines* (e.g., see Part I.1.4, p. 67 in this volume: '…5 planetae fines partiantur signorum…' '…the 5 planets distribute the terms of the signs…' [Kepler's letter to Maestlin of 15 March 1598 = *GW* 13, p. 183; *OO* 1, p. 297]), perhaps when a sense of the term making 'boundaries' is also implied. In this case, Jupiter is in its own terms in the 1602 chart, using the Ptolemaic terms transmitted by Camerarius; the Moon, ruler of the Ascendant in 1603, does not have terms, but it is accidentally dignified by being in the 10th house, and is in mutual reception with Jupiter by triplicity and Mars by domicile.

[18] 'and enjoy…friendships' in the margin of the manuscript.

weapons, but will advance against the enemy. But since Saturn approached the Midheaven, a loss was received.

[*Pulkovo XXII, 301r*] In the later figure: the lord of the geniture is somewhat weak, because Jupiter is peregrine in Scorpio and is in a degraded place.[19] This denotes difficulty, perhaps monetary. The Moon also, as lady of the Ascendant,[20] is injured by a square from Mars, lord of the 7th.[21] However there is a mutual reception,[22] so one reinforces the other, and since the Moon signifies the people and movable goods, perhaps she signifies a devastation of fields and the servitude of subjects, while a killing also has to be avenged through the captivity of enemies, since the Moon is elevated above Mars. [*Pulkovo XXII, 301v*] Furthermore, a mutual reception between Jupiter, lord of the geniture, and Mars, its supporter (*suffraganeum*), occurs from the other's dignities,[23] which is just as if they were both strong and their configuration friendly.[24] In the earlier [revolution], also, the Midheaven in trine with Venus in the heart of Leo[25] signifies magnificence, ambassadors and gifts. In both [revolutions], the lords of the 12th which signifies hidden enemies and slaves, or evil subjects, are in degraded (*abjectus*) places,

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[19] Again, the 'degraded place' may mean that Jupiter is with Saturn, a malefic. 'Peregrine' means that the planet has no essential dignity in the degree and sign in which it is placed, and so becomes a 'wanderer' without a home.

[20] Cancer rises in the 1603 Return.

[21] Both Mars and Saturn are almutens of the 7th house (whose cusp is 16° Capricorn in Kepler's calculation). Mars is also the lord of the Moon in Aries. Though Kepler disdains essential dignities in his philosophical writings about astrology, he seems to have a good grasp of them.

[22] The Moon is in Mars's sign, Aries, and Mars is in the Moon's sign, Cancer. This mutual reception is strengthened even more by the fact that there is an aspect between them.

[23] Mars is in Cancer, the sign of Jupiter's exaltation, and Jupiter is in Scorpio, Mars's domicile. The two planets are also in trine.

[24] They are in trine, a harmonious aspect.

[25] Venus is at 25° Leo, conjunct Regulus, the heart of Leo.

peregrine and retrograde; therefore their condition is afflicted, which turns out to our good.[26]

[*Pulkovo XXII, 301r*][27] This is roughly what can be said according to the common interpretations of the astrologers; if the diary of /monthly/ profections and transits is added to them, a judgement complete in every detail may be estimated.

But since it is fitting that a philosopher and faithful servant distinguish among those which he believes to be true and those which he believes to be unreliable, therefore I, Kepler, shall write a private judgement from fewer principles, which I believe to have understood at this point to be in agreement with nature, and in this way I shall not be inconsistent with myself. For a short while ago, [*Pulkovo XXII, 301v*] in the examination of the judgement of Altobellus[28] about the eclipse of 1601, such were what I maintained.

*The next sections of the manuscript contain Kepler's preliminary notes for Rudolf [Pulkovo XXII, 303r-305v]. We have already seen excerpts from these in **Part I.2.1**(Pulkovo XXII, 303v) of this volume; see **Panel**, pp. 102-103. Here we add Kepler's calculations of the directions, transits and revolutions of 1602 and 1603, including (again) the diagrams for the 1602 and 1603 Solar Returns, followed by Kepler's notes about them.*

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[26] In the modern calculation of the 1602 Solar Return, Saturn (lord of the 12th) is not retrograde in 1602, though it had just gone direct after being retrograde and then stationary at 15° Scorpio (see **Figure 1**, left diagram, where Kepler even shows Saturn as direct). It is in a degraded place (the 8th house) and has no essential dignity (i.e., is peregrine) in the 16th degree of Scorpio. In the modern calculation of the 1603 Solar Return, Mercury, lord of the 12th, is also not retrograde, though it is slowing down and will turn retrograde a week after the date of the Solar Return; it is in a cadent house (the 3rd) and, using Kepler's position of 28° Leo, is peregrine.

[27] *GW* duplicates *OO* in arranging the text of this folio (r and v).

[28] Astrologer and astronomer Ilario Altobelli (1560-1637) See L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols, New York:Columbia University Press, 1934-1958, here vol. 7, pp. 110-112.

