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CHILDREN OF THE PLANETS:  
THE POPULARIZATION OF ASTROLOGY  
IN THE 15th CENTURY

Children of the Planets – can planets have children? Intended here are people who supposedly have an almost family relation to a particular planet, that planet which rules their horoscope and determines their character. This is possibly one of the most successful and long-lived popularizations of complex scientific theories ever. For although all the planets in concert determine a horoscope, here only a particular one is named and its dominant influence defined. This idea of the planets having children – which makes them astrological fathers – spread from the beginning of the 15th century, less in the form of scientific texts, than in pictures<sup>1</sup>.

Fritz Saxl, in his review of Anton Hauber's book in 1919, had supposed that this was a long tradition coming to light, which could have been introduced during the Middle Ages together with other texts from the Arabic world – without having however any real evidence for this<sup>2</sup>. This was still the state of research as I began my investigations. In reality however, we are dealing precisely with something new, having developed from the period around 1400, and closely related to the expansion of cultural interests in German cities.

At the beginning of the surviving tradition we find poetry.

1. A fuller discussion of the material presented in this article is found in D. Blume, *Regenten des Himmels. Astrologische Bilder in Mittelalter und Renaissance*, Berlin 2000, 158-90.

2. A. Hauber, *Planetenkinder und Sternbilder. Zur Geschichte des menschlichen Glaubens und Irrsins*, Straßburg 1916 (Studien zur Deutschen Kunstgeschichte, 194); review by F. Saxl, «Probleme der Planetenkinderbilder», *Kunstchronik und Kunstmarkt*, 54, N. F. 30, Nr. 48 (26. 9. 1919), 1013 ss.

Oswald von Wolkenstein composed a song around 1422 in which he sings of the seven planets and their children<sup>3</sup>. In rhymed

3. This poem was composed around 1422. *Die Lieder des Oswald von Wolkenstein*, ed. K. K. Klein, Tübingen 1987, Nr. 22, 73 ss.: «Des grossen herren wunder ...». For Oswald von Wolkenstein in generell, cf. B. Wachinger, in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, VII, Berlin 1989, 134 ss. A translation in modern German was made by K. J. Schönmetzler, *Oswald von Wolkenstein. Die Lieder, mittelhochdeutsch-deutsch*, München 1979, 65 ss.: «Des großen Herren Wunder / Kein Mensch ersingen mag, / Doch will ich eins darunter / Fein legen an den Tag: / Wie sich der Mensch formieret / Nach der Planeten Bahn - / Geschwächt und auch gezieret / Gehorcht er ihrem Plan. / Zwölf Zeichen folgen jedem, / Es fügen sich darein / Die sieben der Planeten / In täglichem Verein, / Die sich als Meister senken / Tief zu den Menschen hin, / Um sie nach sich zu lenken / Mit Leib, Gemüt und Sinn. / Hört der Planeten Namen: / Zuerst der Sonne Fluß, / Danach des Mondes Bahnen, / Mars und Mercurius. / Jovis, Venus, zwei Kluge / Verjagt mit Recht kein Mann, / In säuberlichem Fuge / Reiht sich Saturnus an. / Der Leo und sein Zeichen / Sei von den Zwölf genannt, / Der Krebs mit seinem Schleichen / Ist dem Skorpion verwandt. / Stier, Widder, die Jungfrau, / Der Zwilling, Fisch, ein Schütz. / Leg's auf die Waag' und schau! / Wassermann, zum Steinbock spritz!

Und wer da in der Sonne / Orient geboren ist, / Dem gibt der Leo Wonne, / Und Kraft zu aller Frist. / Klug, findig, heiß und freudig, / Ehrsam und stets gesund, / Wohl schlafend, selten leidig, / Rastlos zu jeder Stund. / Schmalfüßig, mittelkleine, / Großbrüstig, Antlitz breit, / Kleinhäuptig, Augen reine, / Die Nase schön bereit. / Sie prüfen jeden Schaden, / Vernehmen gern Bericht, / Sind stolz und wohlgeraten / Und Drohen schreckt sie nicht / Der Mond ist feucht und kühle, / Der Krebs ist sein Gestalt, / Der Mensch ist feist an Fülle, / Sein Schlaf kommt mit Gewalt. / Großhäuptig, kleine Augen, / Rund ist die Nasenspitz, / Voll Lügen, die nicht taugen, / Säumig, mit launischem Witz; / Keusch in der Minne Wunder, / Die Freude ist nur Gast, / Und viele sind darunter / Von harter Haut umfaßt. / Dünnlippig, kleine Zähne, / Und lang ist ihr Gesicht, / Schmalschultrig, dicke Hände, / Zur Tugend wohlgerichtet.

Ein Herr der bösen Glieder: / Mars, dürr und grimmig heiß, / Skorpion und auch der Widder / Stehn in dem selben Kreis. / Ihr Loblied soll mich reuen / In menschlicher Natur, / Weil sie die Leute scheuen / Mit Leib, Sinn und Figur. / Dies Volk ist gar verlogen, / Geht Krieg und Rauben nach / Unmäßige und betrogen, / Tut Weib und Priestern Schmach. / Dünnwangig, stolz und faltig, / Tief in der Brau der Blick, / Breitschultrig, maulgewaltig, / Falschzüngig, voller Tück. / Den Adler, den erfinde / Ich im Mercurion, / Mit reizendem Gesinde: / Jungfrau und Zwillingssohn. / Die werden gute Christen, / Reich, mild, getreu und wahr, / Sind Dichter und Juristen, / Steinmetz und Goldschmied gar. / Sie disputieren schwierig, / Sind braun und mittelgroß, / Furchtsam und neubegierig, / Schmal ist ihr Antlitz bloß. / Langnasig, hohe Stirne, / Schönäugig, voll das Haar, / Verschwiegen, klug im Hirne, / Und sauber übers Jahr.

Jovis, der Tugend Krone, / Vor aller Tugend frisch. / Ihm hilft des Schüt-

verses, and using popular language, the basic tenets of astrology are condensed in simple form. From Salzburg a comparable song has come down to us which was composed certainly a few decades earlier at the end of the 14th century<sup>4</sup>. Conceived for

zen Wonne, / Dazu der edle Fisch: / Feucht, heiß und gern beim Schießen, / Verschämt vor böser Weis, / Höflich ohn' all Verdrießen, / Vornehm in höchstem Preis. / Haupt klein, Haar schön, stumpfnasig, / Großbrüstig, rund und wohl, / Engbrauig, Lippen rassig, / Langzähmig, Waden voll. / Mit wankelbarem Sinne, / Weil sie das Reisen freut, / Geneigt zu Lust und Minne, / Zu jeder Tat bereit. / Venus, der Wonne Zierde, / Schafft gute Menschen viel: / Die Waag, des Stiers Begierde / Lenkt sie im frohem Spiel. / In Saitenklang und Singen, / Was die Natur erquickt, / Im Buhlen, Tanzen, Springen / Ist niemand so geschickt. / Hals dick, Haupt klein, viel Locken, / Schwarzäugig, Stirne breit, / Die Nase lang gebogen, / Großzähmig, Hände weit, / Kurzarmig, dicke Füße, / Im Wuchse stattlich lang, / Unkeuschheit schmecket süße / Und ist ihr Leibgedank.

