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MAGIC, ASTROLOGY AND MUSIC

THE BACKGROUND TO MARSILIO FICINO'S ASTROLOGICAL MUSIC THERAPY
AND HIS ROLE AS A RENAISSANCE MAGUS

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Ph.D. Thesis

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June 1992



Busto di Marsilio Ficino, Andrea di Piero Ferrucci (1522). Firenze, Santa Maria del Fiore.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to thank the following people, without whose help, encouragement and constant faith in my work this thesis would never have been completed:

Peter Ammann, Dr. Charles Burnett at the Warburg Institute, Noel Cobb, Geoffrey Cornelius, Graeme Toby and the Latin translation group at the Company of Astrologers, Darby Costello, Dr. Patrick Curry, Professor Joscelyn Godwin, Peter Kingsley, the Latin translation group of the School of Economic Science, Eva Loewe and the Lacemakers group of the London Convivium for Archetypal Studies, Dr. Thomas Moore, Andrew Mouldey, Linda Proud, Kathleen Raine, Anthony Rooley, Professor Malcolm Troup at the City University, and especially Philip Weller for many hours of discussion, translation and moral support.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is structured in four substantial chapters with subsections. The first two cover the background to Ficino's thought, the second two present his own attitudes towards magic, astrology and music.

Chapter one is concerned with aspects of *musica mundana* as represented by Ficino's three main authorities, Plato, Hermes Trismegistus and Plotinus. Firstly I present the fundamental ideas underlying Ficino's mode of thought and musical practice: the structure of the cosmos, Pythagorean *harmonia* and the human soul as microcosm, concluding with the nature of Platonic wisdom. Secondly I consider the role of Hermes and the Hermetic texts with their emphasis on intuitive revelation, alchemical transformation and the imagination. From this synthesis of the intellectual and the intuitive emerges Plotinus, whose understanding of cosmic sympathy and resonance has profound implications for a signficatory attitude towards astrology.

Chapter two moves on to *musica humana*, and the magical means by which the Pythagorean and Platonic traditions aspired to bring the human soul into harmony with the cosmos. I discuss the nature of magic and mysticism, of occult ritual and the value of a symbolic mode of perception. The first half deals with Platonic and Plotinian attitudes towards magic, which were predominantly spiritual; the second half considers the practical magical rituals of theurgy, as revealed through the writings of the neo-platonists Iamblichus and Proclus and the Chaldaean Oracles. The central notion, that of time and its two orders, leads to a consideration of astrology as divination and a conclusion on the way of being and perception on which the efficacy of 'magic' depends.

The second half of the thesis is directly concerned with Ficino's own synthesis of this material. Chapter three firstly presents his formulation of ways of knowing as found in the Iamblichus Commentary, then considers the implications of this for his attitude towards astrology. The 'scientific' astrology of Ptolemy and the syncretic tradition of the Arabs leads to a presentation of the dilemma between the scientific and divinatory approaches. I then discuss Ficino's reaction to astrological determinism and his own views in relation to his *Disputatio contra iudicium astrologorum* and Commentary on Plotinus.

Finally, chapter four brings both astrology and music into focus as the ingredients of Ficino's practices of natural magic. I discuss his ideas concerning the nature of hearing, the function of the musician and the concepts of *spiritus* and *anima mundi* in connection with the sympathetic magic of *De vita coelitus comparanda*. Ficino's attitude towards the power of words and song and his rules for composing astrological music lead us to the final section on *musica instrumentalis* - Ficino's role as the 'second Orpheus'. Contemporary anecdotes, the importance of Orpheus as a model and the rediscovery of the Orphic hymns precede a more historical discussion of Ficino as a music theorist and improviser within the context of 15th century Italian musical culture. I speculate on his instrument, Renaissance performance practice and musical repertoire, concluding with examples of relevant musical forms.

INTRODUCTION

In the *Prooemium* to his great *Theologia Platonica*, Ficino tells the reader how he has felt called upon to explain his synthesis of Platonism and Christianity to those who "separate the study of philosophy from holy religion".(1) Ficino's vocation was to bring theory and practice, intellect and will, knowledge and experience into a harmony which transcended all opposition, and he sought to achieve this through a ritual, symbolic use of both astrology and music in a therapeutic context of 'natural magic'.

The writing of this thesis has, in many ways, been a personal journey of deepening experience and psychological integration. Over the past seven years (a cycle of Saturn) Marsilio Ficino has assumed the role of a *daimon*, leading me to confront the most difficult and complex issues in my life and somehow asking to be put to rest. I embarked on this task without knowing exactly what he was asking of me - I now realise that the process has been an alchemical one of unification, with both internal and external purposes. As a practising astrologer I had always felt very strongly that Ficino's attitude towards astrology had been, on the whole, misrepresented by scholars, and that an attempt should be made to bridge the seemingly irreconcilable gulf between the practising astrologers and the academic historians who write about it. In the course of translating Ficino's *Disputatio contra iudicium astrologorum*, *Liber de Sole* and excerpts from his *Commentaries* on Plotinus and Iamblichus, I became aware that the essential problem was not one of wilful antagonism, but of the misapprehension of the mode of perception required to enter into Ficino's way of understanding the world. For Ficino, there had to be a way of combining, as in astrological practice itself, the fluid, subjective 'irrational' content of qualitative experience within the the firm outer framework of an objective structure. In this sense, I humbly attempt to imitate Ficino himself, who constantly sought to lead his readers to a participatory awareness of the dimension of life commonly regarded as 'occult', and to a valuation of that dimension as equally essential to psychological and physical health as that of rational objectivity.

In Plato and Hermes Trismegistus, Ficino found supreme representatives of the ways of being he strove to integrate: intellectual rigour and clarity and intuitive, mystical revelation. In the writings of Plotinus, thirty years later, he found a synthesis of the two and a supreme justification for astrology as a divinatory, not a 'pseudo-scientific', art. Out of this emerged his extraordinary feat of the imagination, the *Liber de vita*, in which the reader is encouraged towards health of mind, soul and body through a diet of philosophical contemplation, magical practices and rituals, astrological awareness and musical activity. It is here that Ficino formulates his unique astrological music-therapy, a consideration of which will form the culmination of this thesis.

The theme of the three musics, *mundana*, *humana* and *instrumentalis*(2) is a constant unifying motif throughout my work. For the Platonist, life itself is music - instrumental and vocal music merely imitating the true music of the cosmos, which finds its counterpart in the motions of the human soul. True music is harmony of thought, word and deed, and this may be fostered through the right use of audible music and song, if it is performed with a ritual attitude of religious intent. Ficino's 'new' therapeutic combination of music and astrology recovers a lost dimension - that of the divinatory 'moment' which allows the individual "a free participation in destiny".(3) This was of course a hall-mark of the Renaissance - a re-birth of faith in man's capacity to overcome the limitations of a fate-bound existence and be master of himself, in celebration of his own 'divine' potential. Ficino's vocation was to lead men to this realisation through exhorting them to "see with different eyes", to develop what we might term a symbolic attitude towards life, to understand that to see astrology and audible music as metaphors for reality is to facilitate a harmonising of the soul which can only lead to true happiness. Bearing this in mind, I make no apology for frequent reference to the work of C.G. Jung, who has perhaps been the greatest twentieth-century spokesman for the very union of mind and soul to which Ficino dedicated his life. In Jung's writings I have found a constant source of inspiration, clarifying and illuminating - in psychological terms - Ficino's alchemical quest.

To illustrate the imbalance this thesis seeks to redress, I shall consider, for the remainder of the Introduction, some modern interpretations and criticisms of Ficino's attitude towards astrology; in particular, the impressive new translation of Ficino's *Liber de vita* edited by Carol Kaske and John Clark. This will, I hope, help to clarify the issue and set a perspective for the reading of the rest of the work.

Despite Marsilius Ficinus florentinus heading Luca Gaurico's list of late 15th century Florentine astrologers,(4) Ficino's integrity and authority as an astrologer are by no means affirmed by modern scholarship. We find bewildered criticisms, condemnations and misrepresentations of his views by scholars who refer to his "oscillations", "inconsistent views", (5), "self-contradiction", (6), "somewhat double-faced attitude", (7) "vacillation on the subject of judicial astrology", (8) "peculiar adaptations of astrology" and even his "relapse into superstition". (9) Such remarks stem mainly from the seeming contradiction in the sequence of his writings concerning his evident enthusiasm for astrology in the everyday life of himself and his friends, and his apparently wholesale rejection of astrological practices in the *Disputatio contra iudicium astrologum* of 1477 and the *Commentary on Plotinus' Enneads II* of ten years later. The *Disputatio* appears to be a polemical attack on astrological determinism, but Ficino's attack goes deeper than that; for he understood such determinism to be the result of a naive, unself-critical complacency on the part of certain astrologers. In particular, he attacked their wilful, short-sighted use of the faculty of judgement (*iudicium*) when making astrological predictions or observations. He does not take issue with the very possibility of making astrological interpretations and judgements - never denying the 'mirroring' of the heavens by the material world - but with the lack of subtlety and imagination - a 'symbolic attitude' - in a literal, 'scientific' approach towards the prediction of particulars. It is not the astrologer who acts responsibly, exercising mature clarity of insight and maintaining a religious awareness of cosmic law, nor judicial astrology in itself, who Ficino criticises, although he suspects it is not within the limits of human capacity to develop the technique required for a comprehensive awareness of all the factors involved. (10) One does not have to try to prove the consistency of Ficino's thought, or assume that we can or should be able to fathom the

undoubtedly paradoxical twists and turns of his expression of it. But its misinterpretation is another matter, and in recent times modern scholarship has shown itself to be sadly unreceptive to the importance of Ficino's reformation of astrological practice.

One such culprit is Carol Kaske, who in her Introduction to the translation of Ficino's *Liber de vita*, mistranslates the very title of the *Disputatio* as *Disputation against judicial astrology* (which would be *astrologia iudiciaria*).⁽¹¹⁾ Together with other Ficinian scholars such as Eugenio Garin, P.O. Kristeller and D.P. Walker, she has certainly pointed to the need for a re-appraisal and consideration of Ficino's astrological thought in his own terms,⁽¹²⁾ but remains curiously unable to enter into the implications of those terms. Garin admits that "with regard to astrology [the work of Marsilio Ficino] has never been adequately looked at in all its fluctuations and variations"⁽¹³⁾, and on the whole scholars have paid insufficient attention to an area which is indispensable for an all-embracing understanding of Ficino's philosophical position. It is very difficult to broach such an area from a perspective of detached historical analysis (what Ficino was to call *notitia*)⁽¹⁴⁾ and a continual danger that personal prejudices or willy-nilly rejection of 'occult' practices will result in an unwillingness to credit Ficino with an understanding of the subject which is more comprehensive than theirs. We find Carol Kaske searching for "plausible patterns"⁽¹⁵⁾ in Ficino's attitude which will help to clarify what she sees as his "self-contradiction". She assumes that Ficino shows "two outright denials of astrology" in the *Disputatio* and in a letter to Poliziano of 1494, where Ficino wrote to his friend in praise of Pico's massive condemnation of astrology, rejoicing that the "superstitious vanity" of the astrologers had been quashed.⁽¹⁶⁾ She supposes that he "turned back to specific predictive astrology" (demonstrated in numerous letters, the *Consiglio contra la pestilenza*⁽¹⁷⁾ and the *Liber de vita* Book 3) in the Apology to the Cardinals against Savonarola, written a year before his death in 1498,⁽¹⁸⁾ and suggests simplistically, and not a little naively, that Ficino's "faith in Savonarola motivated his rejection of astrology", and that as he withdrew his support he "resumed his more habitual attitude to astrology" and that finally after Pico and Poliziano were dead they could not dispute his "relapse into superstition".

It must be pointed out at the outset that we cannot, and should not, attempt to interpret Ficino's various astrological writings in the same way. So much depends on the personal, social and political context and his intended readership. His relationships with both Pico and Poliziano were complex and uneasy, and the involvement of the trio with Savonarola in the 1490s is by no means straightforward or indeed without ominous implications. Ficino's letter to Poliziano can hardly be regarded as a clear-cut statement of astrological belief unconnected to the circumstances in which it was written - in fact it may well have been conceived as a hidden warning to his friend who died mysteriously soon afterwards.(19) It is, I feel, misguided to attempt to define a linear strand of development and/or regression in the chameleon-like, ever changing hues of Ficino's chosen vehicles of expression and angles of vision.

For Ficino, intuitive vision must be a complement to rational thought-processes if any marrying of mind and soul is to be achieved. One cannot approach Ficinian astrology, or hope to enter the flux of his imaginative understanding, with the detachment of purely logical analysis. Carol Kaske's investigation seems to be geared to the idea that the motions of the heavens and their unseen operation on the sublunar world (if any) function as a purely natural-scientific process, and that any results of that process must be measurable by rationalistic norms. Any subjective or occult effects are to be reduced to mere "superstition". She sadly misrepresents Ficino's innovative, personal attitude by an insistence on restricting 'astrology' into a small pigeon-hole of determinism, even denying altogether its possible validity in the world of scholarship: in her introduction to a philologically thorough translation of Ficino's *Liber de vita*, she laments that, in an ideal world, "to do justice to a work so encyclopaedic as *De vita* would ideally require the services of a committee embracing historians of science, of the medical profession, of philosophy, and of religion"(20) - that she evidently would not feel the need to consult practising astrologers is a sad reflection of academic attitudes. Her evident difficulty in incorporating the neo-platonic model of sympathetic cosmic resonance into a broader concept of astrological experience, leads her to attempt restrictive categorisations which purport to delimit Ficino's far-reaching syncretism into "a preference for more-or-less over either/or thinking".(21).

Carol Kaske talks of Ficino's "ominous horoscope", "peculiar adaptations of astrology" and "wholesale rejections of astrology"; she even says "a person with a bad horoscope could hardly be casual and lukewarm towards astrology; he would have to either reinterpret it to give him some hope or else deny it outright".(22). Ficino is continually at pains to point out that crude good/bad distinctions play no part in subtle psychological tempering,(23) and one simply cannot allow Carol Kaske's assumption that Ficino's "very bad horoscope" accounts partly for his "rejection of astrology" in the *Disputatio*(24) - for such a statement totally denies the very freedom of will and voluntary 'negotiation with fate' preserved by Ficino's 'divinatory' attitude. Far from leading him to "reject astrology", Ficino's struggle for self-knowledge, to use profitably the tensions symbolised in his horoscope, encouraged him to explore the meaningfulness of symbols and to throw out the deadwood of a deterministic system. The tests of Saturn are hard, and the recognition that his gifts, offered through the inner power of contemplation, might lead to inspired creative activity was a profound discovery indeed. Certainly for the man who does not exercise his free-will to know his innermost self and align with a higher will, planetary influences may be perceived as harmful; but the difficult and often painful process of such tempering may yield inner strengths which have no other means of development. To call Ficino's concern with his own horoscope an "obsession"(25) sadly makes a mockery of his deep intuitive perception of the benefits of intensely-focussed perseverance as a path towards inner transformation. It seems unimportant to me if Ficino "vacillated" as to whether Saturn "caused" or "prophesied", in any exact technical sense, his own philosophical career(26) - he understood a personal horoscope as potentially revealing innate resources for life and development, and for a greater understanding of personal purpose. To compare this process to an I.Q. test(27) at best misses the point, and at worst degrades the nobility, and sublimity, of the endeavour.

I have illustrated at some length Carol Kaske's critical attitude because it reflects the very cut-and-dried literalism which Ficino himself saw as such an enemy to the creative possibilities which emerge when the imagination is truly valued, when qualitative correspondences and affinities, non-linear kinds of connection are applied. The psychological unity Ficino strives for is not a simple uniformity - clarity of insight is

not able to reduce the complexities of the sublunar world to convenient, simple propositions. Rather, a unified faculty of intuitive perception reveals the corresponding unity behind the complexity of experience, the polytheistic universe, where elements may be tempered and attuned but not reduced in scope to suit the needs of an explanatory system.

Following Plotinus, Ficino intuitively grasped that semiological astrology, regarding heavenly configurations as signs rather than causes, provided a more philosophically coherent foundation for his practice of natural magic, where synchronistic observations and correlations were connected with an *occultus influxus* from the planets and stars. Carol Kaske's definitive statement that Plotinus "was not very interested in either astrology or magic"(28) hardly does justice to the subtle, discriminating appraisal to which he subjects both arts in *Enneads* IV. She appears to consider semiotic astrology as a somewhat poor cousin of the causal variety, whereas if we learn anything from Ficino's attitude, it surely must be quite the opposite; that it is precisely a deterministic astrology which leaves much to be desired in terms of preserving human dignity, and that the neo-platonic/hermetic imaginative, symbolic and essentially magical attitude holds the key to unlocking the door of fate. To read that "Ficino occasionally retreats to it when defending Saturn"(29) or that "the semiological survived such condemnations (of predictive astrology) in Plotinus' thought"(30) surely belittles the very attitude Ficino strove to advocate. What Carol Kaske sees as "generalising" from a single or scanty data(31) Ficino (as indeed Jung) would have advocated as the free-ranging elaboration of the imagination. The limits of determinism, for the Renaissance humanist, can play no useful part in man's striving to know himself, and know God.

Considering all this, is there in fact an "astrological problem" which "comes to a head in *De vita*" and which was "festering" earlier in Ficino's life?(32) D.P. Walker, in an attempt to impose a more "coherent line of development"(33) on Ficino's "varied, inconsistent and usually evasively expressed" views even wishes to re-date the *Disputatio* (with no reliable evidence) to coincide with the letter to Poliziano. D.P. Walker admits at the outset of his paper "I am remarkably ill qualified to speak on astrology. I know nothing of the details of astrological procedures of any

period"(34) and demonstrates his lack of understanding by a bewildered incomprehension at how Ficino, Pico and Poliziano could possibly have laughed at the "vanity of the astrologers"(35): "If only I could find astrology funny, I would read it eagerly, and this would be a much better paper."(36) Such an inability to discriminate between the 'petty ogres' (*nefarios gigantulos*)(37) whose arrogance and folly, in true Democritan spirit, so amused Ficino and the discriminating wisdom of the philosopher/astrologers for whom astrology as a symbolic system became a tool for self-knowledge, is unfortunately a hallmark of recent attempts to clarify Ficino's position. The issue at stake is surely not whether or not Ficino 'believed' in astrology at different times of his life - he clearly takes its phenomena as self-evident. It is rather to appraise his intellectual and intuitive capacities within a specific philosophical/religious framework, from which position he was able to enter into the play of forces implicit in an animated cosmos, and thus use astrological symbolism as a vehicle for his musical psychological therapy.

Abbreviations and Information for References

Letters - *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, 4 volumes, translated by the School of Economic Science.

Op.om. - *Marsilii Ficini, Opera omnia*, 2 volumes (continuous pagination)

Supp.Fic. - *Supplementum Ficinianum*, 2 volumes, ed. P.O. Kristeller

References are re-numbered for each Part of a chapter. All publication details of articles and books are to be found in the Bibliography. Line references to Ficino's *Liber de vita* are taken from *Marsilio Ficino, Three Books on Life* edited by C. Kaske and J. Clark. Plato's works are generally given by name only, translations from the *Collected Dialogues*. For the Hermetic *Pimander* and *Asclepius I* I have used the translation by Walter Scott; for Iamblichus' *De mysteriis* translations by both Alexander Wilder and Thomas Taylor; for Plotinus' *Enneads*, by both Stephen MacKenna and A.H. Armstrong. All translations of original Latin in the body of the thesis are by me unless a modern edition is stated in the references.

REFERENCES to Introduction

1. Ficino, *Prooemium to the Theologia Platonica*, *Op.om.* p.78:
 ... et quicumque Philosophiae studium imple nimium a
 sancta religione seiungunt, agnoscant aliquando se non
 aliter aberrare ...
2. As specified by Boethius, *De institutione musica* I.2: "The first

[music] is cosmic, whereas the second is human; the third is that which rests in certain instruments." (trans. C.M. Bower)

3. G. Cornelius, 'The Moment of Astrology' part IV p.87
4. L. Gauricus *De inventoribus et laudibus astronomiae* 1507. See *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* p.651
5. D.P.Walker, 'Marsilio Ficino and Astrology' pp.341-2
6. Carol Kaske, 'Ficino's shifting attitude towards astrology in the De vita coelitus comparanda, the letter to Poliziano, and the Apologia to the Cardinals' p.372 ref. 2
7. L.Thorndike, 'Ficino the Philosophaster' in *History of Magic and Experimental Science* vol.IV, p.572
8. J. Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* p.282
9. Carol Kaske, 'Ficino's Shifting Attitude' pp.372, 376
10. See G. Zanier, *La Medicina astrologica e la sua teoria* p.45
11. Carol Kaske and John Clark, eds. *Ficino, Three Books on Life* p.31
12. *ibid.* p.6
13. E. Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance* pp.61-2
14. See chapter three, part one
15. Kaske, 'Ficino's shifting attitude' p.372
16. Ficino, letter to Poliziano, *Op. om.* p.958
17. *Consiglio contra la Pestilenza* in *Supp.Fic.I* p.14
18. Kaske, 'Ficino's shifting attitude' pp.371-3
19. See chapter three part one, ref.39
20. Kaske and Clark, *Three Books on Life* p.6
21. *ibid.* pp.44,62
22. *ibid.* p.19
23. See for example, *Liber de vita* 2.XVI.215; 3.XI.254
24. Kaske and Clark, *Three Books on Life* p.19
25. *ibid.* p.22
26. *ibid.* p.58
27. *ibid.*

28. *ibid.* p.64
29. *ibid.* p.58
30. *ibid.* p.88
31. *ibid.* pp.39,44
32. *ibid.* p.55
33. D.P. Walker, 'Marsilio Ficino and Astrology' p.342
34. *ibid.* p.341
35. See *Supp.Fic.II* p.274:
Nec quoties una facetiamur uberior nobis occasio
sequesque ridendi quam de vanitate astrologorum,
praesertim si tertius veniat Politianus, intervenit
vero semper omnium superstitionum mirus exhibitor.
36. D.P. Walker, 'Marsilio Ficino and Astrology' p.342
37. *Letters* vol.3 p.76, *Op.om.* p.781

CHAPTER ONE: MUSICA MUNDANA

Prisca Theologia - Ficino's Ancient Authorities

PART ONE: PLATO

1.1. Prologue

"let us rather say that the cause and purpose of god's invention and gift to us of sight was that we should see the revolutions of intelligence in the heavens and use their untroubled course to guide the troubled revolutions in our own understanding, which are akin to them and so, by learning what they are and how to calculate them accurately according to their nature, correct the disorder of our own revolutions by the standard of invariability of those of god ... all audible musical sound is given us for the sake of harmony, which has motions akin to the orbits in our soul, and which, as anyone who makes intelligent use of the arts knows, is not to be used, as is commonly thought, to give irrational pleasure, but as a heaven-sent ally in reducing to order and harmony any disharmony in the revolutions within us."(1)

This passage from Plato's *Timaeus* encapsulates concisely the very theme of this thesis, and is perhaps the earliest explicit testimony we have to the connection between symbolic astrology, and the practical use of music-making as a therapy. Plato understood that the arts of astrology and music, at their highest potential, are both means by which human beings can achieve inner equilibrium of soul and self-knowledge. For they can be seen as a reflection and echo - a "heaven-sent ally" - of the perfect and immutably decreed pattern of motion and harmony established in the cosmos by the divine creator, and deeply imprinted within the human soul. In this chapter I shall be exploring the common sources and roots of such a hypothesis as revealed in the 'ancient theology' of Ficino's most revered authorities in the Pythagorean-Hermetic tradition, who not only provided his own practice of 'natural magic' with sound philosophical precedents, but were also his constant, living sources of inspiration. In the teachings and writings of Pythagoras, Plato, Hermes Trismegistus and Orpheus (continued in the neo-platonic schools of Plotinus, Porphyry,

Iamblichus and Proclus) Ficino found kindred spirits, whose religious philosophy he could interpret as being entirely in sympathy with Christian teaching. Ficino's conviction that a thread of truth could be discerned, to a greater or lesser extent, at all periods of history, woven through religion and philosophy - particularly via the Platonic tradition - led him to dedicate his life to the reconciliation of this 'religious' philosophy with Christian revelation. He produced, to this end, his main philosophical and theological works, the *Theologia Platonica*(2) and *De Christiana religione*.(3) In the words of Hankins:

"For Ficino, Platonism, instead of being the nemesis of Christendom, is part of God's providential design for the human race, a *philosophia perennis*, springing intertwined with Christianity from the same soil of religious experience; each of them lends support to the other in their growth towards perfection and truth."(4)

Ficino saw the scholastic Aristotelianism of the previous centuries as having failed to achieve the goals of moral and religious training due to an over-insistence on dogmatic, formulaic methods of teaching at the expense of inner reflection. He maintained that true knowledge must first and foremost be an intuition of the divine which is by its very nature prophetic, and which draws everything back to the subjective, qualitative experience of the individual. In this way, it could not be argued that Plato's religious experience was qualitatively different from or inferior to that of Moses or other Hebrew prophets. Ficino recognised the need to fertilise the traditional, orthodox religious values of his time with the water of the soul - a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter (signifying formal tradition and inspired revelation) such as was actually witnessed in the heavens in 1484, the year that his complete translation of Plato appeared. Ficino would also understand Saturn with Jupiter to represent the Platonic unity of wisdom and worldly power, and would have seen such an ideal embodied in his patron and close friend Lorenzo de' Medici.(5)

The syncretic tendency was of course well represented in the Christian apologetic tradition initiated by Philo, the Alexandrian Church Fathers Clement and Origen and handed down to the Middle Ages via Lactantius and St. Augustine to St. Thomas Aquinas,(6) and in such Christian Platonists as Dionysius Areopagitus(7) and John Scotus Eriugena.(8) The interpenetration

of Aristotelian and Platonic ideas in the Medieval period and the influence of the scholastics on Ficino's philosophy has been discussed by P.O. Kristeller.(9) It is my intention to consider the chief representatives of the perennial wisdom called 'ancient theologians': those great pagan visionaries of the Western esoteric tradition whose religious philosophy most directly fertilised Ficino's particular practice of therapeutic astrology and music-making. Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, Aglaophemus, Pythagoras and Plato(10) - Ficino was deeply attracted by these quasi-'divine' representatives of a tradition, which far from being based exclusively on scholastic verbal definitions of intelligible doctrines, incorporated metaphorical and visionary symbolism together with all kinds of theurgic practices involving natural magic, astrology and music. Above all, it preserved inviolate a secret that was only accessible to those who were worthy of comprehending it, and to this end these initiates "held the assumption that deep truths must be veiled in fable and allegory".(11) Ficino was firmly convinced "that the best pagan minds had been far above polytheistic superstitions, and had adhered to an esoteric philosophico-religious wisdom which they concealed from the uninitiated to avoid persecution and vulgarisation of thought."(12)

The quantity of Greek and Latin texts of which Ficino had first-hand knowledge is formidable, but it is the 'divine Plato' who is most frequently summoned as the advocate of 'right thinking' and as such Ficino's ultimate authority. For the first time in Western history, his complete dialogues, along with the *Corpus Hermeticum* (believed by Renaissance scholars to stem from the hand of Hermes Trismegistus himself), were translated and commented on - by Ficino at the very beginning of his career. In his Preface to the Commentaries on Plato, dedicated to Lorenzo de'Medici(13) Ficino tells us how Lorenzo's grandfather Cosimo entrusted him with the task, establishing him as the leader of the Academy at Careggi which was to become the focal intellectual and artistic centre of the Florentine Renaissance. For Ficino, Plato was no less than a prophet of eternal wisdom:

" ... Almighty God, at an appointed time, sent down the divine spirit of Plato from on high to shed the light of holy religion upon all peoples, through his life, genius and marvellous teaching."(14)

Although Ficino claims that the style of his master could never be reproduced, being "more like that of a divine oracle than any human eloquence, now resounding on high, now flowing with the sweetness of nectar, ever encompassing the secrets of heaven"(15) nevertheless in many of his own writings (particularly his correspondence) we may glimpse the qualities he admires so much - the veiling of truth with humour and jest, the "sweetening" of profound thought with "some sweet and useful matter", (16)) the very use of language itself to rhetorically captivate and seduce the minds of worldly men into contemplating more enduring spiritual realities:

" ... indeed Plato's style appears to be more poetical than philosophical; now his words thunder and reverberate like those of a seer, now they flow gently, and all the while they obey no human power but one that is prophetic and divine; he does not play the part of a teacher so much as a priest or prophet, now enrapturing some whilst expiating others, and seizing them with divine frenzy in the same way."(17)

Hankins has observed(18) that in his literary style Ficino was not content to reproduce the "rhetorical fervour and elegant style" of his contemporary humanists, but cultivated his own rich, pithy and "mystagogic" language, full of irony, puns and allegorical excursions. Following his master Plato, Ficino knew how to use appropriate language as a bait or 'divine lure', to entice the reader to exercise his imaginative faculty and develop an ability to find the hidden meaning in myth and symbol - always encouraging the light of the intellect to be turned inwards towards the *imago Dei* in the human soul.

Through the miracle of Divine Providence which has "restored to the light" Platonic wisdom, Ficino sees Philosophy, the daughter of Minerva, extending encouragement to Lorenzo to enter the Platonic Academy. On one level this is an invitation to join the elite at Careggi, where the gods themselves inspire and instruct: Apollo sings in the garden, Mercury declaims at the entrance, Jupiter pronounces justice, and, most importantly, "within the innermost sanctuary, philosophers will come to know their Saturn *contemplating the secrets of the heavens*" (my italics).(19) Already we have an indication of the elevated and noble function of the symbolic imagery of astrology in Ficino's quest for self-

knowledge, as also of the central role of musical performance, for as we shall see in chapter four, Ficino's contemplation of "the secrets of the heavens" involved specially composed musical settings of Orphic hymns addressed to planetary deities. Certainly the task of knowing his own Saturn by such a means was to prove life-long, and was to carry profound consequences for astrology - namely, the re-interpretation of the traditional 'malefic' view of the planet. On another level, Ficino's invitation can be understood as a universal and timeless exhortation to mankind to join an esoteric 'Platonic Academy' and embark on the difficult but infinitely rewarding journey to true happiness through philosophical speculation and religious contemplation.

Ficino's fervent conviction that true religion would find in the Platonic teachings its surest defence against profanity initiated a revival of ancient wisdom and pagan spirituality which places him at the forefront of a new era - most especially through the philanthropic incorporation of Hermetic and neo-platonic 'licit' magic into his every-day practice as a healer of soul and body. It must not be forgotten that Ficino was both a priest and a physician, and that his wide range of activities included interaction and communication with the ordinary Florentine citizen, whether in Church or at their bedside. Ultimately, it was the application of his religious philosophy to compassionate therapeutic ends, via sermons and public lectures, herbal remedies and astrological music, which superseded any mere theorising, and which singled him out amongst his contemporaries in the Academy, such as his particular friends the philologist and poet Angelo Poliziano and the brilliant but wayward young Giovanni Pico. For Ficino, the practice of sympathetic magic was a means by which *gnosis* could be attained, in the same way that the alchemist's art was directed towards the union of heaven and earth. Both the magician and the alchemist were striving for psychological unity through the strengthening of consciousness, or knowledge of the 'divine' essence of man and matter. But this will be considered further in chapter four.

I shall now look at several of the key texts which set in perspective Ficino's practice as a Renaissance magus - those which reveal the particular cosmological framework on which his 'natural magic' depends.

1.2. The *Timaeus* and Pythagorean harmonia

Pythagoras, the father of the concept of *musica mundana*, the harmony of the spheres, is a figure shrouded in legend, and we know little of the life of the man himself. However, to the Renaissance Platonist he was the most revered representative of the highest spiritual and intellectual attainment.(20) It is probable that he travelled in Egypt and Babylon, perhaps becoming initiated into the spiritual wisdom of the Egyptians, and almost certainly becoming a spokesman for the long-established Eastern religious tradition. Ernest McClain(21) has emphasised the 'totally unhistorical' basis of many traditional stories of Pythagorean discoveries, suggesting that their origin may be traced to ancient Babylon. He shows that Sumer and Babylon were mathematically highly advanced, incorporating music, mathematics and religion in a system of knowledge which was bequeathed to the Western world via the teachings of Pythagoras and Plato.(22)

It is generally held that it was Pythagoras who discovered that musical intervals may be reduced to numerical ratios,(23) thus providing a mathematical basis for audible harmony. The perfect intervals of the octave, fifth and fourth all contain as their numerical basis the numbers one to four, and so the tetraktys became equated with the notion of *harmonia*, the 'fitting of things together' or adjustment of parts in a complex whole.(24) In the words of Guthrie,

"The discovery of Pythagoras, that the basic intervals of Greek music could be represented by the ratios 1:2, 3:2 and 4:3, made it appear that *kosmos* - order and beauty - was imposed on the chaotic range of sound by means of the first four integers, 1,2,3 and 4."(25)

In his Commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* which became the chief authority on neo-platonism in the Middle Ages, Macrobius deals extensively with number in creation.(26) Here we learn that odd numbers are associated with the male principle, and even numbers with the female. The two are united in the substance of the world soul of the *Timaeus*. The number one, the monad or creative principle, is bisexual and both odd and even in nature. Understood, in a musical metaphor, as the generating 'fundamental' of the scale of creation, the unfolding of the consonant octave in the

ratio of 1:2 can be seen as the emergence of the female principle out of the original unity - astrologically, this can be further illustrated by the symbols of the Sun and Moon. Macrobius affirms(27) that the Pythagoreans "revere [the tetraktys] among their secrets as pertaining to the perfection of the soul" and for Iamblichus its secrets are connected with the oracle at Delphi, the seat of the highest and most sacred wisdom.(28) Connected with the tetraktys we find its sum, the sacred Decad or number ten, a symbol of perfection and completion. Not only does it contain the numbers which constitute the ratios of 'perfect' musical intervals but also encompasses all four dimensions of experience, being the sum of the geometrical progressions of point (one), line (two), triangle (three) and pyramid (four).(29)

The Pythagorean concept of the harmonious structure of a universe founded on numerical ratio was transmitted via the creation myth of Plato's *Timaeus*.(30) In *Psychology and Western Religion* Jung shows that pre-Christian parallels to the three-fold symbolism of the Trinity are to be found in Babylonian and Egyptian traditions, and that such ideas were assimilated into Christianity through Philo and Plutarch.(31) He refers to Porphyry's statement(32) that the symbol of a cross within a circle signified the world-soul for the Egyptians, and considers the psychological implications of the triad and quaternity as symbols of completion. In this section I can but summarise his conclusions, which provide an interpretation of the *Timaeus* as an allegory of fundamental psychological experience.

According to Macrobius, two is the first number, as with its separation from the undivided One multiplication may begin: "As soon as the number two appears, a unit is produced out of the original unity, and this unit is none other than that same unity split into two and turned into a 'number'".(33) From this duality of the 'one' and the 'other' a tension arises, as the one holds on to the other and the other pushes away from the one. Here we find the essential duality represented by archetypal oppositions such as light and dark, good and evil, male and female. It is a condition of unresolvable antagonism which must eventually give rise to a third unifying principle: "every tension of opposites culminates in a release, out of which comes the 'third'. In the third, the tension is

resolved and the lost unity is restored."(34) Whereas the emergence of two from one is prerequisite for the act of 'knowing' or differentiation of consciousness from an unconscious, primordial chaos, three appears as a synonym for the process of development in time and is expressed by the perfect symmetry of the equilateral triangle.(35) Three is perfect as it is the beginning, middle and end;(36) in religious experience the absolute Deity unfolded into three aspects.

In the *Timaeus* we read:

"god, when he began to put together the body of the universe, made it of fire and earth. But it is not possible to combine two things properly without a third to act as a bond to hold them together. And the best bond is one that effects the closest unity between itself and the terms it is combining ..."(37)

The mean holding the two opposites together will be a geometrical proportion "such that, as the first is to it, so is it to the last" as in the progression $2:1 = 4:2 = 8:4 = 2$. This, continues Plato, would suffice if the world were a plane surface. But solids require two means to connect them: "So god placed water and air between fire and earth, and made them so far as possible proportional to each other.. and in this way he bound the world into a visible and tangible whole."(38) Thus, the unit of the triad is produced from the union of one pair of opposites only, a two-dimensional construct whose reality is not physical, but remains on the plane of abstract thought. To encompass physical reality in its fourfold aspect, two pairs of opposites need to unite. Here, suggests Jung, is the dilemma of the 'three' and the 'four' found reflected psychic experience:

"Plato begins by representing the union of opposites two-dimensionally, as an intellectual problem to be solved by thinking, but then come to see that its solution does not add up to reality. In the former case we have to do with a self-subsistent triad, and in the latter with a quaternity. This was the dilemma which perplexed the alchemists for more than a thousand years ... and is also found in psychology as the opposition between the functions of consciousness, three of which are fairly well differentiated, while the fourth, undifferentiated, 'inferior' function is undomesticated, unadapted, uncontrolled, and primitive."(39)

Jung draws our attention to the opening words of the dialogue, where Socrates notices that a guest is missing: "One, two, three - but where, my dear Timaeus, is the fourth of my guests of yesterday ..?",(40) suggesting that, read symbolically, the implication is that either air or water is missing from the equation of reality. If it is air, then there is no connecting link with fire; if water, then no link with earth - and we must agree with Jung's conclusion that "Plato certainly did not lack spirit; the missing element he so much desired was the concrete realisation of ideas."(41) The dichotomy between the perfection of the Ideal world and the imperfection of earthly reality was not easily breached by Plato, who struggled and failed to put his political theories into action. His vision of the world was as a 'blessed god' - whole, perfect and uncorrupted;(42) without the fluid, fertilising bonding of water, air has no means of integration with the realm of mother earth, which then can only be regarded as anathema to spiritual aspiration, hostile and full of painful limitation:

"The step from three to four brought him sharply up against something unexpected and alien to his thought, something heavy, inert, and limited, which no *me on* [not being] and no 'privatio boni' can conjure away or diminish."(43)

The Platonic/Christian legacy of a triadic, 'masculine' spirituality has of course been continually underpinned by the complementary 'shadow' of pagan religions. Ficino's re-discovery and promotion of Hermes Trismegistus and neo-platonic magic heralded a breakthrough of the 'feminine' imaginative aspect of religious experience which promised a potential healing of the elemental split - indeed this is the hallmark of the Renaissance. As a Christian priest, his embracing of Lady Minerva can be seen as a symbolic marriage of spirit and soul in the alchemical alembic of Philosophy, where will and desire are one.

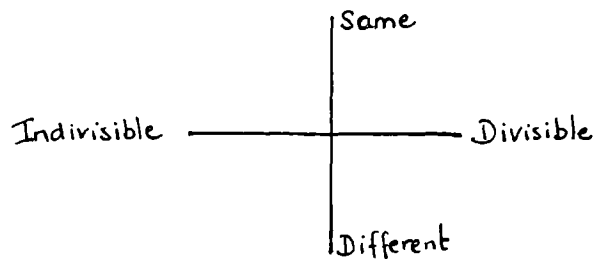
1.3. The World-soul

In the *Phaedrus* Plato presents us with a succinct description of the nature of soul as an all-pervading cosmic life-force:

"Soul taken as a whole is in charge of all that is animate, and traverses the entire universe, appearing at different

times in different forms. When it is perfect and winged it moves on high and governs all creation, but the soul that has shed its wings falls until it encounters solid matter. There it settles and puts on an earthly body, which appears to be self-moving because of the power of soul that is in it, and this combination of soul and body is given the name of a living being and is termed mortal."(44)

In the *Timaeus* Plato tells us that the Demiurge fashioned this soul of the living god of the world, its governing principle, from a mixture of the 'indivisible existence' and the 'divisible existence', and the 'same' and the 'different', thus producing a third kind of independent compound.(45) He then mixed them into a single unity, "forcing the Different, which was by nature allergic to mixture, into union with the Same, and mixing both with Existence." The world-soul is thus three in one, "a revelation or unfolding of the God-image."(46) Jung points out that Plato makes a subtle difference between the two oppositions of indivisible/divisible and same/different, for there is no suggestion that the divisible has to be united forcibly in the same manner as the different. Rather, we are presented with a quaternio composed of two oppositions, whose middle term coincides:



Jung suggests that the triad of the indivisible and the divisible with their mean corresponds to the condition of abstract thought, which needs the addition of the second mixture, the same and different, to become 'reality'. This added dimension necessarily involves the incorporation of that most recalcitrant element, the different:

"The 'Other' is therefore the 'fourth' element, whose nature it is to be the adversary and to resist harmony. But the fourth, as the text says, is intimately connected with Plato's desire for 'being'. One thinks, not unnaturally, of the impatience the philosopher must have felt when reality proved so intractable to his ideas."(47)

The common mean between all four opposites, or elements, could also be seen as the fifth part - the unifying substance of soul which unites the

four elements of the body of the world. We could also see the two mixtures as representing the means of air and water needed to unite the outer extremes of fire and earth, or in psychological terms the 'masculine' and 'feminine' aspects of the soul, the latter being most deeply buried therefore more inaccessible to male consciousness. Whatever archetypal process is being represented in this myth, it is important to realise that Plato would not have been aware of the 'fourth' as a 'problem':

"However extraordinary his genius may have been, it by no means follows that his thoughts were all conscious ones. The problem of the fourth, for instance, which is an absolutely essential ingredient of totality, can hardly have reached his consciousness in complete form. If it had, he would have been repelled by the violence with which the elements were to be forced into a harmonious system. Nor would he have been so illogical as to insist on the threefoldness of his world-soul. Again, I would not venture to assert that the opening words of the *Timaeus* are a conscious reference to the underlying problem of the recalcitrant fourth. Everything suggests that the same unconscious spiritus rector was at work which twice impelled the master to try to write a tetralogy, the fourth part remaining unfinished on both occasions. This factor also ensured that Plato would remain a bachelor to the end of his life, as if affirming the masculinity of his triadic God-image."(48)

In relation to the *Timaeus*, it remains to consider the harmonious structure of the world-soul in terms of *musica mundana* and *humana*. The Demiurge divides up the soul-stuff according to the ratios of the three consonant intervals and then fills it out to complete a musical scale.(49) It is then cut into two strips which are bent around each other, forming the circles of the Same and the Different, which contain the spheres of the fixed stars and the orbiting planets. This strip of the Different is itself divided into narrower strips which form the basis of the movements of the individual planets, and are arranged according to the seven numbers which constitute the two geometrical progressions of 1,2,4,8 and 1,3,9,27. The corporeal world, that is, the physical bodies of the spheres, is created within the world-soul:

"and the soul was woven right through from the centre to the outermost heaven, which it enveloped from the outside and, revolving on itself, provided a divine source of unending and rational life for all time. The body of the heaven is visible, but the soul invisible and endowed with reason and

harmony, being the best creation of the best of intelligible and eternal things."(50)

The planets and the fixed stars move in contrary motion; the planets move according to the strip of the Different which moves against that of the Same. Here also we learn that the physical world is a unique copy of the eternal:

"[The Demiurge] made in that which we call time an eternal moving image of the eternity which remains for ever at one."(51)

Time and movement, in the realm of change, lead to decay, death and rebirth; the planets, or 'instruments of time', are, according to Plato, created in order to define and preserve our sub-celestial realm and it is from their movements that man on earth understands 'time'. The Demiurge constructs the zodiacal sphere of the fixed stars like "a kind of universal cosmic embroidery"(52) around the heavens, and gives them the two motions of individual rotation and forward movement within the band as a whole. Beyond this realm, 'time' is of quite another order; eternal and immutable.

