

MAGIC IN HISTORY

**SPIRITUAL
& DEMONIC
MAGIC**

from Ficino to Campanella

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CHAPTER I. FICINO AND MUSIC

(1) FICINO'S MUSIC-SPIRIT THEORY

Of the three Books of Ficino's *De Triplici Vita*¹ the first deals with preserving the health of scholars, the second with prolonging their life, and the third with astral influences on them (*De Vita coelitus comparanda*)². Through all three, Ficino's attention is devoted not so much to man's soul or body as to his *spiritus*. What this term meant for him may, I hope, appear more fully later; for the moment it will do to quote the definition he gives near the beginning of his treatise. Soldiers, says Ficino, care for their arms, musicians for their instruments, hunters for their hounds,

only the priests of the Muses, only the hunters after the supreme good and truth are so negligent (alas) and so unfortunate that they seem utterly to neglect that instrument by which they can, in a way, measure and grasp the whole world. An instrument of this sort is the spirit, which by the physicians is defined as a certain vapour of the blood, pure, subtle, hot and lucid. And, formed from the subtler blood by the heat of the heart, it flies to the brain, and there the soul assiduously employs it for the exercise of both the interior and exterior senses. Thus the blood serves the spirit, the spirit the senses, and finally the senses reason.³

¹ Florence, 1489; Ficino, *Opera Omnia*, Basileae, 1576, p. 493.

² This title might mean either "on obtaining life from the heavens", or "on instituting one's life celestially"; in view of Ficino's fondness for puns, it probably means both. Ficino, in the dedication of this Book (*Op. Omn.*, p. 529), says that it is a commentary on "librum Plotini de favore coelitus hauriendo tractantem". Kristeller (*Supplementum Ficinianum*, Florence, 1937, I, lxxxiv) states that this "liber Plotini" is *Ennead*, IV, iii, 11, because in one ms. the *De Vita Coel. Comp.* appears among the commentaries on Plotinus in this place. It seems to me perhaps more likely that it is *Enn.*, IV, iv, of which c. 30-42 deal with astral influence in much greater detail.

³ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 496 (*De Tr. V.*, I, ii): "Soli verò Musarum sacerdotes, soli summi boni veritatisque venatores, tam negligentes (proh nefas) tamque infortunati sunt, ut instrumentum illud, quo mundum universum metiri quodammodo

This seems to be a deliberate limitation of the meaning of *spiritus* to a normal, medical sense: it is a corporeal vapour, centred in the brain and flowing through the nervous system; it is the first instrument of the incorporeal soul, an instrument for sense-perception, imagination and motor-activity—the link between body and soul¹. For now, then, let it remain something like the “esprits” of Descartes’ *Traité des Passions*², with which most modern readers will be familiar.

The spirit of the studious is especially likely to need care, because their constant use of it in thinking and imagining consumes it. It has to be replaced from the subtler part of the blood, and this renders the remaining blood dense, dry and black³. In consequence such persons are always of a melancholy temperament⁴. The spirits which derive from a melancholy humour (black bile) are exceptionally fine, hot, agile and combustible, like brandy⁵. They are, therefore, liable to ignite and produce a temporary state of mania or exaltation, followed by extreme depression and lethargy, caused by the black smoke left after the fire. If, however, melancholy is properly tempered with a little phlegm and bile, and a lot of blood, then the spirits will glow, not burn⁶, and make possible continuous study of the highest order. These extremes of madness and stupidity, or of contem-

& capere possunt, negligere penitus videntur. Instrumentum eiusmodi spiritus ipse est, qui apud medicos vapor quidam sanguinis, purus, subtilis, calidus & lucidus definitur. Atque ab ipso cordis calore, ex subtiliori sanguine procreatus volat ad cerebrum, ibique animus ad sensus tam interiores, quam exteriores exercendus assidue utitur. Quamobrem sanguis spiritui servit, spiritus sensibus, sensus denique rationi.”

¹ I know of no modern work on mediaeval and Renaissance pneumatology. Good starting-points for the former would be Costa ben Luca’s *De Anima & Spiritu discrimine* (usually attributed to Constantinus Africanus, *Opera*, Basileae, 1536, p. 308) and Albertus Magnus, *De Spiritu & Respiratione* (*Op. Omn.*, ed. Borgnet, Vol. IX, Paris, 1890, p. 213); for the latter, Fernel, *Physiologia* Lib. IV (*Medicina*, Paris, 1554, p. 102), and Bertacchi, *De Spiritibus*, Venetiis, 1584. For ancient sources, see G. Verbeke, *L’Évolution de la doctrine du Pneuma du Stoïcisme à S. Augustin*, Paris, 1945, pp. 206-212 & passim.

² Descartes, *Les Passions de l’Ame*, Paris, 1649, art. 8 seq.

³ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 497 (*De Tr. V.*, I, iv).

⁴ *Ibid.*; cf. Panofsky & Saxl, *Dürer’s ‘Melencolia I’*, Berlin, 1923 (*Studien der Bibl. Warburg*, II).

⁵ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 498 (*De Tr. V.*, I, vi).

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 497-8 (I, v).

plative genius, are of course connected with the ambivalent influence of the planet Saturn, to which melancholics are subject¹; hence, as we shall see, the importance for scholars of attracting the influence of the benign planets: the Sun, Jupiter, Venus and Mercury.

To preserve the health of the spirit and to avoid the perils of melancholy Ficino gives detailed advice on diet and régime². For nourishing and purifying the spirit he concentrates on three types of things: wine and aromatic foods, odours and pure, sunny air, and music³. These are sometimes made to correspond to the threefold division of the spirits into natural, vital and animal⁴. But Ficino does not work out these distinctions in detail, nor employ them consistently. Of the three types of nourishment music seems to be considered the most important, and its action is said to be on either or both of the two higher kinds of spirit, vital or animal. After recommending the use of wine, incense, aromatic herbs and so forth, he writes:

finally, if the vapours exhaled by merely vegetable life are greatly beneficial to your life, how beneficial do you think will be aerial songs to the spirit which is indeed entirely aerial, harmonic songs to the harmonic spirit, warm and thus living to the living, endowed with sense to the sensitive, conceived by reason to the rational⁵?

¹ See Panofsky & Saxl, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-14, 25 seq., 32-47, & App. IV.

² e.g. *Op. Omn.*, p. 499 (*De Tr. V.*, I, vii, “Quinque praecipue studiosorum hostes: Pituita, Atra bilis, Coitus, Satietas, Matutinus Somnus”); 501 (I, x, list of foods); 505-8 (I, xviii-xxiii, recipes for remedies against melancholy).

³ e.g. *Op. Omn.*, p. 502 (I, x): “Nihil autem adversus hanc pestem [sc. melancholiam] valentius est, quam vinum leve, clarum, suave, odorum, ad spiritus praeceteris perspicuos generandos aptissimum . . . Tenendus ore hyacinthus, qui animum vehementer exhilarat”; 525 (II, xviii): “cuius [sc. spiritus animalis] quidem qualitas maximi momenti est ingeniosis, eiusmodi spiritus plurimum laborantibus. Itaque ad nullos potius quam ad eos attinet puri luminosique aëris, odorumque delectus, atque Musicae. Haec enim tria spiritus animalis fomenta praecipua judicantur”; 568 (III, xxiv).