Unterm Saturn Geborne Sind Kinder, böse gelahrt. / Der Steinbock mit dem Horne / Ist von der selben Art. / Sie morden, rauben, stehlen, / Sind Schänder wohlbekannt, / Spiel, Schwören, Trinken, Hehlen, / Zur Untreu schnell gewandt. / Voll Grind und faul und gräßlich, / Trübäugig, Nase flach, / Schwarz, haarig, breit und häßlich, / Dicklippig, dumm an Sprach. Rasch in des Zornes Flamme, / Gebläht voll Wankelmüt. / Auch kommt von diesem Stamme / Des Wassermannes Flut. / Doch ist der Fluß gemengt / Vom Zeichen Wassermann, / Wird ihm ein Teil zersprenget, / Wie ich euch sagen kann. / Sie schämen sich der Taten, / Bleich ist ihr Angesicht; / Und will ihr Glück geraten / Wird es nicht leicht zunicht. / Doch trägt der Mensch den Adel / Von Gott als höchste Gab: / Trifft ihn ein böser Tadel, / Wie ich berichtet hab, / So kann er ihm entrienen / Mit Tugend und Geduld, / Mit Fleiß und reinen Sinnen / Durch seines Kreuzes Huld».

4. This poem was composed by the so-called Monk of Salzburg, edited by W. Kersken, *Genner beschnaid, die Kalendergedichte und der Neumondkalender des Oswald von Wolkenstein. Überlieferung-Text-Deutung*, Göttingen 1975, 258 s.: «Der mon ist fewcht vnd dar zw chalt / Seinew chinder sein also gestalt / Dikch handt vaist leib vnd augen chlain / Schläffrig vnd sind gerne ayn / Sy chlassen vnd sind läwnig / Ir willen sein vber säwmig / Die myn tuet in nicht vber last / Die frewd ist in ein selczem gast.

Mercurius hät synnreich sit / Juristen tichter vnd goldsmid / Stain meczen maler münsser güt / warhafft getrew vnd wilden müet / Reich leyt vnd wol gepärtet / Ir chunst auf hübsichkayt wartet / Die red sy mit reden vercherent / vnd hörent frömd sach gerne.

Venus der lerend liebleich synn / Die alzeit redent von der mynn / Chlueg singen schymphleich wol gemüt / Ir schimpfen dunkchet yden man güt / Mit tanczen pfeiffen saitten spil / Sie lebet fröleich wie man wil / Vnd sprechent alzeit frawen wol / Da pey man sicherchenen schol.

Der Sunnen leyt sein springer / Starkch leyt stammwerfer ringer / ffraydig haiss vnd lang gesund / Si chlaffent vil zw aller stund / Vnd vossen allen sachen nach / Zw frömden landen ist in gach / Sein mitten chlain vnd oben gross / Vnd yegliche ist nicht ir genoss.

oral presentation with music, these poems clearly document the attempt to popularize astrology. The complex knowledge of the Latin treatises was thus passed on in simplified form to a wider public. In these poems for the first time the planets' «Children» are mentioned, and a short character profile is developed of the persons assigned to the various planets. This ranges from aspects of personal appearance, to basic character traits, all the way to their particular activities and callings.

Corresponding theories are also found in German treatises on astrology from the beginning of the 15th century, for example in that of Johann Wissbier von Gmünd, who begins his remarks with: «This of late has been said of Nature and the Properties of the Seven Planets and their Children [...]»<sup>5</sup>. In this way an idea

Mars haizz vnd türr lered chriegen / Stelen rawben vnd liegen / Gar tieff augen in der bra / Gerumpfnew wang pösz hye vnd da / Dye frowen vnd pfaffen schenden / vnd chain güet dinkch volenden / ffalsch gewdnär rüemen gar vornicht / Dürr pöss gestalt ist ir gesicht.

Jupiter ist fewcht vnd haiss / Sein tugent chain vntugent waiss / zffrid machen fuegen lieb vnd güet / zffrisch fröleich milt vnd wolgemüt / Vnuerdrossen vnd gar werayt / Allczeit zw allen wandenhait / Sy schament sich was vbel stat / Vnd sein höffleich zw gueter tat.

Saturnus chalt vnd türr ge-/ schikcht Sein chind aus / trüeben augen plickht / Verczagt vnd vnuerstanden / Vnd werden alt mit schanden / Dieb spilär mördor vnd vngetrew / Got swerer an allew rew / Sy sein alzeit vol trunkchenpolt / Vnd werdent frawen nymer holt [...].

For the Monk of Salzburg. cf. B. Wachinger, in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, VI, Berlin 1987, 658 ss.

5. «Dis ist kürtzlich geseit von nature und eigenschafft der 7 planeten und von yre kyndern. Der mensch ist des planeten kint der geboren waret oder in seiner mutter empfangen waret zu der zit so der planete grossen gewallt hat oder vom orient uff stat wellicher dan der gewaltigst der rigerit ime das kynt un gyt ime eigenschafft nach sin naturen. Es geschiet aber gar selten, daß eyn planete alleyn gewalt habe. Daromb gibt er im also vil syner eigenschafft dar nach als sie krafft hant. Daromb hat eyn mensch nit alleyn eyne planete eigenschafft, etliche hant von 2, etliche von 3 planeten, etliche von yn allesamt von iglichen etwas lutzel der vil und doch heisset der mensch des planeten nach den der mensch aller meist eigenschafft hat und under dem er geboren ist», quoted after Tübingen Universitätsbibliothek, Hs. Md 2, fol. 271v. For a edition of the full treatise after Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Öttingen-Wallenstein III.1.4.1, see V. Stegmann, *Aus einem mittelalterlichen deutschen astronomisch-astrologischen Lehrbüchlein*, Reichenberg 1944 (Prager Deutsche Studien, 52). Cf. F. B. Brévar, «The German Volkskalender of the Fifteenth Century», *Speculum*, 63 (1988), 312 ss. or F. B. Brévar and G. Keil, «Planetentraktate», in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, VII, Berlin 1989, 713 ss.

of astrology for the layman was established, which permitted each individual to be ascribed to a single planet, and to describe this correspondence with the metaphor of a family or genealogical relation. Such a simplification as this idea may be, it possessed great convincing power, and from then on became a permanent part of what we today call general knowledge.

The success of this idea however was based on its appearance in a new, forward-looking medium – the woodcut. Around 1430 an ambitious publishing project was realized, characterized by the close interaction of image and poem. The localization in Basel is given by the reproduction of the city coat-of-arms in the picture of Venus's Children. I was able to fix the early date by showing that copies were made in 1437 as well as in 1444 and 1445<sup>6</sup>. An extensive planet poem accompanies here the pictures of the Planets and their Children. The verses and pictures are cut in the same wood block and both maintain the division into two equal parts. Two picture fields correspond to the pair of stanzas.

The planet itself speaks directly to the reader and viewer, as in a performance or play. In the first stanza it introduces itself and gives astrological information on its houses and orbit<sup>7</sup>. In the

6. Blume, *Regenten*, 160 ss., 207 ss., 230 ss. The complete series is only preserved in Schweinfurt, Bibliothek Otto Schäfer, OS 1033. Some prints are integrated in Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. Pal. Germ. 438, fol. 149r-150v. An overview of the different editions gives H. Th. Musper, *Der Einblattholzchnitt und die Blockbücher des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 1976 (Handbuch der Holz- und Metallschnitte des 15. Jahrhunderts, ed. W. L. Schreiber, 11), 56 ss.