The Demiurge divides the soul-stuff into "as many souls as there are stars" and allots each soul to a star.(53) Plato says that each soul would be sown in its "appropriate instrument of time", that is, planet, and that it would return to its native star if it lived a good life:

"And mounting them on their stars, as if on chariots, he showed them the nature of the universe and told them the laws of their destiny. To ensure fair treatment for each at his hands, the first incarnation would be one and the same for all and each would be sown in its appropriate instrument of time and be born as the most god-fearing of living things."(54)

However, the soul which did not refrain from wrong-doing

"would have no respite from change and suffering until he allowed the motion of the Same and uniform in himself to subdue all that multitude of riotous and irrational feelings which have clung to it since its association with fire, water, air and earth ... To avoid being responsible for their subsequent wickednesses he sowed some of them in the earth, some in the moon and some in all the other instruments of time ..."(55)

and the rest, he left to newly-created gods who fashioned mortal bodies, and into them, the orbits of the immortal soul. The violent conflict which ensued when the stream of incorruptibility plunged into the earthly body caused the motions of the whole being to become "irregular, fortuitous and irrational". This is the perpetual state of man, caught in a conflict between the pull of his irrational, mortal part and the awareness of his essential divine nature. The implication is that the element of the 'same' retained by each incarnating soul is a particular quality of the fixed star under which it is born, that is, of the zodiac. It is also allotted a quality of the 'different', that is from a particular planet, and it is not difficult to see here the origins of a speculative astrology where the planetary configurations at the moment of birth mirror the inherent characteristics of an individual.

In this myth Plato is describing symbolically the very beginning of Time, when the seeds of all future generations are sown. It would seem that here we have an esoteric explanation of the fundamental astrological tenet of the twelve psychological and physical types, and the suggestion that there is a higher law which determines the time of birth of each individual so that he may embody the appropriate characteristics for his unique destiny. In natal horoscopy, not only is each person born under a particular constellation, but he has a personal 'ruling planet' determined by his time of birth.(56) According to Plato, this is understood to be the particular 'instrument of time' to which he is allotted before birth, and often referred to as his 'guardian spirit'.(57)

In chapter two I shall be exploring in more detail the implications of the two 'orders' of time, temporal (the realm of change) and eternal (unchanging) in the context of neo-platonic magic. The framework set out by Plato in the *Timaeus* provides a powerful image and reference point for the paradoxical experiences of man as microcosm, who has a foot in both worlds.

1.4. Musica mundana

If number is responsible for perfect harmony, then number must assume a mystical significance, since audible music founded on the particular intervallic ratios underlying the cosmic soul will inevitably cause a sympathetic reaction in the human soul, which is fashioned from the same substance. This is vividly expressed by Cornford:

"The living creature (soul and body) is the individual unit or microcosm; the world, macrocosm, is likewise a living creature with a body and soul. Individuals reproduce the whole in miniature; they are not mere fractions, but analogous parts of the whole which includes them."(58)

That the Pythagoreans equated this *harmōnia* with audible music is attested by Plato in the *Republic*, where he criticises those who "prefer to use their ears instead of their minds" to judge intervals:

"for [the Pythagoreans] do just what the astronomers do; they look for numerical relationships in audible concords, and never get as far as formulating problems and examining which numerical relations are concordant, which not, and why."(59)

As we would expect, for Plato the autonomous theoretical speculation of the mind was of a superior order to the observations gained from the 'unreliable' senses of vision or hearing, which was not the case for the Pythagoreans, who evidently in their practical philosophy did not share his difficulty in attributing value to the sensory realm.(60) Music-making (as indeed all forms of art) was ideally to be in service to philosophical insight, a means of reducing the chaos of the human condition by participating in, not just imitating, the divine pattern - a view shared by Iris Murdoch:

"The proper activity of the human artist is in simple ways to discern and emphasize and extend the harmonious rhythms of divine creation: to produce good design rather than rival objects ... The decent artist patiently sorts order out of disorder."(61)

These 'harmonious rhythms', for the musician, are the harmonies of the spheres themselves. The origins of such a concept are obscure; although the idea of planetary motion producing harmony must originate in pre-

Pythagorean times, it is from Aristotle, in his lost book on the Pythagoreans(62) that we learn of their notion that the distances between planets formed harmonic ratios, and that those furthest from the earth moved the most rapidly.(63) In *On the Heavens*(64) Aristotle refutes the idea that the planets' revolutions give forth real musical harmony, although he concedes that the idea is "ingeniously and brilliantly formulated". He states the size and speed of the moving bodies as the Pythagoreans' evidence that sound is produced, and says:

"Taking this as their hypothesis, and also that the speeds of the stars, judged by their distances, are in the ratios of the musical consonances, they affirm that the sound of the stars as they revolve is concordant."

Aristotle's criticism is purely empirical, based on natural scientific observation of moving objects in a medium which is itself in motion - he was not concerned with the need for a metaphorical interpretation. In the *Timaeus*, Plato does not imply a system of audible cosmic harmony in the world soul - it is in the 'Myth of Er'(65) where he suggests the origin of harmonia as pitches sounded by sirens positioned on the rims (representing the planetary orbits) on the spindle of Necessity:

"And on the top of each circle stands a siren, which is carried round with it and utters a note of constant pitch, and the eight notes together make up a single scale."(66)

In *The Pythagorean Plato*(67) Ernest McClain suggests a detailed musical allegory underlying the myth as a whole, the ratios of the musical tetraktys being represented by specific periods of time based on the number ten and seven. He ingeniously presents the idea of a tempered tuning system in relation to the three Fates, for since they are seated "at equal distance from one another", this would suggest positions of equally-tempered major thirds which are not possible in the Pythagorean system, hence the adjustment required of Lachesis.(68) The psychological implications of 'tempering' a scale according to a particular tuning system in order to preserve certain 'perfect' intervals or avoid discordant ones are evident if we imagine that the pattern established in the heavens is that which is deeply embedded in the human soul. McClain suggests(69) that Plato understood the necessity for such temperament and how it would be reflected in society. In the *Republic*(70) Plato uses a musical analogy to

describe the perfect working order of the ideal state, where self-discipline provides the same function as temperance in the maintaining of balance between all elements:

"Unlike courage and wisdom, which made our state brave and wise by being present in a particular part of it, self-discipline stretches across the whole scale. It produces a harmony between its strongest and weakest and middle elements..."

We saw earlier (see pages 21-2) that the process of creation involves the step from 'one' to 'two', thus initiating a tension of opposing forces of expansion and contraction. In the *Philebus* Socrates suggests that the very foundation of music is to be found in the inherent harmony of these opposites:

"doesn't [the opposites'] proper integration in height and depth and speed and slowness, which are indeterminates ... create limit, and form the entire foundation of the whole art of music."(71)

In Jung's hypothesis of the quaternity of elements, held together in a tensile equilibrium and forming the archetypal pattern of the soul, we can find a powerful musical analogy. The two 'conscious' and two 'unconscious' functions can be seen to correspond to the audible overtones and inaudible undertones generated from a single pitch, for division produces the overtones of the harmonic series by expansion analogously to the creation of the manifest world out of the One first principle.(72) Iris Murdoch points out that it is the Demiurge alone who has direct perception of both limits, the 'overtones' of creation and the 'undertones' of unconscious, unmanifest potential, "who can see both ends of the scale of being, the great uncreated Particulars and the little created ones."(73) The hypothesis of undertones and their implications has been explored fully by Joscelyn Godwin who suggests that their postulation is a necessary step "towards understanding how the musical system can be an intelligible symbol of the world of Ideas."(74) This is because they 'balance' the audible reality of overtones by representing their "unmanifested counterpart" in the realm of the Ideas, or what Jung would term the collective unconscious.(75) Godwin concludes that

"The twin rows of harmonics represent the universal forces of contraction (overtones) and expansion (undertones),

which for many theosophers are at the very foundation of Being, and both necessary for Creation to emerge from Chaos."(76)

He suggests that it is possible that the science of harmonics which was considered by Plato as the highest form of knowledge(77) is that of esoteric study of the overtone and undertone series, hinted at by Iamblichus(78) and expressed in the diagram of the lambda.(76) The implications of this extremely complex subject cannot be explored within the limits of this thesis, but it bears direct relevance to theories of sympathetic cosmic resonance and *musica humana*, or the attuning of the human soul and body to the harmonies inherent in creation, via *musica instrumentalis*.(80) It would certainly carry implications for 'right action' and moral responsibility stemming from recognition of the 'undertones' as well as the 'overtones' of psychic existence:

"But our actions also have an exterior result whose influence spreads out and eventually affects, however slightly, the entire universe. The latter is part of the karma (=action) that we create, often disbelieved by the unphilosophical because, like the undertones, it is imperceptible or delayed by a long lapse of time, but none the less a metaphysical necessity. It is symbolically most apt that we can grasp the overtones with our senses, as we enclose our body's parts, but not the undertones, since they belong to the macrocosm outside us."(81)

In Jungian terms, the least differentiated function of the quaternity can never become wholly conscious, and will be experienced as the most problematic and threatening aspect of the 'external' world. Depth psychology recognises that elements belonging to what is now understood as the 'unconscious' are inevitably projected onto matter, or the cosmos, in an attempt to reflect back and thus gain some insight into the deeper, 'hidden' workings of the soul.(82) We can see this in operation in the Pythagorean tradition of planetary scales and intervals, where distances between the planets correspond to the ratios between notes in a musical scale.(83) Joscelyn Godwin observes(80) that this theory is fundamentally a projection into the heavens of a scale system based on the nine-stringed Greek lyre: "It is an attempt to make the heavens accord with a system of earthly music, while asserting on the contrary that the earthly system is a

result of the heavenly order" which can be represented in the realm of *musica instrumentalis* by the monochord.

There is a tradition that Pythagoras himself was able to hear the music of the spheres - Iamblichus(84) tells us that he understood universal harmony through intellectual speculation, and then was able to imitate for his disciples what he perceived through the audible music of voice and instruments. It is also experienced by Scipio (in the sixth book of Cicero's *De republica*)(85) when, in a dream, his grandfather transports him to the realm of the fixed stars, whence he looks back at the planetary spheres and the Earth, and gains a new perspective on the affairs of the world. Without the restrictions of earth-bound senses, Scipio can contemplate the miraculous order of the cosmos and learn of his soul's true origins. His grandfather testifies that the "great and pleasing sound" he hears is indeed the music of the spheres:

"That ... is a concord of tones separated by unequal but nevertheless carefully proportioned intervals, caused by the rapid motion of the spheres themselves. The high and low tones blended together produce different harmonies. Of course such swift motions could not be accomplished in silence and, as nature requires, the spheres at one extreme produce the low tones and at the other extreme the high tones. Consequently the outermost sphere, the star-bearer, with its swifter motion gives forth a higher-pitched tone, whereas the lunar sphere, the lowest, has the deepest tone. Of course the earth, the ninth and stationary sphere, always clings to the same position in the middle of the universe. The other spheres, two of which move at the same speed, produce seven different tones, this number being, as might almost say, the key to the universe. Gifted men, imitating this harmony on stringed instruments and in singing, have gained for themselves a return to this region, as have those of exceptional abilities who have studied divine matters even in earthly life."(87)

Cicero's planetary music would appear to be generated from the motion of the spheres themselves, not by sirens. It is an audible music which can be appreciated by the disembodied soul, and in this sense different from the purely theoretical proportional arrangement as described in the *Timaeus*. In Cicero's account earthly music-making has an exalted role indeed, corresponding to that of philosophical speculation in its potential for reuniting the soul with its divine source. The musical ladder of the octave is a powerful analogy for the journey of the soul from Earth to heaven via

the steps or tones of the planets, for the eighth step, the octave, represents the culmination of the journey beyond the sphere of the fixed stars in the perfection of the Intelligible realm. Cicero compares the magnitude of sound produced by such a harmony to the sun - for neither may be directly confronted. The human sense of hearing is too dull to catch it, as vision is too weak to gaze into the sun's rays; both however may be recognised through their reflections and echoes by those who are gifted - that is already endowed with a particular receptivity - and who develop particular skills to this end.

The question to be asked, of course, is what it means to be 'gifted'; to be able to hear the harmonies of heaven and reproduce them on earth. The whole concept of music therapy, considered from the Platonic standpoint, becomes central to the psychological integration of the human being. The notion that soul, connecting the pure Ideas of the divine mind with the planetary and earthly realms, converts these Ideas into the instrumental causes which move the sublunary world (to be extensively elaborated by Plotinus in explanation of 'occult' practices)(88) led Ficino to postulate a *circuitus spiritualis* of energy moving between Mind, Soul and Nature, a "divine influence emanating from God, penetrating the heavens, descending through the elements, and coming to an end in lower matter."(89) The circuit would be completed by the 'plugging in' of the magician-philosopher, who would know how to use the hidden properties of soul in the material world and in musical sound for the ultimate aim of re-aligning his own with God (that is, gaining greater self-knowledge). Man can know of the interpenetration of the world-soul through its effects in the spiritual circuit, and 'therapeutic' astrological music can be seen as a way of working with and on these effects as they are manifest symbolically as planetary energies in the human psyche - for if a personal natal horoscope provides an image of the particular concords and discords of the heavens at the moment of a soul's incarnation, it is not unreasonable to assume that knowledge of the laws of astrology, musical skill and an active symbolic imagination could combine in a therapeutic process of considerable transformative power. Such was the intention of Ficino's Orphic singing.

1.5. The *Epinomis*

An appendix to the *Laws*, this spurious treatise addresses the question of the nature of wisdom, and is directly relevant to the intrinsic connection we are making between astrology and music; which is of course their dependence on number. Whether by Plato or not, the *Epinomis* contains a summation of Platonic thought on the fundamental musical and rhythmical constitution of life itself and man's participation in the eternal cosmic dance. The kind of wisdom Plato draws our attention to is that which exceeds all intellectual 'knowledge' and consists of a deep connection to the fundamental pulsing of nature combined with reverence and awe for the transcendent principles, or gods, as they are manifest in the bodily vehicles of the stars and planets. As we shall see in the next chapter, it is such a quality of being which is prerequisite for the effectiveness of any 'magical' operation intended to achieve psychological harmonisation - a quality which can be fostered by the right use of the arts whose basis lies in numerical proportion.

The Athenian begins his investigation into the nature of such wisdom and the studies required to achieve it by making the clear distinction between the outer quantitative forms of knowledge-accumulation and the inner intuition, common to all men if they stop to listen, that there must be another dimension - the qualitative, 'irrational' element of experience - which requires recognition and integration. Such insight, by its very nature, is ephemeral and easily submerged, proving to be elusive

"as soon as we turn to any of the branches of understanding which make up the so-called arts, forms of understanding, or other such fancied sciences. It is as though none of them all deserved the name of wisdom in the affairs of a man's life; yet the soul has a confident trust, a prophetic *divination*, that she possesses such a native capacity ..."(90)(my italics)

Neither is wisdom to be found in the habitual performance of daily activities or unquestioning acceptance of rules necessary for survival, such as those concerning meat-consumption, farming, building, hunting and traditional crafts, nor in the indiscriminating and mechanical relaying of oracles ("the art of the prophet or his interpreter .. fails us entirely; he knows only what his oracle says - whether it is true is more than he can

tell").(91) Once, the Athenian concedes, the man who fully understood his relationship to such activities might have been termed wise, but in his contemporary society such occupations are merely regarded as serviceable or even denigrated as unworthy of the virtuous man.(92) Similarly, those who imitate nature in the arts of music or drawing, show courage in war, skill in medical diagnoses (based on "fanciful conjecture"), expertise in seafaring or persuasion in lawcourts do not possess wisdom unless they are able to refer their particular gift or skill to a higher authority than that of human opinion and unreliable sense-perception.(93) Most lawyers, for example "devote themselves to a study of human character based on memories and empirical fancies, while they are far astray from true comprehension of genuine rights".(94) Even the man of easy, natural sagacity, quick intellect, good memory and astute resourcefulness is not truly wise simply on account of these qualities.(95) In all these types of applied knowledge or natural 'wit' there is an essential factor missing, without which no art or science could transcend human limitations and thus lead to spiritual growth, and without which no adherence to a belief-system would ever convince the believer or anyone else of its claims.(96) This is the knowledge of higher principles which is directly connected to the science of number, given to mankind by the god Uranus, and freely available to all through contemplation of the movements of the heavens:

"If a man will but come to the right contemplation of him, he may call him by the name of Cosmos, Olympus, or Uranus as he pleases; only let him follow him in his course as he bespangles himself and wheels his stars through all their courses in the act of providing us all with seasons and daily food ... and with the gift of the whole number series, ... he gives us likewise the rest of understanding and all other good things. But this is the greatest boon of all, if a man will accept his gift of number and let his mind expatiate over the whole heavenly circuit."(97)(my italics)

Number underlies the principles of rational discourse (otherwise there would be nothing but sensation and memory), all the arts ("all musical effects manifestly depend upon the numeration of motions and tones"), and most importantly of all, the natural rhythmic cycles of the universe.(98) Since the pursuit of wisdom, in the noblest Platonic sense of the strengthening of the divine part of the soul, depends on rational discourse, and goodness and happiness depend on wisdom, then it follows

that the truly wise man must also be happy and good. The message of the *Epinomis* is that such equilibrium is to be achieved through one discipline only: the understanding of numerical proportion through the practice of astronomy. Evil and unhappiness are equated with the disorder and chaos which manifests when events and activities are "destitute of number" and degenerate into undisciplined and unrhythmical outbursts of "tuneless movement".(99) In this sense, number can be equated with virtue, which could be defined as the regulation of disorderly impulses within human nature and the cultivation of measure and proportion in thought, word and deed.

We only have to begin, says the Athenian, with the observation of the rhythmical cycle of night and day (reflecting the numerical equivalent of one to two) and the Moon's period of waxing and waning. The phenomena of such repetitive cycles in nature, such as the months combining to form the year, give living creatures "a general insight into the relations of number with number" at a most profound level of their experience.(100) If anything upsets the natural rhythms with their infallible provision for mankind's wellbeing, it is to be attributed to ignorant human interference and man's inability to order his life within the immutable scheme of the elements, and not to the whim of an angry deity.

The essential ingredient of the intuitive wisdom being advocated is that quality of soul which stems from the direct apprehension that there is a greater power at work in the ordering of human lives than the personal will of the individual; namely, piety.(101) The expression of reverence for such a power needs concrete enactment, while we are in an embodied condition, through ritual worship involving prayers and hymns.(102) A conscious attitude of humility is required if man truly wishes to purge away the earth-bound, acquisitive part of his nature, and to discover the gods' will demands an open, alert attitude of enquiry and attention. Clinias and the Athenian demonstrate this in their prayer to the gods before they embark on discussing them - for in making an intentional connection with forces not usually accessible to human awareness they are stimulating their own capacity for insight into their nature, in order to represent them as truthfully as possible.(103)

There follows a survey of the Platonic dichotomy between solid matter and invisible soul, with the elemental hierarchy extending like a ladder between earth and heaven. Each layer contains its own form of living creature composed from a varying proportion of elements; from the human being with his predominance of earth to the fiery daemons who inhabit the stars.(104) Ficino, in his *Epitome*, elaborates the orders of creatures into a twelve-fold system, making a direct correspondence between stars and men which suggests the differentiation implicit in the twelve signs of the zodiac:

"For [Plato] wishes there to be twelve spheres and twelve souls beyond the one soul of the whole world: then twelve orders of souls in each sphere. In heaven, these orders are constellations and stars, on earth, men: in the aether, air and water they are of course the more lofty daemons."(105)

The earth-bound nature is disorderly and unintelligent, in comparison with the uniformity, autonomy and intelligence of the stars, demonstrated by the immutable laws governing their movements. It is the role of Fate to watch over "the full accomplishment of all that each and every god has determined with perfect good counsel."(106) We could say that to be fate-bound is to be star-bound(107) - that is, to regard the operation of cosmic laws in relation to earthly creatures as limiting and restricting rather than liberating, which can only be achieved through a consenting and willingness to participate in what they decree - the implications of which will be explored more fully in the next two chapters. To free oneself from an attitude of fatalistic determinism and grasp the true principles at work requires a 'turning upside down' of habitual thinking(108) - man, says the Athenian, erroneously believes that human beings are intelligent precisely because they are of a mutable nature, and considers the heavens to be devoid of intelligence because they appear immutable - but this is not the case, for

"that which eternally does the same acts, in a uniform way and for the same reasons, is for that very reason to be deemed intelligent ... as [the stars] move through the figures of the fairest and most glorious of dances they accomplish their duty to all living creatures."(109)

For Plato the presence of soul in the heavenly bodies is proved by the accuracy of their movements in relation to their "amazing magnitude"; and if they are divine then they are worthy of worship either as gods in themselves, or as images fashioned by the gods in their likeness.(110) Their messages are transmitted through the variety of spirits and daemons which invisibly inhabit the elements of air and aether, and those watery demi-gods who are sometimes visible to man (Ficino adds "of course, rather by internal sight than external").(111) Although such spirits, being partly of material constitution, are not exempt from suffering, the stellar and planetary gods are "possessed of an all-embracing wisdom and knowledge"(112) from whose perspective all earthly trials and misfortunes are seen as part of a larger, ultimately harmonious, pattern. The interaction of the daemonic realm with the human may give rise to what we may term 'occult' phenomena, and this is an area to which no one may attempt to apply rational explanations nor confine within the bounds of legislation:

"When it comes to beliefs of individuals or whole societies originating in the intercourse of some [of the daemons] with us - appearances in dreams of the night, oracular and prophetic voices ... no legislator of even the slenderest sense will presume to innovate, and so divert his city to a devoutness with no sure foundations. Nor yet will he prohibit obedience to the inherited usages about sacrifices, since in this matter he has no knowledge whatsoever, as, indeed, 'tis impossible that mankind should have any."(113)

The Sun and Moon command our attention because of their visibility and evident rulership over life and generation. But we are reminded by the Athenian that the remaining five planets are equally worthy of respect and worship as gods who play a necessary part in the ordering of human affairs;(114) again it is stressed that only the art of astronomy will lead to a unified mind, for only by contemplating the order of the whole cosmos as an intricate but perfect expression of the unity or oneness of the creator can the human soul find such a unity reflected within itself. Such a glimpse will evoke desire, not merely intellectual curiosity; that is, it will involve the participation of the irrational soul and stir the erotic connecting force of love which for Plato was prerequisite for beginning the spiritual quest:

"In the happy man this order [in the heavens] awakens first wonder, and then the passion to learn all of it that mortality may, for 'tis thus, as he believes, he will spend his days best and with most good fortune, and after his decease reach the proper abodes of virtue."(115)

The Athenian stresses again that the virtue of piety is learnt through astronomy - the observation and measurement of the heavens must lead to a heartfelt desire for active worship of the divine principles revealed, otherwise it remains on the level of theoretical abstraction criticised at the beginning of the dialogue. The true astronomer, he says, must be a man of great wisdom who has not just observed the visible settings and risings of the Sun and Moon, but who has trained his capacities to comprehend the orbits of all seven planets through the application of arithmetic, geometry and stereometry.(116) "Numbers are indeed incorporeal in themselves", Ficino points out,(117) "since they are none other than a return to unity, and this is indivisible." In metaphysical terms, the return to 'the one' is the ultimate aim of the soul, and the *Epinomis* leaves us with the injunction that if man pursues his studies focussed on a single end and purpose, he will come to understand the unity underlying all geometric constructions, number systems, melodic progressions and schemes of celestial revolutions:

"As such a man reflects, he will receive the revelation of a single bond of natural interconnection between all these problems....[such a man will have] reduced the manifold within himself to unity."(118)

Ficino's *Epitome* chiefly presents an elucidation of the dialogue, with confirmations from Orpheus, Hermes and other writers and one or two personal interpolations and excursions; in particular, concerning the twelve-fold division of the heavens (see page 38 above) and the equating of the musical ratios underlying the intervals of fifth and fourth to the distances between earth to Sun and Sun to firmament, according to Pythagorean tradition.(119) In his introduction Ficino emphasises that a "perfect disposition of mind", a prerequisite for happiness, consists in both speculative wisdom and practical religious ritual.(120) The worshipful attitude towards the divine truths perceived through intellectual energising is vital, for in order to regulate any potential hubristic tendencies or intellectual arrogance, acknowledgment of and

reverence for the 'irrational' elements in experiential religion - the experience of faith - is essential.(121) Such a form of knowledge is innate and natural to the soul and only has to be uncovered and fostered for a desire for the good to emerge and lead the soul to a more unified condition, as it recognises the corresponding unity in incorporeal things. It is not until his later writings, in particular the Commentary on Iamblichus' *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, that Ficino explores more fully the implications of such a way of knowing through similitude (*notio* and *aedequatio*), which we shall consider in more detail in chapter three.

PART TWO: HERMES

1.6. The Corpus Hermeticum

Now let us turn to the development of Platonic cosmology in the early centuries A.D., and in doing so, begin examination of the mode of knowledge embodied in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (which will be continued in more depth in chapter two), together with the attributes of Hermes as a mythological figure. It was in the adaptation and elaboration of Platonic concepts that the neo-platonic and Hermetic authors provided rich soil for the Renaissance flowering of occult and magical arts, and cultivated the seed, already sown by their master, of a 'psychological' application of astrological principles.

In 1463 Cosimo de' Medici instructed the young Ficino to set aside his intended translations of Plato and work immediately on a Latin version of part of the *Corpus Hermeticum*.(1) This treatise was included in a manuscript brought to Florence from Macedonia by a monk who had been employed by Cosimo in his search for Greek texts. Ficino tells us in his Preface to the Commentaries on Plotinus(2) that Cosimo had been inspired to found the Platonic Academy by the teachings of the Platonist Gemisthus Pletho who came to Florence for the Council of Florence in 1438.(3) P.O. Kristeller(4) suggests that it was from Pletho that Ficino derived the idea of the *prisca theologia* - certainly Pletho's visit to Italy can be seen as sowing the seed of a revival of interest in classical paganism, opening and enlivening the debate on the rival virtues of Aristotle and Plato. Both

Cosimo and Ficino felt a profound excitement at the discovery of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which they believed to stem from the hand of Hermes Trismegistus, the Greek name for the Egyptian god Thoth whose sacred books were believed to be the source of wisdom of the Egyptian priests who instructed both Pythagoras and Plato.(5) Ficino, on the authority of St. Augustine,(6) supposed Hermes to be the great-grandson of a contemporary of Moses who drank from the same fount of wisdom. In the ancient theology he found a vehicle for philosophical truth in the same way that Christianity was for religious truth, and both these modes of expression - which connected intellectually and intuitively with transcendent realities - found their common source in Moses.(7)

Various supposedly pre-antique texts, including the Greek *Chaldaean Oracles* attributed to Zoroaster by Pletho(8) and first translated into Latin by Ficino, and the Hermetic Latin *Asclepius* (translated by pseudo-Apuleius) were already in circulation.(9) Renaissance scholars had the excellent authority of St. Augustine and Lactantius(10) that Hermes predated Plato (the fragments and Hymns attributed to Orpheus were not known until the 15th century via the translations of Proclus).(11) In the *Asclepius* Ficino would have read about the magic rites of 'ancient Egyptian' religious practices, particularly those involving statue-animating,(12) and in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, of the summoning of daemons and Sun-worship. The men of the Renaissance would have had no reason to disbelieve the authorities of the Church Fathers regarding the venerable origins of such texts, and their supposed authors came to be considered as early representatives of an ancient wisdom which appeared not only to confirm the truth of Christianity but also to spring from a common source. Ficino often refers to this genealogy, specifying the members on four occasions:(13) in the Preface to his translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* of 1462, he gives the order of these *prisci theologi* or ancient theologians as Mercurius Trismegistus, Orpheus, Aglaophemus, Pythagoras, Philolaus, Plato; in his *Philebus Commentary* (c.1469) and in Book XVII of the *Theologia Platonica* (c.1474) he inserts Zoroaster as the initiator and omits Philolaus, extending the series into the various neo-platonic schools including those of Plotinus and Proclus. Finally in the Preface to Plotinus (1484) he says:

"It was clearly the will of divine providence to recall all men to herself in a wonderful way through the spirit of individual leaders: so it once came about that a holy philosophy was born among the Persians through the influence of Zoroaster and among the Egyptians through Hermes, a philosophy at one with itself in both places. It was then nourished among the Thracians through Orpheus and Aglaophemus, quickly grew up under the guidance of Pythagoras among the peoples of Greece and Italy, and was finally brought to fulfilment by the divine Plato at Athens."(14)

Since Hermes' wisdom was considered to be none other than the source of Plato's own, it is not surprising that Cosimo urgently requested the translation of this newly-discovered work, which Ficino completed shortly before his patron's death.

In fact, to quote Frances Yates, this premise was "a huge historical error"(15) since it is now considered that both the Hermetic and Orphic texts emerged out of Greek gnostic and neo-Pythagorean sects of the second to third century A.D. - to quote D.P. Walker, "a Hellenistic amalgam of Platonism, Stoicism, Judaism and Christianity, set in a gnostic and magical framework".(16) Frances Yates has discussed the origins and influences of the Asclepius and other astrological/chemical 'hermetic' texts, together with the implications of their magical content for the early Christian Church and the Medieval philosopher-theologians. She points out that the age in which they originated, the age of the early gnostic Christians and the neo-platonists, tended strongly towards a intuitive, mystical and magical knowledge of reality:

"Since reason seemed to have failed, it sought to cultivate the *Nous*, the intuitive faculty in man. Philosophy was to be used, not as a dialectical exercise, but as a way of reaching intuitive knowledge of the divine and of the meaning of the world .."(17)

Other scholars have produced convincing evidence that the ideas in the *Hermetica* are indeed of Egyptian origin,(18) and certainly for Ficino their pedigree was beyond question - Egypt was a golden land where wisdom arose from unity of intuition and intellect, where priests were philosophers of the highest order.(19) However, it is not the historical authenticity which concerns us, but the content. Of greatest importance for Ficino was

the intuitive mysticism of Hermes which offered such a complement and contrast both to the dogma of the Church and the rigorous rationalism of idealist philosophy. The fourteen treatises of the *Corpus Hermeticum* were translated by Ficino under the general title of *Pimander*. The tenor of these profoundly self-examinatory texts - "a religious philosophy or philosophical religion"(20) - is revelatory, teaching that the individual can reach personal illumination through the intimate master-disciple relationship, contemplating the macrocosm of the universe as it is reflected in the microcosm of his own soul. Here Ficino would indeed have found confirmation of the esoteric Platonic undercurrents which struck such a deep chord in his own heart - and confirmation of the efficacy of 'philosophical' magic. He knew that the wisdom of the ancient theologians was concealed beneath symbols, numbers, images and allegories so that it should not fall into the hands of those who would abuse it by misunderstanding,(21) and it is important to bear this in mind when considering the apparent contradictions and confusions in Ficino's own writings on astrology, an art whose true potential as a tool for psychological insight was (indeed has always been) often ignored, submerged in a sea of superstitious and ignorant credulity.

1.7. Hermes and mythology

In Greek mythology the primary role of Hermes, the brother of Apollo, is that of messenger.(22) Swift and cunning, armed with winged shoes and cap of invisibility, he knows how to deceive and how to avoid being caught, defined or restrained. He is the god who brings the 'lucky chance', the unexpected benefit, and who snatches it away. He is the communicator, the seductive manipulator of lovers' intrigues, of the persuasive businessman. He is also psychopomp, and the guide of all travellers. It is said in the *Homeric Hymn*(23) that he invented the lyre before giving it to Apollo, and in the words of Otto "Nothing can give better expression to the gay and at the same time darkly mysterious, enchanting, and tender elements in Hermes than the magically sweet tones of lyre or flute."(24) It is important to recognise these original Hermetic characteristics, as they became transmuted, refined and subdued in the esoteric, mysterious figure of Hermes Trismegistus at the end of the pagan era.

Ginette Paris likens Hermes' particular kind of intuitive, 'irrational' intelligence with the Greek *metis*:

"Synonymous with prudence, reflection and wisdom, *metis* is the opposite of deductive knowledge and is contrary to the linear logic of Apollo ... Rooted in an inner knowledge, an intuitive perception of contexts, and a sense of intimacy with all of nature's ways, it belongs to mythic thought, where logic does not apply. This is Hermes' brand of intelligence which he gets from the Goddess *Metis* herself and shares with the great seductresses Aphrodite, Pandora, Ariadne, the sorceress Medea, the magician Circe, the strategist Athena ... and many Greek heroes, including Ulysses."(25)

The image of Zeus ruling with the wisdom of *Metis* advising him from his belly(26) is a powerful one, for in connecting the two modes of 'heady' intellectualism and 'gut' instinct a paradoxical mixture arises, which contains the immediacy of intuitive illumination and practical 'sleight of hand' in equal measure. It is a kind of *savoir-faire* which cannot be reduced to either the blind instinct of Dionysos or the uncompromising *logos* of Apollo, the personifications of chaos and reason in their most extreme forms. *Metis* transcends both - she sees with an inner vision, not through processes of thought. She grasps the truth unexpectedly, intuiting the meaning of signs and symbols, instinctively grasping the 'right moment' for action, moving obliquely with the ability to connect the significance of random events which cannot be proved or reduced to a logical coherent system. Hers is a wisdom which can only be experienced to be understood, not objectively considered from a distance. 'Wily Odysseus' has *metis*, as do Nestor and Antilochus in the *Iliad*.(27) This particular kind of Hermetic wisdom can be seen to contribute to a particular attitude which can be brought to any activity or belief system, which would not seem unconnected to the quality of intuitive wisdom advocated in the *Epinomis*. Nor is it unrelated to the mode of being required for any act of divination, augury or oracular prediction where everything depends on the quality of the individual's participation and interaction with the 'moment'. As Iris Murdoch puts it:

"The truth which we can grasp is something quiet, small in extent, and to be found only in the lived real moment of *direct apprehension* out of which the indirectness of mimetic art and writing and perhaps language and discursive thought itself always tends to remove us."(28)(my italics)

The writings attributed to the Thrice-great Hermes reveal a mode of thought which is mythic in that it seeks to reconnect and synthesise both experience and knowledge to a common source, not to separate and analyse with the scalpel of pure Apolline rigour. Ficino himself draws attention to the practical experience, rather than intellectual knowledge, contained in Hermes' writings - experience which depends directly on an intuitive wisdom which is innate to the soul since it is "naturally implanted by the gods".(29) The secret of happiness, says Ficino in an early letter to Antonio Miniatiensi,(30) lies in following the practical lifestyle of Socrates and Christ, the two supreme representatives of philosophical and religious truth. Hermetic wisdom is all-embracing yet never static as in the flow of consciousness, showing an acute awareness of the fluctuation of the human condition yet never losing sight of the one connective principle underlying the diversity of categorisation. Ficino was to examine closely the nature of such wisdom in his Commentary on Iamblichus' *De mysteriis*, to be discussed in chapter three.

Astronomically, Mercury is the closest planet to the Sun, and astrologically he is considered to act in harness with the Sun, being of "a common nature".(31) The not inconsiderable implications of this are that true 'solar' consciousness must include the depth and penetrative insight of Hermetic intuition, and it is hardly surprising that the metaphor of light to communicate such a faculty of inward 'seeing' was such a powerful one for those *prisci theologi* who possessed it. But Hermes does not only perceive, he communicates his insights through the power of rhetoric. The Emperor Julian, one of Ficino's neo-platonic sources, calls on Hermes in his *Hymn to King Helios*(32) to aid him in his endeavour to express what is ultimately inexpressible, and to guard him against the ever-present danger of *hubris* through mis-representing or restricting the natures of the gods with inappropriate language. As Ficino emphasises in the *Liber de vita*,(33) words carry a power which is to be respected and directed to beneficial ends - this, too is the domain of Hermes. That he himself possessed such a gift is confirmed by the eloquence and subtle wit of his voluminous correspondence, which soars beyond personal sentiment to an overwhelming concern for communicating universal truth to humanity. Accessibility of his particular message was of paramount importance, whether (to cite just four examples) via the weighty, scholarly argument of

the *Theologia Platonica*, terse, uncompromising prose of the *Disputatio contra iudicium astrologorum* (to be discussed in chapter three), clear, practical advice of the *Liber de vita* or subtle, poetic nuance and metaphor of the *Liber de Sole*. In his Preface to the latter, whose slender size belies its significance as Ficino's final triumphant homage to the light of consciousness, he stresses in true Mercurial fashion that the work is "allegorical and mystical rather than dogmatic" and that his approach to the task is not "by rational arguments" but "by certain comparisons deduced from the light".(34)

1.8. The alchemical Mercurius

"Mercurius is the light-bringing *Nous*, who knows the secret of transformation and immortality"(35)

Ficino's disciple Pico della Mirandola wrote to him in 1488 urging him to meet again for philosophical discussion, praising his master's wisdom in terms which suggest the two men's familiarity with the alchemical significance of Saturn/Mercurius in their mutual quest:

"Whatever it was which took you away from me, or rather, took me away from myself, I beg you to come back later, so that that which once united us should not separate us; and also may you always believe you can come to discuss occult matters [*faturum*], you who I eagerly desire and thirst for, solace of my life, delight of my mind, establisher of laws, master of learning. Farewell and come, so that your Saturnine nous, that is, fit to discuss occult matters, may render me able to speak of them also ...(36)

Of crucial importance is the role of Hermes/Mercurius in the alchemical tradition, whose practices found their theoretical and philosophical basis in the writings of Hermes Trismegistus. The psychological significance of the alchemical opus in relation to Ficino will become apparent in chapter four, and here it is appropriate to outline the esoteric dimension of the wily god, whose very changeability and multiformity suited perfectly the ambiguous and paradoxical nature of the occult work of chemical transmutation. In doing so I shall refer to Jung's exhaustive studies on alchemy (*Psychology and Alchemy*, *Alchemical Studies*, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*).

For the alchemist, Mercurius was synonymous with the essential power of the philosophers' stone itself:

"The ability to 'become all', attributed to the Son of God, is an attribute not only of the pneuma but of the alchemical Mercurius, whose boundless powers of transformation are praised in accordance with the versatility of the astrological Mercury. He is the *materia lapidis*, the transforming substance par excellence, and is said to penetrate all bodies like a poison."(37)

Mercurius was first understood as the substance of quicksilver, or *Mercurius vulgaris*. The object of alchemical procedure was to extract from this the *Mercurius philosophicus*, an arcane essence present in the metal yet different from it.(38) This could be referred to as the 'soul' of the metal, and was given a variety of synonyms such as the 'divine water', dragon, fiery lion, night raven and black eagle.(39) It was also understood as the fire found in the centre of the earth, revelatory light of nature, and even hell-fire itself.(40) The moral ambivalence of Mercurius, who personified appears as devil, trickster, son of Saturn, psychopomp or divine messenger, is a reflection of his potency as a symbol of all conceivable opposites. Yet he also symbolises their unity, an "undividedness impervious to contradictions"(41) and thus may embody a powerful healing force in the alchemical work, which was undoubtedly aimed at psychological unity.

Mercurius also represents the mirror-image of Christ, in that they are the archetypes of the unconscious and consciousness. As the Hermetic *filius microcosmi* he unites above and below by ascending to heaven and returning to earth as the messenger of divine secrets, in a contrary movement to that of Christ. This continual circular movement is commonly represented by the uroboros, or serpent biting its own tail.(42) As psychopomp, Mercurius leads to the riches of the realm of Pluto, a territory which must be explored by any heroic consciousness questing for the grail, or philosophical lapis, if he wishes to achieve psychic unity:(43)

"Hesitantly, as in a dream, the introspective brooding of the centuries gradually put together the figure of Mercurius and created a symbol which, according to all the psychological rules, stands in a complementary relation to Christ ... its object is to throw a bridge across the abyss

separating the two psychological worlds by presenting a subtle compensatory counterpoint to the Christ image."(44)

From the Christian perspective, Mercurius would seem to stand for everything that is dark and obscure if not downright evil, for dogmatic Christianity (not, arguably, the authentic Christ-figure) affirms the supremacy of light and spiritual purification over the turbulent powers of the nature. In the process of following such a religion, or any idealist philosophy, consciousness is clarified and refined through a differentiation of mind from matter, but only at the expense of rejecting and denigrating the gods of the earth, who will then take their revenge. Jung explains this in psychological terms:

"clarification of consciousness necessarily entails an obscuration of those dimmer elements of the psyche which are less capable of becoming conscious, so that sooner or later a split occurs in the psychic system. Since it is not recognised as such it is projected, and appears in the form of a metaphysical split between the powers of light and the powers of darkness."(45)

The alchemists understood Mercurius as a symbol to heal this split for in his paradoxical nature he represents the conflict of opposites within the individual psyche.(46) In his duality he embodies both rational soul and inspirational *pneuma*, uniting the knowledge of the head and the heart, or intellectual philosophy with religious revelation.(47) Jung points out that when psychic transformation is consciously undergone the experience is one of numinous intensity, and then Mercurius arises in his guise of the Holy Ghost, or the archetype of wisdom, *Sapientia*.(48) His hermaphroditic nature can be expressed as One either through the unity of the three elements of the masculine trinity, or through the quaternity of the lapis, which with the added fourth element incorporates the chthonic feminine aspect of existence.(49) As the principle of wholeness underlying both three and four-fold aspects of existence he is "the Logos become world", or the *anima mundi* suffused throughout creation.(50)

The active, conscious, masculine element of Mercurius is Sol, often represented by the personifications of King, Father, or Son, whilst the feminine, unconscious, passive aspect is Luna, personified as Queen, Mother, Daughter, Church or Virgin.(51) As the Moon has no light of its

own but reflects that of the Sun, so the territory of Luna may only be known through the penetrating light of consciousness, which lies in potential within the unconscious "like a child inside the mother".(52) The birth of consciousness from the dark womb of chaos gave rise to powerful archetypal myths of the divine child, and the re-connection of the 'heroic' masculine with the feminine element from which he was born and from which he struggles to differentiate is a task facing all men in their journey towards individuation, or psychic completeness. In Gnosticism Saturn is recognised as the child of chaos,(53) Saturn who is Mercurius senex, the 'old King' who must die to be transformed into Mercurius, the new birth of consciousness. This was indeed the new meaning that Ficino found in Saturn through struggling with his melancholy temperament, a task which was given symbolic significance by the prominence of the planet in his natal horoscope, situated on the Ascendant in Aquarius.(54) The symbol of Saturn, as an alchemical/astrological 'projection', gave Ficino the key to self-knowledge as he continually found meaning in the cycles and supposed influences of the planet in his own life. It is interesting to note that after a period of profound inner turmoil in his twenties, Ficino was presented with the task of translating Hermes Trismegistus at the age of twenty-nine, the completion of the first Saturn cycle or 'Saturn return' in his life, a time of discrimination and rejection of outworn parental value-systems and the re-birth of an individual sense of destiny. From this moment, his vocation to unite spirit and soul took root, and he was to spend the rest of his life in service to the ideal of the transcendent unity of philosophy and religion.