⁴ e.g. Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 523 (*De Tr. V.*, II, xv), 546 (III, xi); cf. Avicenna, *De Medicinis Cordialibus*, Tract. I, c. i, 9, *Cantica*, lines 81-96 (Avicenna, *Liber Canonis*, Venetiis, 1582, fos 557 v, 560 r, 568 r); the first of these works, to which Ficino refers (*ibid.*, p. 535, III, iv) gives similar directions for nourishing and comforting the *spiritus cordiales* (i.e. *vitales*), but does not mention music. On the origins of the triple *spiritus* see Verbeke, *op. cit.*, pp. 77 (Chrysippus), 192 (Pneumatic School), 206 (Galen).

⁵ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 523 (*De Tr. V.*, II, xv): “Denique si vapores exhalantes

That is to say, the peculiar power of music is due to a similarity between the material medium in which it is transmitted, air, and the human spirit, to the fact that both are living kinds of air, moving in an highly organized way, and that both, through the text of the song, can carry an intellectual content.

We can get a clearer picture of this connexion from other writings of Ficino; for it is a theory which he expounded many times, and which he must have considered of great importance, since he even inserted it into his version of Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*¹ and into an unavowed borrowing from St. Augustine's *De Musica*². For example, in a letter to Antonio Canisiano, who had asked why he combined musical and medical studies, Ficino justifies himself by citing examples of the therapeutic power of music (beginning with the Biblical archetype: Saul and David), and goes on:

Nor is this surprising; for, since song and sound arise from the cogitation of the mind, the impetus of the phantasy³, and the feeling of the heart, and, together with the air they have broken up and tempered, strike the aerial spirit of the hearer, which is the junction of the soul and body, they easily move the phantasy, affect the heart and penetrate into the deep recesses of the mind⁴.

It is in fact not surprising that a song, being the product of mind, imagination and feeling, should, if transmitted, react on

ex vita duntaxat vegetali magnopere vitae vestrae prosunt, quantum profuturos existimatis cantus aërios, quidem spiritu [read: spiritui, as in ed. of 1489] prorsus aërio, harmonicis harmonico, calentes adhuc vivos, vivo, sensu praeditos sensuali, ratione conceptos rationali?"

¹ Ibid., p. 1885, corresponding to Iamblichus, *De Myst.*, III, ix, x.

² Ibid., p. 178 (*Theologia Platonica*, VII, vi), from "Videtur mihi . . ." is quoted verbatim from Augustine, *De Musica*, VI, v, 10 (Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, 32, col. 1169). Cf. infra p. 7.

³ On Ficino's use of this term, see Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, New York, 1943, pp. 235, 369 seq.; when distinguished from imagination, it is a higher faculty, which forms "intentions" (v. infra p. 10, note 1).

⁴ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 651: "Neque mirum id quidem: nam quum cantus sonusque ex cogitatione mentis, & impetu phantasiae, cordisque affectu proficiscatur, atque una cum aere facta [read: fracta, as in Ficino, *Epistolae*, Venetiis, 1495, fo 24 v] & temperato, aereum audientis spiritum pulset, qui animae corporisque nodus est, facile phantasiam movet, afficitque cor & intima mentis penetralia penetrat". Cf. a very similar exposition (also in a medical context) in another letter, *Op. Omn.*, p. 609.

these faculties, just as a book or a picture might. The point which Ficino always emphasizes is that music has a stronger effect than anything transmitted through the other senses, because its medium, air, is of the same kind as the spirit. This needs some explanation, since in most psychologies employing the concept of spirit, and often in Ficino's, all sensation is by means of the spirit, and the media of all sense-data are some kind of spirit¹. It is easy enough to see why the three lower senses (taste, smell, touch) are inferior to hearing; they cannot transmit an intellectual content, which music can do, owing to its text. We are left then with sight. There are two possible reasons why Ficino considered that visual impressions had a less powerful effect on the spirit than auditive ones—less powerful, though not necessarily lower in the hierarchy of the senses; indeed, it is precisely because hearing is not the highest, most intellectual sense that it affects more strongly the whole of the man².

First, Ficino sometimes adopts a theory of sensation according to which the sense-organ is of the same substance as what is sensed. In this scheme the eye contains something luminous ("luminosum aliquid")³, or, with Aristotle, water, which being transparent is potentially luminous⁴; whereas the ear contains air, set deep within it so that it is untroubled by ordinary aerial disturbances⁵. When Ficino is copying out Augustine's exposition of this theory, in which the term *spiritus* is not used, he identifies this air in the ear with the spirit, substituting "aereus auris

¹ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 177 (*Theol. Plat.*, VII, vi), 212 (ibid., IX, v); cf. Verbeke, op. cit., pp. 32, 74-5, 212, 310, 501; Heitzman, "L'Agostinismo Avicennizzante e il punto di partenza di M. Ficino", *Giornale Critico della Filosofia Italiana*, 1935, pp. 306-9.

² Cf. infra p. 21. On the supremacy of sight, cf. Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 1336 (*Comm. in Convivium*, Orat., V, c. ii, where the senses are associated with the elements, in descending order: sight—fire, hearing—air, smell—vapour, taste—water, touch—earth); E. Gombrich, "Botticelli's Mythologies", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 1945, VIII, 20.

³ Ficino and Augustine, loc. cit. supra p. 6 note (2); cf. Galen, *Dogm. Hipp. et Plat.*, VII, v (ed. Kühn, V, 627); Posidonius apud Sextum Empiricum, quoted by Verbeke, op. cit., pp. 133-4.

⁴ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 424 b-425 a; *De sensu*, 438 b-439 a.

⁵ Aristotle, *De Anima*, 420 a: "ὁ [sc. ἀήρ] δ' ἐν τοῖς ὤσιν ἐγκατακοδόμηται πρὸς τὸ ἀκίνητος εἶναι, ὅπως ἀκριβῶς αἰσθάνηται πάσας τὰς διαφορὰς τῆς κινήσεως". Ficino and Augustine, loc. cit. supra, p. 6 note (2).

spiritus" for Augustine's "id quod in eo membro [sc. auribus] simile est aeri"¹. Thus, whereas visual impressions have no direct contact with the spirit, but have to be transmitted to it by a sense-organ of another nature, sounds, being moving, animated air², combine directly with the *spiritus aereus* in the ear, and, without changing their nature, are not only conveyed to the soul but also affect the whole spirit, dispersed throughout the body.

But even this does not quite satisfactorily account for the peculiar difference between sight and hearing. For the spirit, especially in its higher kinds, is often thought to be of a nature more akin to light, fire or the *quinta essentia* of the heavens, than to air; and, as we shall see when dealing with the *De Vita coelitus comparanda*, Ficino did perhaps sometimes think the human spirit was of this kind³. In this case, it would be of the same nature as the medium of light.