7. I give here the text of the poem for Sol and Luna, for a full edition, cf. Blume, *Regenten*, 230 ss. Underlinings are mine and emphazise the activities which are important for the illustrations: «Die Sonne man mich nennen sal, / der myltist planet byn ich wol. / Warm und trucken kan ich seyn, / natürlich ganz mit meynem scheyn. / Der Lawe hot meynes hauses creys, / dorynne byn ich veste heys. / Dach yst Saturnus stetiglich / mit seyner kelde wedir mich. / Derhoet werde ich yn dem ster, / yn der Wogen falle ich herneder. / An CCC und funff und sechtzik tagen / mag ich mich durch die zwelf zeichen tragen.

Ich byn geluglich, edel vnd feyn, / also synt auch die kinder meyn. / Gelbweis gemengit, schon angesicht, / wol geborn, weys, cleyne horgefflicht, / eyne feysten leyb myt scharfen odym, / mittil awgen, eyne große styren, / seitenspil vnd syngen von munde, / wol essen vnd großer herren kunde; / vor myttemtag sie dynen gote vil, / dornoch sie leben, wy man wil. / Steynstossen, schyrmnen, ringen, / in gewalt sie gluckes vil gewinnen.

Der Monde der letzte planet nass / heisse ich und wircke ding die synt

picture we see the planet stepping out robustly along its orbit above a band of clouds (Pl. 1, 3, 5). Its antique nudity marks it unmistakably as a higher being. The second stanza recounts, in a way similar to Oswald von Wolkenstein's, the characteristics and activities of the Planets' Children, while the accompanying picture shows them gathered, busy each at their expected occupation (Pl. 2, 4, 6). They stand crowded on the vegetated Earth's surface, while above the clouds the lonely planet moves along. The pictures aim systematically to contrast, and to complement in their vividness the simple German verses. In spite of the reduced language of forms imposed by the woodcut technique, an intellectually planned conception is recognizable which is based on the particular effect of the pictures. Therefore it was necessary that the initiators of this graphic series conceived fully new types of pictures to accommodate their ideas and demands.

The appearance of the planet-gods is without direct precedent. For the first time they appear fully naked; only a star, indicating their status as celestial powers, covers their privates. A few of their attributes, such as Sol's crown, the pilgrim's staff and scholar's hat of Jupiter, or Venus's blossom, follow certainly the medieval iconography, which in many of its components goes back to Michael Scotus. But most come from the classical antique tradition, although particularly Luna's cornucopia and Mercury's moneybag are however extremely rare in the mythographic tradition. But all these elements are present in the planet pictures of the so-called «Chronograph» of 354 or «Filocalus Calendar»<sup>8</sup>. This sumptuous, late-classical manuscript, known today only

lass. / Kalt vnd feucht meyn wirken yst, / natürlich unstete zu aller frist. / Der crebis mein haus besessen hot, / so meyne figure dorynne stat, / und Jupiter mich schauet an / keyn obils ich gewirken kan. / Derhoet werde ich yn dem Styr / im Scorpion falle ich hernerdir schir. / Die zwelf zeichen ich durchgange / in seben und zwenzig tagen lange.

Der sterne wirken gat durch mich, / ich byn unstete, wundirlich. / Meyne kynt man kaum gezeymen kan, / nymande sie gerne seynt under-tan. / Ir anlitz yst bleich und runt, / grun grausam zene, eynen dicken mund. / obirsichtig, schel, eyn engen gang, / gern hoffertig, trege, der leip nicht lang, / leufer, keukeler, fyscher, marnier / farnde schuler, fogeler, molner, bader / und was sich mit wasser dernert, / den yst des Monden scheyn beschert».

8. H. Stern, *Le Calendrier de 354. Étude sur son texte et ses illustrations*, Paris 1953.

from 17th-century copy engravings, must have been kept at that time in South Germany. Its planet representations were also copied into manuscripts which contain a German version of Michael Scotus' *Liber introductorius*<sup>9</sup> (Pl. 7, 8).

We are dealing here thus with a deliberate act of the conscious assumption of the antique. Also, in a manuscript written in 1475 in Ulm, an old Roman book is mentioned, said to have survived more than 1200 years and in which the planets were painted and described<sup>10</sup>. In the Basel woodcuts the so strangely appearing antique image of the planets was simplified and systematized (Pl. 1, 3, 5). Their complete nudity identifies them as higher beings, and the forward-stepping pose underscores their movement. The planets are differentiated by their attributes, given like accessories to them. The objects from the classical antique tradition are supplemented by contemporary elements.

The second picture shows the Planets' Children in their different activities. The account of them in the poems is usually transformed quite literally into a row of figures (Pl. 2, 4, 6). But the draftsman tries nonetheless to suggest a spatial context, and also sometimes a sort of common setting for the action. Thus it is in the Moon's Children that the miller and the juggler are turning towards the arriving messenger, by which an apparent communication between these figures in the foreground is created. Similar situations can be observed in the bathhouse scene of the Venus Children, or in the battle's fray of the Mars Children. Even if in the woodcuts no perspective is employed, a spatial vision of the action is still created with the help of drastic overlappings.

9. Stern, *Le Calendrier*, 23ss. The earliest example is Salzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. M II 180, produced 1438-1440 by Diebold Lauber in Hagenau, for this manuscript, cf. L. Saurma, *Spit forme mittelalterlicher Buch herstellung. Bilden hand schriften aus der Werkstatt. Diebold Laubens in Hagenau, Wiesbaden 2001, Bd. 2, 98 ss.*

10. Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek, Hs. Md 2, fol. 320v: «Dise reden sint notumb der alten figuren willen zuverstan, die ich uß dem alten buche sant Helena genommen han, umb das yr keyser Constantinus und Eraclius ir kynde gebrucht hant. Wie die planeten yre zufugange won der hoe ond yn 12 zeichen durch alle figuren gereigieret werden in yr wirkonge als ir da me dan 1000 sehen etc. ond lesen von dne alten, wan das Romerbuch was me dan 1200 jar gelegen ond me nottatarie der viel gemalet und beschriben waren in der form».

As children of Sol we see two figures kneeling in prayer before an altar, above that a king listening to the play of a harpist (Pl. 2). In the right picture half various sports are presented: putting the stone, pole-vault and wrestling. And precisely these are also mentioned in the verses, as are the stringed music, great lords and a church service.

Among the Moon's Children we see a miller driving an ass before him to the mill, a juggler or actor at a table at a game of dice, as well as the messenger with the arms of his master on his cloak (Pl. 4). He is entering from the right and his hand is raised in gesture, at which the miller and juggler turn their attention. In the background are still the bird-catcher with limed twigs and the fisherman with his net, and a bather. All of these doings are listed in the accompanying verses, which end with the concluding remark: «[...] and he who from Water lives / to him the Moon its light gives»<sup>11</sup>.