But Mercurius demands the integration of matter, in that man is an embodied creature dependent on the earth: "no more than we can separate the constituents of character from the astronomical determinants of time are we able to separate that unruly and evasive Mercurius from the autonomy of matter."(55) His astrological glyph (☿) graphically illustrates his three-fold nature (Sun ☉ Moon ☾ Earth ⊕). It was only at the very end of his life that Ficino was led to pay his debt to the earth, in the medical/alchemical *Liber de vita*. However, for reasons which demand a fuller psychological investigation, the descent to the underworld was never fully undertaken - the feminine never redeemed in her earthly guise. Instead, Ficino embraced Lady Wisdom and Mother Church, and his final

apotheosis took literary form in panegyrics to the Sun and Light.(56) The abyss was to be regarded with "clarity and compassion", (57) not entered into for the sake of its own dark, instinctual wisdom, and Ficino, as torchbearer of consciousness to Western man, could but embrace his role to the hilt. Here he necessarily parts company with the journey of depth psychology: "Never", he wrote to Lorenzo de' Medici, "have I impiously sung of ... Proserpine, snatched into the underworld" but rather

"I have honoured .. that doctor of souls from Tarsus [St. Paul] who was carried off into the world above. And I have not ... depicted the ill-fated seizure of Helen, that is earthly appearance, but, as is the way of the Platonists, I have depicted the sublime upward soaring of the heavenly mind."(58).

However, the alchemists understood a further truth (and many risked their lives for it), that only "at the bottom of the abyss comes the voice of salvation."(59)

1.9. The Pimander

Let us now look at the account of the creation and the nature of man in the *Pimander*, to see how it may provide the framework for an elaboration of a 'psychological' understanding of astrology, and the model for the alchemical *coniunctio* of mind and soul. First of all, a summary of the physical and spiritual constitution of the Platonic cosmos, which will set the context for the Hermetic myth.

It is believed that the knowledge of the planets and their order in the heavens came from Babylon, introduced into Greece before Plato but after Anaximander (c.600 B.C.), probably around 440 BC.(60) The division of the ecliptic (the Sun's apparent path through the heavens as viewed from Earth) into the twelve zodiacal signs or sections of thirty degrees was a Babylonian invention brought to Greece before 400 B.C.(61) It is possible that the generally accepted planetary order of Earth, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn was determined by Pythagoras; this is the order given by Cicero and called 'Chaldean' by Macrobius.(62) In Plato and Aristotle(63), Venus and Mercury are positioned above the Sun, Macrobius'

'Egyptian' order.(64) Physically, Platonic cosmology gives us a model of seven planetary spheres around the Earth, the eighth sphere of the fixed stars (the zodiac) and the Intelligible sphere of God beyond. From the complementary spiritual perspective, the cosmos is ordered in hierarchies of Divine Mind (the pure intelligence of God), the World Soul (the all-pervading, active principle which conveys and converts Ideas into causes in the sublunar realm), Nature (the four elements - corruptible, compounded of both intelligible forms and matter) and Matter (lifeless, unformed raw material). Within this basic four-fold hierarchical structure there could be an almost infinite variety of sub-divisions, yet the overriding vision was of a manifest creation which, through the agency of soul, returned back to the One divine source in a constant circular process of emanation, conversion and reversion.

The vision of the origin and destiny of the soul in the *Corpus Hermeticum* owes much to the Pythagorean influence on the *Timaeus* - for Ficino, it was Plato who was inspired by Hermes. In the Hermetic text we read that in the beginning there was Mind, which gave birth to the Maker,

" ... and this second Mind made out of fire and air seven Administrators, who encompass with their orbits the world perceived by sense; and their administration is called Destiny ... And Man took station in the Maker's sphere [the highest sphere of heaven], and observed the things made by his brother [the planets], who was set over the region of fire; and having observed the Maker's creation in the region of fire, he willed to make things for his own part also; and his Father gave permission ... having in himself all the working of the Administrators; and the Administrators took delight in him, and each of them gave him a share of their own nature ... And having learnt to know the being of the Administrators, and received a share of their nature, he willed to break through the bounding circle of their orbits; and he looked down through the structure of the heavens, having broken through the [lunar] sphere, and showed to downward-tending nature the beautiful form of God. And Nature, seeing the beauty of the form of God, smiled with insatiate love of Man, showing the reflection of that most beautiful form in the water, an its shadow on the earth. And he, seeing this form, a form like to his own, in earth and water, loved it, and and willed to dwell there. And the deed followed close on the design; and he took up his abode in matter devoid of reason. And Nature, when she had got him with whom she was in love, wrapped him in her clasp, and they were mingled in one; for they were in love with one another."(65)[my italics]

It is important to stress that we are dealing with a symbolic cosmology, a 'poetic metaphor' for an intangible but intense human experience of a transcendent reality, a myth which provides a vivid image of a profound human dilemma. Jung understands the ascent and descent of the soul to represent the alchemical ascent to consciousness, or unity, and the descent to reality: "He who ascends unites the powers of Above and Below and shows his full power when he returns again to earth".(66) The mingling of rational man with the powers of nature, the meeting of fire and earth, male and female, thinking and feeling, light and dark, cannot be achieved without a third unifying factor, for as perceived by the Emperor Julian, the soul and body pull in opposite directions:

"For [man's] is a two-fold contending nature of soul and body compounded into one, the former divine, the latter dark and clouded. Naturally, therefore, there is a battle and a feud between them."(67)

Such a feud results in a state of continual tension in which "all things which come into being are full of perturbations, seeing that the very process of coming into being involves perturbation."(68) Clearly a mean must be found to enable man to live creatively within this perpetual battle between reason and instinct, and the solution, known to the alchemist and the neoplatonic magician, lay in the soulful realm of the imagination which was activated in the practice of their chemical experiment, or through talismanic magic, ritual invocations and hymn-singing and other theurgic ceremonial. They understood that the imagination provides a 'middle area' where images may safely be held and processed, and thus may hold the key to the resolution of the tension between the opposing forces within the psyche. We can of course make the connection between this resolution and the mode of knowledge advocated in the *Epinomis*, where underlying the insistence on the importance of ritual worship is perhaps the notion that such practices could provide for such a synthesis of head and heart through the imaginative use of symbol and image.

The Administrators referred to in the *Pimander* are of course the planets, who through the active agency of soul, have endowed the soul of man with particular qualities before he is incarnate on earth:

"It is the swiftness of the movement of the Kosmos that causes the diversity of the births. For the cosmic life-

breath, working without intermission, conveys into the bodies a succession of qualities, and therewith makes the universe one mass of life."(69)

We are introduced to the idea that the planets in some way control the destiny of the sensible world, but that man has responsibility and choice. It is man who desires to create after the fashion of the Maker, and man who uses his will to leave the divine realm and become embodied and 'mingled' with Nature on earth. According to Platonic tradition(70) the individual soul selects his particular life, which will reflect the the purpose of its incarnation. This is why, continues Hermes, man is twofold, immortal by reason of his soul and mortal by reason of his body - "he is exalted above the structure of the heavens; yet he is born a slave of Destiny".(71) The crucial point here is that the eternal part of man is ultimately immune to the play of fate, which comes into operation once his soul is embedded in the gross matter of the body, with all its irrational impulses and natural appetites. However, because the original divine part of man is his reason, a strengthening of this faculty will allow a more conscious participation in and responsible manipulation of the inevitable downward pull of fate. Hermes says

"All men are subject to destiny, in as much as all are subject to birth and death ... and all men undergo what destiny has appointed for them; but rational men (that is, those who ... are governed by mind), do not undergo it in the same way as the irrational ... It is impossible for a man to escape from his destined death, just as it is impossible for him to escape from his destined birth; but from wickedness a man can escape, if he has mind in him."(72)

In other words, there is a choice to be made, a path to be followed which will lead one closer to the divine part of one's being and thus closer to God within the confines of our given mortal span. It is the "gods who circle in the heavens"(73) who determine the destiny of our earthly lives, and their rule is paradoxically inexorable yet ever-changing. At death, in the Hermetic account, a man's soul travels back through the heavenly spheres discarding the evil attributes of each planet to the appropriate body, thus freeing himself from the contamination acquired by his original fall from the purity of the eighth sphere:

"And to the first zone of heaven [i.e. Moon] he gives up the force which works increase and that which works decrease; to the second zone [Mercury] the machinations of evil cunning; to the third zone [Venus], the lust whereby men are deceived; to the fourth zone [Sun] domineering arrogance; to the fifth zone [Mars], unholy daring and rash audacity; to the sixth zone [Jupiter], evil strivings after wealth; and to the seventh zone [Saturn], the falsehood which lies in wait to work harm. And thereupon, having been stripped of all that was wrought upon him by the structure of the heavens, he ascends to the substance of the eighth sphere [the fixed stars], being now possessed of his own proper power; and he sings, together with those who dwell there, hymning the Father".(74)

This return to a pristine, unsullied state is the aim of gnosis - the a journey is of course metaphorical and does not imply literal, physical death as a prerequisite for union with God. Such an aim is to be strived for through the contemplative pursuit of pure philosophy. It is through the contemplation of the heavens themselves, of the movements of the planets and particularly of the Sun that the mind may be guided to overcome the 'perturbations' inherent in the state of being. This is a powerful recommendation indeed for the value of symbolic astrology as an aid towards greater consciousness: for the mind, nothing is impossible - man is a 'magnum miraculum' who has the potential ability to know the cosmos and himself, and to understand the part he must play whilst on earth.(75) Through the intellectual penetration and control of mind, the soul may be either exalted above destiny or deliberately subjected to it,(76) for it facilitates a deliberate self-awareness and self-direction. This glorification of the power of the mind, the supremacy of a reason fertilised by innate intuition, is reflected in the importance for the neo-platonic philosophers of the Sun as the symbolic representation of the highest rational principle of man.

1.10. The Sun

Philosophy is a 'solar' activity in the sense that it depends on visionary, inward sight rather than on logical calculation - that is, the combination of Mercurial intuitive insight with Apollonian clarity of perception. In this sense it is also 'masculine' as it strives to separate

and differentiate from the instinctual wisdom of the earth. Apollo himself lacks compassion,(77) being a god capable of the most cruel and cold-blooded acts (witness the flaying of Marsyas and the murder of the children of Niobe). He emanates spiritual loftiness and high-minded purity, together with a piercing accuracy of perception which endows him with prophetic gifts - his very distance allows him the utmost objectivity to see things as they are:

"Apollonian desiderates clarity and form, and hence distance. The first impression this word gives is of something negative, but implied in it is the most positive thing of all - the attitude of cognition. Apollo rejects whatever is too near - entanglement in things, the melting gaze, and equally, soulful merging, mystical inebriation and its ecstatic vision. He desires not soul but spirit ... In Apollo there greets us the spirit of clear-eyed cognition which confronts existence and the world with unparalleled freedom - the truly Greek spirit which was destined to produce not only the arts but eventually even science."(78)

But Apollonian science without the compassionate depth of lunar wisdom would be sterile and mechanical, just as a total lack of his clarity of judgement would lead to superstitious indulgence and unfocussed assumptions. Apollo represents intellect in some way divorced from soul; he needs to incorporate the phantasy, the imagination of both the Moon and Mercury (astrologically, the only two planets whose mutable nature is moulded and coloured by the others) to become 'humanised'. But the gods are not fixed or consistent in their natures, and Apollo does indeed 'balance' his nature in another role - that of the supreme musician.

For Ficino, Apollo was doubly important as the patron of both music and medicine,(79) and it is through his musical attributes that his nature is 'ensouled' and balanced, inspiring the human musician to achieve skills which may elevate the spirit and thus strengthen the solar nature. Such a 'humanised' Apollo became metamorphosed into the figure of Orpheus, who for the Renaissance musician embodied the ideal 'music therapist' with the transforming power of his performance. The imitation of this ideal was certainly the conscious purpose of Ficino's music-making, as we shall see in chapter four. Using Boethius' model, for the Hermetic Renaissance musician the conscious cultivation of these very Apollonian ideals of

supreme control, unsullied beauty, moderation and proportion, expressed, paradoxically, through a 'Dionysian' condition of divine intoxication or 'frenzy' in the performance of *musica instrumentalis*, might lead to an intimation of the echoes of the harmonies of the spheres themselves, the *musica mundana* of the cosmos, and thus might powerfully affect man's own inner equilibrium, *musica humana*.

In the the pure light of the Sun Platonic philosophers aim to see things as they are, not clouded and obscured in the shadowy twilight of lunar approximation and varying opinion(80) - which belong to the domain of Mother Nature who has enfolded man in her clasp. The Moon reflects the light of the Sun, softening and diluting its harsh glare, but in its own essential nature was considered to be moist and damp, governing the generating power of nature, corruption of matter and the fluctuation and changeability of earthly affairs.(81) The alchemists understood that lunar consciousness demanded integration, and their supreme symbol for psychic unity was the *coniunctio* or mystical marriage of Sun and Moon. We have already seen that the hermaphroditic Hermes represents such a union - he encompasses the realms of night and day, bringing form and clarity to the inscrutable mystery of the night, and gently poeticising the uncompromising literalness of the day. He is "the one who studies the unseen world in the light of things seen".(82) Without the penetrating and transforming compassion of his vision there would be a danger of total submersion in the irrational forces of the underworld - he leads souls to the realm of Pluto, but also guides them out again. He must, for 'solar' consciousness truly is a prerequisite for civilisation, the upward thrust of enlightenment whose energy is generated by the insistent repelling of 'the powers of darkness'. It is hardly surprising that those valuing the wisdom of the night should have been forced 'underground' and branded as deviant or heretical, for since Plato the scales have been too heavily weighted against them.

The Sun as a physical symbol for God provided Ficino with one of the richest 'poetic metaphors' of the Christian Platonic tradition. In the hierarchy of levels of being the Sun mediates between all the layers of the material and spiritual cosmos as a unifying, all-pervasive symbolic entity:

"In the same manner that the Sun generates both eyes and colours, giving the eyes the power by which they may see, and colours the potency by which they are seen, and joining both of them together with a uniting light, so God is thought to be with respect to all meanings and intelligible things. For expectancy itself creates all meaning and intelligibility, and provides in turn a virtue in action at once natural and appropriate to both. Moreover the Sun daily pours out a universal light through which it excites to mutual action the virtues of both the intelligible and intellectual realms, and joins them together through action. Clearly Plato calls this light truth in respect to intelligible things, and knowledge with respect to the mind of man. He thinks moreover that the good itself, that is God, surpasses all these things, just as the Sun is superior to light, eyes and colours. But where Plato said that the Sun prevails over the whole visible realm, doubtlessly he surmised that the incorporeal Sun, that is the divine intellect, prevails over the corporeal Sun."(83)

In particular, the letter *Orphica comparatio Solis ad Deum*(84) and his small astrological/theological treatises *De Sole* and *De Lumine* written at the end of his life testify to his own Hermetic ability to synthesise astrological, neo-platonic and Christian symbolism into a unified whole. Similarly, light emanating from the Sun as a metaphor for spiritual enlightenment, at its highest potential, and as the source of nourishment required for the inner journey, is a fundamental concept in the tradition of *prisca theologia*. To Niccolo degli Albizzi Ficino wrote:

"Pythagoras told his disciples that they should look at themselves in a mirror, not by the light of a lamp, but by the light of the sun. What is the light of a lamp, if it is not a mind as yet too little instructed by knowledge? What is the light of the sun, if not the mind totally under its instruction?"(85)

In the Hermetic and Chaldaean revelatory texts Ficino discovered what he believed to be the source of such heliocentric philosophical speculation, for example in the *Chaldaean Oracles* of Pletho he would have read:

"You must hasten towards the light and rays of the Father, Whence your soul was sent out, clothed in abundant intellect."(86)

and in the *Asclepius*:

"By the light of mind the human soul is illumined, as the world is illumined by the sun, - nay, in yet fuller

measure. For all things on which the sun shines are deprived of his light from time to time by the interposition of the earth, when night comes on; but when mind has once been interfused with the soul of man, there results from the intimate blending of mind with soul a thing that is one and indivisible, so that such men's thought is never obstructed by the darkness of error."(87)

The "intimate blending of mind with soul" was the *unio mentalis* to which the alchemists aspired, and to which Ficino dedicated his life. In his Preface to the *Corpus Hermeticum* Ficino, in a rhapsodic eulogy to Mercurius, stresses that for this interfusion to take place, there must be a conscious, firm intention and desire of the soul for penetration by the divine mind:

"And so there is a real need for divine light, so that we may contemplate the Sun itself by the light of the Sun. Indeed the light of the divine mind is never poured into the soul unless the soul, like the Moon to the Sun, is wholly turned towards the mind of God. The soul is not turned to the mind unless the mind [does likewise]. Indeed the mind was no sooner made than the deception of the senses, and it generated the mists of the imagination. For this reason Mercurius simply laid aside the senses and the dullness of fantasy, withdrawing into the portals of the mind: soon Pimander, that is, the divine mind, flowed in, whence he contemplated the nature of all things, both existing in God and emanating from God. Then those things were revealed by divine command which he explained to the rest of men."(88)

This concept of the similitude between the subjective condition of the human soul and the object of its knowledge, or *adaequatio* is further explained by Ficino in the *Theologia Platonica*:

"As long as the intellect is only potentially prepared to know, it is not yet united with the object potentially to be known; but when it is actually knowing, it is united with it ... since the form of that object is inherent in the mind .. Thus the knowing mind and the thing known becomes one, since the form of that thing, as such, molds the mind."(89)

We shall refer to this correspondence later where Ficino restates the notion more emphatically - at the beginning of his Commentary on Iamblichus.(90) Suffice it to say here that underlying this conception of knowledge is the notion of *sympatheia* within the hierarchy of the ordered

Platonic universe.(91) For the neo-platonists the interdependence and interpenetration of all elements within the whole was made possible by the active principle of the interweaving vitalising force or soul within the cosmos. In the words of Hermes Trismegistus, echoing those of Plato:

"And this whole body, in which all bodies are contained, is filled with soul; soul is filled with mind; and mind is filled with God. Soul fills the whole body within, and encompasses it without, giving life to the universe; without, it gives life to this great and perfect living creature, and within, to all the living creatures. In heaven above, soul persists in sameness; on earth below, it changes as things come into being."(92)

In the Asclepius Hermes follows Plato in emphasising that the goal of all philosophy is to attain to knowledge of God, that all sciences, whether speculative astronomy or natural science, are ultimately directed towards the adoration of God's skill and wisdom. He continues:

"And to know the science of music is nothing else than this, - to know how all things are ordered, and how God's design has assigned to each its place; for the ordered system in which each and all by the supreme Artist's skill are wrought together into a single whole yields a divinely musical harmony, sweet and true beyond all melodious sounds."(93)

We have now arrived at a position to consider the implications of such a universal sympathy for the practice of theurgic ritual and semiological astrology, which Ficino synthesised into his unique form of 'natural magic'. It is in the works of Plotinus, Iamblichus and Proclus especially, as well as the Asclepius, that Ficino found philosophical justification for his occult experiments which provoked considerable suspicion from the Christian authorities. Plotinus in particular arrived in Ficino's life, along with Pico della Mirandola, at the highly significant time of his second Saturn return, and he approached the task of translating and commenting with as much dedication as he had done with Plato thirty years earlier. In fact, Ficino tells us, Pico arrived the very day the Platonic opus was being edited for publication, as if Cosimo de' Medici was continuing to fulfil his role as spiritual patron from heaven. For Ficino, this was all evidence of a divine plan.(94) Plotinus represented the next vital step - for in the *Enneads* Ficino found authority for his 'natural magic' with the possibility of conscious participation in the life of the

cosmos, and justification for a semiological astrology which preserved human free will.

PART THREE: PLOTINUS

1.11. The cosmic ballet

The works of Plotinus were rediscovered by Ficino after a long period of obscurity, although Paul Henry has pointed out(1) that his thought left traces throughout the Middle Ages, influencing St Augustine, Dionysius and St Thomas Aquinas. Unlike Ficino, Plotinus (c.204-270 A.D.), we learn from his biographer and pupil Porphyry, was not especially interested in the practical application of his philosophy, being by temperament a contemplative and a mystic theoretician:

"He had a complete knowledge of geometry, arithmetic, mechanics, optics, and music, but was not disposed to apply himself to detailed research in those subjects."(2)

He was interested in the principles of sciences such as Astronomy, but only as a constituent element in the overall scheme of cosmic harmony and sympathy which he elaborated in astonishingly complex detail in the nine *Enneads*. Porphyry does however particularly mention that his master studied horoscopy in detail, and "when he had detected the unreliability of [the astrologers'] alleged results he did not hesitate to attack many of the statements made in their writings."(3) Plotinus evidently achieved the heights of mystical union with God, had prophetic insight into the workings of human nature, and was considered to have "expounded the principles of Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy more clearly than anyone before him."(4) He was illuminating a tradition which, owing to its subtlety and esotericism, was constantly in danger of obscurity and mis-representation, and which therefore needed a succession of sympathetic interpreters to keep its insights alive.

Ficino certainly agreed with Porphyry; in the Preface to his own translation and commentary he states his belief that Plotinus was the first to 'unveil' the divine knowledge of the ancient theologians.(5) Ficino,

having discovered Plotinus towards the end of his life, found in his writings a way of synthesising his own experience and knowledge - bringing philosophical speculation into harness with mystical contemplation and both with active participation in 'the life of the All'. He justifies the extent of his own lengthy commentaries on account of Plotinus' literary style, for behind an "incredible terseness" of words is to be found a penetrative depth of perception, abundance and richness of thought as in a multi-faceted jewel. Porphyry describes it thus:

"He puts things shortly and abounds more in ideas than in words, he generally expresses himself in a rapt inspiration, and states what he himself really feels about the matter and not what has been handed down by tradition."(6)

Ficino was most excited by the infusion of deep religious mysticism into philosophical speculation (the fruitful union of the lunar and solar forms of contemplation) demonstrated by the ancient theologians, regarding the rediscovery of their work as leading to an 'ennobling' of religion through the clarifying intellectual influence of philosophy. He accuses the followers of Aristotle of mis-representing and secularising the essentially 'religious' insight of their master, and concludes that, rather than attempting to simply preach to them, such philosophers who "make away with religion" would only be convinced by a display of divine miracles (to redress the balance) or the emergence of a "philosophical religion":

"Now, divine providence is pleased in our age to strengthen religion as a whole with the authority and reason of philosophy, until at the appointed time she strengthens the truest form of religion, as she has sometimes done before, with the manifestation of miracles among all nations. Therefore guided by divine providence we have expounded the divine Plato and the great Plotinus."(7)

As a conclusion to this survey of Ficino's three major authorities, it remains to consider Plotinus' own position regarding astrological influence, for he was undoubtedly Ficino's greatest discovery in justifying the experiences of synchronistic connection or 'meaningful coincidence' between events which so greatly enriched his everyday life and deepened his perception of reality.

For Plotinus, the divine being consists of three hypostases, the One, the Divine Mind or Intellectual Principle (*nous*) and the All-soul, or life-principle. The One, the supreme God of Plato, is the highest 'unknowable', the ultimate resting point of the whole of creation:

"The One is the One and nothing else, and even to assert that it 'is' or that it is 'One' is false, since it is beyond being or essence. No 'name' can apply to it; it eludes all definition, all knowledge; it can neither be perceived nor thought. It is not in movement, nor is it at rest. It is infinite, without limits, and since it has no parts, it is without structure and without form."(8)

The One transcends the Ideas or Forms in the divine mind, and shines its light on them to endow them with beauty. The soul, contemplating the Forms of the intellectual principle, then generates the lower realm of the 'possible'. Plotinus identifies the three deities Ouranos (Caelus), Chronos (Saturn) and Zeus (Jupiter) with the the three hypostases, linking Zeus with his grandfather Ouranos in aspiring to his 'active power' rather than to his father Chronos' purely contemplative nature.(9) We find this symbolism again in the traditional astrological attribution of the virtues of active and contemplative lives to Jupiter and Saturn, whose antithesis reverberated strongly for Ficino, reflected in an opposition aspect in his natal horoscope.

The All-soul for Plotinus includes all individual souls, and when particularised in a human being can itself fall into a hierarchy of Intellective (true knowing), Reasoning (from discursive reasoning to ignorant opinion) and Unreasoning (from sensible imagination to animal instinct). Present in the Reasoning principle are the will, the intellectual imagination and intellectual memory, which present sensations to the higher function for judgement. As the All of the universe culminates in the One, so all man's faculties culminate in the supreme intuitional Intellectual principle, and the aim of his life should be to labour to identify with this. Soul is the central reference point for Plotinus - it is 'amphibian' and connective in function, partaking of and travelling between the two worlds of divinity and matter. It is also self-consciousness, that is, the perception of the divinity in one's own soul, through which self-realisation occurs. This is entirely through the efforts of the individual soul - there is no divine 'grace' or active

participation by a transcendent godhead. Prayer, if it is effective at all, works through a "tension of the soul"(10) as part of the process of striving - it is not a personally directed appeal. According to Porphyry(11) Plotinus' last words were "Try to bring back the god in us to the divine in the All"; it is the perfect alignment of the soul with the Intellectual Principle which enables a two-way interaction, the soul at last fully acknowledging its own divinity:

"like sight affected by the thing seen, the soul admits the imprint, graven upon it and working within it, of the vision it has come to."(12)

Plotinus' experiential mystical impulse pervades his writing. The combination of rational argument and deep, fervent personal desire for mystic union appealed to Ficino's own temperament and urge for self-understanding;(13) indeed the central Plotinian tenet that one knows God through knowing oneself, that return to the 'father' or 'source' is a matter of intense, concentrated effort to free the 'authentic' man from the encumbrances of the attachments it has accrued in its 'fall' from the first principle, can be seen to underlie Ficino's 'unorthodox' astrology. For if a personal horoscope is understood as a symbolic representation of such an imprint - that is, of the individual's essential nature - then its contemplation could be a powerful tool in the striving to strip away all false accretions and obstacles to self-knowledge, and this is of course exactly what Ficino does advocate in *De vita coelitus comparanda*, the third part of the *Liber de vita* which, it has been suggested, he intended as a Commentary on Plotinus' *Ennead* IV.3.11.(14) We can see that the potential afforded by astrology in the Plotinian sense of signification, not causation, is a far cry indeed from the deterministic variety held in such suspicion both by the Church, and by Ficino and his intimate circle.

The Plotinian cosmos then is filled with soul, from the One to the outermost reaches of matter, in a complex interdependent web of emanation. All members of the system, from planets to herbs and minerals, are both 'ensouled' and connected by soul, and thus become sources of cosmic energy in their various degrees and qualities. In this vast chain of being, all components are inextricably connected and reciprocally affect each other in their movements and actions, every such action following a higher law of

ultimate divine justice. In *Ennead* II.3 Plotinus addressed the question of whether the stars are causes, generally condemning the commonly-held, simplistic astrological belief that planets can in any way cause human conditions or that they have any kind of will, or that their inherent qualities might change according to their varying positions under the Zodiac or in relation to other planets. They cannot, he stresses, be good or evil in themselves, nor can they desire to effect changes on earth:

"Like the birds of augury, the living beings of the heavens, having no lot or part with us, may serve incidentally to foreshow the future, but they have absolutely no main function in our regard."(15)

The stars and planets are in service to the Universe as limbs to a body, in sympathy with the whole being. As such, and this was to underlie Ficino's attitude to astrology, they could signify general events, which might happen elsewhere in the universal animal, by certain traces or repercussions which might be interpreted by the perceptive astrologer via the act of divination, when self-aligned with cosmic law. However they could never be the direct cause of particulars. Plotinus, like the venerable exponents of the tradition before him, stresses that only through the mediation of a symbol can one grasp the meaningful significance and depth of experiences which are essentially foreign to linear, abstract conceptualisation:

"We may think of the stars as letters perpetually being inscribed on the heavens or inscribed once and for all and yet moving as they pursue the other tasks allotted to them: upon these main tasks will follow the quality of signifying, just as the one principle underlying any living unit enables us to reason from member to member, so that for example we may judge of character and even of perils and safeguards by indications in the eyes of some other part of the body ... all teems with symbol: the wise man is the man who in any one thing can read another."(16)(my italics)

All forms of divination, augury or prediction would, for Plotinus, have their basis in this co-ordination of all creation and inter-dependence of all its parts: "each thing works with every other thing reciprocally yet independently in a complex yet determined scheme".(17) When the individual has freed his mind from the shackles of lower nature and can enter in part communion with its divine counterpart, then he may see in the comprehensive

meaning of the term, the hermetic meaning, for he has a clear channel through to the organising principles of the cosmos. The stars' symbolic power extends down to the lowest realms of sense, but any immediate efficacy only extends to what they can clearly be seen to do. In the Plotinian hierarchy of creation, the chain of causation through subsequent signification continually extends and moves from the higher (ultimately, the One) to the lower, becoming less pristine and, one might say, diffused and diluted, as it reaches out through the multiplicity of effects in this world. There is never any question that the heavenly bodies do produce effects on the natural world (such as weather and tides), and by extension it is accepted that they can directly influence the lower part of human nature, that is, man's bodily condition, temperament and instinctual behaviour and appetites - indeed medical astrologers work on this premise. Human temperament as such does not determine human actions, it provides the raw material with which to perform them, and as such may legitimately be ordered by a natural law depending on the positions of heavenly bodies. All natural actions and events would then be in active correlation with the animated universe, and comprise the realm of what might be termed 'fate'. However, Plotinus stresses that it the task of man to become liberated from this material, fate-bound existence by the deliberate raising of his consciousness in order to "profit by the significance of the sidereal system" not be "sunken in it and dragged along".(18) That is, to use the stars symbolically as a tool in self-awareness. Some men achieve a measure of harmonious equilibrium amidst the continual upheaval and evolution of life in this way - but most do not.

Plotinus postulates, like Hermes, the predestination of the birth of individual souls, which are "determined by the cosmic circuit"(19) and whose nature is immutable, decided in part by stellar correlations and external material circumstances, for the pure qualities of the planets will necessarily become modified and corrupted when they enter the body. If these deteriorations are extreme, then there may be no possibility of regaining 'alignment', just as "a lyre may be so ill strung as to be incapable of the melodic exactitude necessary to musical effect".(20)

Soul, as the ordering principle of the whole cosmic circuit (which is linked by the pervading Spirit), knows the results of all action and

experience, and it is Soul which determines the moments and conditions of birth:

"For whensoever similar factors meet and act in relation to each other, similar consequences must inevitably ensue: the Soul adopting or fore-planning the given conditions accomplishes the due outcome and links all into a total. All, then, is antecedent and resultant."(21)

The momentary alignments of the moving cosmos allow what Plotinus terms "strokes of fortune" like the finding of a treasure-trove. They also allow for what Jung was to call 'synchronicity', or meaningful coincidence of apparently random events connected by a principle which is a-causal.(22) Both Plotinus and Jung suggest that at such moments, something beyond the natural law of cause and effect has entered into the action; a passing alignment of forces within the cosmic order whose repercussions, like ripples in water, extend to the furthest reaches of the complex web. At these moments, ripe for announcing events, the wise astrologer or clairvoyant is able to 'plug in' and predict purely natural occurrences which do not depend on the responsibility of individual intervention. On the other hand, human events and conditions such as robbery, marriage, fame or power Plotinus considers to be essentially determined by many material, wilful and natural factors, and although they may conceivably be announced by heavenly configurations, they could never be predicted as particulars. Since the stars do not have wills, in no sense do they signify purposefully, in order to indicate future events - it is rather that by the inevitable pattern and working-out of events along the chain some things will necessarily indicate others:

"all is unity sprung of unity and therefore one thing is known by way of another, a cause in the light of the caused, the sequent as rising from its precedent, the compound from the constituents which must make themselves known in the linked total."(23)

It is not surprising that Plotinus mistrusted horoscopy, where it is all too easy for the astrologer to fall into the trap of a restricting concretisation of life's possibilities through assertions and predictions which deny the fluid, unpredictable but personally meaningful potential of a symbolic attitude to enhance and deepen, not exclude, self-exploration. Plotinus' powerful image of the animated universe as a great ballet

comprised of a rich variety of different movements, everything in sympathy, like affecting like, unlike repelling unlike, earthly events happening in sympathy with the changing combinations and patterns in the heavens, and man's soul reflecting in microcosm the continual motion, suggests infinite possibilities for glimpsing powers at work throughout the whole network:

The heavenly circuit has nothing causal in it, but goes according to the rational principle of its living organism; there must therefore be a harmony of action and experience and an order which arranged things together, adapting them and bringing them into due relation with each other, so that according to every figure of the heavenly circuit there is a different disposition of the things which it governs, as if they were performing a single ballet in a rich variety of dance-movements."(24)

The apprehension and channelling of such powers by man for beneficial purposes forms the basis of 'natural magic' - theurgic practices involving ritual, music, talismanic images and astrology were, for the neo-platonists and Ficino, for the purpose of ennobling the soul by bringing it into harmony with the 'All'. In the next chapter I shall continue with an exploration of this concept of 'magic' and, moving from the macrocosm to the microcosm, consider the ways in which *musica humana* may be harmonised and tempered to become a mediating ground, uniting 'what is above' with 'what is below' in the alchemical marriage of nature and divinity.

I will end this chapter, as I began, with confirmation this time from Plotinus of the inextricable association of astrology, psychology and music; of the harmonious interplay of forces in the heavens being reflected in man's soul. In this sense, for those who are able to 'see' with the inner vision of the true follower of Hermes, astrology is music:

"We may know [the overall single purpose of the cosmic system] also by the concordance of the souls with the ordered scheme of the Cosmos; they are not dependent, but, by their descent, they have put themselves in contact, and they stand hence-forth in harmonious association with the cosmic circuit - to the extent that their fortunes, their life-experiences, their choosing and refusing, are announced by the patterns of the stars - and out of this concordance rises as it were one musical utterance: the music, the harmony, by which all is described (the harmony of the spheres), is the best witness to this truth."(25)

REFERENCES to Chapter One

PART ONE: Plato

1. Plato, *Timaeus* 47c-d
2. Ficino, *Theologia Platonica*, Op. om. pp. 78-424. For a modern edition, see R. Marcel, *Théologie Platonicienne de l'immortalité des âmes* vols. I & II. For a survey of Ficino's main themes in this great work, see C. Trinkaus' chapter 'Humanist Themes in Marsilio Ficino's Philosophy of Human Immortality' in *In our Image and Likeness, Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought* vol.2, pp.461-504, and 'Marsilio Ficino and the Ideal of Human Autonomy'.
3. Ficino, *De Christiana religione*, Op. om. pp.1-77. Again, see Trinkaus' discussion of the main themes in *In our Image and Likeness* vol.2 pp.734-53
4. On Florentine Platonism in general and Ficino's relationship with Plato in particular, see J. Hankins, *Plato in the Renaissance* pp.267-359. This ref. p.285
5. See Hankins *Plato in the Renaissance* pp.271,304,357,359; J. Wadsworth, 'Lorenzo de' Medici and Marsilio Ficino: An Experiment in Platonic Friendship'
6. See Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* pp.6-12
7. See D.P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology* p.5:
"The integration of Platonism and Neoplatonism into Christian theology was enormously helped by the writings ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite, based on Proclus and the Parmenides and compiled some time in the sixth century A.D. Since these writings were supposed to be by the Dionysius whom St Paul converted at Athens, they acquired almost canonic status and retained it well into the Renaissance period."
See also P.M. Watts, 'Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite and three Renaissance Platonists'. For Ficino's translation and Commentary on Dionysius, see Op. om. pp.1013-1128: *Dionysii Areopagitae, de Mystica Theologia. Translatio una cum suis argumentis*
8. John Scotus Eriugena, 9th century philosopher and translator of Greek mystical texts. His best known work is the theological and cosmological *Periphyseon*. The most recent study of his thought is D. Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scotus Eriugena*
9. P.O. Kristeller *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino and 'The Scholastic Background of Marsilio Ficino'*
10. See p.42 for Ficino's varying genealogies of ancient theologians
11. Walker, *The Ancient Theology* p.2

12. See Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* p.282; on the Ancient Theology, pp.460-4
13. Marsilii Ficini Florentini, *commentaria Platonis, ad Laurentium Medicem virum Magnanimum, prooemium.* Op.om. p.1128-30
14. *ibid.* p.1128:
Deus omnipotens statutis temporibus divini Platonis spiritum nimium ab alto dimisit, vita, ingenio, eloquioque mirabili, religionem, facnam apud omnes gentes illustraturum.
15. *ibid.* p.1129:
Stylum inquam non tam humano eloquio, quam divino oraculo similent, saepe quidem tonantem altius, saepe vero nectarea suavitate manentem, semper autem arcani coelestia complectentem.
16. *ibid.*:
Miscet frequenter gravissimo quodam consilio utilia dulcibus, quo modestis sermonis blandi leporibus, animos natura proniores ad voluptatem, per ipsam voluptatis escam ad cibum alliciat salutarem.
17. *ibid.* p.1129:
Fingit et saepe fabulas more poetico, quippe quum ipse Platonis stylus non tam philosophicus, quam revera poeticus videatur. Furit enim intendum atque ungatur, ut vates, et ordinem interea non humanum sentiat, sed personam agit, quam sacerdotis cuiusdam atque vatis, partim quidem furentis, partim vero caeteros expiantis, et in divinum furorem similiter rapiantis.
18. Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* p.270
19. *ibid.* p.1130:
In ipsis denique penetralibus, philosophi Saturnum suum agnoscent, coelestium arcanorum contemplatorem.
20. See F. Cornford, 'Mysticism and Science in the Pythagorean Tradition' pp.138-9
21. Ernest McClain, *The Myth of Invariance* p.130
22. *ibid.* p.158; on Babylonian mathematics, see also O. Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity* pp.28-53.
23. See W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy I* p.224; C.J. de Vogel, *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism* pp.162-6; Macrobius, *In somnum Scipionis* II.1.8-14
24. See F.M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* pp.66-72 on 'The division of the world-soul into harmonic intervals'; pp.69-70 on the tetraktys
25. Guthrie *A History of Greek Philosophy* p.224

26. Macrobius I.v-vi. See also E. McClain, *The Myth of Invariance* p.19
27. Macrobius I.iv.41
28. Iamblichus, *Vita Pythagoricae* 82: "What are the islands of the blessed? Sun and Moon. What is the oracle at Delphi? The tetraktys. What is harmony? That in which the sirens subsist ... what is the wisest thing? Number."
29. See Guthrie *A History of Greek Philosophy* pp.225,260. Examples of the decad include Apollo and the nine Muses, God and the nine orders of angels. See for instance Censorinus *De die natali* XX (on the 'ten months' year); Macrobius I.6.41 (on tetraktys and fourfold nature of human soul), I.6.76 (on decad: "et ipse perfectissimus numerus est"). Also McClain *Myth of Invariance* p.6
30. Plato, *Timaeus* 35
31. C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East* paras.172-8
32. *ibid.* paras.179-192
33. *ibid.* para. 190
34. *ibid.* para. 180; this also has implications for the consonant third in music: see chapter four, section 9
35. *ibid.*
36. See Aristotle, *On the Heavens* I.i.268a (*On the Heavens* trans. W.K.C. Guthrie p.5):
 It is just as the Pythagoreans say, the whole world and all things in it are summed up in the number three; for end, middle, and beginning give the number of the whole, and their number is the triad.
37. *Timaeus* 31b-c
38. *ibid.* 32a
39. Jung, *Psychology and Western Religion* para.184
40. *Timaeus* 17a
41. Jung, *Psychology and Western Religion* para.185
42. *Timaeus* 34b
43. Jung, *Psychology and Western Religion* para.185, also para.251:
 Ever since the *Timaeus* the 'fourth' has signified 'realisation', i.e. entry into an essentially different condition, that of worldly materiality, which, it is authoritatively stated, is ruled by the Prince of this world ... it is the true abode of the devil, whose hellish hearth-fire burns deep in the interior of the

earth, while the shining spirit soars in the aether,
freed from the shackles of gravity.

44. Plato, *Phaedrus* 246

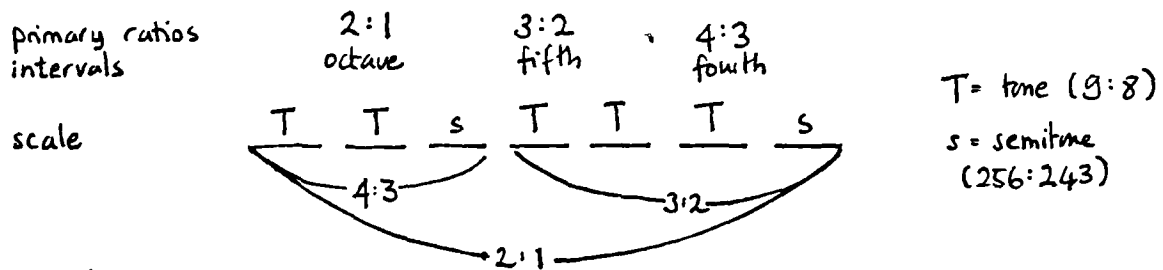
45. *Timaeus* 39

46. Jung, *Psychology and Western Religion* para.187. See *Timaeus* 37c: the 'father' creates a pattern of himself.

47. Jung, *Psychology and Western Religion* para.188

48. *ibid.* para.92

49. *Timaeus* 35. The Pythagorean scale:



50. *Timaeus* 36

51. *ibid.* 37

52. *ibid.*

53. *ibid.* 41e-42d

54. *ibid.* 41e

55. *ibid.* 42

56. See Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* III.2.11

57. See Plato, *Phaedo* 107e, 108b, 113d; *Symposium* 202e

58. See Cornford, 'Mysticism and Science' p.142

59. *Republic* 531a-c

60. The Pythagoreans had no trouble with the four-fold nature of existence, as symbolised in the sacred tetraktys. This is a highly complex and little considered area of investigation, but it could be said that with Plato a 'triadic' consciousness arises as the fourth element of 'lunar' intuition becomes devalued in the Western surge towards the supremacy of 'solar' rationality and supreme consciousness.