The second, more fundamental reason why sound affects the spirit more strongly than sight is because it transmits movement and is itself moving; whereas sight is conceived as transmitting only static images. The following passage from Ficino's commentary on the *Timaeus* explains this quite fully, and may be taken as his own opinion, since it owes little or nothing to Plato⁴. He asks why Plato said the soul was similar to musical consonance⁵, rather than to any harmoniously composed object perceived by other senses, and answers:

Musical consonance occurs in the element which is the mean of all

¹ Ibid.

² Cf. infra p. 10.

³ Cf. infra p. 13 note 1, 38.

⁴ The conception of the peculiar penetration of sound may, as Hutton ("Some English Poems in Praise of Music", *English Miscellany*, 2, ed. Mario Praz, Rome, 1951, p. 21) suggests, owe something to the short passage on hearing in the *Timaeus* (67 a): "Sound we may define in general terms as the stroke inflicted by air on the brain and blood through the ears and passed on to the soul; while the motion it causes, starting in the head and ending in the region of the liver, is hearing" (trans. F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, London, 1937, p. 275; cf. pp. 320 seq.), contrasted with the passage on sight (*Timaeus*, 45 b; Cornford, pp. 152 seq.). Cf. *Timaeus Locutus*, 101 a, passage corresponding to *Timaeus* 67 a, but ending: "ἐν αὐτῷ τοῦτοίς [sc. ὡσὶν] πνεύμα, οὗ ἡ κίνασις ἀκούα ἔστι."

⁵ Ficino is referring to the division of the *anima mundi* into harmonic intervals (*Timaeus*, 35 b-36 b).

[i.e. air], and reaches the ears through motion, spherical motion: so that it is not surprising that it should be fitting to the soul, which is both the mean of things¹, and the origin of circular motion². In addition, musical sound, more than anything else perceived by the senses, conveys, as if animated, the emotions and thoughts of the singer's or player's soul to the listeners' souls; thus it preeminently corresponds with the soul. Moreover, as regards sight, although visual impressions are in a way pure, yet they lack the effectiveness of motion, and are usually perceived only as an image, without reality; normally therefore, they move the soul only slightly. Smell, taste and touch are entirely material, and rather titillate the sense-organs than penetrate the depths of the soul. But musical sound by the movement of the air moves the body: by purified air it excites the aerial spirit which is the bond of body and soul: by emotion it affects the senses and at the same time the soul: by meaning it works on the mind: finally, by the very movement of the subtle air it penetrates strongly: by its contemperation it flows smoothly: by the conformity of its quality it floods us with a wonderful pleasure: by its nature, both spiritual and material, it at once seizes, and claims as its own, man in his entirety³.

Hearing, then, both puts us in more direct contact with external reality, since sound consists of aerial movements which can actually occur in our spirit, whereas sight merely reproduces

¹ This is a fundamental tenet in Ficino's (and other Renaissance Platonists') philosophy; cf. Kristeller, *Philos. of M. F.*, pp. 106 seq, 120.

² The circular motion of the soul may also come directly from the *Timaeus*, 36 b seq. (*anima mundi*), 43 a seq. (human soul).

³ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 1453 (*Comm. in Tim.*, c. xxviii): "Respondetur ad haec: Musicam consonantiam in elemento fieri omnium medio, perque motum, & hunc quidem orbicularem ad aures provenire: ut non mirum sit eam animae convenire, tum mediae rerum, tum motionis principio in circuitu revolubili. Adde quod contentus potissimum inter illa quae sentiuntur quasi animatus, affectum sensuumque cogitationem animae, sive canentis, sive sonantis, perfert in animos audientes: ideoque in primis cum animo congruit. Praeterea quae ad visum quidem spectant, & si pura quodammodo sunt, tamen absque motionis efficacia, & per imaginem solam absque rei natura saepius apprehenduntur: ideo parum movere animos solent. Quae vero ad olfactum, gustum, tactum, quasi valde materialia, potius instrumenta sensuum titillant, quam animi intima penetrent. Contentus autem per aeream naturam in motu positam movet corpus: per purificatum aerem concitat spiritum aereum animae corporisque nodum: per affectum, afficit sensum simul & animum: per significationem, agit in mentem: denique per ipsum subtilis aeris motum, penetrat vehementer: per contemperationem lambit suaviter: per conformem qualitatem mira quadam voluptate perfundit: per naturam, tam spiritalem quam materialem, totum simul rapit & sibi vindicat hominem." Cf. *ibid.*, p. 1885 (Ficino's version of Iamblichus, *De Myst.*), where the same comparison between hearing and the other senses occurs.

surface-images of things; and it powerfully affects the whole of us—the musical sound by working on the spirit, which links body and soul, and the text by working on the mind or intellect. The power of this effect is due to sound being movement, whereas vision is static. Now man's whole moral and emotional life consists of actions of the body and motions of the spirit and soul, and these can be imitated in music and transmitted by it. Ficino writes in the *De Vita coelitus comparanda*:

Remember that song is the most powerful imitator of all things. For it imitates the intentions¹ and affections of the soul, and speech, and also reproduces bodily gestures, human movements and moral characters, and imitates and acts everything so powerfully that it immediately provokes both the singer and hearer to imitate and perform the same things².

The matter of song, he continues, is “warm air, even breathing, and in a measure living, made up of articulated limbs, like an animal, not only bearing movement and emotion, but even signification, like a mind, so that it can be said to be, as it were, a kind of aerial and rational animal.” Musically moved air is alive, like a disembodied human spirit³, and therefore naturally has the most powerful effect possible on the hearer's spirit.

One likely source for this distinction between hearing and other senses is the Ps. Aristotle *Problems*, which Ficino was probably reading at this time, since one of them is the starting-point of the whole theory of melancholy in the *De Triplici*

¹ “Intentiones” probably in the scholastic sense of the first stage of universalization from sense-impressions; cf. Kristeller, *Phil. of M. F.*, p. 235.

² Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 563 (*De Tr. V.*, III, xxi): “Momento verò cantum esse imitatore omnium potentissimum. Hic enim intentiones affectionesque animi imitatur, & verba, refert quoque gestus motusque corporis, & actus hominum, atque mores, tamque vehementer omnia imitatur, & agit, ut ad eadem imitanda, vel agenda, tum cantantem, tum audientes subito provocet . . . materia ipsa concentus purior est admodum, coeloque similior, quam materia medicine. Est enim aer etiam hic quidem calens, sive tepens, spirans adhuc, & quodammodo vivens, suis quibusdam articulis artubusque compositus, sicut animal, nec solum motum ferens, affectumque præferens, verum etiam significatum efferens quasi mentem, ut animal quoddam aëreum & rationale quodammodo dici possit. Concentus igitur spiritu sensuque plenus . . . virtutem . . . trajicit in cantantem, atque ex hoc in proximum audientem . . .”; cf. *ibid.*, p. 234 (*Theol. Plat.*, X, vii).

³ *Ibid.*: “Cantus . . . fermè nihil aliud est quàm spiritus alter”.

*Vita*¹. Two of the Problems on music discuss shortly the questions: “Why is hearing the only perception which affects the moral character?”; “Why are rhythms and melodies, which are sounds, similar to moral characters, while flavours, colours and scents are not?”². The answer in both cases is that sound, alone of things sensed, has movements; movements and actions are of the same nature, and actions have a moral character (ἦθος) or are symptomatic of it³.