We are dealing with a systematically created pictorial image which achieves its special effect from the close interaction of picture and poem, and was – from its incipience – targeted at wide audience through the new medium of the woodcut. Within a few years of the woodcut publication the pictures and poems are copied in numerous manuscripts. A favorite method is their integration into astrological treatises which usually accompany the extensive calendar portion of so-called «house-books», a kind of almanac. This new type of handbook contains besides the calendar and astrological knowledge also medical advice, usually ordered after the year's progression. It spreads widely in the South-German area and in most cases contains illustrations. Miniatures reproducing the Basel woodcuts are a standard part of the picture presentation, which also includes images of the months, zodiac signs and blood-letting points on the body<sup>12</sup>.

For a client from Mainz for instance a handbook was written around 1445, which today is kept in Berlin<sup>13</sup>. In the extensive

11. For the German text, cf. note 7.

12. Blume, *Regenten*, 167 ss., cf. also Brévar, «The German Volkskalender», passim and *Vom Einfluß der Gestirne auf die Gesundheit und den Charakter des Menschen. Kommentar zur Faksimile-Ausgabe des Manuskriptes C 54 der Zentralbibliothek Zürich (Nürnberger Kodex Schürstab)*, ed. G. Keil, Luzern 1983.

13. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. germ. fol. 244, cf. *Katalog der deutsch-*

astrological part the Planets' Children pictures were copied onto double pages (Pl. 9, 10). The dependency of the drawings on the graphics is shown by the numerous simplifications and misunderstandings. The planets' orbits for instance have been transformed into garlands, and the bands of clouds on which they stand have been unified with the surface of a meadow, out of which in part are even growing trees. The planet gods have also completely lost their mobility. The spatial ordering and numerous overlappings were obviously too challenging for the draftsman who copied the Planets' Children, and therefore he put them in a loose row on the side, and still added to that a framing tendril, so that the difference in conception of the two images is obscured.

In the Sun's Children we find the king and the harpists again along with the figures praying before the altar and the various athletes. But the pole-vaulter now has only two arms raised; the nature of his movements is therefore fully incomprehensible. The foreground and background of the Moon's Children have been switched, as the miniaturist began, without planning, apparently with the dominant motif in the upper part of the page. He could then not find any space for the messenger or the bathers. The communicative relations between the separate figure groups have disappeared in any case.

For Konrad Roesner of Passau was made in 1445 another such calendar house-book, this one however of outspokenly high quality and ambitious pictorial ornamentation<sup>14</sup>. The pictures of the Planets and their Children are fitted into a circular scheme, which gives the planets' correspondence to the particular hour depending on the day of the week named after them (Pl. 11, 12).

The Planets' Children are now embedded in a wide-perspective landscape panorama, above which the planets and their houses are visible each in their own orbital segments. The picture

*sprachigen illustrierten Handschriften des Mittelalters*, started by H. Frühmorgen-Voss, continued by N. H. Ott, I, München 1991, Nr. 11.4.5, 375 ss. See also G. A. Trottein, *Les Enfants de Vénus. Art and Astrologie à la Renaissance*, Paris 1993, 56 ss., who however not realize the strong connection with the Basel woodcuts and therefore gives a misleading account of the whole development.

14. Kassel, Gesamthochschul- und Landesbibliothek, 2° Ms. astronom. 1, cf. Frühmorgen-Voss and Ott, *Katalog* Nr. 11.4.25, 414 ss. and Trottein, *Les Enfants de Vénus*, 70 ss.

concept in these miniatures is very independently developed and oriented after other examples, like those possibly seen in the calendar pictures in the «books of hours». The choice of figures and their modes of action agree however so much with the woodcuts that no doubt is possible as to the connection, not least also because the poems are cited literally in the text.

In the Moon's Children the draftsman, with the mill, stream and path, keeps the basic disposition of the scene, which however is more effective because he gives the figures more space. The bathers and fishermen have now come into the foreground, but for that, juggler and bird-catcher are absent. In the Sun's Children we meet the praying figures at the altar and the sportsmen once again. But instead of the king with the harpists there are now two singers, also mentioned in the accompanying poem. The planet iconography is changed here, enriched with further elements, but the attributes, such as Sol's open book, the wheel of Luna, as well as the body positioning, clearly betray familiarity with the woodcuts.

Around 1475 an otherwise unknown Master Joseph assembled in Ulm an extensive German-language handbook of astrology and fortune-telling, which he joined to the usual house-book calendar<sup>15</sup>. From the various sources available to him he took the most different pictures, showing the zodiac, constellations or planets. He also copied the woodcuts of the Planets' Children, but these he expanded into multi-figured presentations (Pl. 13). Thus we find only in the foreground the activities familiar from the Basel woodcuts: in the Moon's Children we see the miller, juggler, messenger, the bird-catcher and the fisherman. But this draftsman adds yet builders, a preacher, a further herald with the arms of Württemberg, as well as a dog howling at the moon. Also in the other planet pictures such additions are found, which altogether present a rather simple, town-like milieu of bakers, tanners, butchers and masons. Probably these are independently-made additions coming

15. Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek, Hs. Md 2, cf. Fröhmer-Voss and Ott, *Katalog*, Nr. 11.4.43, 400 ss., Trottein, *Les Enfants de Vénus*, 76 ss. and Blume, *Regenten*, 172 ss. Gerd Brinkhus is planning a full edition of this interesting manuscript, which was first described by Hauber, *Planetenkinder*, 3 ss., 93 ss., who wrongly took the copied date of one of the treatises (1404) for the date of the whole manuscript.

from the draftsman's own sphere of experience. Possibly he proceeded on the basis of a Netherlandish edition of the Planets' Children undertaken around 1470<sup>16</sup>. These more modern woodcuts also place the familiar figures in a wide-view landscape panorama, and show the planet-god above it in a medallion.

The list of copies and variants could be easily continued still further. It seems to me more important however, after my systematic survey of the material, to underscore the indisputable fact that in Basel around 1430, the pictorial conception of the Planets' Children was newly developed and distributed through the modern medium of the woodcut. The close relation to the poems in the vernacular, presumably composed for this purpose, shows the intentions of this remarkable publication. The importance is apparent of spreading basic astrological knowledge to wider circles of the population which knew no Latin. And at the same time people were also to be reached who had no access to the German-language handbooks, which were also being composed from the beginning of the 15th century. For that reason the pictorial presentation with its direct vividness was meant to interact with the easily-recalled verses, in order to make clear the influence of the planets on everyone's life, even for those who did not possess the actual basic knowledge.

With this combination of picture and poem the great majority of townspeople were to be made familiar with the basic idea of astrology. And the quickness with which this pictorial invention took hold confirms how exactly the needs of a great number of people were met. This phenomenon can only be understood in the context of an enormous developmental shift which was sweeping over South-German cities since the late 14th century, and accompanied equally by a general increase in education. As is known, the number of university diplomas awarded, and the production of books rose with a leap in the course of the 15th century. As part of this, interest in pictures, and their accessibility, increased to unheard-of proportions<sup>17</sup>.

16. Kopenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst, Kobberstiksamlng, cf. Musper, *Der Einblattholzchnitt*, 55 s.

17. P. Moraw, *Von offener Verfassung zu gestalteter Verdichtung. Das Reich im späten Mittelalter 1250-1490*, Berlin 1985 (Propyläen Geschichte Deutschlands, 4), 274 ss., 389 ss.