61. Iris Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun* p.57

62. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 40.7. See W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* pp.350-368
63. Plato disagrees (*Timaeus* 39a), saying that the fixed stars move most swiftly, and that the planetary spheres decrease in motion as they are further removed from the earth.
64. Aristotle, *On the Heavens* II.ix
65. *Republic* X
66. *ibid.* 617b
67. E. McClain, *The Pythagorean Plato* pp.41-55; see also Joscelyn Godwin, *Music, Mysticism and Magic* pp.295-9
68. *Republic* 617c-d
69. McClain, *The Pythagorean Plato* p.55; see also his *Myth of Invariance*: McClain points out (p.9) that the twelve zodiacal constellations are not evenly spaced, and that twelve lunar months do not equal exactly one solar year. This inequality was also observed in the division of musical intervals: "In ancient times neither the constellations nor the intervals of the chromatic scale divided the cycle equally" (p.10). There was a necessity for compromise in order that all parts may work together, music imitating the heavens. Thus both astrology and music serve Plato as analogies for his well-tempered society. The 'pure' intervals of the ideal cosmic harmony cannot co-exist within the imperfections of the earthly condition, where individual integrity must be sacrificed for the good of the whole. In this sense, 'equal' temperament can be seen as an unnatural, artificial division which has no model in the harmony of the cosmos. It was Ptolemy who 'normalised' the zodiac in c.150 B.C. with the implicit idea of equal temperament (*Harmonics* III). He correlated the 12 signs of the zodiac with the 13 tones of the Greek Greater Perfect System or Pythagorean scale. Since each whole tone equals one twelfth of the circumference of the circle, his zodiacal signs correspond to a whole-tone scale in equal temperament. McClain adds, "I do not mean to imply that Ptolemy was advocating equal temperament. I believe he was merely using the standard Pythagorean scale as a convenient approximation. His accompanying discussion assigns the standard ratios of tonal intervals (1:2, 2:3) to appropriate sections of the circumference. It is very likely that there were older precedents for Ptolemy's procedure, for the ratio 8:9 is very nearly one sixth of an octave, and it was the most convenient musical interval to associate with 6 or 12 equal divisions of a mandala."(p.104) See chapter four, pp.306-9
70. *Republic* 431
71. *Philebus* 26a
72. Cornford, 'Mysticism and Science' p.145 remarks that the system of establishing a fixed underlying pattern of perfect intervals in a musical scale - imposing order on chaos - "marks out the whole unlimited field of sound, which ranges indefinitely in opposite directions (high and low)."

73. Iris Murdoch *The Fire and the Sun* p.55
74. Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth* pp.188-93. This reference, p.188
75. On the concept of the collective unconscious, see Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* paras.87-110
76. Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth* p.189
77. Republic VII 530d-531c
78. See Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth* p.190. The treatise mentioned is Iamblichus, *Commentary on Nicomachus' Arithmetic*, discovered by Albert von Thimus; Godwin refers the reader to von Thimus, *Die harmonikale Symbolik des Alterthums* 2 vols., Cologne, 1868, 1876, repr. Hildesheim, Olms, 1972, vol.1 p.3
79. See Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth*. Boethius (II.20) gives the following example of the lambda, under the heading 'progressions from unity to infinity' (trans. C.M. Bower):
- "the beginning of increasing and decreasing rests in unity alone"
80. On the *harmonia* of soul and body see Aristotle, *Politics* 1340b.18; Plato, *Phaedo* 86b, *Philebus* 17d; Cornford, *'Mysticism and Science'* pp.146-50
81. Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth* p.188
82. See chapter four p.264; Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* para.346
83. For example, the distance between Earth and Moon was considered to be 126,000 stades, which corresponded to one tone (one stade equalling 625 ft.). See Pliny, *Natural History* II.19-20; Censorinus, *De die natali* XXIII; Martianus Capella, *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* II.169-99; Theon of Smyrna, *Mathematics useful for understanding Plato* III.15. Censorinus and Theon both give the correlation between planets and intervals as follows: earth to Moon = 1 tone, Moon to Mercury = tone, Mercury to Venus = tone, Venus to Sun = 1 tones, Sun to Mars = 1 tone, Mars to Jupiter = tone, Jupiter to Saturn = tone, Saturn to fixed stars = tone. Thus from the Sun to the earth = a perfect 5th, from Sun to Moon = a perfect fourth, from the earth to the fixed stars = an octave. An alternative version (Theon gives Eratosthenes as an example) the earth remains immobile. See chapter four, part one ref.7 for further information.
84. Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth* pp.126-7
85. Iamblichus, *Vita Pythagorica* ch.15; see Godwin, *Music, Mysticism and Magic* pp.26-7
86. Best known through Macrobius' *Commentary* (360-early 4th c.A.D.) based on a lost work of Porphyry. This was the most important sourcebook of Platonism in the Latin West.

87. Macrobius VI.2
88. See Plotinus *Enneads* IV.3.11
89. Ficino, *Theologia Platonica* X.7, *Op.om.* p.234:
 Forte vero divinus influxus, ex Deo manans, per coelos
 penetrans, descendens per elementa, in inferiorem
 materiam desinens.
 See E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* p.132
90. *Epinomis* 974b-c. The 'prophetic divination' could be equated with
 Ficino's *notio* - see chapter three section 1
91. *Epinomis* 975a-c
92. *ibid.* 974e, 975c
93. *ibid.* 975d-976b
94. *ibid.* 976b
95. *ibid.* 976c
96. *ibid.* 978b
97. *ibid.* 977b
98. *ibid.* 977c-d, 978a
99. *ibid.* 978b, 978a
100. *ibid.* 979a
101. See Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* para.657: "Piety is needed for the
 work [of alchemy], and this is nothing but knowledge of oneself."
102. *Epinomis* 980a-b
103. *ibid.*
104. *ibid.* 981b-982a
105. Ficino, *Op.om.* pp.1525-30, this ref. p.1528:
 Vult enim ultra unam mundi totius animam, duodecim esse
 sphaerarum, duodecim animas: deinde in qualibet sphaera
 duodecim esse ordines animarum. Hi ordines in coelo
 sidera sunt et stelle, in terra homines: in aethere,
 aere, aqua, scilicet sublimiori sunt daemones.
106. *Epinomis* 982c
107. I am grateful to Darby Costello for her work on the etymology of
sidus. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* gives the following definitions:
 i) *sidus*: "a heavenly body.. the planets ... constellations....
 considered as having a direct influence on human affairs... as causing

paralysis". ii) sidero: "(of constellations) to affect with sudden paralysis". iii) sideratio: "the action of causing planets to wither or affect human beings with paralysis attributed to the effect of the constellations". See my chapter two, part one ref.3. For the associations of *considero* and *desidero* with a participatory astrological awareness, and the episode of Olympius' star-magic on Plotinus, see chapter two p.111

108. Plato, *Epinomis* 982d

109. *ibid.* 982e

110. *ibid.* 983a-984a

111. Ficino, *Op.om.* p.1528:

... visu scilicet intimo potius, quam externo.

112. *Epinomis* 985a-b

113. *ibid.* 985c-d

114. *ibid.* 986a-c

115. *ibid.* 986d

116. *ibid.* 990 a-b

117. Ficino, *Op.om.* p.1529:

Numeri in se quidem incorporei sunt, quando nihil aliud sunt, quam repetitia unitas, haec autem individua est.

118. *Epinomis* 992b

119. Ficino, *Op.om.* p.1529:

Pythagorici enim ubi sphaerarum intervalla dimetiuntur, terram ad firmamentum comparant: item ad Lunam et Solem, Solem quoque ad firmamentum. In quibus sane comparationibus intervallum a terra ad Solem, comparatum ad intervallum ab eodem ad firmamentum, efficit quidem inter terram ac Solem sesquialteram: inter hunc vero et firmamentum sesquitertiam: et in illa quidem proportione diapente consonantia nascitur: ex hac autem diatessaron.

120. *ibid.* p.1525:

In speculatione quidem sapientia, in cultu vero religio, in ambobus tota consistit humana foelicitas finisque legum.

121. See Trinkaus on Ficino's *De Christiana religione* in *In our Image and Likeness* pp.734-753. He concludes by suggesting that Ficino's concentration on the nature of the human soul, the "subjective side of philosophy and of man" revealed a reaching towards a "greater universality in man's intellectual and religious traditions" which was to find a similar expression in Lutheranism. Trinkaus' emphasis on

Ficino's firm position as an "enlightened Christian" despite all his pagan and magical interests is important to bear in mind. (pp.752-3)

PART TWO: Hermes

1. Ficino, *Op. om.* pp.1836-67, *Argumentum Marsilii Ficini Florentini, in librum Mercurii Trismegisti ad Cosmum Medicem, Pater Patriae*. Ficino translated the text *Pimander* (*Mercurii Trismegisti liber de potestate et sapientia Dei, cui titulum Pimander*) and transcribed Apuleius' version of the *Asclepius* (*Marsilii Ficini in Mercurii Trismegisti Asclepius Lucio Apuleio Madaurensi philosopho platonico interprete*)
2. *Op. om.* p.1537
3. See C.M.Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*
4. P.O. Kristeller *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, p.15. Hankins however (*Plato in the Italian Renaissance* p.463) maintains that there is no reason to assume that Ficino's versions of the ancient theologians derive from Pletho.
5. On Hermes-Thoth see A-J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* vol.I pp.67-88; G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* pp.22-31; G.R.S. Mead, *Thrice-Greatest Hermes* vol.I pp.47-81; ed. W. Scott, *Hermetica* Introduction.
6. *Op. om.* p.1836:
Eo tempore, quo Moses natus est, floruit Atlas
Astrologus Promethei physici frater, ac Maternus avus
maioris Mercurii, cuius nepos fuit Mercurius
Trismegistus. Hoc autem de illo scribit Augustinus.
The reference is to Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XVIII xxxix. See Yates, *Giordano Bruno* pp.9-12
7. See Walker, *The Ancient Theology*, pp.20-1
8. The *Chaldaean Oracles* are a collection of revelatory and visionary fragments supposedly received from the gods by one Julianus the Chaldean and/or his son Julian the Theurgist in the late second century A.D. They were first brought to the notice of the neo-platonists by Porphyry and commented on by Iamblichus, Proclus and the 11th century Byzantine Psellus. Their content prescribed practical religious/magical rituals known as theurgy, which will be discussed more fully in chapter two. H. Lewy (*The Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy* p.368) supposes the oracles' influences to be oriental mystery religions, Hermetic theosophy and gnosticism rather than Platonic metaphysics, their Platonic elements deriving from contemporary neo-platonism rather than from Plato himself. They reveal a cross-fertilisation of oriental (Babylonian and Syrian) solar and astral religion and Greek rational speculation, and are primarily concerned with spiritual enlightenment through revelation from external divine intervention, not the "training of the inner eye" (p.368), indicating a "yearning for revelation rather than philosophical complexity" (p.8). Ficino would have been familiar with the oracles through Pletho's version, which attributed their origin to Zoroaster and which

he translated (*Magica, id est philosophica dicta magorum ex Zoroastre* in Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana XXXVI,35; fragments occur in *Theologia Platonica*. See Marsilio Ficino e il Ritorno di Platone, *Manoscritti, Stampe e Documenti* pp.25-7; *Supp.Fic.I* pp.x,cxlv). See Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* pp.283-9, *Theurgy and its relationship to Neoplatonism*; Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* p.463; Ruth Majercik, *Introduction to The Chaldean Oracles* pp.1-5; Woodhouse, *George Gemisthos Plethon* ch.IV 'The Chaldaean Oracles' pp.48-61. Editions of the oracles in E. Des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques*; Majercik *The Chaldean Oracles*; ed. J. Opsopoeus, *Oracula magica Zoroastris cum scholiis Plethonis et Pselli*; ed. W. Kroll *De oraculis chaldaicis*. Excerpts from Proclus' *Commentary* are to be found in *Iamblichus: The Exhortation to Philosophy, including the letters of Iamblichus and Proclus' Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles* tr. Thomas Moore Johnson.

9. See Yates, *Giordano Bruno* p.3
10. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* VIII xxiii-xxvi; Lactantius, *Institutes* I.vi; see Yates, *Giordano Bruno* p.7
11. See Walker, 'Orpheus the Theologian and Renaissance Platonists'
12. ed. W. Scott, *Asclepius* III.23b,24a,37,38a in *Hermetica*I. See my chapter two, section 15
13. *Op.om.* pp.386,871,1836,1945
14. *ibid.* p.1537 *In Plotini epitomae, seu argumenta, commentaria et annotationes; prooemium ad Magnanimum Laurentium Medicem* (trans. School of Economic Science):

Itaque non absque divina providentia volente videlicet omnes pro singulorum ingenio, ad se mirabiliter revocare, factum est, ut pia quaedam philosophia quodam et apud Persas sub Zoroastre, et apud Aegyptios sub Mercurio nasceretur, utrobique sibimet consona: nutriretur deinde apud Thraces sub Orpheo atque Aglaophemo adolesceret quoque mox sub Pythagora apud Graecos et Italos tandem vero Divo Platonae consumaretur Athenis.
15. Yates, *Giordano Bruno* p.19
16. Walker, *The Ancient Theology* p.17
17. Yates *Giordano Bruno* p.20
18. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* I p.115 gives as evidence for Egyptian authorship the references to the astrological Decans in the *Hermetica*. These 36 sidereal gods who reside over each 10 degrees of the zodiac are of Egyptian origin, deriving from the idea that each division of time has its own guardian spirit, and were assimilated into Hellenistic astrology. See also Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* pp.31-44, who maintains that the texts' allusions to the exoteric aspects of the cults practised in the Nile valley point to their Graeco-Egyptian origin.

19. Ficino, *De Christiana religione* in Trinkaus, *In our Image and Likeness* pp. 734-5
20. Yates, *Giordano Bruno* p.22
21. *ibid.* p.23. Jung has this to say on the necessity for preserving the secrecy and mystery of 'occult' philosophies and practices:
 The thing hidden is always more or less irrelevant, for in itself it is no more than an image or sign pointing to a content that cannot be defined more closely. This content is certainly not a matter for indifference since it indicates the living presence of a numinous archetype. The essential thing is the hiding, an expressive gesture which symbolised something unconscious and 'not to be named' lying behind it; something, therefore, that is either not yet conscious or cannot or will not become conscious. It points ... to the presence of an unconscious content, which exacts from consciousness a tribute of constant regard and attention. With the application of interest the continual perception and assimilation of the effects of the 'secret' become possible. (*Mysterium Coniunctionis* para.312)
22. W. Otto *The Greek Gods* pp.104-24
23. *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* in trans. T. Sargent, *The Homeric Hymns* no.4 pp.30-31
24. Otto *The Greek Gods* p.124
25. Ginette Paris, *Pagan Grace* pp.84-6, this ref. p.85
26. See Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* I.9, pp.45-6. Metis is associated with Mercury in one of the most ancient creation myths (Graves p.27), where Eurynome, the goddess who laid the Universal Egg from which all creation hatched, next created the seven planetary powers, attributing a Titan and a Titaness to each: to Mercury are given Metis and Coeus. In another myth (Graves p.33), she was born from the union of Air and Mother Earth, along with "Terror, Craft, Anger, Strife, Lies, Oaths, Vengeance, Intemperance, Altercation, Treaty, Oblivion, Fear, Pride, Battle" - the nature of her siblings certainly suggests an uncompromising wiliness. This myth is based on Hesiod's *Theogony* (338-63), where we learn that Metis was the daughter of Oceanus and Tethys, grand-daughter of Uranos and Gaia (Heaven and Earth). Her association with the primal elements of air and earth already indicates a wisdom which is not purely abstract and intellectual, but a combination of the clear-sighted rationality of air and the natural instinct of earth. This 'female' irrational intuition poses a great threat to the 'reasonable' logic of Uranos, who hates the children Gaia bears him and hides them away as soon as they are born. These offspring, through their mother, already have a primitive form of metis, which we see exhibited in the action of Chronos, who, in league with his mother, cunningly castrates his father. Chronos himself, warned by his parents that one of his sons would usurp him, swallows all the children of his wife Rhea. However with the help of Heaven

and Earth Rhea saves her child Zeus and gives Chronos a stone to swallow instead. Hesiod tells us that Zeus conquers Chronos "by craft and power (499), and Robert Graves gives a more detailed account of Metis' role as the instigator of the plan (p.40). She suggests to Zeus that he become Chronos' cup-bearer and tells him to mix the potion which will cause him to vomit up Zeus' siblings - he carries out the plan with the help of his mother Rhea. Metis becomes the first wife of Zeus, being seduced by him only after turning into many shapes to avoid being caught. Hesiod describes her (887) as "wisest of all, of gods and men". However, when Metis was pregnant, an oracle of Mother Earth declared that she would produce a girl, but that her next child would be a son who would overthrow Zeus (Graves p.46). In order to avoid the same fate as his father and grandfather, Zeus "thrust her down into his belly", "so that the goddess could counsel him in both good and evil plans." In due course Athena, the child of Metis, was born from his head.

27. e.g. Homer, *Iliad* 10, XV, XXIII
28. Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun* p.60
29. *Op.om.* p.1873 (see chapter three p.171):
Ante omnem rationem usum inest naturaliter insita
deorum notio.
30. In Kristeller, *Supp.Fic.II* p.82. See also *Op.om.* 619:
Imitare igitur ut coepistis Pythagoram et Socratem et
Platonem.
31. Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* I.4.5
32. Julian, *Oration IV: Hymn to King Helios* 132A. Julian the Apostate, a disciple of Iamblichus, was born 331 A.D. See ed. W.C. Wright, *Julian the Apostate, Works* pp.348-51
33. Ficino, *Liber de vita* III.21
34. *Op.om.* p.965:
Verba ad lectorem, librum hunc allegoricum et
anagogicum esse potius quam dogmaticum ... nos ad illam
non tam rationibus in praesentia, quam comprationibus
quibusdam deductis ex lumine ...
35. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* para.311, also 117: "Mercurius demonstrably corresponds to the cosmic Nous of the classical philosophers"; *Psychology and Alchemy* 404; *Alchemical Studies* part IV, 'The Spirit Mercurius'.
36. Ficino, *Op.om.* p.889:
Sed quicquid illud fuit, quod te mihi, id est, me mihi
abstulit, fac quaeso in posterum, ut non seiungat nos,
qui nos olim coniunxit, nec te unquam credas ad me
faturum accessurum, qui te solatium meae vitae, meae
mentis delicias, institutorem morum, disciplinae
magistrum et esurio semper et sitio. Vale et veni, ut

tuus Saturneus, id est, tuus faturus 'nous' me quoque
faturum reddat ...

37. *Psychology and Alchemy* para.459
38. *Alchemical Studies* para.255
39. *ibid.* 246
40. *ibid.* 257
41. *ibid.* 295; see also chapter four p.362, Appendix 1.1. p.368
42. *Psychology and Alchemy* paras.165,404,447
43. *Alchemical Studies* para.299
44. *ibid.* 295
45. *ibid.* 290
46. *ibid.* 287
47. *ibid.* 263
48. *ibid.* 277
49. *ibid.* 272
50. *ibid.* 271, 263
51. *Mysterium Coniunctionis* para.117
52. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* para.503
53. *Alchemical Studies* para.275
54. See chapter four, part one ref.167
55. Jung, *Alchemical Studies* para.286
56. See Ficino, *Liber de Sole* ch.IX *Op.om.* pp.970-1 on the 'alchemical' purification of matter through the heat of the Sun:
The Sun completely fills with light clear and pure natures everywhere, as if they are now, for a moment, heavenly; while matter which is opaque and unsuitable to light, it first warms and kindles, then refines, and soon illuminates. And sometimes it elevates to the heights through heat and light this matter, now light and accessible.

(Ita Sol perspicuas ubique purasque naturas, quasi iam coelestes momento prorsus illuminat, opacas vero materias ineptas luci calefacit prius, et accendit, atque subtiliat, mox illuminat. Atque tam calorem quam

lucem iam leves et pervias, nonnunquam elevat ad
sublimia.)

57. Letters vol.2 pp.68-9, *Op.om.* p.745: *Nunquam ad infima cadit, qui constitutus in summo, acute et clementer prospicit infima*
58. *ibid.* vol. 3 p.15, *Op.om.* p.756:
... quendam Tarsensem medicum animorum ad superos raptum ... celebravi. Neque ... infelicem Helenae, id est, terrenae formae, rapinam, sed ut veri Platonici solent beatissimum depinxi coelestis mentis ascensum.
59. S. Lilley-Harvey, 'Reflections ... Joseph Campbell' p.94
60. Anaximander understood the fundamental points concerning the structure of the solar system but made no distinction between the fixed stars and the planets. Guthrie (*op.cit.* pp.89-101) says that according to Eudemus Anaximander was the first to discuss the sizes and distances of the Sun, Moon and stars; Eudemus attributes the first determination of their order to Pythagoras.
61. See D. Dicks, *Early Greek Astronomy* p.17 on the general principles of the ecliptic. The concept of the ecliptic appears at the end of the 5th century B.C. (p.87), its invention attributed to Oinopides. It was known by Meton and Euctemon c.430 B.C. Dicks suggests that the invention of the zodiac is not necessarily Babylonian - the earliest Babylonian text to mention zodiacal signs is a horoscope of 410 B.C. Eudoxus listed the 12 zodiacal constellations marking the Sun's annual path through the heavens (p.156) and the concept of the zodiac was becoming known by Plato's time (p.115). If the ecliptic was a Greek discovery, "Hence it may well be that, in the case of the zodiac too, we ought to think of a parallel development in both Greek and Babylonian astronomy at about the same time, and not necessarily of any direct borrowing of the one from the other."(p.172)
62. Cicero, *De republica* VI.iv.2; Macrobius XIX.1-2 (*Stahl Commentary* p.162):
"Next we must say a few things about the order of the spheres, a matter in which it is possible to find Cicero differing with Plato, in that he speaks of the sphere of the sun as the fourth of seven, occupying the middle position, whereas Plato says that it is just above the moon, that is, holding the sixth place from the top among the seven spheres. Cicero is in agreement with Archimedes and the Chaldean system; Plato followed the Egyptians, the authors of all branches of philosophy, who preferred to have the sun located between the moon and Mercury even though they discovered and made known the reason why others believed that the sun was above Mercury and Venus."
(See *Stahl Commentary* p.162, note 1)
63. Plato, *Timaeus* 38d, *Republic* 616e; Aristotle *Metaphysics* XI.viii.1073b
64. See *Stahl Commentary* p.163 note 4: "The orbits of Venus and Mercury

are within the earth's orbit and so they appear to swing back and forth with respect to the sun. They never go very far from the sun's position in the sky and are seen during the same year as morning and evening stars." See also A.E. Taylor *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* pp.192-4 where he gives a thorough survey of the differing versions of planetary order, although he does assume astronomical 'correctness' in the Ptolemaic order of Moon-Mercury-Venus-Sun. In the symbolic cosmology of the Platonic system, such a distinction is irrelevant as intuitive insight does not depend on scientific accuracy. See also Ficino, *Liber de Sole* chapter IV *Op.om.* p.967 *Conditiones Planetarum ad Solem.*

65. *Poimandres Libellus I, 9-14, Scott Hermetica I pp.119-121*
66. *Jung Mysterium Coniunctionis paras.297-314. This ref. para.304*
67. *Julian Hymn 142D*
68. *Poimandres Lib.VI.2a, Scott p.167*
69. *ibid. IX.7, Scott p.183*
70. *Plato, Republic X, see also Julian Hymn 131C*
71. *Poimandres I.15, Scott p.123*
72. *ibid. XII.6-7 ibid. Scott p.227*
73. *ibid. III.4 ibid. Scott p.149*
74. *ibid. I.25-26a, Scott p.129. Jung suggests (Mysterium Coniunctionis para.308): "The ascent through the planetary spheres meant something like a shedding of the characterological qualities indicated by the horoscope, a retrogressive liberation from the character imprinted by the archons."*
75. *Asclepius I.10, Scott p.305*
76. *Poimandres XII.9, Scott p.229*
77. *See Otto The Homeric Gods pp.61-80; K.Kerenyi Apollo; Graves Greek Myths sections 77, 257*
78. *Otto The Homeric Gods pp.78-9*
79. *See Ficino, letter to Antonio Canigiani in Letters vol.1 pp.141-4, Op.om. pp.651-2*
80. *Plato, Phaedrus 248*
81. *See Ptolemy Tetrabiblos I.4*
82. *Julian Hymn 133D*
83. *Ficino, Op.om. p.971:
Quemadmodum Sol et oculos generat et colores, oculisque*

vim praebet qua videant, coloribus qua videantur, et utrosque in unum lumine conciliante coniungit, ita Deus ad intellectus omnes resque intelligibiles se habere putatur. Spes enim rerum intelligibiles et intellectus omnes ipse procreat, atque virtutem invicem agendi praebet utrisque propriam semel atque naturalem. Circumfundit insuper assidue commune lumen, per quod virtutes et intelligibilium, et intellectuum ad actum mutuuum excitat, copulatque agendo. Quod sane in lumen rebus quidem intelligendis veritatem, in mentibus autem scientiam Plato nuncupat. Putat insuper ipsum bonum, scilicet Deum ita saltem haec omnia superare, proculdubio supra corporeum Solem, incorporeum auguratus est asolem, Divinum scilicet intellectum.

84. *ibid.* pp.825 ff.
85. *Letters* vol.1 p.61, *Op.om.* p.620:
Mandavit discipulis suis Pythagoras, ut se in speculo, non ad lucerna, sed ad Solis lumen specularentur. Quid est autem scintilla luncernae, nisi parum adhuc eruditus animus. Quid Solis lumen, nisi mens quaeque eruditissima?
86. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon* p.52
87. *Asclepius* III.18b, Scott p.321
88. *Op.om.* p.1836:
Divino itaque opus est lumine, ut solis luce solem ipsum intueamur. Lumen vero divinae mentis nunquam infunditur animae, nisi ipsa, ceu luna ad solem, ad Dei mentem penitus convertatur. Non convertitur ad mentem anima nisi cum ipsa quoque fit mens. Mens vero non prius fit, quam deceptiones sensuum, et phantasiae nebulas deposuerit. Hac de causa Mercurius modo sensus, et phantasiae caligines exuit, in aditum mentis se revocans: mox Pimander, id est, mens divina, in hunc influit, unde ordinem rerum omnium, et in Deo existentium, et ex Deo manantium, contemplatur. Demum quae divino sunt numine revelata, caeteris hominibus explicat.
89. Kristeller *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* p.50, *Op.om.* p.239:
Intellectus siquidem quamdiu potentia est intellecturus, nondum cum re potentia intelligenda coniungitur, sed quando actu intelligens est cum re actu iam intellecta. Coniungitur autem cum ea ... quoniam rei illius forma inhaeret menti. Quorum vero una forma est, ipsa sunt unum: Unum ergo fit ex mente intelligente, ac re intellecta, quando quidem rei huius forma, ut talis est, format mentem.
90. *Op.om.* p.1874; see chapter three, section 1

91. See P. Moffit Watts, 'Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and three Renaissance Platonists' p.295:
 "Ficino's conception of the universe as a hierarchically ordered *sympatheia* underlies his conception of knowledge as *adaequatio* - the correspondence between the knowing mind and the object of its knowledge."
92. *Poimandres* XI.4b, Scott p.209
93. *Asclepius* I.14a, Scott p.311
94. See Ficino, Preface to Commentary on Plotinus, *Op.om.* p.1537:
 Divinitus profecto videtur effectum, ut dum Plato, quasirena sceretur, natus Picus heros sub Saturno Aquarium possedente: sub quo et ego similiter anno prius trigesimo natus fueram ac perveniens Florentiam, quo die Plato noster est editus, antiquum aillud de Plotino herois Cosmi votum mihi prorsus occultum, sed sibi caelitus inspiratum, idem et mihi mirabiliter inspiraverit.

PART THREE: Plotinus

1. *Plotinus; The Enneads*, trans. S. MacKenna, intro. by Prof. Paul Henry S.J. pp.xxxv-xxxvii
2. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 14 in *Plotinus I* trans. A.H. Armstrong, p.41
3. *ibid.* 15, Armstrong, *Plotinus I* p.45
4. *ibid.* 23, 11, 20; Armstrong, *Plotinus I* pp.71,37,61
5. Ficino, *Op.om.* p.1537:
 Plotinus tandem his Theologiam velaminibus erudavit: primusque et solus, ut Porphyrius Proculusque testantur, arcana veterum divinitus penetravit.
6. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 14, Armstrong, *Plotinus I* pp.40-1
7. *Op.om.* p.1537:
 Placet autem divinae providentiae, his seculis ipsum religionis suae genus auctoritate, rationemque philosophica confirmare: quo ad statuto quod a tempore verissimam religionis spectem, ut olim quandoque fecit, manifestis per omnes gentes confirment miraculis. Divina igitur providentiae ducti divinum Platonem, et Magnum Plotinum interpretati sumus.
8. *The Enneads* trans. MacKenna, intro. p.xlv
9. Plotinus, *Enneads* V.I.7
10. *Enneads* V.1,6,9-11; *The Enneads* trans. MacKenna, p.lxix

11. Porphyry *Life of Plotinus* 2, Armstrong, *Plotinus* I p.7
12. *Enneads* I.2.4
13. *ibid.* I.6.7 and V.8.13: "Our self-knowledge is our beauty, in self-ignorance we are ugly".
14. See C. Kaske, Ficino, *Three Books on Life* p.25
15. *Enneads* II.3.3. (trans. MacKenna)
16. *ibid.* II.3.7 "
17. *ibid.* II.3.7 "
18. *ibid.* II.3.9 "
19. *ibid.* II.3.10 "
20. *ibid.* II.3.13 "
21. *ibid.* II.3.16 "
22. See Jung, *Synchronicity, an Acausal Connecting Principle*. This concept will be explored more fully in chapter four, in relation to astrology and magic: see chapter four part one, ref.139
23. *Enneads* IV.3.39
24. *ibid.* II.4.33 (trans. Armstrong)
25. *ibid.* IV.3.12 (trans. MacKenna)

CHAPTER TWO: MUSICA HUMANA

Natural and Spiritual Magic in the Platonic Tradition

PART ONE: Philosophical Magic

2.1 Introduction

Ficino, in his Commentary on Plotinus' *Ennead* IV.4.30, says:

"Julian and Iamblichus composed orations to the sun. Plato called the sun the visible off-spring and image of the supreme God; Socrates, whilst 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'.(1)

In chapter one we began to investigate the philosophical importance of the Sun as a symbol of divinity, conceived as both the highest Good, in an impersonal, transcendent sense, and as the immanent, divinely appointed intellectual faculty of man - and especially as the seat of intuitive, even visionary, wisdom. To the outer eye, the Sun is the visible source of light and warmth necessary for generative life itself. To the inner eye, it is the intelligible source of spiritual insight, nourishment and growth, and the divine kernel of each human being. In a remarkably 'alchemical' passage in his *Liber de Sole*(2) Ficino sees the function of the Sun as the purifying and purging fire, refining and dissolving hard, resistant matter and revealing the divine essence within - the true heroic quest for supreme consciousness. The spiritualisation of matter (the 'resurrection' of the body) was the final unifying process of the alchemical opus; for Ficino the Sun is the dynamic principle behind the ascent from ignorance to self-knowledge, the very means by which matter and spirit may be brought together in the middle ground of the imagination which exceeds both form and intelligence. The power of the Sun is activated, and union is achieved, through the act of love - the desire to re-connect with the transcendental realm, which is recognised by depth psychology to be synonymous with certain projected unconscious aspects of one's psyche.(3)

It is the function of the alchemical/Hermetic Mercurius to kindle this desire:

"God first sows knowledge of divine things into angelic and blessed minds, and then love. Indeed the mind kindles a love for us believers here which purifies and converts, before it bestows the intelligence of divine things. Thus the Sun illuminates clear and pure natures everywhere, as if they are suddenly become heavenly bodies; indeed first it warms opaque, unsuitable matter, then kindles it, refines it and soon illuminates it. And sometimes it elevates to the heights through heat as well as light this matter which is now light and accessible. Hence Apollo pierces the great Python with the stings of his rays, he purges it, dissolves it and raises it up... Mercurius, as the armsbearer of the Sun, is said to excite sleeping people with a certain wand ..."(4)

Ficino understood the role of the magus to be that of Mercurius, who with his wand sets in motion the active realisation of the correspondence between the outer form and inner psychological process, or 'above with below'. This is the domain of magic and theurgy in its bewildering variety of practices, which I shall be considering in this chapter, paying particular attention to the power of music and rhetoric in hymns and orations. The Pythagorean/Orphic/neo-platonic tradition of musical invocation to religious ends undoubtedly provided the specific inspiration for Ficino's own hymn-singing.

What did Ficino's ancient authorities understand by the sacramental application of techniques and objects, which was not only musical and verbal, but also involved visual image, natural substances, astrological symbols and all manner of observable phenomena? I shall begin by addressing the vast area of theory and practice commonly called 'magic', or 'occult science', with the aim of clarifying some of the underlying metaphysical assumptions implicit in the Hermetic and neo-platonic traditions. I shall refer chiefly to Ficino's own often-acknowledged sources and precedents, namely Plato, Hermes Trismegistus, Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Julian, Proclus and the Chaldaean Oracles. As a Christian Ficino was inevitably confronted with problems in attempting to reconcile syncretically such pagan enthusiasm with traditional Catholicism. He was able to perceive the connective undercurrents linking the 'underworlds' of the two great philosophical and religious systems, unlike

many of his contemporaries in the Catholic Church, for whom the new enthusiasm for Platonism constituted a threat to traditional spiritual training and interpretation of dogma.(5)

2.2. Magic and mysticism

Firstly, we must attempt to clarify the various ways and means of practical participation in the unseen or immaterial suprasensory world which range from 'magical' operations through an infinite variety of 'religious' experiences to the transcendental total unity with the Absolute of the mystic. In her exhaustive survey of mystical experience,(6) Evelyn Underhill provides a useful framework for understanding the distinction between magic and mysticism in their most extreme forms, which is essentially a distinction between the faculty of *knowing* and the condition of *being*. Both kinds of 'supernormal' activity hold the conviction that it is possible for man to attain to a spiritual reality beyond that of sensible phenomena; however, whereas "magic at its best extends rather than escapes the boundaries of the phenomenal world"(7) the true mystic has the capacity to fully transcend all such limitations:

"Mysticism, in its pure form, is the science of ultimates, the science of union with the Absolute, and nothing else, and the mystic is the person who attains to this union, not the person who talks about it."(8)

The magician, she suggests, is motivated by a desire for experiential knowledge of transcendental planes. Through a deliberate extension and exaltation of his will, using all manner of external ceremonies and rituals, he intends (whether his aims are fundamentally ethical and humanitarian or self-seeking) to manipulate 'unseen' forces - the gods and daemons of the Platonic spiritual hierarchy - to material ends. The mystic however is propelled primarily by a passionate emotional impulse for unity with his spiritual source, harnessed to a total dedication of the will. This manifests as a desire to and for love and results in total surrender to a conscious condition of oneness with that which is beyond words, but which we commonly give the name of One, God or Absolute. Of course in between the extreme manifestations of commercial fortune-teller and solitary contemplative we find many stages and varieties of 'occult'

activity: the priests or shamans who mediate between the enlightened and the ignorant and establish schools of spiritual discipline; the mystical philosophers, who expound and interpret the heartfelt intuitions of the mystical temperament and themselves have firsthand experiences of transcendental states of being (such as Plotinus); the philosopher-magicians who use ritual and ceremonial trapping in service to self-ennoblement and spiritual knowledge (such as Iamblichus and his followers); the practical magi such as healers and astrologers who conduct their arts with compassion and integrity in respect to higher authority, and the numerous variety of participators in the ceremonial magic of traditional cults and religions who, to a greater or lesser extent, experience altered states of consciousness as a result of focussing and sublimating the will through ritual activity. The ignorant soothsayer or diviner whose aims are purely selfish and material could be seen as the least nefarious of a whole host of irresponsible dabblers who attempt to control powers beyond their comprehension with intentions ranging from ego-centred curiosity to downright evil.

Outside this grouping of empirical experimenters fall the transcendental philosophers, whose allegorical maps and symbolic cosmologies may kindle latent mystical faculties but who do not necessarily reveal a direct personal experience of them. One may or may not agree with Evelyn Underhill that Plato himself, although a poetic philosopher, was not a mystic.(9) Although he regarded the irrational apprehensions of the mystical temperament as invaluable, he nevertheless submitted all such experiences to the scrutiny of Reason; intuitive feeling was never exalted to the rank of intelligible knowledge. Evelyn Underhill regards Platonism as "the reaction of the intellectualist upon mystical truth", (10) and such philosophers in the Platonic tradition as

"our stepping stones to higher things; they interpret to our dull minds, entangled in the sense world, the ardent vision of those who speak to us from the dimension of Reality"(11)

but in their highly developed capacity for intellectual scrutiny they stop short at their vision of truth, not allowing the 'movement of desire' to flow naturally from the heights of their knowledge(12); they "know but cannot be".(13) The most important exception she acknowledges to be

Plotinus, who reveals himself as a mystic of the highest order whilst maintaining the ability to communicate his experience in the most rigorous and lucid philosophical terms.(14)

It is of course the communication of the inexpressible which is the domain of artists, poets and musicians, and which leads mystics to resort to the imagery and symbols of the sensory world to convey something of the heightened awareness they experience. As Plotinus stresses,(15) all human beings have the latent potential for some degree of transcendental revelation, but they cannot make the leap from everyday consciousness to apprehension of 'the divine' without a medium which partakes of both worlds. They must be 'bewitched'(16) by the inner, hidden content of an art or language whose outer form is easily assimilated by the senses or the rational mind yet whose reflection of a more intensely 'real' world is subliminally perceived by the corresponding 'hidden' or Platonically speaking intelligible faculty of the human soul. In this view, the artist, musician or poet who does not have an "intuition of the Real lying at the root of the visible world"(17) would not move the viewer or listener from his habitual, sense-bound condition and indeed, as Plato warned(18) could even inhibit his spiritual development by keeping him bound there.

Similarly, the use of poetic, symbolic and metaphorical language enables the intellect to make a qualitative leap to an intuitive perception of heightened reality through the power of suggestion:

"The mystic, as a rule, cannot wholly do without symbol and image, inadequate to his vision though they must always be: for his experience must be expressed if it is to be communicated, and its actuality is inexpressible except in some side-long way, some hint or parallel which will stimulate the dormant intuition of the reader, and convey, as all poetic language does, something beyond its surface sense."(19)

It is important to consider this in relation to the significance of words in magical operations, ranging from the mumbo-jumbo of the charlatan who may use exotic language to invoke a particular emotion in his victim, to the exalted intentions of incantatory prayers and Plato's philosophical 'charms'. But I shall return to this in the context of neo-platonic theurgy.

The Greeks had three words to distinguish the different levels of participation in the supernatural; *goēteia* signified the lowest, base wizardry and superstitious soothsaying; *magia* (a word derived from *magoi*, a Persian tribe with particular religious rites foreign to the Greeks) came to refer to all forms of exploitation of higher forces to gain advantages on a lower level by practitioners who, to a greater or lesser extent, had an understanding of cosmic sympathy; and *theourgia* or philosophical/religious magic, where the aim was to elevate the lower towards the higher, to align one's will with that of the cosmos through the agency of intermediary spirits, from daemons to angels and the gods themselves. The magus aimed to gain power and control over the invisible presences in the world - the theurgist strived for self-knowledge through surrender to them. At either end of this scale, one could add the perverted and willfully malevolent exploitation of forces known as black magic and the pious intent for direct contact with super-cosmic deities or God Himself demonstrated by the sacraments of religion, such as the Christian Mass.

The philosopher-magician's ultimate aim with his theurgic practices was the freeing of the soul from its material bonds, to be achieved through rigorous self-discipline and focussing of the will. To this end, external 'props' such as repetitive, quasi-hypnotic rhythmical incantations and repeated sacred words as mantras could strengthen and concentrate the powers of the imagination, to bring the wayward will into alignment with a higher realm by opening up a channel of communication between them:

"The uprushes of thought, the abrupt intuitions which reach us from the subliminal region, are developed, ordered and controlled by rhythms and symbols which have become traditional, ... and powers of apprehension which normally lie below the threshold may thus be liberated and enabled to report their discoveries."(20)

Thus the magician is endeavouring to raise his own spiritual energy when he calls upon super-terrestrial gods and spirits, using a wide variety of artificial means. For the famous 'occultist' A.E. Waite the term 'ceremonial magic' embraced all the means by which this energy was stimulated, "which in effect was a tremendous forcing house of the latent faculties of man's spiritual nature."(21) In other words, occult rituals can be seen as 'containers' for powerful psychological operations. Once a

permanent raising of the energy level, or alignment with the cosmic will, has been achieved, then of course the magus would have no further need for helpful images, sounds or words as he then approaches the condition of the mystic. As we shall see when we consider Plotinus in more detail, it is while he has glimpses of an order of things beyond normal human awareness that the superior magician may perceive the analogies and correspondences between all creation and know future outcomes, make oracular predictions or divinatory pronouncements. The lesser magician would work purely from an assumption of which he had no direct experience. We can see why Plato set such high standards for the musicians, artists and rhetoricians whose work was to be used in educating the young, for their quality of being was directly reflected in their creation, and only those having reached this level of perception could fuse knowledge with inspiration, and thus guide others effectively. He also recognised the necessity for popular religious cults and rituals involving ceremonial magic amongst the citizens, with their potential, but again only if operated by the wise, to open and extend levels of perception according to individual capacity, as we shall be considering in more detail below.

It cannot be stressed too highly that despite the useful distinction between magical-philosophical and mystical modes of expression, the infinite number of gradations in the discrete hierarchies of spiritual development (each nominally involving a qualitative leap) in no way allow limited or restrictive categorisations of experience. For it is possible to achieve both divine knowledge and cosmic awareness combined with a truly mystical rapture of the heart, and for the most enlightened souls to fully understand the usefulness and psychological necessity of all manner of 'magical' ritual and symbolic art and to put it into practice. The effectiveness of such action is dependent on a state of being where knowledge and love can no longer be differentiated, but fuse in a wisdom of the heart whose ultimate vocation is a selfless concern for the spiritual education of humanity. Ficino was indeed one of those rare souls.