¹ Ps. Aristotle, *Problems*, XXX, 1. Cf. Panofsky & Saxl, *op. cit.*, pp. 33 seq., 93 seq. (where this Problem is quoted in full).

² Aristotle, *Problems*, XXX, 27, 29.

³ *Ibid.*, XIX, 29: “ἢ ὅτι κινήσεις εἰσιν [sc. ῥυθμοὶ καὶ μέλη] ὡς περ καὶ αἱ πράξεις; ἦδη δὲ μὲν ἐνέργεια ἠθικὸν καὶ ποιεῖ ἦθος, οἱ δὲ χυμοὶ καὶ τὰ χρώματα οὐ ποιοῦσιν ὁμοίως”. On other classical sources for the ethical power of music, see D. P. Walker, “Musical Humanism in the 16th and early 17th centuries”, *Music Review*, 1941-2, II, pp. 9 seq.; Hermann Abert, *Die Lehre vom Ethos in der Griechischen Musik*, Leipzig, 1899, pp. 48-9 & passim.

(2) FICINO'S ASTROLOGICAL MUSIC

The last Book of the *De Triplici Vita, De Vita coelitus comparanda*, deals with astrological matters, especially with methods of tempering the melancholic influence of Saturn by attracting the benign influences of Jupiter, Venus, Mercury and, above all, the Sun. In spite of Ficino's somewhat vacillating attitude toward astrology¹, it can be stated: first, that he believed earnestly in the reality and importance of astral influences; secondly, that as a Catholic he could not openly accept an astrological determinism which included the soul and mind². On this view, the highest part of man which could be directly influenced by the stars was the spirit.

But in the *De Vita coelitus comparanda* the concept of spirit is plainly widened far beyond the bounds of its technical medical meaning. Ficino here accepts a theory of astrological influence, ultimately Stoic in origin, which postulates a cosmic spirit (*spiritus mundi*), flowing through the whole of the sensible universe, and thus providing a channel of influence between the heavenly bodies and the sublunar world³. Since the world, as in Plato and Plotinus⁴, is one animal, its soul, like ours, must have a "first instrument" which transmits its powers to its body. This mean between the *anima* and *corpus mundi*, though analogous to our spirit, is not, says Ficino, made like ours out of the four

¹ Cf. Kristeller, *Phil. of. M. F.*, pp. 310 seq.; E. Garin, "Recenti Interpretazioni di Marsilio Ficino", *Giom. crit. d. fil. ital.*, 1940, pp. 315 seq.

² Cf. Ficino's unpublished *Disputatio contra Iudicium Astrologorum* (Kristeller, *Suppl. Fic.* II, II seq.; written in 1477 (v. *ibid.*, I, cxl)), which is mainly concerned with safe-guarding man's freedom.

³ Cf. Panofsky & Saxl, *op. cit.*, p. 41; Verbeke, *op. cit.*, pp. 11 seq. (Chapter on Stoicism); more important sources for Ficino are probably Neoplatonic and Hermetic, cf. *infra* pp. 36 seq.

⁴ Plato, *Timaeus*, 30 c-31 a; Plotinus, *Enn.*, IV, iv, 32.

humours (and ultimately the four elements)¹, but may properly be called the fifth element, *quinta essentia*², i.e. the Aristotelian substance of the heavens, incorruptible "aether"; but it also contains the powers of the lower four elements, so that it can and does enter into ordinary sub-lunar bodies. This cosmic spirit, says Ficino³:

is a very subtle body; as it were not body and almost soul. Or again, as it were not soul and almost body. Its power contains very little earthy nature, but more watery, still more aerial and the maximum of fiery and starry nature . . . It vivifies everything everywhere and is the immediate cause of all generation and motion; of which he [Virgil] says: "Spiritus intus alit . . ." ⁴.

This cosmic spirit, which is also that of the alchemists⁵, is like enough to ours for us to be able to nourish and purify our own spirit by attracting and absorbing it. "Undoubtedly the world lives and breathes, and we may absorb its breath (*spiritus*)" by means of our spirit, especially if we render this even more similar than it already is by nature to the *spiritus mundi*, "that is, if it becomes as celestial as possible" ⁶. There are various ways of doing this. You may consume things which contain an abundance of pure cosmic spirit, such as wine, very white sugar, gold, the scent of cinnamon or roses⁷. To attract the "spiritual"

¹ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 535 (*De Tr. V.*, III, iii). Ficino is somewhat inconsistent about the substance of the human spirit; elsewhere it appears to be made of something like the quintessence (cf. next note), or the aether of the Neoplatonic vehicle of the soul (v. *infra* p. 38). In the *Theol. Plat.* (VII, vi, *Op. Omn.*, p. 177) e.g. he describes it as "tenuissimum quoddam lucidissimumque corpusculum".

² Aristotle, *De Caelo*, I, 2, 3. For Aristotle this was also the nature of man's innate spirit (*De Gen. Anim.*, II, 3, 736 b).

³ *Op. Omn.*, p. 535 (*De Tr. V.*, III, iii): "Ipse verò est corpus tenuissimum, quasi non corpus, & jam anima. Item quasi non anima, & quasi jam corpus. In eius virtute minimum est naturae terrenae, plus autem aquae, plus item aëriae, rursus igneae stellaris quamplurimum . . . Ipse verò ubique viget in omnibus generationis omnis proximus auctor atque motus, de quo ille: Spiritus intus alit . . ."

⁴ Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 726; cf. Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 612, where this passage is quoted as referring to the Orphic Jupiter, equated with the *anima mundi*, and *infra* pp. 128-9.

⁵ See F. Sherwood Taylor, *The Alchemists*, London, 1951, pp. 11 seq. & *passim*.

⁶ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 534 (*De Tr. V.*, III, iii, entitled: "Quod inter animam mundi et corpus eius manifestum, sit spiritus eius, in cuius virtute sunt quatuor elementa. Et quod nos per spiritum nostrum hunc possimus haurire"), p. 535 (III, iv).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 532 (III, i).

influence of a particular planet you may use animals, plants, people, subject to that planet—as food, scents, acquaintances; Ficino gives lists of these for the Sun and Jupiter¹. You may perhaps use talismans (*imagines*); he is extremely worried and hesitant about these, but devotes a great deal of space to them². Finally, you must use music fitted to the planet. Here again, it is music which is recommended most strongly.

The effectiveness of music for capturing planetary or celestial spirit rests on two principles, which ultimately connect. The first is the ancient and persistent theory, deriving from Plato's *Timaeus* or the Pythagoreans before him, that both the universe and man, the macrocosm and microcosm, are constructed on the same harmonic proportions³; that there is a music of the spheres, *musica mundana*, of man's body, spirit and soul, *musica humana*, of voices and instruments, *musica instrumentalis*⁴. Thus the use of anything having the same numerical proportions as a certain heavenly body or sphere will make your spirit similarly proportioned and provoke the required influx of celestial spirit, just as a vibrating string will make another, tuned to the same or a consonant note, vibrate in sympathy⁵. Ficino, in the *De Vita coelitus comparanda*, refers several times to this theory⁶, and applies it not only to music, but also to foods, medicines, talismans, etc. For example, when discussing the figures engraved on talismans, he writes⁷:

¹ Ibid., pp. 352-3; but "quomodo verò virtus Veneris attrahatur turturibus, columbis & motacillis [water-wagtails], & reliquis, non permittit pudor ostendere".