The effect of this popular picture invention, in light of the number of copies and citations, can be hardly overestimated. Neither can the elite circles of the courts resist its fascination. Between 1450 and 1460 for example a richly decorated manuscript was created for Francesco Sforza, in which the woodcuts were reproduced in elaborate miniatures<sup>18</sup>. The abundance of details cannot obscure their close relation to the German graphics. As there, Planet and Children face each other on a double page, and the representation of the planet-gods corresponds in all details (Pl. 14-17). Also the cloud bands, and the medallion form with concentric orbits have been retained. But the creative use of color has considerably heightened the effect of the pictures. The planets appear now before a naturalistically painted sky, under which stretches a broad landscape in which people are going about their activities. While the painter has indeed extensively taken over the Planet Children of the Basel woodcuts, he has re-grouped them and added examples which were especially important to his courtly clients. In Sol this is clearly visible (Pl. 14, 15). The various sports are to be seen on the left, under the star-god; the prayer scene is above on the right, in a private chapel. But the king, who originally sat alone listening to the harpist, reigns now in a great hall where he holds a splendid audience. The music has, as it were, fallen under the table. The situation is similar in the Moon's Children, where the juggler at his table has been made the main personage and the miller relegated to the background, while in the free space on the left page seafarers were added with their ships.

But the changes in the new context are most visible in Mars (Pl. 16, 17). Instead of robbing and kidnapping we see here the orderly conduct of war by knights. In splendid regalia they ride out with raised lances to besiege a city. On the right side they are engaged

18. Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Ms. lat. 209, cf. *The Painted Page, Italian Renaissance Book Illumination 1450-1550*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander, München 1994 (also catalogue of the exhibition in London, Royal Academy of Arts, and New York, Pierpont Morgan Library 1994-1995), Nr. 18, 75 s. The facsimile-edition by E. Milano, *De Sphaera (Lat. 209) della Biblioteca Estense*, Luzern 1995 offers good pictures, but the commentary is full of mistakes. A similar adaption of the Basel woodcuts was integrated in the so-called «Hausbuch» from Schloß Wolfegg on folio 10v-17r, which was produced in the circle of the German emperor Frederic III (1415-1493), cf. Blume, *Regenten*, 177 ss.

in hand-to-hand combat with their equals, while their squires wait with their mounts behind a hill. War is seen here through the eyes of the condottiere, accustomed to victory, and not from the point of view of ordeal-tested farmers or fearful town dwellers. The verses belonging to this picture refrain therefore from any negative comment on the lust for war caused by Mars, and employ Sforza – the name of the prince – as a rhyming word, and so at the same time praise Francesco Sforza as the son of Mars<sup>19</sup>.

The pictures conceived for a town audience thus find their way into the court. But they change their look on the way. All the characteristics of the new woodcut medium – fast readability and wide accessibility – they have rejected and instead present themselves in a show of precious exclusivity.

Around 1460 the new pictorial idea from the North is also taken up in Medici Florence, however not as a sumptuous manuscript, but as a series of copper engravings, i.e. in a newly developed technique also intended for wide distribution, but vastly superior to the woodcut in fineness of execution<sup>20</sup>. As in the woodcut prints – today surviving in Copenhagen –, the planet follows its orbit above a landscape view. Although the activities of the individual Planet Children were adopted, they are newly grouped and broadened considerably. Above all the artist has put everything into a decidedly Florentine ambience. Baccio Baldini – if it is indeed he who produced the engravings – provides us here with a many-sided picture of his city and its inhabitants. Viewers of the time got not only a vivid illustration of astrological theory, but at the same time an impression of their environment in which they could immerse themselves with home-bound emotion and civic pride, and thus determine their own place.

In the Sun's Children we also find the various sports again and

19. Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Ms. lat. 209, fol. 7v «Il bellicoso marte sempre infiamma / Li animi alteri al guerreggiar et sforza / Hor questo hor quello ne satia sua brama / In lacquistar: ma piu sempre rinforza» (Underlinings are mine).

20. A complete series is preserved in London, British Museum, A III 1-7, cf. A. M. Hind, *Early Italian Engraving*, I, London 1938, 77 ss. Traditionally these engravings are – without a real proof – ascribed to Baccio Baldini, for his œuvre, cf. K. Oberhuber, in J. A. Levenson, K. Oberhuber and J. L. Sheehan, *Early Italian Engravings from the National Gallery of Art*, Catalogue of an exhibition in the National Gallery of Art, Washington 1973, 13 ss.

the worshipers at the altar (Pl. 18). The king too sits at the right picture edge; the harpist is absent, instead he watches now the acrobats. Everything is typically Florentine, from the landscape and architecture to the details of the costumes. In many aspects, not only in clothing styles, there are points of reference to the particular festivity-culture of the upper class<sup>21</sup>.

In Mercury's Children the architecture is even identifiable, for we can see the Loggia dei Lanzi and the church of San Pier Scheraggio, that is, the Piazza della Signoria, the central location of Florentine self-representation (Pl. 19). But also the Moon's Children appear in a precise location of the Florentine topography, the Ponte della Carraia and the widening of the Arno to the west of the city. A comparison with the view of Florence made by Francesco Rosselli dating only a little later reveals this, for we find not only the same bridge with its wave breakers and the sundial clock, but also the boat which was used as a pedestrian ferry<sup>22</sup> (Pl. 20, 21). The Moon Children's usual activities are fancifully spread about these environs.

The iconography of the planet-gods in Florence however has been completely reconceived. For the first time all the planets, not only Sol and Luna, possess a carriage, in which they travel their orbits. The planets themselves are not naked, but present themselves in clothing reminiscent of ball or theater costumes<sup>23</sup>. The identification with the gods of the antique is however here too central, although the iconography is consciously kept clear and simple. Thus, each planet holds only one object, and is also identifiable by means of a different sort of head-covering.

21. For this culture, cf. R. C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, New York 1980, 225 ss. and P. Ventrone, «Feste e Spettacoli nella Firenze di Lorenzo il Magnifico», in *Le Tems revient, 'L Tempo si rinnova, Feste e Spettacoli nella Firenze di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, Catalogue of the exhibition Firenze, Pal. Medici Riccardi, Firenze 1992, 21 ss.

22. The engraving with the view of Florence by Francesco Rosselli (c. 1480) is lost, preserved is only one exemplar of the woodcut copy by Lucantonio degli Uberti in Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Kupferstichkabinett, I.N. 899-100.

23. Blume, *Regenten*, 188 ss. The costumes of the children of Venus are described in detail by Trottein, *Les Enfants de Vénus*, 99 ss.; cf. also C. Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love. Botticelli's Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent*, Princeton 1992, 65 ss.

So numerous are the references to the self-idealization of the Florentine upper class in these engravings of Baccio Baldini that one can only suppose their launch was targeted. They are part of the pictorial culture of the leading Florentine families who put their ideals on show equally in magnificent interior accessories such as the cassone or deschi da parto, as in the pomp of their celebrations. Along the splendor of the triumphal march of the planets in these graphics the flourishing life and grandiose balls of Medici Florence unfold, to which the observer was allowed to feel a sense of belonging. As in the extravagance of the real events, these engravings seem to hold ready a proposal of self-identification ultimately intended as a stabilizer of societal conditions of the time<sup>24</sup>.