[GW 21, 2.2, p. 426] [*Pulkovo XXII, 304r*]
[Directions] for completed years 50 and 51[29]
On 18 July of whatever year, the ☉ at 4.36g [*noon position of Sun*]
On 6 September it is at 22º53' h   22.53 h
                                          48.17 [*solar arc in 1602*]
Radix Moon 1.46f   Radix ☉ 5.11
            48.17   Place of direction 23.28 h☉ [*directed ☉ in 1602*]
Direction   20. 3 g   It has passed G☿ [*natal ☿ at 20º ♋*]
        l at 20.22

                21. 3 [*directed ☽ 1603*]   24.28 [*directed ☉ 1603*]
It projects rays ♂20. 3 g [*directed ☽ 1602*] ♂ 23.28 h [*directed ☉ 1602*]
  G20. 3 Ⅱ   G20. 3 z   G 23.28 f   G 23.28
  ✶ 8. 3 Ⅱ   ✶ 2. 3 x   ✶ 11.28 f   ✶ 5.28 c
  □ 20. 3 s   □ 20. 3 h   □ 23.28 Ⅱ   □ 23.28 c
  F 20. 3 a   F 20. 3 c   F 23.28 s   F 23.28 v
  # 5. 3 a   # 5. 3 v   # 8.28 s   # 8.28 b
  ★ 26. 3 n ★ 14. 3 v   ★ 29.28 a   ★ 17.28 b
        S 20.3 b   S 23.28n
Therefore in no rays except to l . The Sun in no rays. 5º before was G☿ .

    R.A. 4.36 g   126.57 [*R.A. of Sun at noon on birthday*]
    R.A. 23.28 h 174. 1 [*R.A. of directed Sun in 1602*]
Corresponding R.A. 47. 4   47. 4 [*solar arc in right asc.*]
    Radix R.A.   232   Oblique asc. 322   [*obl. asc. of natal Asc.*]
[*R.A.M.C. in 1602*]279. 4   9. 4 [*obl. asc. dir. Asc. 1602*]
        At   7.48 v [*MC in 1602*] 19. a. Ⅱ . g . z . c. v. b
            8.20 v [*MC in 1603*]

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[29] Key for aspects: ♂ = conjunction; G= sextile; ✶ = quintile; □ = square; F = trine; # = sesquiquadrate; ★ = quincunx; S = opposition. These are Kepler's symbols. My explanatory notes are in square brackets with italics.

[*GW* 21, 2.2, p. 427]

26 ⅓ z	20 ⅓ n	n. h	3º before G♂
14 ⅓ g	2 ⅓ Ⅱ	a. z	5º before F y
23 g	23 s	s. x	1º before □ ☿ 's place
		f	4º before □ r

2º before ★ y . 6º before S ☽ 7º b

5º before [S] ♄ 1º f 1º after ★ ☽

Therefore now MC in no rays. 25º x

13º h

4º h

4º c

[Pulkovo XXII, 304v]

As far as his transits are concerned. Saturn [♄] is found in the Midheaven [MC] in November 1602. In August 1603 it comes close, but does not make contact. In February, April, October 1603 it is in square [□] to itself, in December in trine to the Sun [F☉].[30]

Jupiter 1602 7 November in square to the Sun [☉]

10 December in square to Jupiter [y]

1603 In March near the MC [*Jupiter ca. 22º Scorpio, stat. retr.*]

In July close to the square of Jupiter [*12º Scorpio*]

13 or 18 October in the MC. [*23º or 24º Scorpio*]

Then Saturn [♄] in its own square [□] [*Saturn at 3º Sagittarius in February, March and April, then again in November*], Mars [♂] in opposition to radix Saturn [*Mars at 3º Virgo near the end of October*]. And a square of Saturn and Mars, Sun in NO.[31]

Jupiter [y] on 4 December in trine to the Sun [F☉].

North Node

[l] 1603 In June through the MC.

And in November an eclipse in the IC.

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[30] All these are correct (using a modern ephemeris).

[31] Despite much thought and experimentation, we have not been able to discover what 'NO' stands for here and below (for Mars in 1604).

In the year 1604 Mars in February, March, April in NO in Libra[32]

1604 11 December Jupiter in opposition to the Moon [*Jupiter at 2º Capricorn*]

1604 17 January Jupiter in opposition to Mars [*Jupiter at 14 ½º Sagittarius*]

14 February Saturn in opposition to Mars, it stations about there. [*Saturn in February at ca. 14º Sagittarius, and stations in March at 14º*]

5 May Saturn in opposition to Mars [*Saturn at 13 ½º Sagittarius, within a degree of opposing natal Mars*]

30 July Jupiter in opposition to Mars, it stations there. [*Jupiter at 14º19' Sagittarius on 30 July; it goes stationary direct on 11 August*]

22 August Jupiter in opposition to Mars. [*Jupiter at almost 14 ½º Sagittarius*]

9 November Saturn opposition to Mars. [*Saturn at almost 14º Sagittarius*]

When the Sun came to the square of Mars by equal direction, then the Turkish war began, the Bohemian plot. When the MC came to 14½ Sagittarius, then the Empire and Bohemia. Therefore the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in 15º Sagittarius, the Sun toward the sextile of Mars at 9½º, [*Pulkovo XXII, 305r*] signifies the empire, and the change in it.