It has been claimed by that most humane and perceptive of classical scholars, A.H. Armstrong, that the Greeks did not understand the 'the occult' in the same way as we do.(22) There is no indication that closed esoteric groups existed with special and exclusive knowledge of 'secret

things' which they passed on to fellow initiates. The rites of mystery religions were in service to heightened spiritual awareness, which was in principle accessible to all who had the capacity to embrace it. In an 'open' community seeking spiritual enlightenment, the self-professed 'magician' would have been a highly suspect character; certainly not credited with wisdom, and probably condemned as a charlatan by any respectable philosopher. The manifestation of any 'hidden powers' in the world in the form of the chance or unpredictable event was attributed to divine intervention, but there was no group of people who had special access to the gods' world:

"The gods did indeed give signs and omens and oracles, and there were religious craftsmen with professional skills in interpreting them. But the interpretation of the signs was always considered to be a tricky business, and it was recognised that the interpreters, even if skilled and honest, might be wrong."(23)

The Pythagorean 'secret doctrine' was a practical philosophy based on enlightening spiritual principles of cosmic harmony and transmitted by Plato as a public tradition. If we are to consider the idea of 'hidden knowledge' at all, it must be in relation to that which is indeed concealed from most men, the ability to use the forms of ritual (*telestikē*), specific daily practices (*akesis*), dreams and omens to activate Plotinus' 'different way of seeing' and lead towards the apprehension of higher realities. For Plato, both the discriminating use of music and the practice of contemplative astrology were the most powerful tools - far from being superstitious magic, they could evoke the inscrutable yet vital affects on the soul necessary for the virtue (*aretē*) of the citizens under cover of the rational composition of music and traditional ritual observance of cult.(24) The combination of astronomy as a respectable natural science with an acknowledgement of the stars as visible, divine minds forges a powerful bond embracing both exoteric and esoteric disciplines which for Plato provided the key to the only true wisdom. As we have seen in chapter one, this is the central conclusion of the *Epinomis*.

2.3. Plato and magic

What conclusions may be reached concerning Plato's attitude to what we would now call magical practices? It has been suggested by E.R. Dodds that Plato's personal contact with the Pythagoreans of West Greece in around 390 B.C. sowed the seed of his unique philosophical synthesis of reason and metaphysics: "Plato in effect cross-fertilised the tradition of Greek rationalism with magico-religious ideas whose remoter origins belong to the northern shamanistic culture".(25) Shamans, through rigorous training, have the ability to dissociate from their bodies and transcend the normal state of human awareness, becoming adept in divination, dream-prophecy, 'magical' healing and religious teaching. In his capacity as a shaman, Pythagoras would have been concerned with the purification of man's 'occult self', the purgation and tempering of the irrational forces of the *psyche* through catharsis, using rituals in which music and incantation played an important part. Such enlightened men, Dodds points out,(26) transcended all limiting boundaries of scientific, magical or philosophical knowledge in a personal synthesis directly dependent on their quality of being. The mythical Orpheus too reveals shamanistic gifts, and amongst the proliferation of 'Orphic' cults it was a central tenet that absolution could be obtained through ritual. Dodds proposes that it was contact with such traditions which made such a "fateful contribution" to Greek religious experience - that of a puritanical belief in an "occult self of divine origin" which set the "soul and body at odds", (27) in a world where before Plato *psyche* was not associated with Reason, but was more akin to the Homeric *thumos*, the irrational self or vital life-principle, the seat of emotion and appetite and intuitive or instinctual apprehension which dictated one's actions and inhibited rational decision-making. It was "perfectly at home" in the body.(28)

With the interpretation of this intuitive life-force as in part divine and separable from its irrational elements, Plato raised the level of 'religious' experience from that of the unquestioning acceptance of revelation (whether as an authentic experience or on some religious authority) to that of a rigorous and discriminating exercise in self-examination and awareness, involving an intellectual and moral sensitivity

to all nuances of experience.(29) As Dodds suggests, in Plato's ideal state the Guardians could be seen as "rationalised shamans".(30)

For Plato, all intuitive, irrational experiences must be brought under the scrutiny of the intellect. This is not to devalue their significance as genuine insight, but is a result of the conviction that knowledge acquired by rational argument could lead to the resolution of inner conflict, which was seen as the cause of moral evil.(31) Plato recognised that the passionate element of the soul, that "contentious and combative element which frequently causes shipwreck by its headstrong violence"(32) released an erotic energy which could be harnessed towards this resolution through rigorous philosophical training,(33) and which, paradoxically, could itself provide the impulse to transcend earthly experience. That Socrates himself took irrational intuition very seriously is evident, for example, from the attention he paid to his own dreams.(34) For him, 'occult' experiences were rich food for rational speculation, which could be called on to interpret their significance. One is reminded of Plato's advocating of an inner act of connection or prayer (a Plotinian 'tension of the soul'(35)) before any intellectual activity: "we should always appeal to the gods when we set about speaking or reflecting".(36)

Nevertheless, we have many examples of Socrates' acknowledgement of the benefits of irrational activities and practice of legitimate 'magic'. He implies that he himself received initiation into the Corybantic rites which involved frenzied ritual dancing.(37) In such ceremonies, rites of purification and supplication involving 'possession' were conducted, presumably led by a priest or priestess whose condition of frenzy inspired the followers. This homoeopathic cure of 'madness with madness', Dodds suggests, designed to provide an outlet for "infectious irrational impulses", (38) has its prototype in the Dionysiac mountain dancing, where orgiastic dancing and music produce an ecstasis which liberates the soul from overpowering anxieties. In the Classical Age such rituals were adopted by the cults of Hecate, Cybele or the Corybantes - Plato refers to the "sacred rage" of the Corybant(39) and the trance induced by frenzied dancing.(40)

Socrates also recognises the powers of midwives with their ability to alleviate labour pains with 'drugs and incantations' and even to intuitively match-make with an eye to healthy offspring(41) and mentions his own apparent ability to "charm away" the fear of death by saying magic spells.(42) Such a gift, he suggests, is the hallmark of a true magician and rarely to be found - indeed Simmias fears that after Socrates' death they will be hard put to find another who "understands these spells". In *Charmides* 157a-b, a passage of startling relevance to holistic medical practice and much reiterated by Ficino himself,(43) Socrates suggests a certain leaf together with a 'charm' as a remedy for a headache, and implies that the power of such charms lies in their words:

"... if the head and body are to be well, you must begin by curing the soul - that is the first and essential thing. And the cure of the soul ... has to be effected by the use of certain charms, and these charms are fair words, and by them temperance is implanted in the soul ... the great error of our day in the treatment of human beings [is] that men try to be physicians of health and temperance separately."

The problem lies in the fact that it is impossible for the average ignorant citizen to distinguish between the potency of a 'charm' uttered by a truly enlightened philosopher-magician and that claimed by a wily charlatan. For this reason Plato was in practice highly suspicious of all claims of 'paranormal' activity, recognising both the destructive potential of thought-suggestion when undertaken irresponsibly and with evil intent, and the difficulties in understanding exactly how such effects might occur in order to arm oneself against them (which was of course possible, as we shall see in the case of Plotinus):

"There is another form [of poisoning] which works by art, magic, incantations, and spells, as they are called, and breeds in the minds of the projectors the belief that they possess such powers of doing harm, in those of the victims the conviction that the authors of their suffering can verily bewitch them. Now as to all such matters the true facts are hard to learn, nor, if one could learn them, would it be an easy task to convince another. And it would be labour lost to try to bring conviction to minds beset with such suspicions of each other, to tell them, if they should by perchance see a manikin of wax set up in the doorway, or at the crossroads, or at the grave of a parent, to think nothing of such things, as nothing is known of them for certain."(44)

Any unauthorised 'magical' activity was dangerous because it could destabilise the individual, and by extension the society, by clouding his judgement and inducing false opinion.(45) Plato roundly condemns all "begging priests and soothsayers" who believe they have the power to constrain the gods themselves by means of sacrifices and incantations and to remit sins by various effortless rituals.(46) Such men who do not examine their own consciences can have no access to higher knowledge, and in their hands potentially transforming rites can be at best meaningless and at worst extremely harmful. That such practices were widespread is suggested by the reference to a 'bushel of books' attributed to Musaeus and Orpheus which the soothsayers used as authorities for their dubious ceremonies. Without the ability to discriminate truth from falsehood - and Plato recognised that the average human condition is one of constant struggle, confusion and error in vision - the individual cannot be protected from the perils of mistaking imitations from the real thing; mere imitations of nature in an art which prohibits any visionary glimpses of transcendent reality,(47) or imitations of the true 'charms' of discourse in the extravagant rhetoric of speechmakers(48) are likened to the forms of witchcraft and enchantment which exploit the inherent "weakness of our nature" and beguile through their seeming to be something they are not - reflections of divinity. In a profoundly psychologically perceptive passage in the Laws Plato indicates the precariousness of inner equilibrium, since our soul is by its very nature in a constant state of change and development and may at any moment be tempted into dissolution and chaos by subversive elements, whether externally applied in the misuse of 'magic' or internally generated by warring passions. Such a condition of psychological chaos, he suggests, is what is meant by hell itself:

"all things that have part in soul change, for the cause of change lies within themselves, and as they change they move in accord with the ordinance and law of destiny .. if [their changes of character] are more and in the direction of grave wickedness, they fall into the depths and the so-called underworld, the region known by the name of Hades ..."(49)

So seriously did Plato regard the crimes of those who encouraged such disorder by their subtle and guileful manipulations (manifest not only in self-confessed magicians but also in "dictators, demagogues, generals, contrivers of private Mysteries and ... the so-called Sophist")(50) that

their punishment in the ideal state is harsh indeed. Those who "bewitch the living" with "the supposed sorceries of prayer, sacrifice and incantations"(51) are to be sentenced to solitary imprisonment (presumably for life) and no rites of burial. In the end, the only authentic 'magical' effects Plato recognised and trusted were the psychological transformations brought about by imitation of the immaterial archetypes of the Good, True and Beautiful.

2.4. Daemons

In the Platonic spiritual hierarchy, the energy generated by the life force or world soul as it permeates and connects the various levels is carried by spiritual beings "superior to men but inferior to gods".(52) Unlike the morally neutral world soul, daemons are potentially autonomous beings whose actions may appear arbitrary, willful and unpredictable if not subversive and disruptive to the human psyche which reaches out to them, or which they invade. The co-operation of the various spiritual entities mediating between God and man was central to magical operations. For Plato himself such spirits were essentially well-intentioned; they were created to watch over human affairs(53) and to act as mediators and messengers between the two worlds. Each individual was protected and guided in the after-life by a guardian spirit;(54) Socrates attributed his inner 'prophetic' voice which advised him at all times to his guardian angel or *daimon*.(55) Our clearest account of the function of spirits occurs in the *Symposium* where Diotima describes Eros as a 'mighty daemon'. She explains:

"Spirits are half-way between god and man ... they are the envoys and interpreters that ply between heaven and earth, flying upward with our worship and our prayers, and descending with the heavenly answers and commandments, and since they are between the two estates they weld both sides together and merge them into one great whole. They form the medium of the prophetic arts, of the priestly rites of sacrifice, initiation, and incantation, of divination and of sorcery, for the divine will not mingle directly with the human, and it is only through the mediation of the spirit world that man can have any intercourse. whether waking or sleeping, with the gods. And the man who is versed in such matters is said to have spiritual powers, as opposed to the mechanical powers of the man who is expert in the more

mundane arts. There are many spirits, and many kinds of spirits, too, and Love is one of them."(56)

The implications of this passage are that 'occult' practices depend on such spirits for their effectiveness, and that Plato had no doubt of man's potential to contact them during ritual or mediumistic activity and bring something of their higher nature into the material world. What he did doubt, however, was his capacity to conduct such operations with wisdom and responsibility.

The later neo-platonists devised an elaborate and complex system of distinction between levels of moral superiority among spiritual beings and the elemental layers they inhabited, which as we shall see came into conflict with the dualist assumptions of Christianity, for whom all daemons must be intrinsically evil. Plotinus' view differs considerably from Platonic theology with its incorporation of individual choice and responsibility into the system of guardian spirits. He maintains that each soul may choose the level of reality on which it lives out a particularly earthly life, with its guardian spirit existing on the level immediately above. He links the allocation of guardian spirits with astrological determinants of character in a passage, often echoed by Ficino, which in its perception of microcosm/macrocosm sympathy suggests a viable framework for the symbolic, 'psychological' astrology practiced by the Florentine magus. After death, Plotinus suggests, souls return to the planet or star akin to their nature

"each according to his rational activity here: for one must think that there is a universe in our soul, not only an intelligible one but an arrangement like in form to that of the soul of the world: so as that, too, is distributed according to its diverse powers into the sphere of the fixed stars and those of the moving stars, the powers in our soul also are of like form to these powers, and there is an activity proceeding from each power, and when the souls are set free they come there to the star which is in harmony with the character and power which lived and worked in them: and each will have a god of this kind as its guardian spirit, either the star itself or the god set above this power."(57)

Gods (spirits who inhabit the intelligible realm) and lesser spirits are for Plotinus products of the *anima mundi* to provide for and sustain it in

its complex totality.(58) Spirits are impelled by desire for their particular attribute, and the individual soul chooses its guardian spirit "according to the corresponding part of that which is active in them, the soul".(59) Plotinus' majestic vision soars past the intricate debates of the theurgists on the classification of disembodied spirits and their ritual invocation. The true magus, for him, is the wise man who knows how the force of love draws everything together in cosmic sympathy, and how to enter into it. I agree with A.H. Armstrong(60) that the episode in Plotinus' life mentioned by Porphyry(61) when he agreed to witness the calling up of his guardian spirit by a visiting Egyptian priest does not merely reveal a superstitious interest in theurgic daemonology, but rather may be given "a rational interpretation in terms of Plotinus' own philosophy" which shows that the rank of our tutelary spirit is determined by our own decision to "live by the higher or lower in us". The fact that the spirit which appeared was no less than a god suggests either that the whole story was invented by Plotinus' disciples to prove his exalted spiritual state, or that the priest had attained an extraordinarily refined level of being; for "no true god could ever be conjured in Plotinus' universe". We cannot discount the possibility that Plotinus discerned an integrity and true spiritual gift in the priest which led him to trust the result of whatever event took place. We shall return to the role of daemons in theurgy of Iamblichus later in this chapter, and to Ficino's attempt to coherently synthesise philosophical, magical and Christian views in his own attitude towards magic in chapter four.

2.5. Divine frenzy

For Plato, the only authentic condition of being in which it was possible to make any direct contact with higher intelligences, and thus successfully conduct any 'magical' operation which aimed to divinise the soul, was that of *furor*, manifested in the disturbed and heightened consciousnesses of the prophet, ritual priest, poet and lover. "Our greatest blessings come by way of madness" says Socrates,(62) and Evelyn Underhill calls such 'madness' a mystical "enabration of reality", suggesting that it involves "an intenser degree of vitality ... a more acute degree of perception, a more vivid consciousness, than that which is

enjoyed by other men."(63) Dodds has pointed out that it is a commonly held belief amongst primitive people that all mental disturbances are caused by supernatural intervention(64) and that "the dividing line between common insanity and prophetic madness is hard to draw".(65) For the soul firmly embedded in a material condition, it would seem evident that nothing less than a severe jolt away from a rational sanity, a turning upside down of value systems designed to preserve such a condition would be required to free the soul to glimpse other levels of reality. Whether this is interpreted as contact with God himself or a whole range of lesser deities and spirits must depend on the quality and purity of the individual soul, and the degree of spiritual training undergone in preparation for such an event.

In the *Phaedrus*(66) Socrates distinguishes between human and divine acts of prophecy. Any act of divination or augury which depends purely on human intelligence for interpretation, such as the observance of birds, is the work of a "sane prophet" whose comprehension and advice, however acute, cannot exceed the limits of cosmic sympathies in the natural world. He is not 'plugged in' to receive the vibrations of higher planes, messages of the gods themselves, but relies merely on his own human judgement of external phenomena.(67) The prediction of the future through real supernatural intrusion, or "heaven-sent madness" however, is called by Socrates "that greatest of arts" and acknowledged to be an ancient practice - indeed Dodds suggests(68) that it may be as old as the religion of Apollo, the patron of all prophetic arts. The Pythia at Delphi evidently entered into an 'enthusiastic' trance after careful ritual preparation in which she was possessed by the god in the manner of spirit mediumship. Although the ultimate aim of such mediumship was specific knowledge of future events, the medium herself was merely the instrument of the god and it was the function of the *prophetes* to interpret through the application of wisdom and reason.(69) Plato suggests that any truths which are uttered "with no conscious thought", whether by prophets, priests or statesmen, are fit to be considered of divine origin if the results of their speeches are "repeatedly and outstandingly successful."(70)

Hierophantic madness is described by Plato as a therapeutic, cathartic process involving prayer and ritual to heal hereditary afflictions built up

over generations, originally caused by "some ancient sin".(71) When such inherited guilt eventually erupts in the form of severe psychological disturbance, it may be expiated once and for all in frenzied rites of purification and supplication. Plato particularly refers to the music of flutes in such rituals, which calms irrational, childish fear. Indeed he likens their effect to that of mothers singing to their babies:

"they ... put a spell on their babies just as the priestess does on the distracted in the Dionysiac treatment, by this combination of the movements of dance and song."(72)

Plato's devaluation of the 'irrational' is demonstrated in his rating of the worthiness of types of life according to the criterion of degrees of wisdom attained.(73) The prophet and mystery priest appear fifth, below the level of athlete or physician, since their skills lie in their 'foolishness'(74) or powers of irrational intuition, not their ability to acquire knowledge through rational argument. Poets and imitative artists appear even further down the list, presumably since they represent their glimpses of divinity through a medium accessible to the senses of sight and hearing. This may harmonise, refine and impose order on the chaos and confusion exhibited in the utterances of direct oracular possession, but therefore also may distract from or dilute the impact of the original inspiration.

Ficino, as we shall see(75) elevates the role of poetic frenzy to the status of that of the lover, and emphasises the equal potential of both visible and audible beauty to arouse the longing of the soul to return to its divine origin. Indeed the inspired musician-poet embodies the gifts of both prophet and priest, functioning as a seer possessed by a Muse, composing under the influence of "a kind of instinct or inspiration" without conscious knowledge of what he is doing(76) or the ability to discriminate logically:

"When a poet takes his seat on the Muse's tripod, his judgement takes leave of him. He is like a fountain which gives free course to the rush of its waters, and since representation is of the essence of his art, must often contradict his own utterances in his presentations of contrasted characters, without knowing whether the truth is on the side of this speaker or of that."(77)

He is "out of his senses" like a Corybantic dancer, says Plato in his most eloquent description of the inspired lyric poet.(78) In such a condition the poet can enhance and transform ordinary reality through listening to his imagination which is a gift of the Muse:

"a poet is a light and winged thing, and holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself, and reason is no longer in him. So long as he has this in his possession, no man is able to make poetry or to chant in prophecy."(79)

Socrates' analogy of the Muse as a loadstone, initiating and connecting a chain of inspiration from poet to interpreter to audience like a series of magnets, drawing and fostering particular talents and affinities (such as Ion's love for Homer) sets the model for the spiritually therapeutic function of 'live' performance, and explains why Plato considered 'bad' or ego-centred art, where the creative artist believes himself to be the generative force, to be so damaging to moral virtue.

Finally, the "best of all forms of divine possession"(80) - that of the lover of wisdom, who is aroused to frenzy through the intimations of divinity reflected in the visible beauty of this world; in particular, through the painful experience of falling in love with another human being. There can be no more vivid portrayal of the struggle of reason over passion than Plato's highly charged metaphors of the sprouting of the lover's wings and the charioteer's taming of the unruly horse. The power of erotic passion, when harnessed, can propel two individuals to self-mastery and the realisation of a mutual love based on the highest principles whose erotic component, although not necessarily without a physical outlet, is primarily an expression of the union of their souls. 'Platonic love' in the true sense of the term does not imply a repression or abnegation of all physical erotic desire, but a condition in which the lover fully enters into his passion, knowing to what end his desire must lead and recognising that its enactment on the physical level is but an experiential image of spiritual union. For Plato, the experience of Eros in sexual love (between men) is an important first stage in the ascent to "the philosophical life", (81) and for Ficino it became the principle on which the intense friendships within the Platonic Academy were founded, and which philosophically justified his

own propensity for the detached intimacy of sublimated homosexual relationships.(82)

The imperfect, or degenerate forms of the four frenzies, as they are dimly perceived and misunderstood by those souls most firmly locked into a material universe (like the outermost ripples of a stone thrown into a pond), manifest as fortune-telling, superstition, 'superficial music' and what Ficino called "that common and completely insane love"(83) inspired by the earthly rather than the heavenly Venus. These shadow-forms, it could be argued, are necessary both as a shield to preserve the pearls from defamation by the swine, and as potential stepping stones towards an awareness of their archetype once the 'itching' of the wings has begun.

2.6. Pythagorean music therapy

As we saw in chapter one, the whole idea of a cosmos held within the tension of order imposed on chaos originated, for the Pythagoreans, in the mathematical laws of musical intervals which regulated and structured the world-soul (expounded by Plato in the *Timaeus*):

"The general principle applied by the Pythagoreans to the construction of a *kosmos* is that of the imposition of limit (*peras*) on the unlimited (*to apeiron*) to make the limited (*to peperasmēnon*)."(84)

Quantity is imposed on quality, a harmonious cosmos is created within the confines of the octave or ratio of 1:2. The organising principle (*archē*) actively tends towards unity "but it is only when its work is done that unity is achieved"(85) - the temporal condition can thus be seen as one of continual striving towards a completion which can only culminate in the release of the soul from its embodied condition.

We have already noted that for the Pythagoreans, unlike Plato, the judgement of the ears was considered as of equal importance to that of the mind in the evaluation of musical intervals. For accounts of the importance Pythagoras attached to practical, therapeutic music-making we must rely to a large extent on the legends and anecdotes gathered together by Iamblichus in his *On the Pythagorean Life*.(86) Iamblichus tells us that

Pythagoras spent twenty-two years studying and receiving initiation in Egypt, followed by twelve years with the Magi in Babylon. However exact this information may be, it is generally held as we saw in chapter one that 'Pythagorean' discoveries concerning music and mathematics originated in Babylon, and it is important to bear in mind, particularly in view of the Renaissance enthusiasm for Hermetic texts, that "the Greeks were indeed as children to those venerable but by then quite decadent civilisations."(87)

According to Iamblichus, the first stage of education in the Pythagorean school involved the training of the disciples through refinement of the senses. Music was to take precedence over visual arts,

"through certain melodies and rhythms, from which the remedies of human manners and passions are obtained, together with those harmonies of the powers of the soul which it possessed from the first ... divinely contriving mixtures of certain diatonic, chromatic and enharmonic melodies, through which he easily transferred and circularly led the passions of the soul into a contrary direction ... attempering them through appropriate melodies, as through certain salutary medicines."(88)

Music was used to induce sleep and to purify the intellect, paying attention to specific times, rituals and astrological symbolism. For example, at springtime a lyre player would be surrounded by singers whose behaviour would be 'ordered' by the singing of 'certain paeans' (presumably to Apollo) in a representational ritual symbolising the Sun surrounded by the signs of the zodiac.(89) Iamblichus tells us that Pythagoras alone had developed and refined his 'inner ear' to directly intuit the harmonies of the spheres, which he then determined to reveal to his disciples through the means available to the outward senses - through dance, recital of epic poetry and instrumental music - so that they might "comprehend truly the first and genuine archetypes of things".(90) The overall aim was purification of the soul and its alignment with the macrocosm, as manifested by the movements of the heavenly bodies. This was to be achieved firstly through desire, that is, the inner quickening of the soul which has been afforded a glimpse of its immortality (the longing to 'return to the stars?')(91) and secondly through imitation of the inexorable cosmic laws revealed by the movements and harmonic proportions of the heavens.

Iamblichus, like Plato, understood this therapeutic tempering of psychological imbalances and intentional substitution of various emotional conditions as 'enchantment':

"Sometimes, also, by musical sounds alone, unaccompanied with words, they healed the passions of the soul and certain diseases, enchanting, as they say, in reality. And it is probable that from hence this name *epode*, i.e. enchantment, came to be generally used."(92)

Iamblichus likens the whole Pythagorean training method to the Delphic oracle; for divine messages cannot be easily accessible to those who do not apply themselves to serious study of the inner, hidden meanings to be found concealed within the language of riddles and puzzles, and within the symbolism of ritual practices.(93) For ritual sets up the conditions for a direct apprehension by the intuitive faculty in a way beyond the power of verbal communication and rational conceptual thinking. Music is such an effective 'charm' because it goes straight to the soul, connecting with its intrinsic proportions and effecting change and adaptation through its likeness to and resonance with the object. Thus the change will be natural and revelatory, beyond any human power to change someone purposively through a direct argument. In this sense, any moment where an alignment of the soul has occurred through artistic stimulation, whether in music or poetry, is an 'enchanted' one.

2.7. Ritual and education

Although for Plato the only truly effective catharsis of irrational elements was mental withdrawal and concentration(94) he realised that unlike the philosopher, the common man did not have the self-possession and strength of resolve to achieve such an aim without the aid of some form of external ritual. He saw that it would be detrimental to eliminate cult practice entirely, but that its regulation and authorisation by the wise was essential for the accommodation of common religious impulses and traditional honouring of the gods(95) - as the Athenian pointed out,(96) the need to worship both visible deities and invisible ones by means of images was fundamental to all cultures. However Plato understood that the task of establishing a sanctuary was not to be undertaken lightly and for

that reason forbade individuals to set up shrines in private houses "under the delusion that they are winning the privy favour of heaven by offerings and prayers". At all times the oracle at Delphi was to be the absolute authority,(97) the cult of Apollo providing a traditional, archaic ritual counterpart to the new "rational form of worship"(98) of the philosophers which centred around the symbol of the Sun, deified as Helios. In the *Laws* we see Plato forced into an extreme position in his despair at the superstitious materialism of his society. He is attempting to regulate something essentially unregulatable - the irrational religious impulse - in reaction to the harmful effects of manipulative and ignorant popular 'religious conjurors'. Astrology, from this point of view, provided for all levels of society, from the highest mystical speculations on number (as we saw in the *Epinomis*) to the rituals of popular cults of the planetary gods. The most important thing was a fundamental education in the basic principles of astronomy, so that even if the average citizen remained at the level of the literal or the superstitious, he would not be guilty of misrepresentation and at least the seed for potential spiritual growth would be sown.(99)

In the *Laws* the role of music as a powerful form of 'natural magic' is emphasised as being primary in both the education of children and for the continuing moral health of the citizens. This finds its precedent of course in the musical regime of the Pythagoreans and the supposed teachings of Pythagoras himself.

Following the Pythagorean tradition, for Plato the specially-composed songs for children were "spells for souls", disguised as play, but with the underlying potential to induce moral virtue and temperance.(100) The 'enchantment' of the children was to be effected through the setting of 'noble doctrines'(101) to carefully chosen rhythms and melodies and performed by experienced singers who themselves had attained a high level of moral discrimination:

"the sexagenarians of the 'chorus of Dionysus' would need to be exceptionally sensitive to rhythmic and melodic structure to ensure their competence to distinguish a good musical imitation of a soul under the stress of its emotions from a bad - competence, that is, to distinguish the counterfeit presentments of a good soul from those of an evil, to reject the second but produce the first publicly in their hymnody,

and thus to put a charm on the youthful mind, challenging one and all to join them in pursuit of virtue by means of these same imitations."(102)

Again, Plato stresses that it is the condition of being of the performer which determines the quality of the musical imitation he produces and thereby will affect most profoundly the impressionable soul. We learn in the *Republic*(103) that the subtle qualities of the various harmonic modes and careful choice of rhythms must always be in service to the words, and that a strong and noble character will naturally reflect similar qualities in any artistic output.(104) The true musician is someone who understands *musica humana* - the conditions of the human soul as manifested in moral virtues and vices - and can intuitively discern the presence or absence of 'the good' reflected in any activity or image.(105) Plato exalts the musician's role to no less than that of philosopher whose soul is so harmonised that it instinctively vibrates in sympathy with the harmony manifest in the proportions of physical beauty.(106) Because both rhythm and harmony directly penetrate 'the inmost soul'(107) through correspondence in kind, the musician as educator may touch the quick of the listener's psychological equilibrium, and if his own soul is tempered through training to only receive the 'beautiful and good' then he is in a position to foster and nurture similar tendencies in the impressionable souls of children.

2.9. Plotinus

Plotinus, perhaps in a rigorous attempt to refine and reform the diffuse 'magical' strands of the neo-platonism of his day with their implicit dangers of encroaching superstition and dilution through the proliferation of cults and rituals (a "spineless syncretism" in the opinion of Dodds),(108) never mentions theurgy as a legitimate practice. Plotinus' magic of natural correspondence was based on firm analogies between the experience of the intelligible realm and intensified sense-perception of the material world, which provided a natural image of it:

"They [the Forms in Intellect] all flow, in a way, from a single spring, not like one particular breath or one warmth, but as if there was one quality which held and kept intact all the qualities in itself, of sweetness along with

fragrance, and was at once the quality of wine and the character of all tastes, the sights of colours and all the awareneses of touch, and all that hearings hear, all tunes and every rhythm."(109)

Plotinus was not concerned with the external trappings and observances of religious experience; as A.H. Armstrong points out,(110) religion for him was "a solitary journey of the mind to God" - which is not to say that he despised or condemned such practices if fellow-philosophers found them useful. In the instance of his refusal to accompany Amelius to certain rituals for the gods in temples with the words "It is for them to come to me, not me to them"(111) he appears to display an attitude of apparent indifference towards association with lower deities; or rather, perhaps, he knew that the presence of a god may be invoked by openness and reverence at all times, and not necessarily through habitual cult procedures or manipulation of paraphernalia. Plotinus' contemplation was aimed directly at union with the One beyond all intelligible realms and their numina. Philosophical reflection was in itself a prayerful attitude; a condition of ceaseless contemplation which permeated all 'lower' activities and enhanced their significance. His philosophical formulations and images on the one hand, and the inscrutable content of his mystical experience on the other, were hence two aspects of the same thing. Such practices could, for him, be the only 'charms' worth cultivating.(112) Plotinus' penetrating mind is concerned with stripping away all impediments to an untrammelled, authentic realisation of the autonomy of man's higher soul, the full assumption of individual responsibility for affecting, directing and re-aligning external circumstances. 'Right action' may then "spring spontaneously from [man's] higher self's unbroken contemplation."(113)

The images and actions of external ceremonial, in this sense, could only provide approximations of a true inner experience. They could be seen as a more or less helpful way of strengthening contemplative powers which might be too weak to be harnessed directly towards the vision of the ultimate Good - for, as Plotinus suggests, "who, if he is able to contemplate what is truly real will deliberately go after its image?"(114) He does not deny that images, in reflecting the intelligible world, may aid recollection, but stresses that mere sense-perception of such images can in no way lead to knowledge.(115) It is important to remember Plotinus' distinction

between the higher and lower parts of the soul, for he is never in any doubt that the lower, irrational part, including the body, could be affected by 'magical' practices, and was particularly vulnerable to what we might now term telepathic interference. In the episode of Olympius' attempts to undermine Plotinus by directing 'star magic' at him which resulted in intestinal pains,(116) Plotinus apparently was so possessed of 'soul power' that Olympius' actions were deflected back onto him and he gave up in fear for his own health.(117) According to Porphyry, Plotinus unquestioningly accepted that his pains were happening as a result of Olympius' evil thoughts, but such was his ability to act from his higher, contemplative nature at all times that he was ultimately immune from, and by his very quality of being (in other words, involuntarily) resisted and caused to rebound, such enchantment.(118)

Would Plotinus have maintained that Olympius' evil wish, evidently some sort of rite involving astrological invocation, caused his intestinal complaint? In *Ennead* IV.4.41-2 he describes how the natural powers of the stars may be set in operation by prayer but do not have autonomous wills to be petitioned:

"That which he prays for comes about because one part is in sympathetic connection with another, just as in one tense string; for if the string is plucked at the lower end, it has a vibration at the upper ... But if the vibration can even pass from one lyre to another in so far as a sympathy exists, then there is also one single harmony in the All, even if it is composed of opposites ... nor do [the stars] deliberately choose to attend to prayers, but we must admit that some influence comes from them both with and without prayer in so far as they are parts, and parts of one whole ... one thing is benefited and harmed by another because it is naturally so disposed, and by the arts of physicians and magicians one thing is compelled to give something of its power to another .."

If this is effected with harmful intent by the 'magician', it does not presume any evil property in the part itself:

"if the man who prays is evil, there is no need to be surprised; for the wicked draw water from the streams and that which gives does not know itself to what it gives, but only gives; ... if someone takes what he ought not from what lies at the disposal of all, justice pursues him by an inevitable law."(119)

From this one could assume that Plotinus, being so in-tune with the apt and just flowing of such 'inevitable laws' through the subduing and moulding of his own will, became an unwitting instrument for such retribution to flow back to the perpetrator. In *Ennead III.1*, 'On Destiny' Plotinus rejects all neatly cut-and-dried theories of causation, held by Epicureans, Stoics and astrologers, in favour of a free-ranging potential of human will to acknowledge its own participation in its destiny. By likening the role of the wise astrologer to that of the soothsayer or diviner, in that he is contemplating the possible significance of a given set of signs by subjecting them to a personal interpretation and not regarding them as definite objective causes,(120) Plotinus sets a philosophical precedent for all 'magical' rites as experiential, non-quantifiable moments of meaningful and significant connection between the participator and his chosen set of cosmic 'mirroring' devices, whether they be observed as stars, birds or entrails. Such operations work, he says in *Ennead IV*,

"by sympathy and by the fact that there is a natural concord of things that are alike and opposition of things that are different, and by the rich variety of the many powers which go to make up the life of the one living creature."(121)

In such an inter-connected cosmic system it is not surprising that an intentional 'invasion' for manipulative ends by a particular individual would cause reverberations of equal intensity, for this, for Plotinus, would simply be in accordance with natural law - a perversion of the natural state of conditioned tension and reverberation present in creation, in which we continually and inevitably participate.

However, the treasures yielded by 'knowing participation' in cosmic forces are only available to those who are able to make the necessary connections. For example, with regard to 'occult' astrology, he says:

"We must rather say that the movement of the stars is for the preservation of the universe, but that they perform in addition another service; this is that those who know how to read this sort of writing can, by looking at them as if they were letters, read the future from their patterns, discovering what is signified by the systematic use of analogy."(122)

The degree of such ability, according to Plotinus, varies according to the quality of the human soul, which in its nobler form acts from the impulse of free-will and exercises total control over bodily passions. Instead of being at the mercy of external circumstances and internal temptations, the "self-directed" man is possessed of himself, and when moved by "irrational impulses" holds his own and remains free to move in any direction, maintaining the power to change the outer circumstance or influence rather than be changed by it.(123) This ability to discriminate and sift with regard to involvement in life and use of resources was of course of paramount importance to Ficino in his attempts to regulate and balance his outer life with his temperamental melancholic tendencies. As I mentioned earlier, it was the intention of the neo-platonic magician to use his practices, whether those of direct contemplation (in the case of Plotinus) or theurgy (as favoured by Iamblichus and Proclus) as a means of self-clarification and alignment so that his desires and those of the World Soul become one, achieving a degree of self-possession and direction which enhances individual freedom of action and liberates from the limiting shackles of deterministic assumption:

"it is perhaps correct to say that the soul acts unthinkingly according to destiny, at least for people who think that destiny is an external cause; but the best actions come from ourselves; for this is the nature we are of, when we are alone."(124)

We have already mentioned how Plotinus believed the higher part of the soul to be immune from the effects of all artificial intervention on the part of the magician. He explains(125) that this is because the rational soul is self-directed, and may choose whether or not to consciously enter into the natural enchantment of the world. For all worldly, practical action is enchantment for Plotinus - we are constantly moved towards that which charms us, and often caught by it. Nature herself is full of 'magic draughts'(126) which bring illusion and misdirect or attract our energies sideways instead of upwards. Plotinus particularly stresses the danger of musical incantations, for when they are produced with a specific attitude and intent on the part of the magician they exert a wholly natural power over the irrational part of the soul and so may, by the unscrupulous manipulator, be misdirected to confuse rather than harmonise:

"And there is a natural drawing power in spells wrought by the tune and the particular intonation and posture of the magician - for these things attract, as pitiable figures and voices attract; for it is the irrational soul - not the power of choice or the reason - which is charmed by music, and this kind of magic causes no surprise: people even like being enchanted, even if this is not exactly what they demand from the musicians."(127)

In order to free oneself from such enslavement, Plotinus suggests, we must so strengthen the higher part of the soul with philosophy that it will "dissolve the powers on the other side."(128) Then an upward shift of emphasis may take place; all practical activities may be approached from an inner condition of contemplation. For Plotinus, contemplation is not confined to a few solitary mystics. It is the common gift of an inner vision which "all have and few use."(129) As such, it may be brought constantly to all activities, to 'ennoble' them, for necessary natural impulses and compassionate actions are not inherently 'noble'(130) but become so by their continual, intentional relation to a higher purposive design through the medium of the inner eye, which 'sees' with connective, symbolic insight. The opening of this eye is aided or prompted, in the Platonic sense, by intimations of the divine pattern perceived by our senses as Beauty, visible or audible. It is an operation that must be continually renewed experientially, to preserve and strengthen the soul, and can be seen as Ficino's fundamental aim in his emphasis on active imagination throughout Book three of the *Liber de vita*, as we shall see in chapter four.

Plotinus would see that self-examination, understood as self-contemplation, can alone ennoble every-day life without losing self-possession. We will find a direct echo of his words "that which [the self-directed man] contemplates is himself"(131) in Ficino's exhortation to a young member of the Medici family(132) to turn his attention to the planetary energies mirrored within his soul and "temper within himself" the heavenly gifts. In the end, engagement in practical activity without losing a higher self-awareness is a question of attitude and participation, a willingness to renounce habitual, objective thought processes. Paradoxically, for Plotinus, to be "actively occupied" with the concerns of so-called everyday reality, without having recourse to a contemplative

perspective, is to be enchanted and deluded by the semblance of truth. True 'reality' is only to be found in subjective inner experience:

"The man ... is alone free from enchantment who when his other parts are trying to draw him says that none of the things are good which they declare to be so, but only that which he knows himself, not deluded or pursuing, but possessing it. So he would not be drawn in any direction."(133)

We can perhaps sum up this brief survey of Plotinus' conception of the magician's role as follows: the natural process of ebb and flow in the cosmos is consciously, but disinterestedly, entered into and dynamically caught by the magician through his inclination and disposition - what Giovanni Pico was to call his 'intent of soul' (*animi intentio*)(134) - to move towards that which he desires, which is to enter the play of forces for the sake of harmonising his own soul. The natural astrological benefits which he draws to himself via the 'occult' properties of the stars and their effluxes are thus signs, symptoms or by-products, which incline towards him through a sympathetic resonating. The wilful and deliberate attempt to harness these forces for the manipulation of events or the artificial realisation of particular objectives, is illegitimate and presumptuous and will receive, in the natural balance of cosmic justice, its deserved retribution.

2.10. Images (*sunthēmata*)

"Things here are signs; they show therefore to the wiser teachers how the supreme God is known; the instructed priest reading the sign may enter the holy place and make real the vision of the inaccessible."(135)

A.H. Armstrong in his article 'Platonic Mirrors'(136) gives a vivid and succinct analysis of the distinction between 'natural' and 'artificial' images and Plotinus' own evaluation of their specific derivations and functions. He quotes a passage from *Ennead VI 4-5* where Plotinus clearly differentiates between the image produced by an artist and that to be found in the natural world:

"... if one is talking about the likeness made by the painter, we shall affirm that it is not the original which made the the likeness but the painter, since even if some painter makes a self-portrait it is not alikeness of

himself, for what made the painting was not the body of the painter or the bodily form which was represented: and it is not the painter, but this particular disposition of the colours which should be said to make this particular likeness. This is not in the strict and proper sense the making of likeness and image as it occurs in pools and mirrors, or in shadows - here the image has its existence in the strict and proper sense from the prior original, and comes to be from it, and it is not possible for what has come to be to exist cut off from it."(137)

In Platonic terms, these two forms of imaging can be referred to as 'participation' (*methexis*) or 'imitation' (*mimēsis*). (138) It is the direct participation of the divine in the natural things of this world which Plotinus considered of greater import than the images constructed by the intervention of the artist; indeed, such images could be inherently dangerous. Iris Murdoch draws our attention to Plato's suspicion that art may be a subversive distraction from the true business of intellectual speculation, for it demands a personal, subjective response:

"The artist begins indeed to look like a special sort of sophist; and not the least of his crimes is that he directs our attention to particulars which he presents as intuitively knowable, whereas concerning their knowability philosophy has grave and weighty doubts. Art undoes the work of philosophy by deliberately fusing knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description."(139)(my italics)

A.H. Armstrong points out that for the ancient Greeks, artificial representation such as that of Greek tragedy could also be "dangerously powerful";(140) for in the heightened intensity of artificially induced emotion, as in the non-naturalistic stylised beauty of sculpture, the aim is to activate the archetype directly, deliberately creating a clarifying focus in contrast to the diffuse, ambiguous and often hidden signs freely available in nature. For Plotinus, the world's interfusion with divinity is best expressed through the concept of mirror-imaging, rather than imitative representation. In the words of Armstrong:

"What his preference for the mirror-reflection rather than the picture enables him to bring forward and stress is, first, the intimacy and immediacy of the relationship of all below it to the eternal, and, second, the direct spontaneity of the eternal's creative self-diffusion."(141)

Plotinus tells us(142) that it is by means of such close interweaving that earthly things display traces or signs of their real forms, of immanent, divine presence. Such a direct, spontaneous imprint of divinity on the world, facilitated by the action of the Soul, gave rise to Plotinus' famous image of the temporal world being contained by the eternal as if a net spread out in the sea.(143) For Plotinus as a contemplative mystic, divine activity takes the form of emanation and irradiation, a process of creative contemplation which must precede all deliberate planning of the artisan:

"the world-order is not the result of following out a train of logical consequences and purposive thought: it is before consequential and purposive thinking; for all this comes later, reasoning and demonstration and the confidence produced by them."(144)

Such processes of discursive thinking play no part in the processes of nature, who creates from the font of silent contemplation, as from a dream, which lies beyond all action. In *Ennead III.8* Nature herself speaks:

"... my act of contemplation makes what it contemplates, as the geometers draw their figures while they contemplate. But I do not draw, but as I contemplate, the lines which bound bodies come to be as if they fell from my contemplation."