The Florentine engravings are a systematic adaptation of the Basel graphic series. In spite of the extensive changes, the most important features of the original pictorial concept were adopted, and appear in a new and – as it were – more up-to-date fashion, to fit a changed context. The success of the new series is unprecedented and proves how exactly expectations were met. For the next two hundred years the vision of the planet-gods and their children is set. Not only are traces of them found in many early prints; even German graphic series created in the 16th century on this theme refer more strongly to Baccio Baldini than to his German predecessors.

The history of the Planets' Children is that of an exceptionally successful popularization based on the effect and distribution of images. It was a systematic pictorial conception, ambitiously planned and precisely measured to the needs of the public. The same picture series would be henceforth variously fitted into different contexts, but the basic idea remained recognizable. Thus the history of the Planets' Children is at the same time also a lesson on the particular peregrinations of images and ideas. The new graphic media would transport images to places and people who before had never been reached in that way, and out of this a formative power, a new normative influence over imagination came to be.

24. P. Ventrone, «Lorenzo's *Politica festiva*», in *Lorenzo the Magnificent. Culture and Politics*, ed. M. Mallett and N. Mann, Warburg Institute Colloquia 3, London 1996, 105 ss.



Die sonne man mach nennen sal :: —||—||—  
 Der mynilt planet byn ich wol :: —||—||—  
 Warm und trucken kan ich seyn :: —||—||—  
 Natuerlich ganz mit meinem seyn :: —||—||—  
 Der laue hot meines hantzes creys :: —||—||—  
 Dazyme byn ich voste heys :: —||—||—  
 Daz yst saturnus stenglich :: —||—||—  
 Mit seiner kelde wedir mich :: —||—||—  
 Daz hoet werde ich yn dem ster :: —||—||—  
 In der wogen falle ich her ueder :: —||—||—  
 In aa. und sunff und fecher tagen :: —||—||—  
 Mag ich mich durch die reichen tragen :: —||—||—



Fig. 1. Schweinfurt, Bibliothek Otto Schäfer, Woodcut from Basel, Sol.

Ich byn geluglich edel und seyn :: —||—||—  
 Sald sint auch die kinder meyn :: —||—||—  
 Gel weys gemengit schon angesicht :: —||—||—  
 Wol gehorn weys eieyn bor gesticht :: —||—||—  
 Finen seysten leyb myt sehafe odym :: —||—||—  
 Kuntl. mugen eyne guose stym :: —||—||—  
 Seutenspil und syngeu von munde :: —||—||—  
 Wol essen und guose heren kunde :: —||—||—  
 Vor myn tein tag sie dynen gode vil :: —||—||—  
 Dazuch sie loben my man vil :: —||—||—  
 Deynstosten sehyrmen eingen :: —||—||—  
 Angemalt sie gluckes vil gewynnen :: —||—||—



Fig. 2. Schweinfurt, Bibliothek Otto Schäfer, Woodcut from Basel, Children of Sol.

Der mond der letzte planet nass :-||-||-  
 Heisse ich vnd wirke ding die synt laß :-||-||-  
 Kalt vnd feucht meyn wirken yst :-||-||-  
 Natuerlich vnstete zu allw frist :-||-||-  
 Der nebis meyn haus besessen hot :-||-||-  
 Someyne figure dorynne stat :-||-||-||-  
 Vnd jupiter much schawet an :-||-||-||-  
 Keyn obils ich gewurken kin :-||-||-||-  
 Du hoet werde ich yn dem styr :-||-||-||-  
 In scorpiou falle ich her nedw schar :-||-||-  
 Die zwelf zeichen ich durch gange :-||-||-  
 In seiden vnd zwenzig tagen lange :-||-||-



Fig. 3. Schweinfurt, Bibliothek Otto Schäfer, Woodcut from Basel, Luna.

Der sterne wirken gat durch mich ::-||-||-  
 Ich bin vnstete wunderlich ::-||-||-||-  
 Meyne kynt man kaum geremmen kin :-  
 Nymande sie gerne seyne vndrtay ::-||-  
 Traulich yst bleich vnd vnt ::-||-||-  
 Ein grausam geneeynen duren mund :-  
 Obvischtig schel eyu engen gang ::-||-  
 Bein hofte: tige der leip nicht lang :-  
 lewfer kerkeler fussyher marner ::-||-  
 sarnde schuler sogeler molner bader :-  
 vnd was sich mit wasser durnert ::-||-  
 Den yst des monden sibeyn bestzeit ::-||-



Fig. 4. Schweinfurt, Bibliothek Otto Schäfer, Woodcut from Basel, Children of Luna.



Fig. 5. Schweinfurt, Bibliothek Otto Schäfer, Woodcut from Basel, Mars.



Fig. 6. Schweinfurt, Bibliothek Otto Schäfer, Woodcut from Basel, Children of Mars.



Fig. 7. Rom, Bibliotheca Vaticana, Ms. Barb. 2154, Filocalus Calendar, Sol.