Revolution

☉ in 5.11. 1   Diurnal [motion] 57'22"

1602. 18 Jul. 4.50.16   5.11 g

21   H.   1603   4.36.24 g

20 -- 8.22   35.24

25

8.47   Add to prior H. 5.48½

R.A. ☉ 127.33   Therefore 349.32 18.40 n[*MC 1603*]

120.   15.36 f [*Asc 1603*]

11.45

259.18 20v [*should be c*]

349.18 8 n [*actually 18n*]

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[32] At the beginning of February, Mars is at 22º Libra. It then stations and goes retrograde, so that in April it is still around 22º Libra. (We still cannot discern the meaning of 'NO' here.)

[*GW* 21, 2.2, p. 428]
Pistorius   At Vienna 23º3'c
Therefore R.A. 262.25
                75. 7½
                12.
                349.32

Figure 1. Positions (in Kepler's typical chart form) for Rudolf II's Solar Revolutions for 1602 and 1603, based on transcription in *GW*, 21, 2.2, p. 428
[*Pulkovo XXII, 305r*]
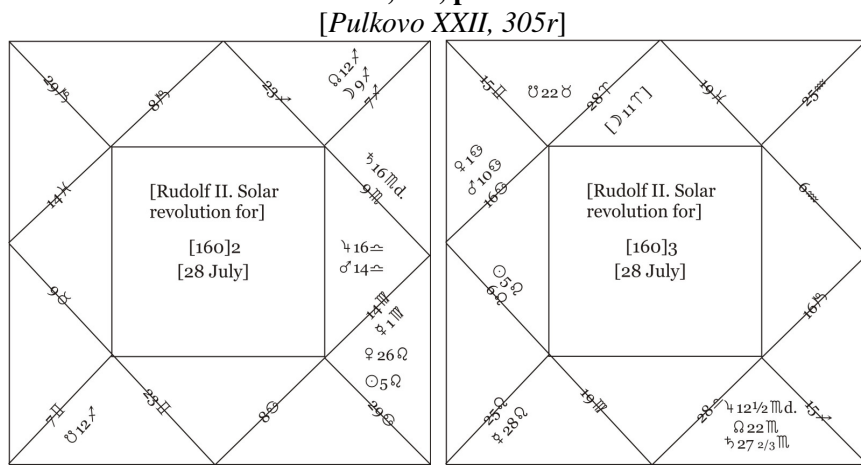
[*Pulkovo XXII, 305v*] **In the prior figure** Jupiter is lord by all claims, accidentally strong, in its own terms, in the exaltation[33] of friendly Saturn [♄], in the house of friendly Venus [r], joined to friendly Mars [♂]; it denotes the good or average state of the native. When the Moon [☽] [is] with the North Node [l] in the 9th, the house of Jupiter [y] [it denotes] a journey because of the law. The lord of the 12th in the 8th, [denotes] hidden enemies, [now] dead,[34] and weak servitude. Jupiter and Mars [y ♂] in the 7th [denotes] insurrection by open enemies, perhaps powerful ones. The M.C. in trine to Venus [Fr], [denotes] splendor, complimentary legations, gifts.

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[33] *GW* has 'ex altatione', which appears to be a typographical error.

[34] The 12th house traditionally signifies hidden enemies; when its lord is in the 8th (signifying death), the combination denotes hidden enemies who are now dead.

In the second [figure] the lords are Jupiter [♃] and Mars [♂], one in the 12th, the other in the 5th. The former [*the one in the 12th, i.e. Mars*] cadent, the latter peregrine [*the one in the 5th, i.e. Jupiter*] and with Saturn [♄]: they signify the weak state of the native, and because the Moon [☽] is in the house [of Mars] and square Mars [□♂] peregrine in the 12th, while the Moon herself is in fact in a lofty place, there is a beating and defeat of the native by an enemy. For Mars [♂] in its detriment is not good. But much more befitting, the Moon [☽] is the lady of Mars [♂]. And there is a mutual reception. And likewise between Jupiter [and] Mars [♃ ♂]. And because the lady of the first [house] and Mars [♂] is elevated, that signifies victory. And Mars [♂] is in the embrace of the Ascendant, and Mercury [☿] lord of the 12[th35] is degraded, retrograde and peregrine in the 3rd.[36]

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[35] Reading 'XII' for transcribed 'XI'.

[36] Kepler's positions do not show Mercury as retrograde in the 1603 chart (and it is not actually retrograde in a modern rendition of the chart). In 28° Leo, Mercury is peregrine (without essential dignity).