In order to understand the processes of magical rites, Plotinus' continual emphasis on the necessity of abandoning discursive thought in favour of experiential, intuitive apprehension (hence his preference for *methexis*) cannot be too highly stressed, and we need to consider the implications of such a mode of perception in some detail. Plotinus' master Plato in his *Seventh Letter* and in the *Phaedrus* had already commented on the inadequacy of words to represent the true nature of reality. Written speech, he says(145) is merely a shadow of the "living and animate speech of a man with knowledge" and moreover

"it shows great folly ... to suppose that one can transmit or acquire clear and certain knowledge of an art through the medium of writing, or that written words can do more than remind the reader of what he already knows on any given subject ... once a thing is committed to writing it circulates equally among those who do not understand the subject and those who have no business with it; a writing

cannot distinguish between suitable and unsuitable readers
..."(146)

To quote Iris Murdoch, "Plato wrote with misgivings, because he knew that truth must live in present consciousness and cannot live anywhere else."(147) Socrates attributes the tradition of the cultivation of wisdom by internal resources of memory, rather than by the external form of writing, to the ancient Egyptians, the culture so revered as the 'golden age' of religious philosophy by Ficino and his contemporaries.

Such an emphasis would help to explain the 'philosophical incoherence' (as Brian Copenhaver puts it)(148) of the Hermetic texts, which were perhaps intended, in the spirit of Egyptian teaching, more as an aide-mémoire to be tasted than doctrines to be learned. Plotinus' own distrust of artificial 'reminders' was no doubt fostered by the words of the Egyptian King Ammon in the *Phaedrus*:

"Those who acquire [writing] will cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful; they will rely on writing to bring things to their remembrance by external signs instead of on their own internal resources."(149)

On this passage, Ficino comments

"Socrates laughs at the person who studies writing in the belief that through letters he can reveal indubitable truth to posterity. In the manner of the Pythagoreans, he affirms that the contemplation and transmission of truth occurs in souls rather than in books."(150)

However, paradoxically, if the intelligible world is to be represented on the sub-lunar level at all, then images rather than words may provide the most effective medium, when employed by those who know what they are doing. Plotinus certainly credited the "wise men of Egypt" with such skill:

"... either by scientific or innate knowledge, when they wished to signify something wisely, [they] did not use the forms of letters which follow the order of words and propositions and imitate sounds and the enunciations of philosophical statements, but by drawing images, and inscribing in their temples one particular image of each particular thing, they manifested the non-discursiveness of the intelligible world, that is, that every image is a kind

of knowledge and wisdom and is a subject of statements, all together in one, and not discourse or deliberation."(151)

In the *Seventh Letter* Plato stresses the value of enthusiastic debate for acquiring knowledge.(152) Given that language in general will always be a poor substitute for experiential insight, although the wise man may be able to create verbally the conditions for true perception, such apprehension is more likely to occur during the thrust of 'live' discourse. The written word is a solidification of thought, open to misunderstanding and uncompromisingly, although arbitrarily, fixed in a context. True penetration into the nature of things, suggests Plato, can only occur

"when all these things, names and definitions, visual and other sensations, are rubbed together and subjected to tests in which questions and answers are exchanged in good faith and without malice ... when human capacity is stretched to its limit, a spark of understanding and intelligence flashes out and illuminates the subject at issue."(153)

The creating of the right conditions, the "sustained, persistent discussion"(154) necessary before insight is gained is, as we shall see in Ficino's own description of his improvisatory musical compositions, of direct relevance to all 'spontaneous' artistic outpourings, if they are worth anything. Plato emphasises that neither learning nor memory "can make a man see if his nature is not akin to the object"; but once the alignment is made (either through natural disposition or purposeful art or ritual) then there is no danger of forgetfulness, for truth has been "grasped by the soul".(155)

In Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* we read how his master put this into practice. Plotinus' teacher Ammonius left no writings, and for ten years Plotinus gave lectures and led discussions based on Ammonius' teaching, but committed nothing to writing himself(156) - in fact he had made an agreement with two other pupils not to disclose any of Ammonius' doctrines. When he did commit his thought to paper, it was without concern for spelling or syntax and never revised.(157) Porphyry suggests (see chapter one, page 61) that Plotinus' capacity for sustained, focussed concentration enabled him to convey as lucidly as possible the nature of his immediate, intuitive thought-processes - such a writing method, springing from a

contemplative over-view, would reproduce as closely as possible in the reader the sensation of being present at a viva voce exposition.

It is clear from Porphyry's account that in Plotinus' school of utmost importance was the direct personal relevance of the texts studied and the encouragement of sustained, penetrating questioning, out of which a 'spark' of truth might arise which could then be set down in writing.(158)

Ficino's Commentary on Plato's *Seventh Letter*(159) reveals his firm agreement on the dangers of expressing 'divine things' in writing or words to the common people, and he stresses that the faculty required for comprehending them is not that by which 'other things' are understood:

"Nowhere does Plato say that nothing true and certain can be understood about divine things; but what is understood of these things can neither be expressed, nor can their particular truth be understood by the same intelligible reasoning [*ratio*] as the rest."(160)

He goes on to explain that the philosopher's mind is prepared for illumination through the strengthening of the divine part of the soul through 'moral purgation and contemplative resolve' [*tum morali purgatione, tum resolutione contemplativa*]; the act of 'knowing' in this sense is an approaching and joining with God in an 'opening of contemplation'. Ficino is also convinced that such things cannot be taught or discovered by the same systematic reasoning [*ratio*] that may be brought to other areas of knowledge. The soul must respond or yield to the inner purified essences of things [*purgatissima atque eminentissima*] which are qualities perceivable by the philosopher after long and dedicated application. Only then is his soul prepared for the sudden spark of illumination, the perception of the Ideas which have been "kindled by the fanning doctrine" and shine out like the rays of the stars. A mind thus nourished, suggests Ficino, is unable to represent in words the nature of its revelation, but rather it "cultivates and instructs minds through listening" that is, in 'live' performance. It is no use, he says, to attempt to convey such things to those who in their normal condition are incapable of understanding, through their lack of the essential faculty of inner sight, but only to those who do have potential to 'see' in this way, for their "keenness of vision" [*aciem*] will be sharpened and inspired by it. For in

no way can such refinement ever be cultivated from the soil of a mind steeped in a habitual yet deadening rationality.

There is a radical difference of quality between these two modes of awareness. Ficino's clear distinction between ordinary 'rational' or common-sense understanding and an anagogic raising of consciousness to grasp exalted truths inaccessible to man in his common condition has deep implications for our interpretative response to his own literary style. For it is in itself a paradox that he can discourse rationally and scholastically about something beyond discursive reason; yet perhaps it is in that very 'rubbing together' of seemingly disparate outer form and inner content that the 'spark' is lit in the soul of the reader.

2.11. Earthly beauty

In elaborating on the same theme, Plotinus also tells us that the mode of awareness necessary for contemplation of the essential divinity present in all things is far from what we normally regard as understanding or even perception, for rather "it will be like comparing the consciousness of someone fast asleep to the consciousness of someone awake."(161) In his treatise on Beauty,(162) Plotinus exhorts us to "shut your eyes and change to and wake another way of seeing, which everyone has but few use."(163) This is the condition of creative contemplation, the activity of Soul, known in her furthest reaches by the productive processes of nature which

"holds all the levels of the Neoplatonic universe together and ensures that the reflections, shadows and dreams which it produces as our cosmos here below are true signs and icons of the intimate and immediate presence of the Good."(164)

Discursive reasoning, a faculty peculiar to man, is of course necessary as a stepping stone to a contemplative awareness, but there is always the danger of it taking over in a way which excludes conjectural or speculative insight. For the neo-platonists such an awareness could be enhanced through the power of beauty in earthly things, a beauty which also, as we have seen, may bewitch and deceive those who do not understand its purpose. The sense-awareness of beauty manifests in the Platonic tradition as love,

a desire evoked in response to the supreme beauty of the Idea glimpsed in an object or person, or heard as an echo in *musica instrumentalis*. It is this desire, or *eros*, which enables the philosopher to begin his ascent from the particular to the universal;(165) it frees him to enjoy the beauties of the earth without desiring their possession, for he is no longer attached to them for their own sake. A.H. Armstrong stresses(166) the importance of understanding the transcendence of the Ideal world as a horizontal expansion as well as a vertical shift in perspective, the intelligible cosmos being "our material cosmos with all its beauties intensified" which is immediately present when we look with different eyes. It is the greatest paradox, and perhaps the key to an alchemical unity of objective and subjective vision, that such perception involves seeing things both 'as they are' - intensely and clearly - and yet also knowing that their apparent truth is an illusion. For Plotinus, and for Ficino, the entire living world is an icon of the divine.

Music, for Plotinus, is another way of 'waking' the soul by reflecting the imperceptible sounds of the ordered cosmos.(167) The musician is seen as having the facility to be led to higher speculation through his affinity with harmonious sounds and rhythms:

"He must be led and taught to make abstraction of the material element in them and come to the principles from which their proportions and ordering forces derive and to the beauty which is in these principles, and learn that this was what excited him, the intelligible harmony and the beauty in it ..."(168)

In this way, the musician may transcend the condition of the lover and attain that of the philosopher, although he may not be explicitly conscious of such a transformation. Moreover, his intuitive "firm confidence in what he possesses"(169) will allow his insights into the divine nature of things to be communicated non-verbally through a musical performance where there is no interference from a self-centred acknowledgement of 'divine powers' - he arrives on this plateau "without knowing it".(170) Such is the position of the musical magus, who in the hope of effecting a harmonisation of 'above with below', uses hymns and invocations to strengthen his prayers.

PART TWO: Practical Magic

2.12. Theurgy

In chapter XXII of *De vita coelitus comparanda*, the third part of his *Liber de vita*, Ficino suggests that the depressive tendencies signified by the planet Saturn may be alleviated in two ways: either allopathically, by the admixture of a good dose of Jupiter, or homoeopathically, by fully entering into the nature of his melancholy and thereby receiving the greatest gift of the planet - that of divine contemplation and intelligible knowledge. In the context of the philosophical life, the latter remedy is more highly recommended, for, says Ficino, "The Chaldaeans, Egyptians and Platonists think that by this method one can avoid the malice of fate."⁽¹⁾

It is in this light that Ficino's enthusiasm for the neo-platonic practical magic of the Chaldaeans (as relayed by Iamblichus and Proclus), the revelatory, 'alchemical' magic of the Egyptians (via Hermes Trismegistus) and the philosophical magic of the Greeks (in the works of Plato and Plotinus) must be considered, for his syncretic attempt to penetrate to the common roots of a wisdom manifesting through a vast spectrum of intellectual disciplines and revelatory religious practices was directed to one end: that of self-mastery and thus the liberation of the soul from fate-bound necessity. Although Ficino understood that all religious traditions could be traced back to the same common need for unity and that essentially there was no contradiction in his embracing of the Christian faith, his advocacy (and even adoption) of magical practices nonetheless provoked unease amongst some Church authorities who were limited by a more orthodox perspective. Ficino's *Apologia* to his *Liber de vita*⁽²⁾ testifies to his struggle in presenting such unorthodox material. His dilemma lay in the conflict between his convictions and the very real danger of losing his livelihood and reputation - if the new Christian Platonism was to inspire and take root, it was vital for Ficino that his authority as a Christian priest was never undermined. Ficino sought "the reform of Christian theology by returning it to its Platonic sources" through creating "a new Platonic 'mentality' which challenged implicitly

the cultural hegemony of the inherited traditions of Christendom"(3) - such work could only be carried out from within the very institution whose attitude it sought to change.

Although Plotinus undoubtedly provided Ficino with a sound framework for his 'natural magic', as we shall explore further in chapter four, the Florentine magus was not content to strive for union with the divine by internal visionary and contemplative means alone. He found much to be recommended in adding the 'charms' of ritual activity involving astrology, visual image and music to those of philosophical speculation. It was chiefly the newly-discovered works of Porphyry, Iamblichus and Proclus which revealed to Ficino the lofty potential of theurgic rites, although like his master Plato he was fully aware of the precarious nature of daemonic magical activities when practiced by the ignorant. In the religious rites of the Chaldaeans(4) Ficino discovered a practical dimension to Platonism which appeared to demonstrate experientially its essential truths. In the elevation of his music-making and astrology to the condition of sacramental ritual Ficino took on the role of hierophant, discovering a form of magic which could lead directly to the contemplative gift of Saturn through the transforming power of the imagination.

Iamblichus, in his *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, drew his personal exposition of ritual magic in reply to Porphyry's sceptical enquiry, he tells us, from a synthesis of the three traditions mentioned above (Chaldaean, Egyptian and Greek).(5) This work certainly seems to have both aroused Ficino's intellectual curiosity and inspired his practical use of ritual, drawing from him a lengthy Commentary,(6) and it provides us with a thorough examination and advocacy of the ritual attitude known as theurgy. He incorporated the experiential revelation of the Chaldaean Oracles into the intellectual discipline of neo-platonism in a way which connected human philosophical discourse with direct initiation through the power of the gods. This was magic of a kind which aspired to that which lay beyond the intellect, vertically connecting man with god, not merely dealing with horizontal sympathies or artificial hallucinations.(7) The central ritual of the Chaldaeans was *anagōgē*, or the ascent of the soul on the rays of the Sun to mystical union with God. Whereas Plotinus maintained that the purification of the soul was essentially a contemplative process in which

the individual could turn to the higher part of the soul - which remained pure - through internal moral effort, for the Chaldaeans the whole soul is enslaved in matter. In such a condition the soul is subject to the influence of the stars and prey to the evil aggression of material daemons, and requires purification through various rituals which eventually lead to the thrusting of the soul out of the body to be united with the god. Lewy(8) suggests that the anagogic condition of ecstatic rapture is none other than Platonic frenzy - the moment when the soul becomes immortal through the discarding of all material elements, and in a state of inebriation is 'possessed' by the god. We may also see similarities with the alchemical stage of 'whitening' when, in a supreme act of differentiation from matter, soul and spirit unite in the first coniunctio or mystical marriage.

Iamblichus understood very well that the proper performance of rituals involved man's participation in a natural order which lay beyond his conscious grasp, and which enabled him to clarify the part he must play in this order. In the establishing and consecration of a 'templum' or sacred space, the conditions are created for alignment with eternal laws, or to use Boethius' terms, for *musica humana* to be brought into accord with *musica mundana*. Iamblichus describes sacred rites as "more excellent than reason"(9) with the potential to purge the irrational elements of the soul and free the subject from bad fate. Different rituals will be suited to different types of souls - in fact the specific kind of ritual hardly matters, for the importance lies in the subjective experience, which will inevitably be the more powerful when the rite is suited to the soul performing it.(10) The objective is to move "from parts to wholes", (11) from confusion to clarity, freeing from the constraints of material life. Although the theurgist may use sympathetic magic (his embodied condition is his starting point therefore the first rites must be material ones) such means are never ends in themselves - the power lies 'beyond' in the gods. To participate fully means to give oneself to the symbol or occult property by a turning around and away from logical thinking; for such concentration frees the dormant intuitive faculty of apprehension from the constraints of sense-perception and discursive thought, which as we have seen is continually regarded as a severe prohibitor of alignment with the play of forces in the cosmos, or real engagement with its forces. Most important

to Ficino as a 'doctor of the soul' would have been Iamblichus' belief in the power of ritual as a cathartic, purifying activity similar to Greek tragedy, purging the evil of the soul through its contact with similar 'base' apparitions and auditions:

"The powers of the human passions that are in us, when they are entirely restrained, become more vehement; but when they are called forth into energy, gradually and commensurately, they rejoice in being moderately gratified, are satisfied; and from hence, becoming purified, they are rendered tractable, and are vanquished without violence. On this account, in comedy and tragedy, by surveying the passions of others, we stop our own passions, cause them to be more moderate, and are purified from them. In sacred ceremonies, likewise, by certain spectacles and auditions of things base, we become liberated from the injury which happens from the works effected by them. Things of this kind, therefore, are introduced for the sake of our soul, and of the diminution of the evils which adhere to it thorough generation, and of a solution and liberation from its bonds."(12)

2.13. Invocations

Central to theurgic practice was the invocation of gods, who were 'loosed' and 'bound' by the magician by means of magic formulae which were imparted to him by the gods themselves. It is continually stressed that the gods are the active agents; the human participant is passive and aims at a purification of his soul which will allow it to be drawn upwards by divine action. The conjunction (systasis) of the magician with the god was achieved through the powerful action on the soul of 'voces mysticae' - the names of the gods uttered in the forms of prayer, often outwardly unintelligible but composed of definite numerical arrangements and vowel patterns. For Iamblichus, and for Ficino, invocation achieved no less than the conforming of human will to divine:

"for an invocation ... does not draw down the impassive and pure Gods, to that which is passive and impure; but, on the contrary, it renders us, who have become passive through generation, pure and immutable ... [it] renders the will of man adapted to the participation of the Gods ... such names of the Gods are adapted to sacred concerns, and other divine symbols, are able, as they are of anagogic or elevating nature, to connect invocations with the Gods themselves."(13)

Why were these magical names so powerful? For the theurgist, the 'secret names' or voces mysticae represented the power of God working in the universe, the Ideas sown in matter and represented in sound,(14) audible images of the 'divine lures' embedded in the natural world. Their knowledge and utterance brought the magician into direct contact with the archetypal principle personified in the god evoked - Psellus tells us(15) that such invocations are the 'watchwords' forgotten when the soul left its divine condition for the embodied; to 'remember' them is to have access to the musica mundana experienced when the soul descended through the planetary spheres, and thus to be enabled to begin the reascent:

"Seek out the channel of the soul, from where it descended in a certain order to serve the body; and seek how you will raise it up again to its order by combining (ritual) action with a sacred word."(16)

Iamblichus stresses(17) that only invocations and rites performed by someone who knows this may reach and join with the "more excellent natures" through a natural attraction of "similitude and alliance", not through any violent or manipulative means. He explains that the significance of the 'names' uttered lies in their symbolic value - we cannot apply human judgements about the degree of meaning in any particular word. To the gods, they all have a significance which lies beyond the limits of our imagination; it conforms either to our intellect, itself being divine, or is simply beyond human powers of description. For this reason we must not assume the right to apply logical or natural similitudes to the words which are transmitted by the gods themselves, and which conform most closely to their divine natures;(18) but if it were possible to know the totality of meaning contained in an invocation, then "the whole divine essence, power and order" would be revealed.(19) Iamblichus considered that ancient Egyptian and Assyrian words were more powerful because, since these races were the first to participate with the gods, their language itself was inherently "adapted to sacred concerns".(20) He understood that it is impossible to preserve the essence and idiom of a language in translation, and that such attempts would result in a degeneration and weakening of the original 'divine' force present.(21) Ancient words would also be more effective due to their immutability, for in this aspect they correspond to the changelessness of divine natures and may be more potent reminders of the eternal 'order'. The preservation of sanctity in a prayer or a holy

place must depend on its conformity to the invariability of the deity to which it is dedicated, otherwise no 'divinisation' of the temporal space (in spoken word or physical locality) can take place. Iamblichus laments the attitude of his contemporary Greeks, who restlessly indulge in continual innovation and change: "they transform everything through an unstable desire of discovering something new."(22) The venerability and sanctity of ancient ritual was thus firmly established, and one cannot overestimate the importance, for the Renaissance Platonist, of the rediscovery of such arcane practices and their incorporation into a new synthesis of religious philosophy and practical magic.

In his *Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles* Proclus employs musical imagery to describe the activating of the divine principle of the soul as it strives towards ultimate union with the Father. He refers to the 'seminal reasons' implanted in the soul as

"the intellectual and invisible hymns of the ascending soul, awakening the memory of harmonic reasons, which bear the inexpressible images in it of the divine powers."(23)

Proclus goes a stage further than Iamblichus in suggesting that the hymn surpassing all hymns, that directed towards the Father himself and no lesser divinity, must be of a nature that transcends any material or sensual expression - in fact it can consist of no less than the 'energising' of the soul itself. After all initial preparations involving sensual stimuli of words and music, the final song of the soul consists in its actual transformation:

"The hymn of the Father does not consist of compound discourses nor the preparation of sacred rites. For being alone incorruptible he does not receive a corruptible hymn. Let us not therefore imagine that we may persuade the Master of true discourses by a strange hurricane of words, nor by show or parade adorned with artificial rites: for God loves the simple, unadorned beauty of form. Let us therefore consecrate this hymn to God as an assimilation to or becoming like him ..."(24)

But for the initiates who had not yet attained the inner resources for such direct internal communion, audible invocations provided valuable stepping-stones for the ascending soul. The Chaldaeans recognised the traces of divine essences present in *musica instrumentalis* to be 'baits'

identical with the Iynges, or mediating intelligences between the intelligible and sensible worlds. When evoked, they enter the planetary spheres whence their message is mediated,(25) and solar light is contracted into rays which elevate the soul of the initiate to the 'heart' or Sun, filling it with a fiery ray. Porphyry, *On the Philosophy of Oracles*,(26) describes an oracle of Apollo where the god says he will "lift up" the supplicant who utters the formula he has taught him "from his heart". When the god is enticed to descend, he then fills the 'recipient' who then 'becomes' the god and utters prophetic words - a shamanic process vividly described by Porphyry:

"The stream separating from the splendour of Phoebus on high, and enveloped in the sonorous breath of the pure air, falls enchanted by songs and by ineffable words about the head of the blameless recipient. It fills the soft integument of the tender membranes, ascending through the stomach and rising up again, and it produces out of the mortal pipe (or flute) a lovely song."(27)

We are looking at an operation whose essential ingredient is occult power; the connection of the most physically-experienced emotional force with the transcendental erotic power of the cosmos. The instinctive rapture arising from the stomach and through the heart of the ritual singer is the force of desire which connects with the divine lures or Iynges which have descended into the rolling spheres. The Chaldaeans venerated Eros as the all-pervasive cosmic power who binds all things and brings about the concord of the universe and of the parts of the human soul. The audible Ideas or Iynges resonate musically with the harmony of the spheres, and thus the enaction of the desire becomes a musical reality in which the human singer (or instrumentalist) has direct access to the gifts of *musica mundana* through the proper use of *musica instrumentalis*. It is clear from Porphyry's description that the psychosomatic effects of this process (the components of *musica humana*), are felt as bodily sensations - the transformation reaches (in the Platonic hierarchy) the lowest material level. Do we not find here another parallel with the intuitions of the alchemists, that matter preserves in its depths a divinity which, when freed, will transform and 'spiritualise' its very substance and thus resolve the battle of opposites inherent in a dualistic universe? Theurgic ritual depends on the receptivity of matter to the permeation of divine forces; the natural world becomes a meeting-ground for man and god. On the

spiritual level, the tremendous potential of theurgic ritual - man transformed into a divine likeness - can be fully realised. In fact the universe itself becomes a symbol of an occult organism which represents a higher reality, as we read in the Hermetic Asclepius: "This [sensible] Kosmos has been made in the image of that other [eternal] Kosmos, and reproduces eternity in a copy"(28) and find elaborated by Lewy:(29)

"Consequently the point of crucial interest removes from cosmology to the occult power of the spiritual in man ... this psychic substance ... receives ... dynamic faculty and becomes a centre of power which is able, by means of the pure thought of the divine, to insert itself in the system of the supramundane powers and to transfer the energies of their organised structure to itself. Thus the knowledge of the divine becomes the control of the unity of its powers: power of thought, power of magic."

2.14. Time

"The things which are seen are temporal, but things which are not seen are eternal".(30)

We shall now turn our attention directly to the underlying theme of this thesis, which is the exploration of the fundamental distinction between two orders of what might be termed 'being in time'. This bears specifically on the nature of the forces in play during the 'magical moment' or within the synchronous event, when an alignment appears to occur between these two essentially different 'orders'. In Platonic terms, they are represented by the eternal Cosmos and its sensible copy. We could also distinguish these two 'orders' in terms of qualitative evaluation and quantitative measurement, and we find the most discerning elucidation of the ways in which the two realms interpenetrate in the third book of the Latin Hermetic Asclepius.

Brian Copenhaver rejects the possibility that the Hermetica had much influence on Ficino's theories of magic. He says that "any attempt to derive such material from the eclectic and philosophically jejune Hermetica would have been fruitless"(31) and that their "philosophical content is banal, eclectic and incoherent".(32) However he does not acknowledge a more fundamental correspondence between the mode of intuitive perception in

which the texts were conceived and that required of the magus for effective theurgic operations. I suggest that it would be unwise to insist that the practice of magic should be made to rely on any merely theoretical philosophical coherence, and that the insights contained in the revelatory mysticism of the Hermetic texts rather provide the fundamental attitude and subjective conditions required for successful psychological transformation such as Ficino advocated - as such, his debt to pseudo-Hermes can hardly be overestimated. As these authors understood, we simply cannot approach a real understanding of any magical event when too firmly rooted within the fixed order of our temporal framework, with its strictly linear, causal view of time-processes. It is man's very participation in 'God's' time which empowers him to transcend the fateful limitations of matter, eloquently expressed by Ficino in the *Theologia Platonica*:

"mankind .. is so precious a part of the world that it is the intermediary of temporal and eternal things according as it understands the eternal and organises the temporal; it is so close to God that insinuating itself into the secrets of the divine mind it knows this work of God, namely the order of the universe."(33)

In distinguishing between the Intelligible and Corporeal realms, we read in the *Asclepius*, the chief factor is the immeasurability of the Intelligible in terms of the fixed quantitative methods used for corporeal events and concrete substances:

"nothing [of the corporeal can mingle with the intelligible] which admits of determination by quality, magnitude or number; for nothing of this kind exists in it. You cannot measure it as you would measure a body, affixing marks of length and breadth and height."(34)

The movement of the Cosmos is twofold: eternal by virtue of the Intelligible realm which infuses into all parts from 'without'; and temporal by virtue of number and time, determined by the movements of the celestial bodies which obey fixed laws and relations (*Et commotio mundi ipsius ex duplici constat effectu*).⁽³⁵⁾ The notion of the immanence of the eternal order within the temporal poses a paradox - for since the timeless eternal has entered into the realm of movement it appears to be itself in motion.⁽³⁶⁾ But 'time', in the eternal sense, is not bound by a chronological order of past, present and future. When this 'order' of

things is glimpsed, 'past' or 'future' events may be revealed, woven into a synoptic pattern which transcends causality, as if the threads of these linear events are turned back on themselves and on each other: "into eternity all movements of time go back, and from eternity all movements of time take their beginning".(37) The laws of movement are seen as a reflection or "secondary eternity" - that is, within the changing realm eternal laws may always be glimpsed. The tensile immobility of the divine principle ("though stable, is yet self-moving")(38) holds steady the mobile Cosmos according to its own inherent immutable laws: "it is this sort of eternity that enters into all the parts of which the Kosmos is composed".(39) The immanence of the eternal in the material world infuses what appears as an essentially qualitative mode of being into a world of quantitative processes. The sense-perceptions employed to assess and measure the temporal world cannot be applied in the same way to the quality or depth of an experience which reaches beyond the limits of the human powers of rational scrutiny and measurement.(40)

It is possible to describe the nature of eternal 'time' rather more faithfully as being circular:

"That movement has had no beginning, and will have no end; it manifests itself and disappears by turns in the several parts of the Kosmos, and that in such fashion that again and again in the chequered course of time it manifests itself anew in those same parts in which it disappeared before. Such is the nature of circular movement; all points in the circle are so linked together, that you can find no place at which the movement can begin; for it is evident that all points in the line of movement both precede and follow one another for ever. And it is this manner that time revolves."(41)

Because of its circular movement, the eternal divine mind is filled with "all-embracing knowledge" whereas the limited human mind may only stretch to memory of the past.(42) We are warned that a purely linear view of time leads to error for it only presents half the picture and distorts the totality of a particular event: "For where things are discerned at intervals of time, there is falsehood; and where things have an origin in time, there errors arise."(43) Through embracing the image of circularity in relation to eternal time, the human faculty through which such a concept

may be glimpsed is itself strengthened, for such is the power of the symbol which facilitates direct connection between macrocosm and microcosm.

In the human microcosm, the eternal and temporal are reflected in the different functions of soul and body(44) or in the psychological distinction between the intellective soul (the seat of the deeply intuitive *notio*) and the rational mind. In the same way that the wholeness of the cosmos can only be comprehended through a total experience of the eternal as infused in the temporal, the cohesive disposition of the faculties required for such an act of cognition on the human level would promote an illumination of the soul by the light of the mind - the alchemical conjunction of male and female aspects of the psyche, symbolised by the Sun and Moon:

"but when mind has once been interfused with the soul of man, there results from the intimate blending of mind with soul a thing that is one and indivisible, so that such men's thought is never obstructed by the darkness of error."(45)

Through his intellect (*intellectus/dianoia*) rather than merely through his rational mind or sense, man has the capacity to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the eternal order through varied degrees and qualities of perception, according to the intensity of his subjective vision: "And thus it comes to pass that we men see, as through dark mist, the things of heaven, so far as this is compatible with the conditions of the human mind."(46) However this vision is not achieved without an appropriate attitude and "mental effort" (*intentione mentis*). It is possible now to see both Plotinus' internal 'tension of the soul' and externalised theurgic purifications and rituals as efforts to transcend the boundaries of linear time so that the human soul can tune in to that moment or space where the two orders coincide or intersect, and from which divinations, oracular pronouncements or prophecies may spring. The ultimate aim of the soul elevated to the Sun on sunbeams in theurgic *anagōgē* would entail an experience of such a coincidence, for "the beyond is no more than the eternal duration of the supreme experience which the soul undergoes during the initiation".(47) Such an experience of participation in a conjoining and interaction of the two orders is an irrational, subjective one, depending to a large extent on the corresponding condition of unity in the human soul, and set in motion by a

longing generated through the tension of religious feeling created by the ritual. The process cannot be regarded as a systematic interlocking of two equivalent processes or mechanisms independent of the one who perceives it - such moments may be viewed as 'fortuitous' or 'synchronous', but they are never predictable or logical.

In a cross-fertilisation of the two orders, linear time may appear to lose its momentum whilst eternity adapts itself momentarily to linear motion, resulting in an expansion of consciousness at that point where time appears to 'stand still'. In the human being the discursive mind rests and the soul's intuitive mode of perception is allowed to blossom - in such a synchronous event the intrusion of the eternal into the temporal is grasped and the implications of the moment are seized in their entirety by man in his entirety. It is the moment when profound changes may take place in the human psyche through a liberation from cause-and-event thinking to a conscious deepening of awareness to embrace a wider spectrum of the qualitative distinctions and intensities of any given moment.

The location and moment of this occurrence (its co-ordinates within the temporal system) is called 'chance' or 'contingency' by the Hermetic authors, who recognised that it was "intermingled with all material things"(48) as a necessary temporal component of the inscrutable workings of Destiny - a force which in itself lay beyond 'orders' of time:

"The seven spheres ... have as their Ruler the deity called Fortune or Destiny, who changes all things according to the law of natural growth, working with a fixity which is immutable, and which yet is varied by everlasting movement."(49)

The 'contingent' provides a glimpse of what appears to be haphazard but which paradoxically confirms an immutable order beyond normal awareness, which is justified and determined by Necessity. The arrangement of events in time progression, the domain of Order, is one way in which the 'higher' Cosmos weaves the 'lower' like a garment:(50)

"Destiny generates the beginnings of things, Necessity compels the results to follow. And in the train of Destiny and Necessity goes Order, that is, the interweaving of events, and their arrangement in temporal succession..."

Order .. maintains the interconnexion of the events which
Destiny and Necessity determine."(51)

Order and contingency (or 'causal' and 'acausal' orderedness) provide the warp and weft of the cosmic fabric; in the generation of creatures the two modes find expression in the immutability of the laws governing the characteristics of the particular species and the uniqueness of each individual:

"For it is impossible that any single form should come into being which is exactly like a second, if they originate at different points of time, and at places differently situated; but the forms change at every moment in each hour of the revolution of that celestial circle ...Thus the type persists unchanged, but generates at successive instants copies of itself as numerous and different as are the moments in the revolution of the sphere of heaven, for the sphere of heaven changes as it revolves, but the type neither changes nor revolves..."(52)

A horoscope, or representation of this particular moment, can be seen as a 'frozen' image of the intersection which contains within it the complete potential of that moment, and which is not limited to one position within linear time. As a divinatory tool, it will allow qualitative predictions which may suggest distinct concrete events but can never indicate those precise times, certain locations or particular forms which will be the vehicles for conveying the essentially subjective experience required by any one individual. We shall explore this more fully in chapter three when discussing Ficino's attitude towards astrological prediction. Suffice it to say here that a horoscope may be seen to encapsulate the quality of a moment in time using measurable co-ordinates and therefore may provide a template for the individual's resources and thus become a powerful tool for unification within the psyche. Any attempt to reduce astrology to purely rational 'scientific' theories or statistical analysis may thus undervalue and mis-represent its holistic potential.(53)

The significance of such a symbolic image, in whatever form it may take (horoscope, statue, talisman, inscription, spoken word) extends beyond its sensible manifestation and thus may lead to the glimpse of the eternal order. This is confirmed by Ficino himself in a discussion on the power of words in the *Theologia Platonica*.(54) In his reading of Iamblichus and

Proclus on the power of invocation Ficino would have found confirmation of his own insights into the 'occult' properties of the spoken word; that it is the meaning of the word which reflects its qualitative dimension and which remains after the act of speaking:

"Signification is an incorporeal, not a sensible, thing ... this signification remains in the intelligence of the auditor although the syllables have disappeared, as it had existed in the intelligence of him who spoke before he spoke. Consequently the signification produced without intermediary by the soul of him who speaks is incorporeal ... If one pays attention to this signification, it is the thought of God who speaks that one comprehends."(55)

Ficino likens the relation between meaning and words to that between the soul and body; or again we might use the imagery of the eternal and the temporal being fused in the spoken invocation or prayer uttered with true *intentio animi*. The same power, latent within any visual image designed to symbolise unity or wholeness, as for example in 'animated' statues which formed an important part of the Egyptian and Chaldaean rituals of *telestikē*,(56) might be entered into and released by such an 'intention of the soul' expressed through prayer or sacrificial ceremonies.

2.15. Statue-magic

As far as Ficino was concerned, Plotinus' reference to statues as receptacles for soul(57) was based on the 'god-making' passages in the *Asclepius*,(58) where we find the art of statue-animating heralded as one of the greatest achievements of man.(59) These gods, we are told, are fashioned in human likeness out of material substances (as God fashioned man in his likeness) with the addition of a "suitable power from the nature of the world" (*virtutem de mundi natura convenientem*) whereby they work good or evil acts. Through rituals involving herbs, stones, and scents "which have in them something divine" (that is, their 'occult' property which corresponds to the attribute of a particular deity) the souls of spirits are evoked and implanted in the statues,(60) which then become

"living and conscious, filled with the breath of life, and doing many mighty works; [they] have foreknowledge, and predict future events by the drawing of lots, and by prophetic inspiration, and by dreams ... [they] inflict

diseases and heal them, dispensing sorrow and joy according to men's deserts."(61)

What is this "supernatural force" which facilitates such miraculous processes? It is perfectly clear from the most cursory examination of the Asclepius that it would be futile to expect any explanations which rely on logical, cause-and-effect rationalisations. Nor may we dismiss such accounts as 'merely' imaginative, fantastic delusions - both reactions would remain firmly within temporal, causative framework belied by the texts themselves. However, if we consider it possible that some living, numinous quality may be grasped through the interfusion of the temporal and the eternal 'orders', and that to seize this moment will depend solely upon the quality of the individual's subjective condition (when his own normally unconscious faculty of overview and insight beyond linear time-structure is stimulated), then it is possible that in the interflow and alignment of cosmic with human soul insights into the nature of things (experienced as prophecies, dreams, divinations etc.) may appear to originate from the images themselves. The Hermetic authors held that these 'terrestrial' gods predicted and administered the particulars of earthly concerns; it is not difficult to suppose that in the state of 'frenzy' induced by ritual, latent human potential - seen as 'divine' - to transcend temporality may be projected onto a suitable image of divinity, whereby it is believed that the god himself completes the work. The spirits are encouraged to remain in the statues, we are told, through the continued performance of sacrifices, hymns, praises and "sounds which imitate heaven's harmony"(62) - a passage which Ficino was quick to refer to in his own discussion of statue-magic.(63)

Plotinus' account of statue-magic in *Enneads* IV.3. illustrates the principle that, on the basis of his understanding of magic as a product of sympathy within the All, material objects constructed with the specific intent on the part of the magician to invest them with a more powerful resonance through an intensification of their 'occult' properties, could indeed be said to be 'inhabited' by a god - but this would be through no intention of the god himself, nor through his manipulation by man. Rather, it would be achieved by the alignment of the divine or 'occult' property present in the object with the cosmic soul, a sympathetic attraction

conducted and focussed through the sensitive spiritual touch of the mediating magician. Their construction by men of such wisdom would reveal true insight into "the nature of the All":

"That which is sympathetic to [soul] is what imitates it in some way, like a mirror able to catch [the reflection of] a form. Yes, the nature of the All, too, made all things skilfully in imitation of the [intelligible] realities of which it had the rational principles, and when each thing in this way had become a rational principle in matter, shaped according to that which was before matter, it linked it with that god in conformity with whom it came into being and to whom the soul looked and whom it had in its making. For it was certainly not possible for the thing made to be without a share in the god, nor again for the god to come down to the thing made."(64)

Proclus, in his influential treatise *De sacrificio et magia* (revealed to the West, as was the *De mysteriis*, by Ficino's Latin translation)(65), gives us a concrete and homely image of the process of purposeful interaction into this play of forces with the analogy of candle-flame:

"For instance, if a candlewick which has been heated beforehand is placed under a lamp, not far from the flame, you will see it light up even though it has not touched the flame, for the transmission of the flame takes place downwards. By analogy, you may consider the heat already there in the candle to correspond to the Sympathy between things, and its being brought and placed below the flame to correspond to the Sacred Art (*hieratikē technēs*) making use of material things at the right time and in the right way."(66) (my italics)

Proclus' description of the practices of the magi, who used their knowledge of occult sympathies between hierarchies of spirit and matter in their ritual concoctions and images, was to have profound influence on Ficino's own magical treatise, the *Liber de vita*. Proclus did not doubt that it was possible to create images, through the subtle art of mixing various combinations of properties and essences present in matter - images which contained divine powers within them: "Thus they unified the multiplicity of powers which when dispersed are weakened, but when combined lead back up to the Form of the Archetype (*hē tou paradeigmatos idea*)".(67) If the practices Proclus describes included the construction of statues, he does not consider such procurement of divine forces as illicit or dangerous, but rather as a stepping-stone to a higher form of magic at a

level where physical objects are abandoned in favour of purely intellectual communion with higher powers.(68) For Plotinus on the other hand, such an art is explained by the link of everything in the sense-world to the intelligible through the agency of soul; the creators of images who "wish that the gods should be present to them"(69) intensify and focus the divine element through the concentration and intention of that very faculty in their own soul - via the subjective experiences induced by ritual and purification - thus enhancing the potential of the material form as a bait or divine lure for cosmic soul.

Ficino, following both Iamblichus and Synesius (whose treatise *De somniis* he translated)(70), was well aware of the dangers in the non-theurgic use of statue-magic involving spirit-exhortation and conjuration. Synesius objected to rituals which involved matter as a lure for bewitching daemons from the lower echelons of the material cosmos which would thus only result in the trapping of the magus in matter.(71) He acknowledged that Plotinian cosmic sympathy would involve the participation of cosmic divinities, but held that "whatsoever of the divine element is outside the cosmos can in no wise be moved by sorcery."(72) Similarly, Iamblichus condemned the Egyptians' magic as merely constructing baits for evil spirits,(73) could find no value in artificial images ("these useless delusions")(74) and denied that anything fashioned "by human art" might be "genuine and pure"(75) or contain divine power.(76) Ficino's stance was more ambivalent, although we find him often echoing Iamblichus' cautious advice "it is necessary to know what is the nature of wonder-making art, but by no means to have faith in it".(77) The general objection was that such magic (thaumaturgy) was illicit in that it denied the essential Forms in favour of material images, inviting earth-bound, and therefore evil, daemons who deceived and deluded the magician; it was particularly harmful as it prevented any progression or development of the soul which would ultimately lead to union with God, and which would depend on the invocation of hypercosmic numina. For Iamblichus and Proclus, all forms of theurgy using material objects must ultimately lead to a condition of mystical contemplation. On this account, Iamblichus recommends the practices of the Chaldaeans, who in his view practiced pure theurgy in their understanding of the higher purposes of sympathetic links between the occult properties of consecrated matter and divinities.(78)

We might describe such a process of recognising the divine properties in matter as one in which the souls of the worshippers are encouraged to remain attuned, through regular celebration using words and music, to their deeper resonances - to maintain the 'horizontal' expansion of consciousness within the ordering of events on a 'vertical' time-scale. The true value of religious ceremonial must surely be to enhance the awareness of the eternal in the temporal.

Modern depth psychology would understand these 'magical' procedures to be methods through which the unconscious is projected onto external objects in order that it may be more readily consciously recognised and assimilated by the participant. As Jung has extensively illustrated, the idea of the trapped 'spirit in matter' or the 'living stone' is an ancient alchemical one:

"Although the alchemists attached the greatest importance to [the physical nature of the stone], and the "stone" was the whole *raison d'être* of their art, yet it cannot be regarded as merely physical since it is stressed that the stone was alive and possessed a soul and spirit, or even that it was a man or some creature like a man."(79)

The alchemists were looking for the 'spirit-substance' in the heart of the stone which would transform base metals into gold and which must first be freed in order to be recovered - such work reflecting the psychic transformation of the operator himself:

"This 'spirit-substance' is like quicksilver, which lurks unseen in the ore and must first be expelled if it is to be recovered in *substantia*. The possessor of this penetrating Mercurius can 'project' it into other substances and transform them from the imperfect into the perfect state. The imperfect state is like the sleeping state; substances lie in it like the 'sleepers chained in Hades' and are awakened as from death to a new and more beautiful life by the divine tincture extracted from the inspired stone. It is quite clear that we have here a tendency not only to locate the mystery of psychic transformation in matter, but at the same time to use it as a *theoria* for effecting chemical changes."(80)

As we shall explore further in chapter four, Ficino was not unaware of the alchemical nature of his 'natural magic' and could not condemn outright 'occult' practices involving images simply because of their dubious

labelling by orthodox Christianity. If an act of the imagination involving talismans, inscriptions or artificial images led to greater psychic integration and unity, then this was justification enough for their use. As Ficino wrote to his great friend Poliziano, he held no "definite theory" (*certain rationem*) about the efficacy of astrological figures in particular and was prepared to use any remedy "which might appear to anyone to be life-restoring in any way whatsoever".(81) Regarding statue-magic in particular,(82) Ficino agrees with Plotinus and Hermes that the ancient magi were able to capture "a life or something vital from the Anima Mundi and the souls of the spheres and of the stars" in matter, but that such *numina* were cosmic, not the higher, celestial variety. He upholds most strongly the alchemical Hermetic notion that such airy daemons are continually present in matter as "a natural force of divinity" and may be strengthened in their presence by musical incantations, but is sceptical about certain reports of astrological prophecy being uttered by fabricated statues. Human attempts to intervene and manipulate the presence of daemons are not to be trusted - if the divine may be glimpsed in matter it may only be through the all-embracing presence of the Anima Mundi and the participation of the priest, who knows how to reveal such a presence by entering into the natural ebb and flow:

"the Anima Mundi generates and moves the forms of natural things through certain seminal reasons implanted in her from the divine. These reasons he even calls gods, since they are never cut off from the Ideas of the Supreme Mind. [Plotinus] thinks, therefore, that through such seminal reasons the Anima Mundi can easily apply herself to materials since she has formed them to begin with through these same seminal reasons, when a Magus or a priest brings to bear at the right time rightly grouped forms of things ..."(83)

Although professing allegiance to Hermes and particularly to Plotinus, Ficino's attitude towards artificial images is by no means clear-cut. But, as we shall see in chapter four, it did ultimately depend on their efficacy in stimulating the imagination and on the quality of the individual's subjective response, not on the restrictive legislations of Church authorities.