² e.g. *Op. Omn.*, p. 530 (*Ad Lectorem* of *De Tr. V.*, III), pp. 548-561 (III, xiii-xx). Cf. *infra* p. 42-3, 53.

³ This is a vast subject; some of the main sources used in the Renaissance will be found in Hutton, *op. cit.*; cf. *infra* pp. 81, 115 seq.

⁴ These terms seem to originate with Boetius (*v. Hutton, op. cit.*, p. 17).

⁵ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 555 (*De Tr. V.*, III, xvii), 563 (III, xxi); a normal image in any exposition of universal magic sympathy, cf. e.g. Plotinus, *Enn.*, IV, iv, 41; Synesius, *De Insomn.*, Migne, *Pat. Gr.*, 66, col. 1285 b (Ficino trans., *Op. Omn.*, p. 1969). Since Ficino says the *De V.c.c.* is a commentary on Plotinus (*v. supra* p. 3 note (2)), *Enn.*, IV, iv, 30-44 is probably one immediate source of this theory of planetary influence, though there is little mention of spirit in this *Ennead*.

⁶ E.g. *Op. Omn.*, p. 546 (*De Tr. V.*, III, xii), 564 (III, xxii); cf. *ibid.*, pp. 1455 seq. (*Comm. in Tim.*).

⁷ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 555 (*De Tr. V.*, III, xvii): "Non ignoras concentus per

You know that musical sound, by its numbers and proportions, has a marvellous power to sustain, move and affect the spirit, soul and body. But these proportions, made up of numbers, are, as it were kinds of figures, which are made of points and lines, but in motion. Similarly, celestial figures act by their movement; for these, by their harmonic rays and motions, which penetrate everything, constantly affect the spirit secretly, just as music does openly, in the most powerful way.

But, when Ficino comes to working out on this theory practical precepts for planetarily effective music, he finds himself in difficulties. In the long chapter devoted to astrological music¹, he gives a list of seven things by which celestial influences can be attracted²; they are, in ascending order:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Stones, metals, etc. | which pertain to the Moon |
| 2. Plants, fruits, animals, | „ „ „ Mercury |
| 3. Powders, vapours, odours, | „ „ „ Venus |
| 4. Words, songs, sounds, | „ „ „ the Sun (Apollo, the mean of the seven) |
| 5. Emotion, imagination ³ , | „ „ „ Mars |
| 6. Discursive reason, | „ „ „ Jupiter |
| 7. Intellectual contemplation, divine intuition, | „ „ „ Saturn |

He then continues⁴:

numeros proportionisque suas, vim habere mirabilem ad spiritum & animum & corpus sistendum, movendum, & afficiendum. Proportiones autem ex numeris constitutae, quasi figurae quaedam sunt, vel ex punctis lineisque factae, sed in motu. Similiter motu suo se habent ad agendum figurae coelestes, hae namque harmonicis, tum radijs, tum motibus suis omnia penetrantibus spiritum indies ita clam afficiunt, ut Musica praepotens palam afficere consuevit." The "figurae coelestes" are, I think, Plotinus' σχήματα (*Enn.*, IV, iv, 34 seq.), i.e. patterns traced by the planets and constellations (cf. Ficino, *ibid.*, pp. 531-2 (III, i)). Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.*, IV, iv, 40 (Ficino, *Comm. in Plat., Op. Omn.*, p. 1747), for music effecting "palam" what the stars do "clam".

¹ Ibid., p. 562 (III, xxi).

² "Quum verò septem Planetarum numero, septem quoque sint gradus, per quos à superioribus ad inferiora sit attractus, voces medium gradum obtinent, & Apollini dedicantur."

³ "Vehementes imaginationis conceptus, formae, motus, affectus".

⁴ Ibid.: "Quorsum haec? ut intelligas quemadmodum ex certa herbarum vaporumque compositione confecta, per artem tum Medicam, tum Astronomicam, resultat communis quaedam forma, velut harmonia quaedam siderum dotata muneribus. Sic ex tonis primò quidem ad stellarum normam electis, deinde ad earundem congruitatem inter se compositis, communem quasi formam fieri, atque in ea coelestem aliquam suboriri virtutem. Difficillimum quidem est iudicatu, quales potissimum

What are these for? That you may understand how from a certain combination of herbs and vapours, made by medical and astronomical art, results a certain form, like a kind of harmony endowed with gifts of the stars. Thus, from tones chosen by the rule of the stars, and then combined in accordance with the stars' mutual correspondences, a sort of common form can be made, and in this a certain celestial virtue will arise. It is indeed very difficult to judge what kind of tones will best fit what kind of stars, and what combinations of tones agree best with what stars and their aspects. But, partly by our own diligence, partly by divine destiny, . . . we have been able to accomplish this.

The way Ficino does accomplish it is by having recourse to the second of the two principles mentioned on the previous page. This is one we have already discussed, namely, that music imitates emotions and moral attitudes (*ἡθεα*) and thus influences those of the singer and listener. Since the planets have the moral character of the gods whose names they bear, this character can be imitated in music; by performing such music we can make ourselves, especially our spirit, more Jovial, Solarian, Venereal, etc. . . . This mimetic theory of music connects with the world-harmony one outlined above, because such mimetic music *is* a living spirit and the heavens also *are* musical spirit:

This kind of musical spirit [i.e. morally and planetarily effective song] actually touches and acts on the spirit, which is the mean between body and soul, and wholly disposes both in accordance with its own disposition. You will indeed allow that there is marvellous power in lively, singing spirit, if you concede to the Pythagoreans and Platonists that the heavens are spirit, ordering everything with their movements and tones¹.

Ficino gives three rules for composing this astrological music, prefacing them with the cautionary remark that he is not speaking

toni, qualibus convenient stellis, quales inter tonorum compositiones, qualibus praecipuè sideribus, aspectibusque consentiant. Sed partim diligentia nostra, partim divina quadam sorte . . . id assequi possumus."

¹ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 563 (*De Tr. V.*, III, xxi): ". . . spiritus eiusmodi musicus propriè tangit, agitque in spiritum inter corpus animamque medium, & utrumque affectione sua prorsus afficientem. Mirabilem verò in concitato canenteque spiritu vim esse concedes, si Pythagoricis Platonisque concesseris, coelum esse spiritum, motibus tonisque suis omnia disponentem."

of worshipping stars, but rather of imitating them, and by imitation capturing their natural emanations¹; they are²:

Rules for fitting songs to the heavenly bodies:

1. Find out what powers and effects any particular star has in itself, what positions and aspects, and what these remove and produce. And insert these into the meaning of the text, detesting what they remove, approving what they produce.

2. Consider which star chiefly rules which place and man. Then observe what modes (*tonis*) and songs these regions and persons generally use, so that you may apply similar ones, together with the meaning just mentioned, to the words which you wish to offer to these same stars.