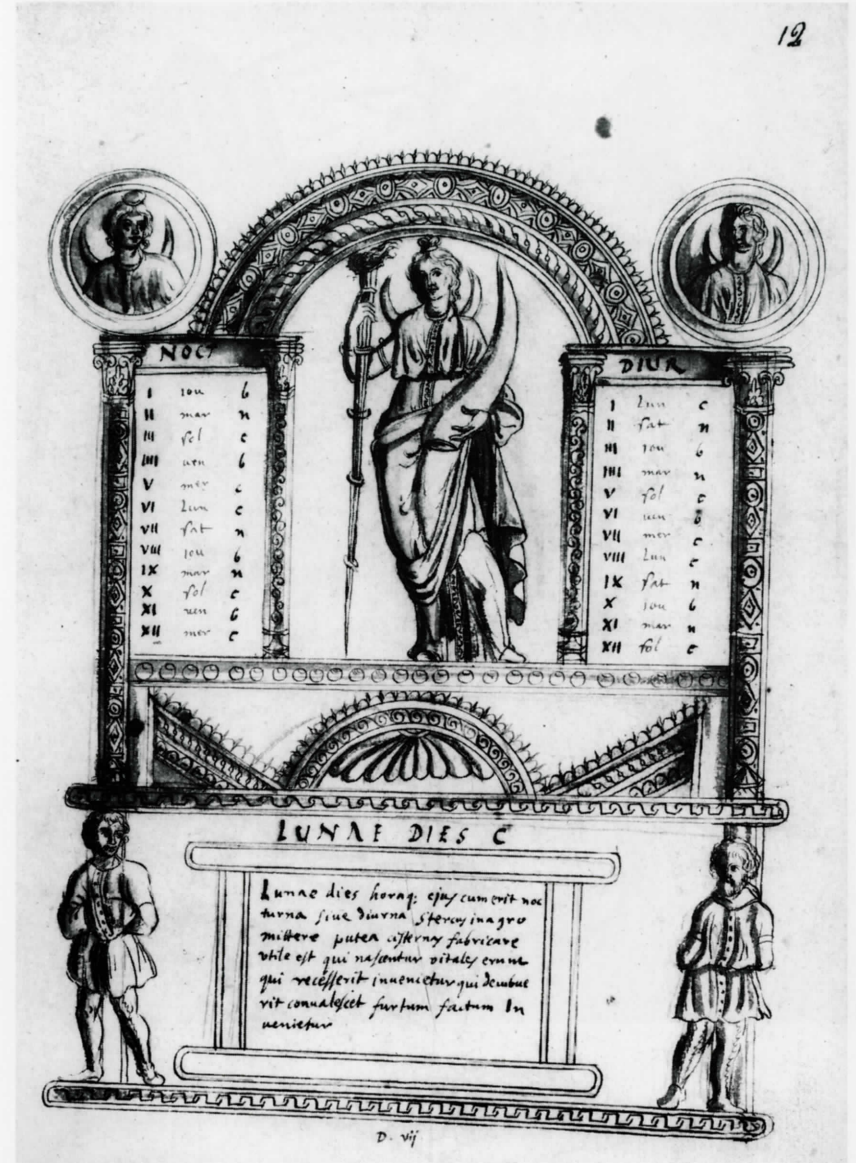


Fig. 8. Rom, Bibliotheca Vaticana, Ms. Barb. 2154, Filocalus Calendar, Luna.

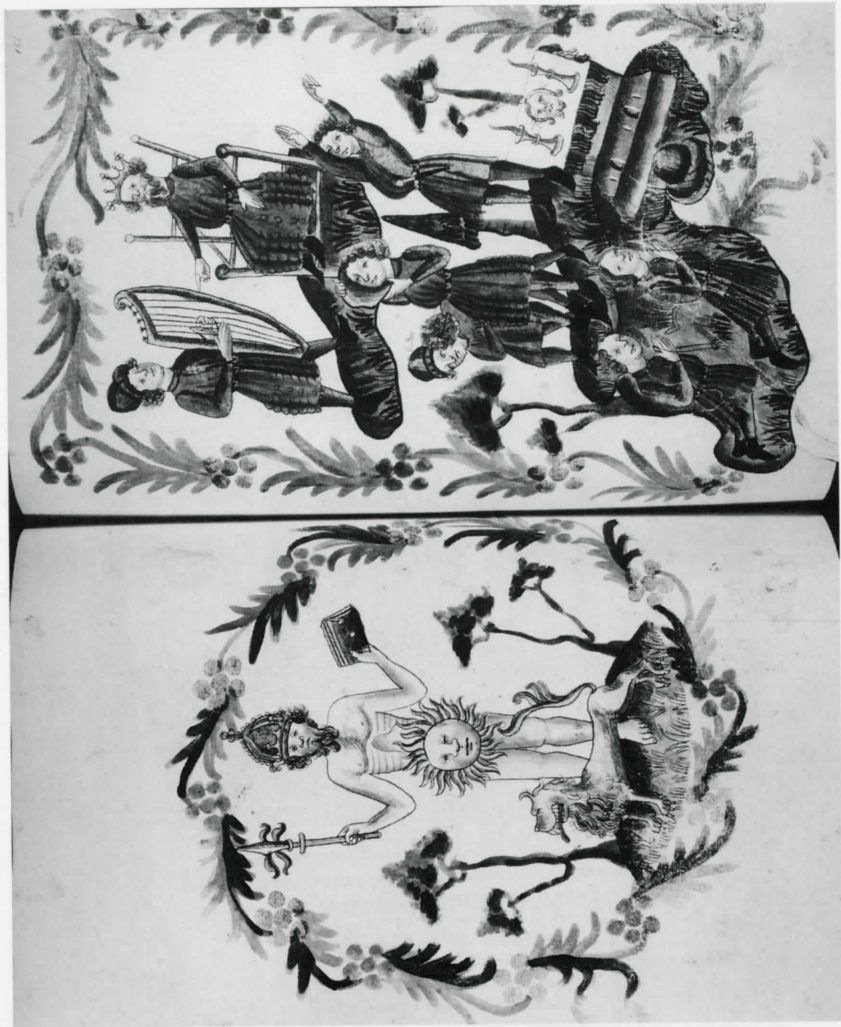


Fig. 9. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. germ. fol. 244, Fol. 181v-182r, Sol and his Children.

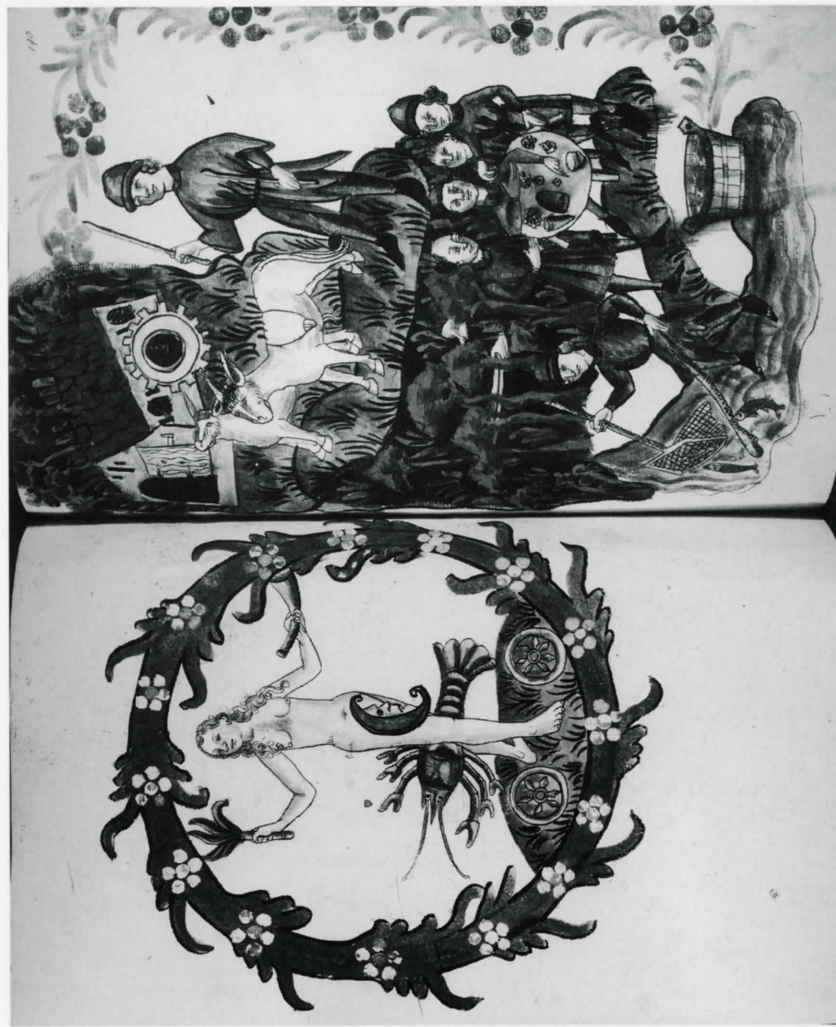


Fig. 10. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. germ. fol. 244, Fol. 189v-190r, Luna and her Children.



Fig. 11. Kassel, Landesbibliothek, Ms. astronom 1 (2°), Fol. 70v, Sol and his Children.