2.16. Divination

Iamblichus' discussion on the valid forms of divination can be understood as an attempt to explain the necessity of removing oneself from the realm of 'human' values and measurements: "For the whole authority of it pertains to the gods".(84) Any knowledge of the future can only be obtained from a divine perspective - natural phenomena used in the process of divination are to be seen as instruments or tools of the gods, and never as primary causes in themselves.(85) Iamblichus stresses that divinations can only be totally genuine when the divinity possesses the soul entirely(86) and there is no interference from the human body or material part of the soul. The shock induced by divine frenzy has the effect of banishing the participation of the rational mind, for the individual has exchanged his life for that of the divinity:(87) "The frenzy causes words to be let fall that are not uttered with the understanding of those who speak them". Iamblichus acutely observes that any attempt to describe the process in detail will fail, for it is not through rational appreciation but through imaginative intuition that the eternal order of things is glimpsed: "hence it is by impression, and not with precise accurateness, that we speak in relation to it." In the same way, the power of ritual, choric music to excite affections or heal passions is not to be attributed to a purely human activity; it is effective precisely because it corresponds to *musica mundana* and thus attracts the harmony of the gods:

"By the agency of such a relationship of the choric songs to the gods it is that their presence actually becomes manifest ... whatever has a mere incidental resemblance to them becomes immediately participant of them."(88)

The quality of the harmony we experience as mediated or transmitted through *musica instrumentalis* is directly dependent, according to Iamblichus, on the rank of the god whose presence is summoned and not on the native capacity of the individual to hear it. The implication being that the greater the correspondence between the humanly performed music and its divine counterpart, the higher the rank of divinity which will be drawn down and the more powerful will be the reminder to the soul of its heavenly origins. The musician is not merely re-aligning the musical resources within his soul, he is hoping to attract the sublime music which transcends his imagination and hence his own musical capacity and skill. For

Iamblichus rejects the notion that the soul consists innately of harmony and rhythm - it is affected because it heard *musica mundana* prior to its condition of embodiment, and may participate in these harmonies again when it perceives their echoes. Iamblichus uses this musical analogy to provide an overall explanation for divinatory practices ("Hence we may generally explain in this way the source of the divine faculty of divination");(89) for music is one of the most powerful means of inducing awareness of that meeting-point of temporal and eternal which allows 'memory' of past and future to merge into the present.

Divination works, says Iamblichus, because the gods bestow an energy superior in kind and quality to anything in "generated existence" - it is of a *different order*, and "it is not right to compare their operations to those taking place in ordinary ways".(90) He confirms the Hermetic authors' conception of the two orders of 'time' in attempting to convey how the divinatory experience transcends all temporal limits of time or place:

"Such a faculty, being inseparable from the constitution of places and bodies that are subjects of it, or preceded by a motion limited by number, cannot always prognosticate in the same manner things occurring in every place. But being separate and free of places and things that are measured by the enumerations of times as *though superior to those existing in relation to time*, and from those that are held fast by place, it is present with objects equally wherever they are, and is always conversant at once with those coming into existence in time, and likewise includes in one the truth of all things *by virtue of its own separate and superior essence.*"(91)(my italics)

The divining power of the gods is fully present everywhere "with those who are able to receive it", permeating all elements and living beings in nature and imparting the faculty of foreknowledge "according as everyone is able to receive of it". Iamblichus stresses the folly of assuming that simply going through the required motions of a prescribed ritual will automatically produce a divinatory insight;(92) the imagination must be consciously prepared and awakened to receive "divine illumination". This can be achieved through the focussing of light on inscriptions, musical incantations, darkness, potions - in other words sensual stimuli to arrest the thinking processes and stir the latent imaginative faculty which is otherwise largely inaccessible, buried and enclosed deep within the

material soul. Above all, light is recommended as the primary mode of preparation for divination; it is a "sacred irradiation" (which Ficino was to call an *occultus influxus*)(93) which emanates from all the celestial spheres. This mode of divining through the subtle perception of rays and quality of light is to be distinguished from the method using stars or planets as signs or symbols, to which Iamblichus adds all forms of divination or augury which rely on merely human ingenuity and interpretative skill. By such means it is impossible to make accurate predictions - the diviner is bound by the limits of his own speculations and may only guess or expect certain outcomes:

"From the divine tokens, according to the relationship of things to the signs that have been exhibited, the technic in some way arrives at conclusions, and guesses at the augury, inferring from it certain probabilities."(94)

The meaning hidden in the signs produced by the gods, whether they are stars, flights of birds or sacrificial entrails is there for the diviner to fathom, if he suspends rational judgement. By a process of 'magnetic' attraction, his very desire to know the true 'message' will be strengthened by its presence in the symbols themselves:

"[The gods] generate all things by means of images, and likewise signify them beforehand through instituted emblematic representations ... by this means, they excite our faculty of understanding to a greater acuteness."(95)

It is important to realise, says Iamblichus, that the gods may use anything in the world of nature to carry purposeful signification. But such reliance on the interpretation of natural phenomena is inherently dangerous, for any reduction of a symbolic pattern to an anthropocentric analysis cannot reveal a ultimate truth. In the long run, the pure theurgic union attained in the *anagōgē* can be the only legitimate form of divination as it involves direct apprehension of the divine powers which rule the cosmos.(96) Psellus, in his *Commentary on the Chaldaean Oracles*(97) went further, to specifically condemn the use of astrology, birds and entrails in divination, and we read in oracle fragment 107(98) of the necessity for an uncompromising attitude of humility and discrimination in order to discover what the gods intend, not what man wishes them to. Again the message is reiterated - one cannot apply temporal measurement and expectation to eternal laws:

"Do not cast into your mind the huge measures of earth, for the plant of truth does not exist on earth. Do not measure the extent of the sun by joining rods together, for he is borne along by the eternal will of the Father and not for your sake. Let be the rushing motion of the Moon, she forever runs her course by the action of Necessity. The starry procession has not been brought forth for your sake. The wide-winged flight of birds is never true, nor the cuttings and entrails of sacrificial victims. All these are playthings, the props of commercial fraud. Flee these things, if you would open the sacred paradise of piety, where virtue, wisdom and good order are brought together."

It is not a case of the divine intellect descending to the level of the human to procure a divination; rather, it converts our level to its own through kindling the dormant divine faculty in man and raising his understanding to an apprehension of what we have termed the eternal dimension.(99) The process is a spiralling one which must culminate in the total clarity of unhindered awareness and absolute knowledge of the laws of the cosmos - but there are many stages at which, through a greater or lesser enlargement of perspective, glimpses of divine order may be had. It must depend on the degree to which one is able to perceive the signification. Even inanimate objects are bestowed with soul by the gods in order to allow the apprehension of nature's 'occult' powers and foster the corresponding force in the human soul. Iamblichus' final point is that the divinatory attitude is a mode of being through which all things are perceived in this world as potential signs and indicators of the will of the gods. It involves an opening of the heart to the heart of the world in an act of renunciation of personal will,(100) for anything less will not allow an uncontaminated, direct knowledge of the gods' will:

"...everyone who is a genuine lover of the Gods, should give himself wholly; since by this means irreprehensible truth will be obtained in divinations."(101)

for, as expressed in oracle fragment 116,

"the divine is accessible not to mortals who think corporeally, but to all those who, naked, hasten upwards towards the heights."(102)

Such a condition can in no way be defined in terms of human logic or analysis. Iamblichus attempts to describe it as:

"authoritative, and first in operation, and likewise self-governing and transcendent, encompassing all things in itself, but not itself encompassed by any, or enclosed in limited conditions by its participants."(103)

2.17. Astrology

In chapter one we laid out the Platonic and Hermetic symbolic cosmology which pre-supposes the inextricable participation of the human soul in the forces of the cosmos - thus providing a framework for an esoteric approach to astrology. How did the theurgists incorporate this into their understanding of divination and fate? Iamblichus is unequivocal in his estimation of astrology as a "true mathematical science", (104) testified as divine by the time-honoured art of astronomy, (105) and he realised that its abuse was due to the ignorance of those who "wander from the scope of it". We also find his disciple, the Emperor Julian (who tells us that he was held in some esteem as an astrologer when still a youth); (106) distinguishing between those who survey the heavens "like horses or cattle" and those who, "[drawing] their conclusions from the unseen world", recognise the heavens as "a great multitude of gods". (107) Because we are in the realm of time, divine knowledge is easily obliterated through its contamination and mingling with material elements and motions; but astrology may provide a way of strengthening it:

"This divine mode is indeed in astrology also, and a certain clear indication of truth, though it is but small, is at the same time preserved in it."(108)

In the Chaldaean rites the gods invoked by the magician to empower him for his operation (the rite of conjunction or *sustasis*) were particularly the Lords of Time; those who presided over the hour and day at which the ceremony was to take place. This would have the effect of purposefully intensifying the quality of the moment by expanding the awareness of the magician to embrace the 'eternal' present in the actual temporal event. As we shall see, Ficino paid great attention in his practical life to the use of electional astrology in general and planetary hours in particular to enhance the quality and effectiveness of any enterprise - especially those concerned with healing, whether of body or soul. (109) Iamblichus tells

us(110) that the Egyptians believed they could transcend fate simply by observing a suitable time for their rituals - but what does he mean by the assertion that the gods dissolve fate and liberate from the mundane order of cause and event?(111) Again, it is with reference to the two 'orders' of time that we may understand how astrology may either bind or liberate, depending on whether the individual's understanding is limited to the temporal order alone, or embraces both.

Iamblichus explains(112) that the celestial bodies are gods "because the divine form which is in them predominates, and inserts everywhere throughout one total essence."(113) The individual will partake of the powers of the planets "according to its own proper nature, and not according to their power"(114) - that is, according to his ability to transcend definitions and interpretations based on human (and therefore distorted) values. It is not the case, says Iamblichus, that planets are in themselves benefic or malefic; apparently 'evil' affects are due to the ways in which the varying qualities of material natures receive the "irradiations" or influxes and the impure mixture which results:

"Thus, for instance, the efflux of Saturn is constipative, but that of Mars is motive; but the passive genesiurgic receptacle in material substances receives the former according to [its] congelation and refrigeration, but the latter according to an inflammation which transcends mediocrity."(115)

The Sun is of course the central generating force of energy within the universe, and is modified in its form during its yearly cycle through the twelve signs of the zodiac. Individuals receive the Sun's powers, as they are contained in and combined with those of all the other heavenly bodies, "according to their peculiar motions";(116) in other words, the power is uniform and invariable in its nature, and how material beings are affected by it is dependent on their individual constitutions and capacities. The choice available to man is directly concerned with the degree to which he identifies himself with material or spiritual reality. Iamblichus explains this in terms of a psychic duality; man has two souls, one from the intelligible realm, and one from the realm of the planetary circuits; that is, eternal and temporal. The higher soul, in transcending the motions of time, cause and effect, is liberated from such laws called 'fate' by active

intention and energising - to be achieved through ritual and supplication to the gods "as they alone rule over necessity through intellectual persuasion."(117) The concept of eternal life implies the triumph of the higher soul as it gives itself over to another order, abandoning the determinism immutably set by the Lords of Time. Man can choose to live a fate-bound life, subject to the temporal workings of these laws which are the domain of mundane gods and making no effort to change the modality of his orientation - or he may sense the necessity to turn around and through moral and intellectual effort strengthen the influence of the 'supermundane' gods in whose domain causal laws have no authority.(118)

In the Hermetica this struggle is explained in terms of the active role of the planetary daemons in the determining of individual destiny. Such daemons, assigned to the various planets but ultimately subject to the Sun, exercise total command over the lower soul:

"They are both good and bad in their natures ... To these daemons is given dominion over all things upon earth ... For they mould our souls into another shape, and pull them away to themselves ... For at the time when each one of us is born and made alive, the daemons who are at that moment on duty as ministers of birth take charge of us - that is, the daemons who are subject to some one planet... These daemons ... enter into the two irrational parts of the soul ... But the rational part of the soul remains free from the dominion of the daemons, and fit to receive God into itself ... such men are few indeed; and all others are led and driven ... by the daemons..."(119)

In Iamblichus' discussion concerning the possibility of finding the personal guardian daemon through astrological rules of nativity, he shows the same scepticism towards the investigation of divine principles using the limited means of human judgements according to particular rules.(120) If we try to trace the origin of a daemon from a horoscope, using habitually conventional rules of measurement and calculation, we are applying definitions which can never reach as far as the transcendent cause or essential nature of the daemon. To grasp the nature of any spiritual entity requires a faculty of a quite different order. Any daemon whose existence and sphere of operation was limited by such astrological geometry could not possibly liberate the individual from fate, since his origin would be merely within the scheme and limits of the natal horoscope and

therefore in the realm of time.(121) To know his "more ancient origins" is only possible through divine, or theurgic, divination, which may use the stars, but is not bound by imperfect assumptions concerning them, and knows that any rules are in service to a higher knowledge than ours:

"For whether these arts [of nativities] are known or are incomprehensible, yet, at the same time, the efflux of the stars distributes to us the daemon, whether we know it or not. But divine divination is able to teach us concerning the stars, in a way which is most true, and [when we are in possession of this] we are not entirely in want of the enumeration of canons, or of the divining art."(122)

It is those astrologers who rely exclusively on the "enumeration of canons" without any "divining art" whom Ficino was to call the "petty ogres"(123) in agreement with Julian(124) that there is a huge difference between astrologers who are satisfied with making "plausible hypotheses" from their own judgements, and priests of religion who use astrological symbolism in service to their living rites of purification of the soul.(125)

2.18. Conclusion: cognition

To conclude this chapter, I shall attempt to summarise the essential nature of the cognitive faculty required for an effective magical operation - this will set the context for a more detailed consideration of Ficino's attitude towards and practice of hymn-singing as a ritual performance, as a 'seizing of the moment' in which the souls of both performer and auditor are transformed through alignment with the sympathetic motions of the cosmos.

Iamblichus, Julian and Proclus were all practising philosophers whose 'magical' activities enhanced and furthered their speculations. Proclus' biographer Marinus tells us that his master acquired his virtues through the conforming of his life to his philosophy:

"practising the actions by which the soul succeeds in separating itself, continually, by day or night, making use of the purificatory practices which woo us from evil, of lustrations, and of all other processes of purification, whether Orphic or Chaldean ..."(126)

Proclus believed that the philosopher should be "the hierophant of the whole world";(127) he himself composed hymns,(128) experienced luminous visions in Chaldaean rites,(129) could produce rain, predict earthquakes and utter prophetic verses.(130) We can hardly believe, as many writers imply(131) that theurgic ritual, "a power higher than all human wisdom, embracing the blessings of divination, the purifying powers of initiation, and in a word all the operations of divine possession"(132) could by nature be inferior to the purely speculative life. It must be considered from within its own terms and not fall prey to modern prejudices. Certainly Ficino himself gives equal importance to the values of intellectual speculation and active ritual as leading to the complementary virtues of wisdom and piety, in his confirmation that "complete human happiness and the aim of law consists in both wisdom in speculation and true religion in ritual".(133) Indeed, even for purely speculative philosophers like Plotinus, eventual union with the One could never be achieved without a full embracing of the ritual or divinatory attitude. Theurgy can provide the means of transcending rational understanding through direct experience: as Gregory Shaw puts it,

"rather than falling outside the circumference of Platonism, theurgy was understood by Iamblichus and Proclus to penetrate to a deeper centre, which extended the boundaries of the Platonic world."(134)

Ritual is an attitude, not a theory, involving a giving of one's whole self to the symbol in the hope of ultimately transcending it; a concrete enactment of the soul 'turning upside down' and deliberately going against the natural processes of the temporal realm in order to "transform manifest chaos into cosmos".(135) Shaw suggests that when such an inversion occurs, the turbulent passions which ensue (due to the individual's heightened awareness of the confusion and duality of embodied existence) may be regulated by Plato's recollection through sensible objects which developed into full theurgic ritual amongst his successors. He points out that all elements of the cosmos in which we find ourselves, as we have seen in the case of astrology, are ambivalent, in that they may be used either as such aids to harmonisation and balancing of soul (through a participatory act) or remain as hindrances in the form of distinct, 'knowable' phenomena:

"The entire cosmos and its daimonic powers are both obstacles to the soul and vehicles of transcendence,

depending on the souls' relation to them. Theurgy establishes a proper relation, providing souls the means to transform their obstacles into icons, whether they were painted in the fine medium of interior prayer or in the darker colours of animal sacrifice."(136)

We might say that 'bad fate' is due to being caught, blindly, in the wheels of destiny - attempting to maintain personal law in the face of insurmountable opposition from the gods, or cosmic purposes. When 'inverted', the soul falls in line with the measures of the Creator, however he is hypostatized, and thus in line with its true destiny. In the words of Hermes,

"Man knows himself, and knows the Kosmos also, provided that he bears in mind what action is suited to the part he has to play, and recognises what things he is to use for his own ends, and to what things he in turn is to do service."(137)

Magical practices cannot be 'understood' - for that very intellectual act involves a separation from immediate experience. For that reason, the human intellect cannot make judgements about its effectiveness. As Iamblichus explains:

"For a conception of the mind does not conjoin theurgists with the gods; since, if this were the case, what would hinder those who philosophise theoretically, from having a theurgic union with the gods? Now, however, in reality, this is not the case. For the perfect efficacy of ineffable works, which are divinely performed in a way surpassing all intelligence, and the power of inexplicable symbols, which are known only to the gods, impart theurgic union. Hence, we do not perform these things through intellectual perception."(138)

Proclus emphasises that it is by "simple and impartible intuitions" and not "discursive reason" that the soul may eventually achieve unity with the One. By the process of similitude, the object of knowledge must correspond to the faculty knowing it:

"to the sensible or object of sense-perception the perceptive cognition, to cognizable objects discursive reason, to intelligible objects intelligible cognition, and therefore also to that which is prior to intellect the flower of the intellect is correspondent."(139)

Again, it is stressed that what is purely intelligible is on a higher hypostasis than the multiple or compound material forms which we measure, and so cannot be grasped by applying "a certain measure of form and knowledge" - for this would reduce its essential unity to coarser multiplicity, and would involve attempting to 'know' or grasp it through an inferior, coarser faculty. It is only the "flower of intellect" which may, as the most unified intellectual element, lead us to the Paternal intellect, and the "flower of the soul", the "first of all our powers" which may transcend all intellectual powers and lead to the "Principle which is beyond all beings, and is the unifying power of all that is in us".(140) In this rarified realm the highest refinement of intellectual apprehension comes rather closer to the beauty and intuition of a vision than it does to a set of discursive propositions. Amongst the Chaldaean Oracles themselves we find an exhortation to surrender all thought-processes, and in a meditative state connect with the intelligible through a condition of passive cognition. The oracle conveys its message through a poetic, visionary use of language which even surpasses the metaphorical, in encouragement to abandon literal interpretation. This realm is in its nature unknowable, and can only be contemplated in its absence, in the void of unknowing, by suspending the need for verification and reassurance. As such it holds the inscrutable and inaccessible power of unconscious content:

"For there exists a certain Intelligible which you must perceive by the flower of mind. For it you should incline your mind toward it and perceive it as perceiving a specific thing, you would not perceive it. For it is the power of strength, visible all around, flashing with intellectual divisions. Therefore, you must not perceive that Intelligible violently but with the flame of mind completely extended which measures all things, except that Intelligible. You must not perceive it intently, but keeping the pure eye of your soul turned away, you should extend an empty mind toward the intelligible in order to comprehend it, since it exists out of [your] mind."(141)

Corresponding to the flower of intellect, the Hermetic writers exhort us to "see with the eyes of the mind" for "thought alone can see that which is hidden".(142) We are told that it is not through physical observation of the heavens that God may be known, but through imaginative and intelligible contemplation of their symbolic significance:

"If you wish to see Him, think on the Sun, think on the course of the Moon, think on the order of the stars..."(143)

Then, in accordance with the capacity for inner sight, the turning away from immersion in temporality may begin:

"For it is a property of the Good that it becomes known to him how is able to see it ... the vision of the Good is not a thing of fire, as are the sun's rays; it does not blaze down upon us and force us to close our eyes; it shines forth much or little, according as he who gazes on it is able to receive the inflow of the incorporeal radiance .. But in this life we are still too weak to see that sight; we have not the strength to open our mental eyes, and to behold the beauty of the Good, that incorruptible beauty which no tongue can tell."(144)

Iamblichus' criticism of Porphyry(145) is that he remains firmly in the literal realm of discursive thought, from which springs his discomfort and doubt concerning theurgic practices: "what you assert is rather philosophical and logical, than conformable to the efficacious art of priests", he objects, adding:

"You seem to think that knowledge of divine things and of anything else is the same, and that each step is derived from oppositions, as is usual with dialectical propositions; but it is nothing like that at all, for the knowledge of divine things is entirely different and is separated from all contradiction."(146)

There is of course a fine line, to the uninitiated observer, between the magician who truly 'knows' and the one who genuinely and honestly imagines himself to be enlightened. It is a hubristic arrogance, says Iamblichus, to assume that as mere humans we are able to rely on our own judgement in any sacred concern. The overriding theme of his treatise is to emphasise the danger of forming assumptions and conclusions about divine matters merely according to personal opinion. The act of allowing and acknowledging the validity of the eternal dimension of life - which we could describe as the quality and content of unconscious experience - requires humility and reverence; but when fully entered into there is the possibility of achieving psychic wholeness and equilibrium - the accord of *musica humana* with *musica mundana*. How Ficino himself attempted to effect

such a transformation through his use of astrology and music is the subject for the rest of this thesis.

REFERENCES to Chapter Two

PART ONE: Philosophical magic

1. Ficino, *Op.om.* p.1745 (trans. D.P. Walker *Spiritual and Demonic Magic* p.18):
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
certe in Sole posuit tabernaculum suum.
Ficino's sources are: Julian, *Hymn to King Helios* in *Works* vol.I, 352;
Plato, *Republic* VI,508 b-c, *Symposium* 220 c-d; Iamblichus, *De vita*
Pythagorica c.25,35; Psalm XVIII.6
2. *Op.om.* p.971 *Comparatio Sole ad Deum*
3. I am grateful to Darby Costello and the Latin translation group of the Company of Astrologers for their work on the etymology of 'desire': *desidero* derives from *de sidero*, or 'from the star'. Its definitions include 'to long for, greatly wish for, desire, to stand in need of, to want, to miss, to find lacking'. Similarly, *considero*, 'with the star', originally meaning 'to observe the stars' has come to mean 'to look at closely, inspect, examine'. These words reveal an inextricable connection between man's inner condition and that of the cosmos - to 'desire' is to feel the lack of harmony or connection with one's star, to yearn to return to one's star or to re-establish a relationship with it. They imply a subjective/objective correlation which has since been lost in common usage, suggesting that true desire is that which yearns from the heart for a cosmic consciousness, for psychological alignment with the laws of the cosmos as reflected in the stars, and in particular in one's own horoscope pattern. As Evelyn Underhill postulates, "the deep-seated desire and tendency of the soul towards its Source" (*Mysticism* p.85) is the condition of total dedication of the will known as mystical Love. (See also *desiderata, desiderium*). Dictionaries used: *Dictionnaire etymologique de la langue Latine*; *Chambers Etymological Dictionary*, 1947 ed.; *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, *Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary*.
4. *Op.om.* p.971:
Quod Deus angelicis beatisque mentibus scientiam
divinorum prius inserit, mox amorem. Animus vero
nostris hic utrunque credentibus amorem accendit
purgantem atque convertentem, antequam divinorum
intelligentiam la[r]giatur. Ita Sol perspicuas ubique
prasque naturas, quasi iam coelestes momento prorsus
illuminat, opacas vero materias ineptas luci calefacit
prius, et accendit, atque subtiliat, mox illuminat.
Atque tam calorem quam lucem iam leves et pervias,
nonnunquam elevat ad sublimia. Hinc Apollo radiorum
aculeis Pythoneam molem transfigit, purgat, dissolvit,
attollit ... Mercurius tanquam Solis Achates caduceo
quodam excitare dicitur dormientes ...

5. See Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* vol.1 pp.347-51. The opposition to Platonism reached a peak in the 1490s with the polemical sermons of Savonarola.
6. Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*
7. *ibid.* p.151
8. *ibid.* p.72
9. *ibid.* pp.262, 305:
 "In the 'contemplation' of Plato and of the Platonic schools generally, however, the emphasis lies at least as much on intellect as on intuition: with him the head and not the heart is the meeting-place between man and the Real."
10. *ibid.* p.83
11. *ibid.* p.83
12. *ibid.* p.50, quoting Thomas Aquinas *Summa theologiae* ii.ii.q.clxxx; also p.83
13. *ibid.* p.83
14. *ibid.* pp.50,85,333
15. Plotinus *Ennead* I.6.2
16. See *Ennead* IV.4.40 on bewitchment; Underhill, *Mysticism* p.74
17. Underhill, *Mysticism* p.74
18. See Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun* pp.5-7, 31-2, 40-2, 65-7
19. Underhill, *Mysticism* p.79
20. *ibid.* p.157
21. See A.E. Waite, *Occult Sciences* p.14
22. A.H. Armstrong, 'The Hidden and the Open in Hellenic Thought' in *Hellenic and Christian Studies* pp.83-4
23. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* p.86
24. *ibid.* p.184: arete for Socrates was not a set of behaviour patterns but "a consistent attitude of mind springing from a steady insight into the true nature and meaning of human life." See Protagoras 319a-320c
25. *ibid.* p.209
26. *ibid.* p.146
27. *ibid.* p.139

28. *ibid.* p.139
29. *ibid.* p.209
30. *ibid.* p.210
31. *Sophist* 228a-b, *Phaedo* 237e-238a
32. *Laws* 863b
33. *Republic* 485e
34. *Phaedo* 60c-61c, *Apology* 33c
35. See chapter one part three, ref.10
36. Plato, *Eighth Letter* 353b
37. *Euthydemus* 277d
38. Dodds *The Greeks and the Irrational* p.76
39. *Symposium* 215e
40. *Ion* 553e
41. *Theatetus* 149c-150a
42. *Phaedo* 78a
43. See for example, letter *On Music* to Antonio Canigiani, *Letters* vol.1 pp.141-4, *Op.om.* pp.651-2
44. *Laws* 933a
45. *Republic* 413b
46. *ibid.* 364b-e
47. *ibid.* 602d, see Underhill, *Mysticism* p.74:
 "[The] intuition of the Real lying at the root of the visible world and sustaining its life, is present in a modified form in the arts; perhaps it were better to say, must be present if these arts are to justify themselves as heightened forms of experience. It is this which gives to them that peculiar vitality, that strange power of communicating a poignant emotion, half torment and half joy, which baffle their more rational interpreters. [The true business of art is] not to reproduce the illusions of ordinary men but to catch and translate for us something of that 'secret plan', that reality which the artistic consciousness is able, in a measure, to perceive."
48. *Euthydemus* 290a

49. *Laws* 904c-e
50. *ibid.* 908d-e
51. *ibid.* 909b
52. *ibid.* 731d
53. *ibid.*
54. *ibid.* 620d-e, *Phaedo* 107d-e
55. *Phaedrus* 242b
56. *Symposium* 202e
57. Plotinus, *Ennead* III.4.6
58. *ibid.* III.5.6
59. *ibid.* III.5.7
60. A.H. Armstrong, 'Was Plotinus a Magician?' pp.73-9
61. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 10 (Armstrong *Plotinus* I pp.33-5)
62. *Phaedrus* 244a
63. Underhill, *Mysticism* p.235
64. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* p.64
65. *ibid.* p.68
66. *Phaedrus* 244c-d
67. *Philebus* 67b
68. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* p.70
69. *Timaeus* 71e, 72a
70. *Meno* 99c-d
71. *Phaedrus* 244d-e
72. *Laws* 790e, 791a
73. *Phaedrus* 248d
74. *Timaeus* 71e
75. See chapter four, pp.312-4; *Letters* vol.1 pp.42-8, *Op. om.* pp.612-5
76. *Apology* 22c

77. *Laws* 719c
78. *Ion* 533d-535a
79. *ibid.* 534b
80. *Phaedrus* 249d
81. *ibid.* 250a-b See also A.W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* pp.55-8
82. For examples of Ficino's attitude towards his friends see Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* pp.283-8, *Op.om.* pp.716, 864, *Letters* vol.4 pp.20-21, 24-5, 35-6, 46, 50, 57. He reveals an emotional intensity in his relationships which is remarkable as much for its spiritual fervour as for its total lack of sensuality. He wrote to Piero Compagni, "I love [members of the Academy] too much and I embrace them in such a way that I do not let them go away." (*Modo proficiscor ad alios, quia minus amo, ad academicum non proficiscor quia nimis amo, atque ita complector ut abire non finam.*) (*Op.om.* p.864, in Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* p.283)
83. *Letters* vol.1. p.47, *Op.om.* p.615:
 Amorem divinum, amor ille mater vulgaris penitusque
 insanus, falso imitatur, poesim, levior, ut diximus,
 musica, mysteria superstitio, divinationem coniecto.
84. *Phaedo* 67c
85. *Laws* 909d-910b
86. *ibid.* 930e-931a
87. *Republic* 427b-c, *Laws* 738b-c, 759c
88. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* p.221
89. *Laws* 821b-d
90. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy I* pp.247-8
91. *ibid.* p.251
92. For trans. see Thomas Taylor, *Iamblichus' Life of Pythagoras, or Pythagoric Life*; Gillian Clark, *On the Pythagorean Life*; excerpts in Joscelyn Godwin, *Music, Mysticism and Magic* pp.25-30
93. On Pythagoras' travels, see Clark *On the Pythagorean Life* pp.6-8 (chs.13-19). This quotation, Godwin, *Music, Mysticism and Magic* p.26
94. Thomas Taylor, *Life of Pythagoras* ch.15, in Godwin, *Music, Mysticism and Magic* p.26
95. Taylor, *Life* ch.25, Godwin, *Music, Mysticism and Magic* p.28 and note 8 p.303

96. Taylor, *Life* ch.25, Godwin, *Music, Mysticism and Magic* p.27
97. See ref.3 above
98. Taylor, *Life* ch.25, Godwin, *Music, Mysticism and Magic* p.29
99. Clark, *On the Pythagorean Life* p.103 (ch.247)
100. Plato, *Laws* 659e, 670c
101. *ibid.* 664b
102. *ibid.* 812b-c
103. *Republic* 398d-400d
104. *ibid.* 400d-e
105. *ibid.* 402c
106. *ibid.* 402d
107. *ibid.* 401d
108. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* p.286
109. Plotinus, *Ennead* VI.7.2, (trans. A.H. Armstrong in 'The Divine Enhancement of Earthly Beauties', *Hellenic and Christian Studies* p.76)
110. In *The Cambridge History of Late Classical and Early Medieval Philosophy* p.204
111. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* ch.10 (Armstrong, *Plotinus I* p.35)
112. *Ennead* V.3.17; See *The Cambridge History of Late Classical and Early Medieval Philosophy* p.260
113. *ibid.* p.253
114. *Ennead* III.8.4 (trans. Armstrong)
115. *The Cambridge History of Late Classical and Early Medieval Philosophy* p.257
116. Porphyry *Life* ch.10 (Armstrong, *Plotinus I* p.33)
117. See chapter one part one, ref.107. Armstrong translates *astrobolesai* as 'star-stroke'. The connection between the stars and physical paralysis deserves further investigation - the ability to manipulate their effects and direct them towards another person is evidently connected to the idea that they had an innate capacity to paralyse or render an individual impotent in some way.
118. On Plotinus and Magic, see Armstrong 'Was Plotinus a Magician?' and P. Merlan, 'Plotinus and Magic'. Merlan attempts to prove Plotinus' practice as a magician, Armstrong convincingly refutes his

conclusions. On this incident, Merlan suggests Plotinus was suffering from "a delusion of persecution" (like Strindberg) and assumes he had a "schizoid personality" (p.342), attempting to explain the event as a psycho-somatic reaction interpreted by Plotinus, who would know no better, in terms of evil star-rays. Armstrong replies: "For an educated man in mid-19th century Scandinavia, to attribute real or imaginary pains to witchcraft might well be taken to indicate some degree of mental abnormality: but for a man of the 3rd century A.D. to attribute a perfectly genuine and in no way neurotic attack of illness to magic indicates nothing of the sort." (p.74)

119. *Ennead* IV.4.42 (trans. Armstrong)
120. *ibid.* III.1.5
121. *ibid.* IV.4.40 (trans. Armstrong)
122. *ibid.* III.1.6 " "
123. *ibid.* IV.4.44 " "
124. *ibid.* III.1.10 " "
125. *ibid.* IV.4.43
126. *ibid.* IV.4.43
127. *ibid.* IV.4.40 (trans. Armstrong)
128. *ibid.* IV.4.43
129. *ibid.* I.6.8. See ref.164 below
130. *ibid.* IV.4.43
131. *ibid.* IV.4.43 (trans. Armstrong)
132. *Letters* vol.4 p.63, *Op. om.* p.835:
Si hac ragione prudenter tibi ipse in te coelestia tum
signa, tum munera temperavis ...
See chapter three pp.229-30
133. *Ennead* IV.4.44 (trans. Armstrong)
134. G. Pico, *Conclusiones numero XXXI secundum propriam opinionem de modo intelligendi hymnos Orphei secundum Magiam* no.2, *Omnia ... opera* p.159
135. *Ennead* VI.9.11 (trans. MacKenna)
136. Armstrong, 'Platonic Mirrors' in *Hellenic and Christian Studies* pp.147-81.
137. *Ennead* VI.4.10, (trans. Armstrong in 'Platonic Mirrors', *Hellenic and Christian Studies* p.148)
138. Armstrong, *Hellenic and Christian Studies* p.148

139. Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun* p.139, on Republic X
140. Armstrong, *Hellenic and Christian Studies* p.151
141. *ibid.* p.155
142. *Ennead* V.3.31
143. *ibid.* IV.3.9
144. *ibid.* V.8.7. (trans. Armstrong)
145. *Phaedrus* 276
146. *ibid.* 275c
147. Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun* p.147
148. For this reference, see this chapter part two, ref.32 below
149. *Phaedrus* 275
150. In M. Allen, *Marsilio Ficino and the Phaedran Charioteer* pp.80-1
151. *Ennead* V.8.6 (trans. Armstrong)
152. Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun* pp.22-32
153. Plato, *Seventh Letter* 344
154. Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun* p.23
155. *Seventh Letter* 344
156. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* ch.3 (Armstrong, *Plotinus I* p.11)
157. *ibid.* ch.8 (Armstrong, *Plotinus I* pp.29-31)
158. *ibid.* ch.13 (Armstrong, *Plotinus I* p.38)
159. Ficino, *Op. om.* pp.1534-5
160. *ibid.* p.1535:
 Non inquit Plato usquam nihil veri certique de divinis
 intelligi posse: sed neque psse exprimi, quod de his
 intelligitur, neque propriam horum veritatem intelligi
 eadem ratione quam caetera.
161. *Ennead* III.6.6 (trans. Armstrong)
162. *Ennead* I.6
163. *Ennead* I.6.8 (in Armstrong, *Hellenic and Christian Studies* p.174)
164. Armstrong, *Hellenic and Christian Studies* p.163

165. *Symposium* 210a-212b, *Phaedrus* 255e-256e
166. Armstrong, 'The Divine Enhancement of Earthly Beauties', *Hellenic and Christian Studies* pp.69-70
167. *Ennead* I.6.1
168. *ibid.* I.3.1 (trans. Armstrong)
169. *ibid.* I.3.1 " "
170. *ibid.* I.3.1 " "

PART TWO: Practical magic

1. Ficino, *Liber de vita* 3.XXII.84:
 Noxium vero influxum Saturni effugiunt subeuntque propitium, non solum qui ad Iovem confugiunt, sed etiam qui ad divinam contemplationem ab ipso Saturno significatam tota mente se conferunt. Hoc enim pacto malignitatem fati devitari posse Chaldaei et Aegyptii atque Platonici putant.
2. *Apologia quaedam, in qua de medicina, astrologia, vita mundi: item de Magis qui Christum statim natum salutaverunt* in Carol Kaske and John Clark eds. *Marsilio Ficino, Three Books on Life* pp.395-401
3. Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* pp.6,32
4. See chapter one part two, ref.8
5. Iamblichus, *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum*. Edition used: ed. Stephen Ronan, *Iamblichus of Chalcis, On the Mysteries* with translations of Thomas Taylor and Alexander Wilder (refs. to Taylor trans. in brackets). I have used translation by Wilder unless stated otherwise.
 This ref. I.1 (4), Ronan p.23
6. Ficino, *Iamblichus de mysteriis Aegyptiorum, Chaldaeorum, atque Assyriorum*, *Op.om.* pp.1873-1908
7. *De mysteriis* I.19 (61), Ronan p.47
8. H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles* p.462
9. *De mysteriis* I.11 (37), Ronan p.36
10. *ibid.* V.15 (20), Ronan p.114
11. *ibid.* I.19 (58), Ronan p.46
12. *ibid.* I.11 (39-40), Ronan p.38
13. *ibid.* I.12 (41), Ronan p.39

14. See Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles* fragment 108 p.91:
 "For the Paternal Intellect has sown symbols throughout
 the cosmos, (the Intellect) which thinks the
 intelligibles. And (these intelligibles) are called
 inexpressible beauties."
15. *ibid.* frag.109:
 "But the Paternal Intellect does not receive the will of
 (the soul) until (the soul) emerges from forgetfulness
 and speaks a word, remembering the pure, paternal
 token."
16. *ibid.* frag.110
17. *De mysteriis* III.18 (145), Ronan p.82
18. *ibid.* VII.4 (255), Ronan p.129
19. *ibid.* VII.4 (256), Ronan p.129
20. *ibid.* VII.5 (260), Ronan p.130
21. *ibid.* VII.5 (257-9), Ronan pp.129-30
22. *ibid.* VII.5 (259), Ronan p.130
23. See Thomas Moore Johnson, trans. 'Excerpts from the Commentary of
 Proclus on the Chaldean Oracles' in *Iamblichus: The Exhortation to
 Philosophy including the letters of Iamblichus and Proclus' Commentary
 on the Chaldean Oracles* ch.I p.123
24. *ibid.* ch.II p.124
25. Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles* frag.76 p.79
26. In Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles* p.58
27. *ibid.* p.43
28. *Asclepius* III.31, Scott, *Hermetica* I p.351
29. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles* p.440
30. II Corinthians 4.18. Quoted in A. Jaffé *The Myth of Meaning* p.21
31. Brian Copenhaver, 'Iamblichus, Synesius and the Chaldaean Oracles in
 Marsilio Ficino's De vita libri tres: Hermetic magic or Neoplatonic
 magic?' p.443
32. Copenhaver, 'Scholastic Philosophy and Renaissance Magic in the De vita
 of Marsilio Ficino' p.524
33. Ficino, *Theologia Platonica* XIV.8, *Op. om.* p.318 (trans. in Trinkaus, *In
 our Image and Likeness* p.496):
 genus humanum .. quod est mundi pars adeo pretiosa ut
 media sit temporalium rerum et aeternarum, quantum

aeterna capit, ordinat temporalia; adeo Deo proxima ut
ses divinae mentis arcanis insinuans opus hoc Dei,
ordinem scilicet mundi cognoscat.

