

Iatromathematics in medical discourse of early modern era: Czech lands before 1620

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Abstract:

This dissertation examines iatromathematics, or astrological medicine, in the early modern medicine of the Czech lands before 1620 (sources ranging from 1491 to 1619). It seeks to both comprehensively outline this specific and then quite standard medical doctrine as well as assess the role and significance of iatromathematics for the practice of the early modern physician and its position within the system of contemporary humoral medicine as a whole. Within the Czech study of the history of medicine, such a systematic treatment of the topic of iatromathematics is unprecedented. Having defined the historical framework of astrology in European cultural history and the concept of *astrologia naturalis* in the contemporaneous philosophy of nature, the thesis maps the tradition of iatromathematics in medieval sources of Czech origin and the development of the discipline in the early modern era. Then, employing textual analyses and interpretations, it examines various medical sources (books of prognostica, bloodletting booklets, almanacs, treatises on plague, phlebotomic instructions, health regiments) that focused on the influence and action of the heavenly bodies on human health. The thesis demonstrates that iatromathematics in early modern medical discourse represented a fully functional type of medical knowledge that continuously drew on the medieval and ancient traditions and whose practices made sense within the physiological and nosological system of Galenic humoralism of the time, as they appeared to be effective. In the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness, iatromathematics was based on postulated natural and symbolic correlations and analogies (elemental qualities, human body – celestial bodies) within the era's prevalent worldview and its aim was to benefit the sick person and restore one's health.

Keywords: iatromathematics – astrological medicine – astrology – medieval and Renaissance medicine – phlebotomy – humoralism – books of prognostica, almanacs