Fig. 12. Kassel, Landesbibliothek, Ms. astronom 1 (2°), Fol. 64r, Luna and her Children.



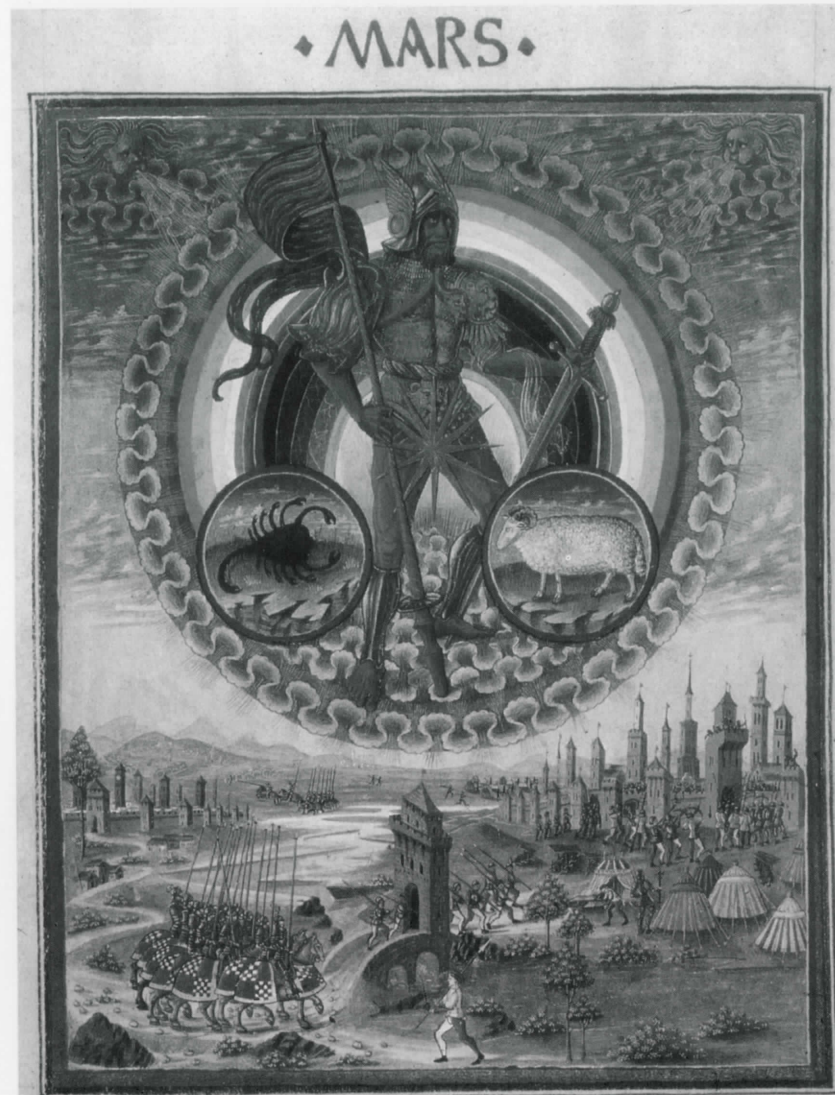
Fig. 13. Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. M.d. 2, Fol. 272r, Luna and Children.



Fig. 14. Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Ms. lat. 209.



Fig. 15. Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Ms. lat. 209, Fol. 9r, Children of Sol.



Il bellicoso Marte sempre infiamma  
Li animi alteri al guerreggiare et sforza  
Hez questolor quello ne fatta sua brama  
In lacquistar: ma piu sempre rinforza :-

Fig. 16. Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Ms. lat. 209, Fol. 7v, Mars.





Fig. 17. Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Ms. lat. 209, Fol. 8r, Children of Mars.



Fig. 18. London, British Museum, Baccio Baldini (?), Engraving, Sol and his Children.



Fig. 19. London, British Museum, Baccio Baldini (?), Engraving, Mercury and his Children.



Fig. 20. London, British Museum, Baccio Baldini (?), Engraving, Luna and her Children.

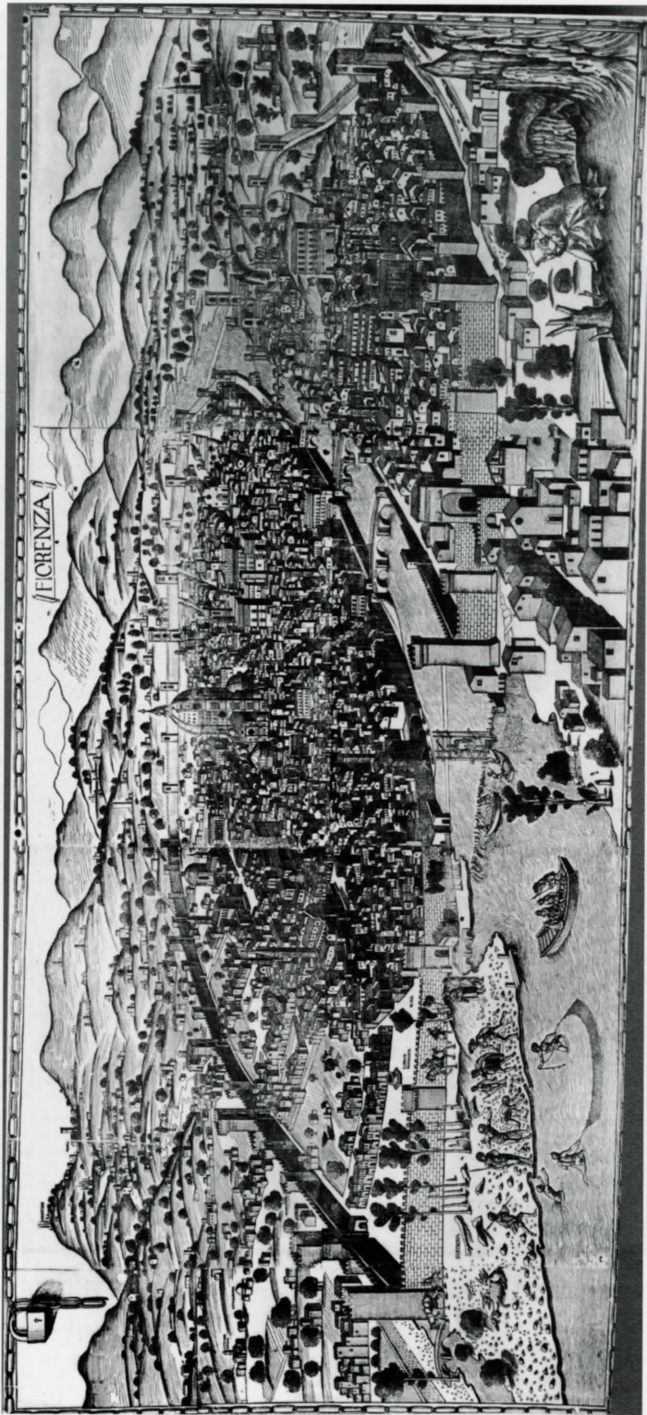


Fig. 21. Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Kupferstichkabinett, Lucantonio degli Uberti, Woodcut after Francesco Rosselli, View of Florence.

ESTRATTO

# Micrologus

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Il sole e la luna  
*The Sun and the Moon*



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