3. The daily positions and aspects of the stars are to be noticed; then investigate to what speech, songs, movements, dances, moral behaviour and actions, most men are usually incited under these aspects, so that you may make every effort to imitate these in your songs, which will agree with the similar disposition of the heavens and enable you to receive a similar influx from them.

A little further on we are given descriptions of the music appropriate to each planet. The Sun, Jupiter, Venus and Mercury, the benign planets, each have their particular kind of music; but Saturn, Mars and the Moon have only "voices"—no music³. The characters of these planetary modes are⁴:

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 562: ". . . ne putes nos in praesentia de stellis adorandis loqui, sed potius imitandis, & imitatione captandis. Neque rursus de donis agere credas, quae stellae sint electione daturae, sed influxu potius naturali."

² *Ibid.* pp. 562-3: "Regulae cantum sideribus accommodaturae . . . exquirere quas in se vires, quosve ex se effectus stella quelibet, & situs [original: sidus] & aspectus habeant, quae auferant, quae ferant. Atque verborum nostrorum significationibus haec inserire, detestari quae auferant, probare quae ferunt . . . Considerare quae stella, cui loco maximè, vel homini dominetur. Deinde observare qualibus communiter haec regiones, & personae tonis utantur, & cantibus, ut ipse similes quosdam unà cum significationibus modò dictis, adhibeas verbis, quae sideribus eisdem studeat [original: stupes] exponere . . . situs aspectusque stellarum quotidianos animadverteret, atque sub his explorare, ad quales potissimum sermones, cantus, motus, saltus, mores, actus, incitari homines plerique soleant, ut talia quaedam tu pro viribus imiteris in cantibus, coelo cuidam simili placituris, similemque suscepturus influxum."

³ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 563 (*De Tr. V.*, III, xxi); Saturn has "voces tardas, graves, rucas, querelas", Mars "veloces, acutas, asperas, minaces", Luna "medias".

⁴ *Ibid.*: "Concentus autem Jovi [tribuimus] quidem graves, & intentos, dulcesque, & cum constantia laetos. Contrà Veneri cum lascivia & mollitie voluptuosos cantus adscribimus. Inter hos verò medios Soli tribuimus & mercurio. Si una cum gratia suavitateque sunt venerabiles, & simplices, & intenti, Apollinei judicantur. Si una

Jupiter: music which is grave, earnest, sweet, and joyful with stability.
 Venus: music which is voluptuous with wantonness and softness.
 Apollo (the Sun): music which is venerable, simple and earnest, united with grace and smoothness.
 Mercury: music which is somewhat less serious (than the Apolline) because of its gaiety, yet vigorous and various.

If any one of these "harmoniae" is sung frequently and attentively, the singer's spirit will take on this character, having, by natural sympathy, attracted the appropriate planetary spirit.

Since all music pertains primarily to Apollo, as can be seen from the list on page 15, music of any kind tends to capture the sun's influence and render the musicians solarian; which is eminently desirable¹. This preoccupation with the sun is, of course, typical of all Ficino's work². In his commentary on Plotinus he tells us that people once worshipped the planets because of the benefits obtainable by exposing one's soul and spirit to their influence; but, he says, most of the Platonic philosophers worshipped only the sun³:

Julian and Iamblichus composed orations to the Sun. Plato called the sun the visible off-spring and image of the supreme God; Socrates, while greeting the rising sun, often fell into an ecstasy. The Pythagoreans sang to the lyre hymns to the rising sun. Concerning the cult of the sun, let them look to that; but undoubtedly "God has placed his tabernacle in the sun".

cum jucunditate remissiores quodammodo sunt, strenui tamen, atque multiplices, Mercuriales existunt." Cf. *ibid.*, p. 534 (III, ii): "Musicam gravem quidem Jovis Solisque esse, levem Veneris, mediam verò Mercurij"; p. 546 (III, xi): "Soni quintiam cantusque grati, blandique ad gratias omnes spectant atque Mercurium. Minaces autem admodum atque febiles Martem praeferunt & Saturnum."

¹ Man in general is thought to be primarily solarian, and to a lesser degree jovial and mercurial (*ibid.*, p. 535 (III, ii)).

² See his *Orphica Comparatio Solis, Liber de Sole, Liber de Lumine* (*Op. Omn.*, pp. 825, 965, 976).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1745: "plurimi verò praesertim Platonici atque id genus Philosophi, solum adorabant inter coelestia Solem. Orationem ad Solem composuit Julianus et Iamblichus. Solem Plato filium et imaginem summi Dei visibilem appellavit: Solem Socrates orientem salutans ecstasim saepe patiebatur: Orienti Soli Pythagorici hymnos lyra canebant. De cultu quidem Solis illi viderint: Deus certè in Sole posuit tabernaculum suum." Ficino's sources are: Julian, *Εἰς τὸν βασιλεῖα Ἡλίου*, (*Works of the Emperor Julian*, ed. W. C. Wright, London, 1913, I, 352); Plato, *Respubl.*, VI, 508 b-c, *Sympos.*, 220 c-d; Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythag.*, c. 25, 35; Psalm, XVIII, 6.

One may take it then as highly probable that Ficino's astrological music was most often addressed to the sun.

There is little doubt that Ficino himself performed the astrological music described in the *De Vita coelitus comparanda*. We know from his own and his contemporaries' writings that he was in the habit of singing while accompanying himself on an instrument which he calls his *lyra* or his *lyra orphica*¹. One reason for calling it Orphic was that the instrument was adorned with a picture showing Orpheus charming the animals and rocks with his lyre². Now in most Renaissance representations of Orpheus the instrument he is playing is clearly a *lira da braccio*, or, less often, a treble viol or violin³. It seems to me likely then that Ficino accompanied his planetary songs on the *lira da braccio*. Even much later musical humanists associated the modern *lira* with ancient music; Zarlino was inclined to believe that the ancient lyre was like a *lira tedesca* (i.e. hurdy-gurdy)⁴, and Mersenne wrote of the modern *lira*⁵:

le son de la Lyre est fort languissant et propre pour exciter à la dévotion, et pour faire rentrer l'esprit dans soy-mesme; l'on en use pour accompagner la voix et les récits . . . il n'y a peut estre nul instrument qui représente si bien la Musique d'Orphée et de l'antiquité . . .

If this conjecture is correct, one might suppose that Ficino's music was like that of the "improvvisatori sulla lira", of which,

¹ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, pp. 608, 651, 673, 725, 871, 944; Lorenzo de' Medici, *Opere*, Firenze, 1825, II, 157 (*L'Altercazione*); cf. Della Torre, *Storia dell'Accademia Platonica di Firenze*, Florence, 1902, pp. 490, 788-90, 792 seq.; Kristeller, "Music and Learning in the Early Italian Renaissance", *Journal of Renaissance and Baroque Music*, 1947, pp. 269-272, *Philos. of M. F.*, pp. 307 seq., *Suppl. Ficin.*, II, 37, 230, 262.

² See Naldi's poem to Ficino, *De Orpheo in ejus cythara picto*, in Kristeller, *Suppl. Ficin.*, II, 37.

³ See G. Kinsky, *Musikhistorisches Museum von Wilhelm Heyer in Cöln*, Leipzig & Cöln, 1910-16, II, 383 seq.; B. Disertori, "L'Arciviola lira in un quadro del Secento", *Rivista Musicale*, XLIV, 1940, p. 199. Cf. Sylvestro Ganassi dal Fontego, *Regola Rubertina*, Venice, 1542, ed. Max Schneider, Leipzig, 1924, p. ix, c. viii, who bases his identification of the ancient lyre with the violin or *lira*, rather than with the lute, on "l'autorità cavata d'Orfeo".

⁴ Zarlino, *Istitutioni Harmoniche*, Venezia, 1558, III, lxxix, p. 290; cf. D. P. Walker, "Musical Humanism", *Music Review*, 1941-2, III, 55.

⁵ Mersenne, *Harmonie Universelle*, Paris, 1636 IV des Instr., x, p. 206.

unfortunately, we know very little¹. The expression "recitare", which is often used of these improvisers, suggests a very simple kind of chant, half-way between song and speech, something like the performance of a young boy of whom Poliziano wrote to Pico della Mirandola²:

he proclaimed an heroic ode, which he himself had composed in honour of our Pietro de' Medici. His voice was neither like someone reading nor like someone singing, but such that you heard both, yet neither separately; it was varied, however, as the words demanded, either even or modulated, now punctuated, now flowing, now exalted, now subdued, now relaxed, now tense, now slow, now hastening, always pure, always clear, always sweet . . .

Perhaps Ficino's music was something like this, or perhaps it was based on plain-song, since, as I shall try to show, his astrological singing came near to being a religious rite. Apart from such vague conjectures³, all that one can say about the purely musical side of Ficino's singing is that it was monodic and that he was aiming at the same ideal of expressive, effect-producing music as the later musical humanists. His directions for fitting songs to the *ethea* of planets conform strikingly with, for example, Galilei's advice to composers to observe and note the exact tones, accents, rhythm, of various types of character, in various situations⁴.

About the text, however, of Ficino's singing we can be more

¹ See André Pirro, "Léon X et la Musique", *Mélanges offerts à Henri Hawette*, Paris, 1934, pp. 221 seq.; A. Einstein, *Italian Madrigal*, Princeton, 1949, I, 18, 76-7, 89, 92.

² Politian, *Opera*, Basileae, 1553, p. 165: "pronunciavit . . . heroicum carmen, quod ipsemet nuper in Petri Medici nostri laudem composuerat . . . Vox ipsa nec quasi legentis, nec quasi canentis, sed, in qua tamen utrunque sentires, neutrum discerneres: variè tamen, prout locus posceret, aut aequalis, aut inflexa, nunc distincta, nunc perpetua, nunc sublata, nunc deducta, nunc remissa, nunc contenta, nunc lenta, nunc incitata, semper emendata, semper clara, semper dulcis . . ."

³ The nearest we get to a practical example of Ficino's planetary music is when he briefly describes how in Apulia those bitten by the tarantula are cured by special music which makes them dance; he comments: "Sonum verò illum ex indicijis esse Phoebum Jovialeque conijcio" (ibid., p. 564); presumably he had not heard a *tarantella*. Cf. H. E. Sigerist, "The Story of Tarantism", *Music and Medicine*, ed. Schullian & Schoen, New York, 1948.

⁴ Galilei, *Dialogo della musica antica e moderna*, Firenze, 1581, p. 89; cf. Walker, "Musical Humanism", II, 291-2.

precise; and for him, as, again, for later musical humanists¹, the text was much more important than the music. A song works on body, mind, and on whatever intermediate faculties may be between; but it is the text alone which can carry an intellectual content and thus influence the mind. The music, abstracted from its text, can reach no higher than the spirit, i.e. sense and feeling, or at most, through the spirit, the lower parts of the soul, phantasy and imagination. The status of song is clearly shown in the hierarchical list quoted above²: Apollo is just above the odours and unguents of Venus, just below the vehement imaginings of Mars, and far below the intellectual contemplation of Saturn³. But music has here the important position of being the mean of all seven grades precisely because it is not separated from text; it does therefore affect the whole man, mind as well as spirit and body. A similar placing of music and poetry occurs in Ficino's doctrine of the four *furors*⁴. They are the first and lowest kind of *furor*, but they have the privileged position of accompanying the other three (those of religious rites, prophecy, love):

no man possessed by *furor* is content with ordinary speech. But he breaks forth into shouting and singing and songs. Wherefore any *furor*, either that of prophecy, or of mysteries, or of love, since it leads to singing and poetry, can rightly be said to find its completion in the poetic *furor*⁵.

What, then, were the words of Ficino's astrological songs?

¹ See Walker, "Musical Humanism", II, 9, 226 seq.

² p. 15.

³ Cf. Ficino's introduction (*Op. Omn.*, p. 1559) to Plotinus, *Enn.*, I, iii, of which the first two chapters deal with the ascent of the soul through philosophy, love, music. Having stated the Plotinian triad: *ipsum bonum, intellectus, anima*, Ficino gives three modes of ascent to this: by Mercury, through reason, to the *ipsum bonum*; by Venus, through sight, to the *intellectus*, "in quo prima pulchritudo [idearum corruscat]"; by Phoebus, through hearing, to the *anima*, "ad quam potissimum pertinet harmonia", and which is "vita mundi, quasi divinae intelligentiae spiritus". These constitute a descending hierarchy, but may all lead up, through Saturn, "intelligentiae duces", to the *ipsum bonum*.

⁴ Ibid., p. 1282 (*Comm. in Ion.*), 1361 (*Comm. in Conviv.*).

⁵ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 1365 (*Comm. in Phaedr.*): "Furens autem nullus est simpliciter sermone contentus. Sed in clamorem prorumpit, & cantus & carmina. Quamobrem furor quilibet, sive fatidicus, sive mysterialis, seu amatorius, dum in cantus procedit & carmina, merito in furem poeticum videtur absolvi."

The answer, I think, is to be found in his Orphic singing, in his revival of the "antiquus ad Orphicam lyram cantus", which he lists among the triumphs of the Florence of his time, together with the resurrection of Plato by the Academy at Careggi¹. Ficino's *lyra* was Orphic not only because it bore a picture of Orpheus, but also because it accompanied his singing of the Orphic Hymns, and probably other Orphic fragments². Although he does not mention it in the *De Vita coelitus comparanda*, I am convinced that his Orphic singing is the same as the astrological music there described.

From the second of Pico's *Conclusiones Orphicae* we learn that the Orphic Hymns were sung in a special manner for magic purposes³:

In natural magic nothing is more efficacious than the Hymns of Orpheus, if there be applied to them the suitable music, and disposition of soul, and the other circumstances known to the wise.

In Ficino's commentary on Plotinus we learn what these magic purposes are and what are the "other circumstances known to the wise". Commenting on a chapter where Plotinus remarks that we can capture planetary influences by "prayers, either simple or sung with art"⁴, Ficino says⁵:

¹ Ibid., p. 944; cf. pp. 822, 871, 608.

² See Della Torre, op. cit., p. 789 (from Corsi's biography of Ficino: "Orphei hymnos exposuit, miraque, ut ferunt, dulcidine ad lyram antiquo more cecinit").

³ Pico, *Op. Omn.*, Basileae, 1572, I, 106: "Nihil efficacius hymnis Orphei in naturali magia, si debita musica, animi intentio et caeterae circumstantiae, quas norunt sapientes, fuerint adhibitae." Pico, also, was in the habit of singing "ad lyram" Latin prayers of which he had composed the words and music (G. F. Pico's *Life* of him, in front of this edition of his works).

⁴ Plotinus, *Enn.*, IV, iv, 38: "οἶον εὐχαῖς ἢ ἀπλαῖς ἢ τέχνῃ ἀδομέναις". This book of Plotinus (IV, iv) may be the one on which the *De Triplici Vita* is supposed to be a commentary (v. supra p. 3 note (2)).

⁵ Ficino, *Op. Omn.*, p. 1747: "Intellectualis anima mundi et sphaerae cuiuslibet atque stellae subiunctam habet vegetalem vitam suo infusam corpori: per quam non electione, sed naturaliter generantur, moventurque sequentia, et beneficia capacibus conferuntur . . . Vegetalis vita nostra vitae superius dictae admodum est conformis, similiter spiritus noster radijs illius tam occultis, quam manifestis omnia pentrantibus. Evadit etiam longè cognatior, quando erga vitam illam vehementer afficimur, consentaneum illi beneficium exoptantes, atque ita spiritum nostrum in illius radios transferentes amore: praesertim si cantum et lumen adhibemus, odoremque numini consentaneum, quales Orpheus mundanis numinibus consecravit. Item coelo incensi thuris odorem, aetheri ferventem crocum, stellis aromata, Saturno et Jovi styracem . . . Spiritus enim per affectum, cantum, odorem, lumen cognatior effectus numini, uberiores haurit illius influxum."

Our spirit is consonant with the heavenly rays which, occult or manifest, penetrate everything. We can make it still more consonant, if we vehemently direct our affections towards the star from which we wish to receive a certain benefit . . . above all, if we apply the song and light suitable to the astral deity and also the odour, as in the hymns of Orpheus addressed to cosmic deities.

He then gives a list of planets and odours taken from the Orphic Hymns, whose titles all contain the indication of a fumigation, e.g. "Hymn of the Sun. Fumigation: frankincense"¹. He continues:

For when our spirit is made more consonant to a planetary deity by means of our emotions, the song, the odour and the light, it breathes in more copiously the influx which comes from this deity.

Bearing in mind that throughout the *De Triplici Vita* the chief means of nourishing the spirit are odours and music, wine and light², we can have little doubt that this Orphic singing is identical with Ficino's astrological music. The Orphic Hymns would have seemed to him particularly suitable for a good kind of magic singing, because Orpheus was a *priscus theologus*³. In the series of ancient theologians which goes from Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus and Moses to Plato, and from Plato to Christianity, Orpheus has a conspicuous place, because he is the most ancient of the Greeks, the master of Pythagoras, and through him of Plato. He is also, of course, the symbol of the powerful, effect-producing singer; and he was a magician⁴.

Apart from those Orphic Hymns which are addressed to planetary deities, Ficino would probably have sung other Orphic fragments⁵, other ancient prayers to the sun⁶, and the 18th

¹ *Orphica*, ed. Abel, Leipzig, 1885, p. 61.

² V. supra p. 5 note (3); cf. *Op. Omn.*, p. 568 (*De Tr. V.*, III, xxiv): as our body is nourished by the four elements, so is our spirit by its "tenua quaedam elementa" — wine (earth), odour of wine (water), song and sound (air), light (fire).

³ See D. P. Walker, "Orpheus the Theologian and Renaissance Platonists", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVI, 1953, p. 100. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 102, the story of Ficino's working some successful magic by Orphic singing.

⁴ V. infra pp. 131, 147.

⁵ See article cited in preceding note. There are many Orphic fragments suitable for sun-worship, e.g. Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta*, Berlin, 1922, fr. 62, 236-8.

⁶ E.g. Proclus' *Hymn to the Sun (Eudociae Augustae, Procli Lycii . . . carm. gr. rel.*, rec. H. Ludwich, Lipsiae, 1897, pp. 133 seq.).

psalm of David¹, the Jewish Orpheus² ("Deus certè in Sole posuit tabernaculum suum").

¹ When, a century later, Patrizi (*Nova de Universis Philosophia*, Venetijs, 1593, fos 107 v-111 v (1st ed. 1591)) used this psalm (and the Orphic Hymn of the Sun) in a sun-worshipping context, the inquisitor, Jacopo de Lugo, noted (*ibid.*, fo 111 v) "id quod refert Augustinus contra Faustum, Manicheos, scilicet ex illo psalmi dicto: In sole posuit tabernaculum suum: excidisse in adorationem solis, quoniam cum Christus (ut aiunt ipsi) in caelum ascenderet, corpus suum reliquit in globo solis, inde vero solam animam secum supra coelos ad dexteram patris evexit".

² On David and Orpheus, see Walker, "Orpheus", p. 101.

(3) FICINO'S MUSIC AND LATER MUSICAL THEORISTS

Ficino's theory of the peculiar connection between music and spirit seems to be original, in the sense that, though most or all of the elements of this theory have a long history, his combination of them does produce something new and valuable¹. We have the familiar ingredients of medical spirits, the ethical power of ancient music and its therapeutic use², and Aristotelian-Augustinian accounts of hearing and the nature of sound; out of these Ficino creates a very satisfactory explanation of the "effects" of music, an explanation which is not without permanent value: the conception of musical sound as a living, "spiritual" animal³ is, as a poetic image, remarkably adequate and profound. Similarly, his astrological music has obvious origins in the ancient magical and theurgic uses of music, mediaeval astrology, and Pythagorean-Neoplatonic ideas of universal harmony. In this case, Ficino adds something in that he is not content to point out possible analogies between macrocosm and microcosm, between musical and celestial harmonies, but gives practical directions for making music which may usefully exploit these analogies.

There are two main resemblances between Ficino's musical theory and later musical humanism. First, he is the earliest

¹ This is a very rash statement; it may well be that I have overlooked some important source. There are, of course, earlier references to music and the *spiritus* (e.g. Augustine, *Confessions*, X, xxxiii (Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, 32, col. 800: "Omnes affectus spiritus nostri pro sui diversitate habent proprios modos in voce atque cantu, quorum nescio qua occulta familiaritate excitentur"; or Dante, *Convivio*, II, xiii, 20 seq.: "la Musica trae a sè li spiriti umani, che quasi sono principalmente vaporio del cuore, sì che quasi cessano da ogni operazione: sì e l'anima intera, quando l'ode, e la virtù di tutti quasi corre a lo spirito sensibile che riceve lo suono"); but I have come across none which can be said to foreshadow Ficino's music-spirit theory.

² See e.g. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Univ. of California Press, 1951, pp. 78 seq., 99; Abert, *Lehre vom Ethos*, pp. 15-6 & *passim*; Panofsky & Saxl, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

³ V. *supra* p. 10.