34. Asclepius III.34b (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.323)
35. *ibid.* III.30 (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.349)
36. *ibid.* III.31 (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.351)
37. *ibid.* III.31 (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.351)
38. *ibid.* 32b (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.355)
39. *ibid.* 40b (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.353)
40. *ibid.* 31 (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.353):
"The being, then, of which I speak - whether it is to be
called God, or eternity, or both, and whether God is in
eternity, or eternity in God, or each in the other -
this being, I say, is imperceptible by sense; it is
infinite, incomprehensible, immeasurable; it exceeds
our powers, and is beyond our scrutiny."
41. *ibid.* 40b (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.355); see also Aristotle, *On
Generation and Corruption* II.10.337a: "Time ... is a number of the
circular movement"
42. *ibid.* 32b (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.357)
43. *ibid.* 32b (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.357)
44. Put succinctly by Proclus, *Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles* trans.
T.M. Johnson ch.IV, p.125:
"The body is the root of evil, just as the Intellect is
the root of Virtue ... our body is a part of generation
or the sphere of time and sense, but another part,
namely the soul, is able to act unsubdued by the power
of generation, but cannot conquer the whole of
generation, unless we destroy the being or essence of
it."
45. Asclepius III.18b (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.321)
46. *ibid.* 32b (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.357)
47. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles* p.420
48. Asclepius III.40c (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.365)
49. *ibid.* III.19b (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.325)
50. *ibid.* 34c (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.327)
51. *ibid.* 39 (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.363)

52. *ibid.* 35 (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.329)
53. This will be discussed further in chapter three, but for a thorough appraisal of the dilemma posed to astrology as a divinatory art by a 'scientific' overlay of rationalism see G. Cornelius, 'The Moment of Astrology', particularly parts IV,V and VI.
54. Ficino, *Theol.Plat.* X.7, *Op.om.* pp.233-5. See Watts, 'Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and three Renaissance Platonists' pp.295-7
55. *ibid.* pp.296-7
56. See Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* pp.292-5 on the branch of theurgy known as *telestikē*
57. *Ennead* IV.3.11
58. *Asclepius* III.23b-24a,37 (Scott *Hermetica* I pp.339-341,359)
59. *ibid.* 37 (Scott *Hermetica* I p.359)
60. *ibid.* 37 (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.359)
61. *ibid.* 24a (Scott, *Hermetica* I pp.339-40)
62. *ibid.* 38a (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.361)
63. Ficino, *Liber de vita* III.XXVI
64. *Ennead* IV.3.11
65. *Op.om.* pp.1928-9
66. Proclus Diadochus, *De sacrificio et magia* ed. Ronan 'On the Sacred Art' pp.146-7. For Ficino's version, see *Op.om.* p.1928:
Siquis enim canabim, sive papyrus calefaciat, deinde subigat lucernae proxima etiamsi non tangat, videbit subito accensam canabim, quarumvis non tetigerit ignem, accensionemque desuper ad inferiora descendere. Comparemus igitur Canabim calefactam, sive papyrus cognationi cuidam inferiorum ad superiora, appropinquationem vero eius ad lucerna opportuno usui rerum pro tempore, loco, materia.
67. *ibid.* Ronan p.147, *Op.om.* p.1929:
Quorum quidem divisio unamquamque debilitavit, mixtio vero restituit in exemplaris ideam.
68. *ibid.* Ronan p.149, *Op.om.* p.1929:
Quamobrem ab aliis, atque similibus recipientes primum potentias daemonum, cognoverunt, videlicet eas esse proximas rebus, actionibusque naturalibus: atque per haec naturalia, quibus propinquant praesentiam convocarunt.
69. *Ennead* IV.3.11

70. Ficino, *Synesius De somniis*, *Op.om.* pp.1968-78
71. See B. Copenhaver, 'Iamblichus, Synesius and the Chaldaean Oracles' pp.446-8
72. *ibid.* p.446, quoting *De somniis* 132d 10-13
73. *De mysteriis* III.28-30 (167-175), Ronan pp.91-4
74. *ibid.* III.29 (172), Ronan p.93
75. *ibid.* III.29 (171), Ronan p.93
76. *ibid.* III.30 (174), Ronan p.94
77. *ibid.* III.30.175, Ronan p.94. See Ficino, *Liber de vita 'Apology'* 1.55; III.XV.110; *Verba .. ad lectorem* 1.21.
78. *De mysteriis* III.31 (176), Ronan p.95
79. In *Psychology and Alchemy, Alchemical Studies, Mysterium Coniunctionis*. This ref. *Mysterium Coniunctionis* para.773
80. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* para.406
81. *Op.om.* p.958:
 Nequid denique praetermiserim intentatum, quoad ad vitam utcunque conducturum cuiquam videri possi, nonnulla tamen intersero firmiora, multa quoque passim congero, quae et si forte minus spero, tamen opto prodesse.
 See also chapter four, section 5
82. In *Liber de vita* III.XXVI.77:
 Vult autem una cum Trismegisto per materialia haec non proprie suscipi numina penitus a materia segregata, sed mundana tatum, ut ab initio dixi et Synesius approbat - mundana, inquam, id est, vitam quandam vel vitale aliquid ex anima mundi et sphaerarum animis atque stellarum, vel etiam motum quandam et vitalem quasi praesentiam ex daemonibus.
83. *ibid.* III.XXVI.127:
 quatenus [anima mundi] naturalium rerum formas per seminales quasdam rationes sibi divinitus insitas generat atque movet. Quas quidem rationes appellat etiam deos, quoniam ab ideis supremæ mentis nunquam destituuntur. Itaque per rationes eiusmodi animam mundi facile se applicare materiis, quas formavit ab initio per easdem, quando Magus vel sacerdoes opportunis temporibus adhibuerit formas rerum rite collectas ...
84. *De mysteriis* III.1 (100), Ronan p.64
85. *ibid.* III.1 (102), Ronan p.64

86. *ibid.* III.1 (99-102) on divination, III.2-3 (102-109) on divination through dreams, Ronan pp.64-7
87. *ibid.* III.4 (110), Ronan p.68
88. *ibid.* III.9 (119), Ronan p.72 (Thomas Taylor trans.)
89. *ibid.* III.9 (119), Ronan p.72 (T. Taylor trans.)
90. *ibid.* III.10 (123), Ronan p.73 (T. Taylor trans.)
91. *ibid.* III.12 (129), Ronan p.75 (T. Taylor trans.)
92. *ibid.* III.14 (133), Ronan p.77
93. See chapter four pp.274-5 on the 'occult' light of the Sun and stars. Also, Ficino's treatise *De Lumine, Op.om.* pp.976-86
94. *De mysteriis* III.15 (135), Ronan p.78 (T. Taylor trans.)
95. *ibid.* III.15 (136), Ronan p.78 (T. Taylor trans.)
96. *ibid.* III.27 (164-5), Ronan p.90. See also Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles* p.257
97. *Psellus Expositio in Oraculo Chaldaica* 1128b
98. Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles* fragment 107, p.91
99. *De mysteriis* III.16 (139), Ronan p.79
100. See for example Proclus Commentary II: "But the earth, from which it is necessary that the heart be raised ..." and Majercik fragment 58 p.71: "[the solar fire] was established at the site of the heart ..." In note 1 p.166 Majercik remarks: "In Chaldean cosmology, the sun was situated in the middle of the seven spheres as the 'heart' or 'centre' of the Universe. See also Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles* p.124, n.221d, 409-13
101. *De mysteriis* III.31 (179), Ronan p.96
102. Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles* frag.116, p.97
103. *De mysteriis* III.17 (143), Ronan p.81 (T. Taylor trans.)
104. *ibid.* IX.4 (277), Ronan p.137
105. *ibid.* IX.4 (278), Ronan p.137
106. Julian, *Hymn* 131
107. *ibid.* 134B, 148C
108. *De mysteriis* IX.4 (278), Ronan p.137
109. Ficino, *Liber de vita* 3.XXI.95, XV.90, XII.110,120

110. *De mysteriis* VIII.4 (267), Ronan p.133
111. *ibid.* VIII.7 (270), Ronan p.134
112. *ibid.* I.17 (52), Ronan p.43
113. Julian, *Hymn* 143B
114. *De mysteriis* I.18 (54), Ronan p.44
115. *ibid.* I.18 (55), Ronan p.44
116. *ibid.* VII.3 (253-4), Ronan p.128
117. *ibid.* VIII.7 (270), Ronan p.134
118. *ibid.* VIII.8 (271-2), Ronan pp.134-5
118. *Pimander* Libellus XVI.13 (Scott, *Hermetica* I pp.269-70)
120. *De mysteriis* IX.2 (273-4), Ronan p.136
121. *ibid.* IX.2 (273-4), Ronan p.136
122. *ibid.* IX.3 (276), Ronan p.137
123. *Nefarios gigantes: Op.om.* p.781, see chapter three, section 11
123. Julian, *Hymn* 148B
125. Ficino *Liber de vita* 3.XXVI.95
126. *Marinus, Life of Proclus* ch.18; trans. K.S. Guthrie in *The Life of Proclus or Concerning Happiness* p.34
127. *ibid.* ch.19, Guthrie, *The Life* p.35
128. *ibid.* ch.19, Guthrie, *The Life* p.35
129. *ibid.* ch.28, Guthrie, *The Life* p.45
130. *ibid.* ch.28, Guthrie, *The Life* p.45
131. e.g. Dodds *The Greeks and the Irrational* p.288 declares theurgy to be the ancient equivalent of spiritualism, which corrupted Platonic rationalism with Oriental superstitions and which was no better than the attempts of vulgar magic to control supernatural forces:
 "As vulgar magic is commonly the last resort of the personally desperate, of those whom man and god have alike failed, so theurgy became the refuge of a despairing intelligentsia which already felt 'la fascination de l'abîme'"
- See also G. Shaw, 'Theurgy: rituals of unification in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus' pp.2-13 where he gives a detailed critique of modern scholars' attitude towards theurgy. His essential conclusion is that "rather than falling outside the circumference of Platonism, theurgy

was understood by Iamblichus and Proclus to penetrate to a deeper center, which extended the boundaries of the Platonic world." (p.12) This was certainly Ficino's intuition - for him, 'Platonic' did not mean restricted within a certain clearly-defined and exclusive set of beliefs, rather it denoted a reverent, symbolic and holistic attitude towards life which sought to integrate the needs and functions of both mind and soul - the interrelation of the objective with the subjective. "Plato is called divine" he wrote in the *Prooemium* to the *Theologia Platonica* (*Op. om.* p.78) "because he never speaks of morals, dialectic, mathematics or physics without bringing all of them to the contemplation and cult of God with a feeling of profound piety." (*Quo factum est, ut ex ipse sine conversia divinus: et doctrina eius apud omnes gentes Theologia nuncuparetur, cum nihil usquam sive morale, sive Dialecticum, aut Mathematicum, aut Physicum tractet, quin mox ad contemplationem cultumque Dei summa cum pietate reducat.*)

132. Proclus *Theologia Platonica* p.63, quoted in Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* p.291
133. *Op. om.* p.1525:
 In speculatione quidem sapientia, in cultu vero
 religio, in ambobus tota consistit humana foelicitas
 finisque legum.
134. Shaw, 'Theurgy' p.12
135. *ibid.* p.15
136. *ibid.* p.18
137. Asclepius I.10 (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.305)
138. *De mysteriis* II.11 (96), Ronan p.62
139. Proclus *Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles* ch.IV, trans. T.M. Johnson p.125
140. *ibid.* p.127
141. Majercik *The Chaldean Oracles* fragment 1 p.61
142. *Pimander* Libellus V.2 (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.159)
143. *ibid.* V.3 (Scott, *Hermetica* I p.159)
144. *ibid.* X.4b-5 (Scott, *Hermetica* I pp.189-90)
145. Iamblichus' treatise is a refutation of Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* in which Porphyry severely questions the efficacy of theurgic practices, on the grounds of their irreconcilability with the fundamentally intellectual nature of Greek philosophy. See trans. in Ronan, *On the Mysteries* pp.14-21
146. *De mysteriis* I.3 (10) (trans. in Shaw, 'Theurgy' pp.21-2)

CHAPTER THREE: FICINO AND ASTROLOGY

PART ONE: On the Knowledge of Divine Things

3.1. Notio

"A mind apt in knowledge will discover truth more readily than one practiced in the highest branches of science."(1)

I shall begin this chapter with a direct connection between the mode of knowing emphasised by the neo-platonic theurgists and Ficino's own thoughts on the matter, as expressed in various key passages in his Commentary on Iamblichus' *De mysteriis*.(2) This will provide the context from which a clearer perspective on his particular attitude towards astrology may emerge. Ficino's translations of and commentaries on Plotinus, Iamblichus, Porphyry and Proclus have been generally neglected by modern scholars in favour of his letters, Platonic commentaries and theological works - but it is in these very texts, written towards the end of his life, that we find Ficino formulating the basis for the practical, experiential wisdom and 'occult' awareness on which his own natural magic depended, and which was to find final expression in the controversial but extremely popular *Liber de vita* of 1489.

At the beginning of the Commentary, Ficino elaborates on Iamblichus' reply to Porphyry that knowledge of divine things cannot be attained through rational argument and discourse.(3) In his own attempt to explain the mode of understanding required, he distinguishes between *notio*, or a pre-eminent, intuitive sense innate to the soul, and *notitia*, or conceptual mental activity. As this is one of Ficino's most succinct interpretations of 'qualitative' as opposed to 'quantitative' apprehension it is worthy of detailed examination. He begins by stating the belief that preceding all human faculties of reasoning (*ratio*) the gods implanted in the soul an experiential faculty of knowing (*usus*), which he describes as "a certain touch of divinity (*tactus quidam divinitatis*) rather than the workings of mental conception (*notitia*)."(4) This innate, immediate grasping of divine things through that part of the soul "touched by the gods" will stir, says

Ficino, a natural appetite for that to which it is akin - the Good - and foster a capacity for careful consideration (*ratiocinatio*) and wise judgement. *Notio* is perpetually available, within the soul, to be drawn on and experienced - it is concerned with the perception of the essentiality of things, and is of quite a different order from the quantifiable knowledge referred to as *notitia*. The nature of *notio* is "a certain essential contact", (5) not linear discourse. In other words, it is not concerned with developing gifts for speculating on and quantifying an experience, it is that experience. Ficino's use of earthy, tactile terminology (*tactus, contactus*) brings the intellectual and spiritual impulsion of fire and the theoretical abstraction of air (the two elements which motivate Greek transcendental philosophy(6)) into harmony with concrete, sensual experience: *notio* embraces the qualities of mind, soul and the senses in a single act of apprehension. For we must continually bear in mind that Ficino was no Plotinus - his intellectual activities were balanced by daily practical ministering to the physical and spiritual needs of his community. His ideal of unity involved the natural congruity of an action with its internal impulse, which itself arose from a deep sense of connection with higher principles.

In our struggle to attain unity of being, we can only make a "particular and effective contact" (*contiguitatem tam propriam et efficacem*) with such principles (the gods) through a corresponding unity of our own soul, and this must of its very nature transcend the particular distinctions implied by the use of different words for 'mind' and 'soul', and by the event-oriented measurement of 'linear' time - for Ficino stresses that such a process of knowing is a continuous one (*actu perpetuo*), effective through simultaneous affinity rather than 'cause and effect' thinking.

He continues with the common Platonic notion that essence of the soul - that which is unified - is divine in that it partakes of divine Intellect in all its simplicity and unchanging, eternally revolving harmony. The essential being of the soul is therefore expressed via its intellectual perception, where subject and object merge in an awareness of the divinity of self as God:

"Our being is to know God, because the chief essence of the soul is its intellect, in which exists the same essence which comprehends divine things by perpetual action."(7)

The intellect embraces at its very centre this faculty of unceasing intuitive perception, from which the intelligible powers of the soul derive. This process of *adaequatio*, or similitude of knower with known, is seen by Ficino to be accomplished in a single act of conformity in which the intellect remains complete in itself as in God: "The intellect, maker of all things, always approaches most fully all the gods through one act, remaining in itself."(8) In a letter to the Cardinal of Aragon in 1478 Ficino had described such a process using the image of a sphere, a powerful evocation of the internalisation of the macrocosm:

"Now Ferdinand, leaving behind the senses, turn your mind back onto itself, by a complete observation of itself. Having dismissed the body you will at once see your mind, when it is turned in on itself, to be an incorporeal sphere, of which the circumference, that is intelligence and will, is revolved through incorporeal things. And the centre, that is life and essential being, is independent; it does not pivot around any corporeal thing."(9)

It is through the powers of the circumference that "the habitual discourse of human reason" may be transcended and access gained to the intermediate spiritual hierarchies, the "servants of the gods", namely daemons, heroes and pure souls.(10) Ficino supposes that, after *notio* has been activated (as a direct intuition of contact with the eternal realm in general), the lower echelons of *numina* are the first spirits to be reached when the soul leaves behind "a mobile manner of understanding" (*modum cognitionis mobilem*) and contemplates the *potentiam rationalem*, or intellect applied as direct, enlightened intelligence (*intellectum adeptum*). Conceptual thinking, or *notitia* is the fundamental mode of 'knowing' and stems from the active intellect. However, it lacks the fertilisation of true divine intelligence and is incapable, because not united to the intuition, of *adaequatio* or the sense of affinity with divine knowledge. It is only through *notio* that the smallest glimpse (according to our individual human capacity) of the eternal realm may be had - since such a mode of knowing partakes in sufficient measure of those same immutable qualities.(11)

All this has profound implications for a 'psychological' application of astrology, for incorporating the manifold constraints on one's individual temperament (as symbolised by particular astrological configurations) into one's own motivation - accepting limitations and taking them into account while fully embracing them, at a radically subjective level, allows the individual to transcend them, or at least, not to suffer their imposition as an arbitrary operation of external 'fate'. There is the possibility of 'negotiation' with the gods - which is of course the basis of all divinatory practices. But this will be explored more fully later.

The essential characteristic of *notio* is unity - overall unity of parts of the soul naturally drawing together gifts ultimately derived from the unity of the divine realm. Unity of perception enables a correct overview and interpretation based on insight which is neither distorted by emotion nor confused by the proliferation of detail. It is concerned less with the study of separate things through comparing and opposing their particular distinctions, than with referring their common qualities to a higher level of discrimination, and thus understanding them as parts of a greater whole. The false and the true can only be known, says Ficino, through the similitude of such knowledge to the innate, natural faculty of intellect and achieved through the processes of attraction and affinity together with an alchemical operation of distillation, not through arbitrary quantification:

"moreover it is acquired by a certain study of the power of reason, not so much by comparison and conjecture as by the operation of differentiation (*separationis*) and purification."(12)

The very manner of opposing and analysing in quantifiable terms, (for example considering whether the gods are temporal or eternal), Ficino suggests is in itself fundamentally opposed to the nature of unchanging things, since it is changeable or inconstant in its methods of "comparison and conjecture". When a philosopher is firmly embedded in such an attitude (as Porphyry reveals himself to be in his bewildered incomprehension of divine action and his demands for rational explanations), unity of mind and soul is unobtainable and the individual remains stuck in the unreliable realm of *doxa*. Ficino is of course struggling to explain a very complex and subtle distinction in rigorous philosophical terms; but it is typical

of his constant desire to transcend the limitations of 'mobile' thought and move towards unity that elsewhere we find the same notion presented not as a philosophical definition but as a sensuous image.

In the *Liber de Sole*(13) (written about six years later), a work which he specifically tells us is "allegorical and anagogic rather than dogmatic", (14) Ficino appeals directly to the reader's imagination to convey the meaning of *notio*. Here he abandons "rational arguments" for "certain comparisons deduced from the light", (15) using the metaphor of light and illumination to convey the same qualities of immeasurability and all-pervasiveness evoked by *notio*, and to suggest that affinity with the divine is achieved through a qualitative leap of direct apprehension, not tortuous investigation:

"Whenever in your studies you make a serious attempt to postulate that there are many angelic minds beyond heaven, like lights ... what then will be the use of pursuing your investigations down long winding paths? Look up at heaven.. O citizen of the heavenly realm..."(16)

Later in the same work Ficino attempts to find words to describe the nature of this subjective insight and the experience of transcending the boundaries of temporality, in a passage reminiscent of Plato:(17)

"you .. must abandon a definite quantity, and, moreover, the potency of the light. Then there will remain the light itself, cleansed by miraculous power, defined neither by a definite quantity nor by any definite shape, and this light itself filling with its presence a space immense with respect to the imagination. This pure light exceeds the intelligence just as in itself sunlight surpasses the acuity of the eyes. In this way, in proportion to the strength you receive from the Sun, you will almost seem to have found God ..."(18)

We are reminded, in Ficino's appeal to the faculty of the imagination as the 'middle ground' in which the quality of the divine may be humanly experienced, of Jung's conception of the power of the archetypal image (the Sun being a prime example):

"The use of these [images] requires at any rate an alert and lively fantasy, and this is not an attribute of those who are inclined by temperament to purely intellectual concepts. These offer us something finished and complete, whereas an archetypal image has nothing but its naked fullness, which

seems inapprehensible by the intellect. Concepts are coined and negotiable values; images are life."(19)

It must of course be remembered that for the Renaissance Platonist the 'real being' of the spiritual realm - understood by depth psychology to be a projection of the unconscious - could never be in question.

A second passage in the Commentary on Iamblichus deals more specifically with the powers of magical operations, (20) restating Iamblichus' insistence that divine operations are not accomplished technically through any human power but by disclosing the inherent gifts and qualities of the gods as revealed in all things, and that the realisation of such properties requires a purity and intent of soul (namely *notio*) which precedes all thought-processes:

"For universal causes are not moved by particular effects: whence divine things are not originally moved to operate by our intelligence, but it is necessary that the greatest disposition and purity precedes thoughts, just as with certain causes. Indeed those things which primarily summon divine will are themselves divine sacraments, and so divine things are invoked by themselves and do not receive the origin of their action from anything inferior."(21)

No merely human invention (however boldly directed) may hold any sway in the face of the gods' decrees, for even if we do attempt to intervene by forming our own conclusions or fabricating results we will suddenly find ourselves conforming to their will whether we like it or not.(22) This is because the inscrutable power at work is beyond human knowledge; it is "superior to thought", a "purified purity"(23) and not brought about by anything in us (or perhaps we should add, by any conscious intention on our part). When the priest constructs symbols and uses sacramental objects in religious rituals, he knows how to prepare and dedicate them to be most effective lures, in the Plotinian sense - but finally it is God alone who "seals the effective force of the sacrament".(24) We can take this to refer to *adaequatio* of microcosm and macrocosm, a reaching down past all arbitrary opinion and judgement to that sense of *notio* which connects with what we have described as the eternal realm and infuses another dimension into so-called reality. Ficino himself realised the psychological potential of such a synchronous moment of coincidence in his ritual

singing, which, he assures us, depended on a combination of diligent preparation and *divina sorte* for its therapeutic effectiveness.(25)

The third passage to be considered before addressing more specifically Ficino's attitude towards astrology itself concerns statue-magic and the presence of the gods in specific locations and materials, for this has direct bearing on his own practical magic as demonstrated in the *Liber de vita*. Again he uses the powerful metaphor of light to convey the subtle quality of divine essences which pervade a particular receptacle:

"When the gods are said to choose their own various places, towns, buildings and statues, understand that their essence and power flourishes everywhere in those places, illuminating most powerfully here and there; and just as light, remaining uniform in itself [*in se manens*], shines in different places without different mixtures and divisions of its light, likewise [do] the gods."(26)

The light of the gods is thus uniform and all-pervasive; it is the varying mixtures and qualities of earthly things (whether in material objects or human beings) which determine the strength or weakness of the divine power which can be perceived in them, not any variation in intensity of the light itself as it emanates from its one source; for the capacity to receive and respond to it will vary considerably according to how each thing is most accommodated to it. For Ficino, light serves as a metaphor for the intelligible principle which transcends all opposites and unites them (*unitque cum extremis extrema*). (27) It stands for the clarity of insight which transcends and unites pure intellect and depth of intuition as represented by the 'masculine' and 'feminine' principles of mind and soul (*animus, anima*). Light is the medium in and through which all the elements of the cosmos work together to produce *musica mundana*:

"it accomplishes all things and unites extreme parts with each other, through a medium including all things in itself, and thus reflecting itself to itself completely united. Indeed which function is imitated too by the circular motion of the world, and by the connection of the parts in the whole, and by a certain uniting of elements to elements in turn, and by virtue of higher things sending forth to lower things."(28)

It is the linking of these unified motions with the motions of the human soul, or *musica humana*, that constitutes the art of attunement to the

heavens (which Ficino was to call *De vita coelitus comparanda*), and we shall see in chapter four that he considered this astrological or magical art of self-adjustment to be therapeutically helped by the correct use of *musica instrumentalis*.

As part of the *circuitus spiritualis*, the divine light, or intelligible principle, will be present in objects specifically designed to receive and reflect it - such as statues of particular gods - as a 'power point' of spiritual energy. Again it is stressed that the power itself is uniform; the degree to which it is present will depend on the suitability of the material, the knowledge and skill of the operator or inventor, and above all on the quality of perception of the participator. "It is necessary", says Ficino, "to be totally reverent to perceive the causes of the mundane gods in places [normally by nature] foreign to them." (29) This recognition and use of *notio* is the only way in which the essence, strength and action of the gods in the world will be experienced and so understood, and is an act of intuitive comprehension, not a quantitative analysis of distinction and separation. By "determination of how much pertains to distribution according to place" and differentiation according to species and types, the possibility of apprehending reciprocal and mutual qualities and powers of occult properties in relation to their one source is severely inhibited. (30) In other words, the qualitative richness of the external world is dependent upon a unifying act of imaginative perception, not 'scientific' analysis. Any part of the world, says Ficino, receives something from God, according to its natural propensity; we can understand that people, in the same way as places, receive varying degrees and proportions of 'divine light' as it is refracted down through the elements and material world - the horoscope in this sense becomes a symbolic representation of strengths and weaknesses according to the manner in which a particular individual, like a prism, reflects the original light of God. Ficino believed that this divine element could be made more wholly present and beneficently harmonised ("the gifts of the gods naturally attracted") through purposeful invocations and material adaptations (31) - and particularly through music composed in specific accordance with the astrological 'signature' of the individual in a continuous process of tempering and refining his soul.

3.2. Divinatory and 'scientific' astrology

Astrology is in a unique position to bridge and thus to unite the eternal and the temporal; the empirical observation of universal motions and celestial phenomena and the mathematical calculation of the laws of regulation which arise, provide a framework within which the subjective imagination may freely range and find meaning. In fact, as Garin observes, it is precisely the impossibility of detaching the theories from the experiential effects which gives astrology such potential as a tool for attaining a holistic vision of the unity of heaven with earth - for it becomes "the translation of reality into celestial language."⁽³²⁾ In achieving this insight, a human being may become master of his fate as he realises the union of the opposites within his own soul and ceases to be thrown off course by 'fated' external events.

In his *Etymology* the seventh century encyclopedist Isidore of Seville attempted to clarify the classical Ptolemaic tradition of astrology, distinguishing between *astronomia* and *astrologia* as follows:

"There is some difference between Astronomy and Astrology. For Astronomy is confined to the changing of the heavens, the rising, orbits and movements of the stars, or why they are so placed. Astrology is partly natural, partly superstitious. Natural, when it follows the courses of the sun and moon, or definite stations/placings of the planets' revolutions [temporum]. The superstitious kind is that followed by the mathematicians, who augur from the stars, and distribute twelve signs of the heavens to particular souls or members of the body, and strive to predict by the movements of the stars the births and customs of men."⁽³³⁾

According to this definition, the astronomer measures phenomena and traces their movements back to a first cause; the 'natural astrologer' considers the movements of the heavenly bodies in time and their reciprocal aspects, and the 'superstitious astrologer' adds meaning to such movements by relating them to the microcosm of the human being and making assumptions about the future from such observations of correspondence. However, in regarding as 'superstitious' all astrology which relates to the condition of the individual Isidore is smoothing over a distinction which is fundamental to the neo-platonic approach to the subject - that between true 'divinatory' astrology and the attempt to reduce the 'superstitious'

variety to a natural science. For the kind of astrological awareness demonstrated by the neo-platonic philosopher/magician in his symbolic cosmology of spiritual hierarchies reflected within the soul of the individual is essentially divinatory, and of quite a different order from the traditional 'natural scientific' model of predictive and deterministic astrological judgement. We are dealing with two positions here which derive from the fundamental dichotomy in human nature between rational objectivity and intuitive, subjective insight. We might also view this distinction in relation to what we have termed temporal and eternal time, or quantitative as opposed to qualitative modes of comprehension. We have suggested that it is the possibility of a moment of fusion of the two orders which gives rise to the experience of unity of being and perception (the *unus mundus* of the alchemists) by fully embracing the underlying paradox inherent in the two conditions of 'being' and 'becoming'.

Much of the confusion surrounding Ficino's apparently ambivalent attitude towards the value of astrological techniques and judgement may be clarified by bearing this in mind. He was a human being prey to all the inner tensions and confusions of an extremely melancholic temperament, which he understood to be signified by the presence of Saturn rising on his ascendant. He acknowledged the constant, inevitable fluctuation of human intellectual prowess, remarking "we are not always the same with respect to knowledge", (34) and it is surely unfair to attempt to evaluate his experience of meaningful symbolic correspondence with an expectation of rational consistency. 'Magical' activity of any sort, in its complexity and radical subjectivity, will of necessity elude all attempts at final categorisation and analysis. We should surely regard Kristeller's opinion that Ficino's position is "ambiguous and full of contradictions" (35) not as a criticism of an inconsistent philosophical stance, but as an indication of the richness and subtlety of his astrological experience and the difficulties involved in both his expression of it and our clear understanding of what he means.

Eugenio Garin has effectively summarised the complex nature of the astrological 'dilemma' which faced the humanist thinkers from Petrarch onwards. The two ways of approaching astrology, as a theoretical science or an occult art (that is, as an experiential 'moment') provided material

for a debate which was to reach polemical proportions by the 1490s with Pico's massive outcry against a divinatory astrology based on pseudo-scientific assumptions.(36) In the words of Garin:

"[one way of interpreting astrology] is conceptual and mathematical and reduces the heavenly intelligences and the souls of things to necessary principles of rationality inherent in the picture of an absolute, completely predetermined. The other instead accentuates the personality of the divine and underlines the free individuality of souls, and gives life and humanity to everything, and is expressed in terms which are fantastic and emotive, imaginative and poetic. In the first case one risks losing human initiative and freedom; in the second the trap is the destruction of rationality and a nature which is regulated by laws. A continual tension emerges from this in the oscillations of the thinkers ... an ambiguity which is so deep that it is useless to think it can be resolved by the commonplace of the oppositions between astrology and magic."

It is useless, I would emphasise, because within each way of approach lie as many modes of understanding as there are individuals, and because ultimately both the objective and subjective viewpoints converge in a sense of personal awe and wonder when the unchanging laws of cosmic working are revealed. At the apex, the precision of 'scientific' examination and determination of natural law should, according to Platonic thought, give rise to true religious experience and intuition of the numinous.(37) But as the strands diverge and separate myriad positions may be tenanted, from blind adherence to rational 'scientific' norms to the hysteria of religious fanaticism; from the Apollonine clarity of exact perception to the enchanting images of poetic approximations and musical analogies. For both Ficino and Pico astrology was "not so much a technique of prediction as a general conception of reality"(38) in which man as *magnum miraculum* triumphed in his self-determined freedom. In a letter to Poliziano concerning his astrological views(39) Ficino congratulates both him and Pico for disputing against the astrologers who "in the manner of giants, as vainly as wickedly struggle to tear away Zeus' heaven from him" - in other words, who attempt to de-mythologise and reduce to a quantifiable system an art which must depend on a symbolic, open-ended imaginative response for its effectiveness.

When the positions of heavenly bodies are observed and annotated at any given moment one is conducting a 'scientific' or astronomical, operation. When the result is taken up imaginatively in the act of divination, when the operator participates in a meaningful relationship with the quality of that moment, astrology becomes 'magic' - the wise astrologer observes, interprets and uses operative magic to 'negotiate with the gods' and transcend 'bad' fate; thus the formal structure provides the framework for the content of the experience. Unfortunately it is all too easy to lose the kernel of that irrational experience within a strict tradition which upholds rational objectivity and thus becomes bound within the view of structure as an end in itself. Ficino succeeded in maintaining a divinatory attitude within the craft of astrological procedure, together with a respect for disciplined interpretation which he found in Ptolemy and the Arabic astrological writers. But he reacted against the tyranny of a purely formal approach, and his criticism fell heavily on both the rule-bound determinism and superstitious, fanciful soothsaying of ignorant practitioners, never on the potential of astrology itself, in the hands of the wise, as a tool for self-knowledge and, ultimately, for an experience of unity of religious breadth and intensity.

3.3. Ptolemaic astrology

Before considering in some detail Ficino's condemnation of what he regarded as ignorant astrology, we should look briefly at the tradition of astrology as a natural science which Ficino would have inherited through medieval Aristotelianism. Although he respected such a view (Ptolemaic astrological theory unquestioningly formed the basis of his own practice) he recognised that it could, if it were allowed to impose its own hegemony, negate the possibility of a transcendental, 'eternal' order which would thus deny any possibility of final psychological unity.

Ptolemy and Hermes Trismegistus can perhaps be viewed as the clearest upholders of 'rational' and 'mystical' approaches to astrology. We have considered in chapter two the Hermetic tradition in terms of its emphasis on 'eternal time' and the implications of this on magical operations. Apart from Manilius' didactic poem *Astronomica*(40) (in which he

specifically presents astrology as a gift of Hermes - Tu princeps auctorque sacri, Cyllenie, tanti) 'Hermetic astrology' is to be found chiefly in the treatises of philosophers. In contrast, the traditional Ptolemaic model of 'scientific' astrology is represented by a series of astrological 'text books', beginning with Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* in the late Hellenistic period (c.150 AD).(41) The formulation of a purely 'scientific' astrology was concerned with the correlation of effects from the heavens in 'objective time' which leads to the inevitable, concrete outcomes of future events. Ptolemy's work provides us with a definitive exposition of the conceptual framework of astrology; an approach which developed simultaneously with the enthusiasm for astral and solar cults and for the deep subjectivism of experiential theurgic ritual in the early centuries A.D. Geoffrey Cornelius has pointed out(42) that before Ptolemy astrology was essentially katarchic in that it was inextricably linked to the practices of auspices and augury - divinations and oracles which sought to clarify the relationship of human conduct with the will of the gods at any given moment of significance. He suggests that with Ptolemy, the katarchic elements became suppressed in favour of a rationalistic model - a 'protective overmantle' of natural-scientific rationalism(43) was superimposed on this core of divinatory practice; a mantle which, I would add, is always in danger of stifling rather than protecting its vulnerable content.

Ptolemaic astrology firmly upholds a natural process of causation, following Aristotle,(44) but introduces an original concept of an ambient or ether, whose quality depends on the heavenly bodies and which is suffused throughout creation(45) (a 'scientific' equivalent of *anima mundi*?). Ptolemy promised man the ability to understand human temperament and predict events "both scientifically and by successful conjecture" through examining the quality of this airy, all-pervading substance. Of utmost importance is the 'seed' moment, or moment of origin - which may be that of birth itself or any moment in life from which predictions may be made - at which time the heavens stamp an impression which impregnates and marks, indelibly, the characteristics of the person or event:

"For the cause both of universal and of particular events is the motion of the planets, sun, and moon: and the prognostic art is the scientific observation of the precisely the change in the subject natures which correspond to parallel movements of the heavenly bodies through the surrounding heavens, except that universal conditions are greater and

independent, and particular ones not similarly so ... The general characteristics of the temperament are determined from the first starting point, while by means of the others we predict events that will come about at specific times and vary in degree ..." (46)

Here there is no room for negotiation with the gods. Ptolemy regards any form of participatory divination using astrology as merely deceitful and profiteering soothsaying, (47) and rejects an intuitive, comprehensive 'ancient' form of prediction which takes all the stars into account (practised by "those who make their enquiries directly from nature") (48) as too difficult. He is much more concerned with "theorising on the basis of the traditions" (49) than attempting to account for what actually happens in the astrologer's experience. Neo-platonic or Hermetic astrology fundamentally challenges the determinist stance by observing that the correlation of an event with a particular heavenly configuration is neither necessary or sufficient for the astrological effect to happen - that is, to be experienced. The degree to which a meaningful connection between the two is made will depend not on an empirical observation of external factors, but on the capacity of the individual for insight - which thus depends more on *notio* than *notitia*. This position remains in the realm of the 'possible' and preserves the autonomy of the human will by allowing freedom of choice with regard to the taking up of the symbolism - there is room for manoeuvre, for the play of the imagination, as the responsibility is removed from an invariable 'out there' and placed in the realm of personal experience with its infinite variety of shades and intensities of subjective meaning. (50) Ficino was to continually stress that human beings inhabit a world of contingency. To reduce their experiences to either necessary or impossible outcomes - to adopt a fatalist view of astrology or deny any possible symbolic signification - deprives man of the noblest part of his soul- his divinity - which is expressed through his capacity for creative imagination. As Salutati cried, a hundred years before Ficino's *Disputatio*: "Leave free will to humankind: if you take it away you will destroy both the human and the divine." (51)

3.4. Arabic astrology

It has been pointed out by David Pingree(52) that a thorough scholarly investigation of the vast amount of Arabic literature concerning astrology has hardly begun. But from the available texts it is clear that the Arabs were the great synthesisers of astrological tradition, translating into Arabic Greek, Sanskrit, Syriac and Persian writings. Persian astrology itself combined both Hellenistic and Indian doctrine. Persian astrologers writing in Arabic began to create a literature based on Persian translations of Greek and Sanskrit texts made in the third century A.D., and from the seventh to eighth centuries A.D. the two branches of divinatory and genethliological astrology are found represented in Arabic treatises. It has been assumed by modern scholarship(53) that Arabic astrologers in general promulgated the Ptolemaic 'machine of destiny' in an attempt to justify their art scientifically. However, it would appear that already divination and horary practices, involving a subjective or 'experiential' dimension, played a large part in Islamic horoscopy in the eighth and ninth centuries. The earliest known Arabic text relating to astrology deals with celestial omens,(54) which were also to predominate in the many Arabic translations of Hermetic texts. A feature of Arabic astrology was that it established and clarified the different branches of astrological practice. One particular source, evidently known to Ficino, is the twelfth century *Liber novem judicium*,(55) a Latin compendium of Arabic astrological writings mostly from the eighth and ninth centuries A.D., some of which were translations of astrological authorities from both Greek and Persian traditions: Aristotle, Ptolemy, Dorotheus, Aomar ('Umar Muhammed ibn al-Farrukhan al-Tabari, died 815), Alkindus (Al-Kindi abu Yusuf Ya'Qub ibn Ishaq al-Sabbah c.800-873), Zael (Sahl ibn Bishr ibn Habib ibn Hani, died between 822-850), Albenait (also known as Abu Ali, Albohali, Alchait, Yahya ibn Ghalib Abu Ali al-Khayyat, active c.854), Mesehella (Masha'allah ibn Athari al-Basri, died 815) and Jergis (unidentified).

Mesehella, a Persian Jew working in Iraq from 762 to 815, was the first astrologer to introduce elements of Aristotelian physics into Arabic, and his work on genethliology survives in a Latin translation by Hugo of Santalla.(56) In the text included in the *Liber novem judicium* he distinguishes between six categories of astrological practice: the

astrology of generations and nations, of families and single households, kings and potentates, natal astrology, inceptions and elections, and horary.(57) The divinatory branch of interrogations, which depends on a subjective interrelationship between the condition of the inquirer and that of the heavens, is regarded as a particular application of astrology which may happily co-exist with the 'objective' methods of genethliology, for which Ptolemy and Dorotheus provided the chief models. We know that Mesehella, Aomar and two other astrologers cast the horoscope for the foundation of Baghdad on 30th July 762.(58)

In his *Disputatio* Ficino's most-quoted authority is Ptolemy, whose name springs from almost every page. However, many of his references are to the spurious *Centiloquium* or *Liber fructus*, now believed to be composed by the Arab Haly Abenrudian (Abu Jafar Ahmad b. Yusuf b. al-Dayah c.920) whose Commentary on the work was available in the Renaissance via the translation by Hugo of Santalla.(59) The Arabic astrologer quoted most frequently in the *Disputatio* is Albumasar (Abu Ma'shar, 787-886), who had become a principal authority in the Medieval period through his *Introductorium maius in Astronomiam*, written in Baghdad in 848 A.D. and twice translated into Latin in the 12th century.(60) His justification of astrology as rooted in the principles of natural science carried through the principle of deterministic causation to embrace every aspect of the sublunar world, and Ficino frequently refers disparagingly to what he regards as Albumasar's "silly similitudes" (*pueriles similitudines*) which cannot give any sound basis for judgement.(61)

Albumasar firmly upheld astrological fatalism, establishing astrology as an intellectual discipline which could not in itself be subject to error - any inconsistency or contradiction in judgement was to be attributed to the shortcomings of the practitioner, not to his art. Albumasar's advice is that the astrologer "must have confidence in his science while avoiding to meddle with the unknown or with that which exceeds the power of reason in order not to bring legitimate astrology into disrepute."(62) All human qualities of body and soul Albumasar understood as part of one natural movement, the ultimate source of which is God's will, but which are nevertheless totally determined by virtue of the heavenly bodies. Ficino would agree that, in the world of nature which included human bodies and

emotions, results of planetary activity could be directly observed depending on the type of action and degree of receptivity of the material. But he was to protest indignantly at the assumption that the great variety of effects in this world could all be attributed to planetary movements, aspects and figures - both observable and imagined. Although Albumasar acknowledged man's capacity to deliberate and exercise choice, ultimately even contingency must for him be determined by the stars - for in what has been termed "the ominous inclination toward elimination of contingency so characteristic of Arabian philosophy"(63) his conclusion is that man will choose what is of necessity already implied in planetary motion.(64) If God intervenes in this natural process through an act of providence, it does not disrupt the system of regular cause and effect. Although he professes to allow it, Lemay points out, Albumasar effectively does away with the notion of contingency altogether. No possibility of transformation through transcendence of 'fate' can be incorporated in this system - for the strict rationalist, 'magical' operations claiming to do this would be considered illusory and dangerous, not least because to endow planets with the numinous qualities of divine personifications and to presume to summon them would be polytheistic and reveal a dangerous and presumptive faith in human, rather than divine, power. To this degree, the Ptolemaic attitude would appear to stop short at the very moment when psychic transformation might become possible. By its refusal to enter the domain of the imagination (fearful perhaps of the consequences of an incomplete *notitia*-type knowledge), rationalistic astrology forces man to live in a strait jacket, prey to the infallible prognostications of fallible astrologers.

Even Al-Kindi's *De radiis*,(65) to which Ficino owed much authority for the 'natural' emphasis of his own astrological magic,(66) reduces all occult or mysterious forces at work in so-called magical operations to a rational theory of ray-emanation. For Al-Kindi the process of cosmic sympathy determines and explains all possible phenomena; in the words of his modern editor, "there is no shadow of esotericism in this system; once the premiss has been adopted, that is the fundamental unity of the Cosmos and its harmony, everything unfolds from there according to rational norms."(67) Although Al-Kindi acknowledges the power of imagination, intention and faith of the practitioner to provoke changes in other

elemental things, his theory is that human emotions such as desire, hope and fear emit rays which may act on matter at a distance. Al-Kindi's explanation of ritual magic allows no supernatural agency or theory of occult synchronicity; rather, the *spiritus imaginarius* or seat of the imagination emits rays which conform to cosmic rays. To obtain an effect a mental image must be formed, and the man must desire the realisation of it (Al-Kindi does acknowledge that lack of faith would prevent success) then precise acts such as invocations and prayers may follow, designed to provoke specific movements of celestial rays.(68)

Specifically taken up by Ficino was Al-Kindi's emphasis on the power of words to reinforce the effects of planetary rays.(69) The latter recognised that formulas could act on different kinds of beings according to time and place; and just as prayers recited in conjunction with an intense desire could achieve a more powerful effect, so the potency of astrological formulas was enhanced when they were linked directly to the stars which were themselves linked by sympathy to elemental nature.(70) Al-Kindi's theory of rays and sympathetic resonance provided a rational explanation for the efficacy of talismans, magical mirrors, sacrifice and images. He firmly believed that the success of a magical operation depended on the favourable aspects of the planets and signs which governed its inception, and that their names and characters should be written or spoken to ensure the strongest concordance of cosmic rays for the operation. He was determined to present 'occult' phenomena as the natural consequences to be drawn from the overall principle of cosmic unity, maintaining that what man regards as 'hidden' does not therefore imply origins of an unnatural, or supernatural, kind.(71)

Al-Kindi's natural-scientific theoretical position is often belied by the implications of what he approved of in practice. For example, his realisation that the 'meaning' of a ritual invocation is constituted from a dual source - a combination of cosmic harmony and human custom (*musica mundana* and *musica humana*) - would not seem totally divorced from the intuitive notion of the theurgists, that the gods perfect the work of humans:

"Moreover when in any invocation the attribution of meaning from the harmony [already] created and from men concurs, the virtue of meaning of this invocation is doubled. For if

this name, man, by its harmonic disposition may contain the meaning of man, just as it has been agreed by the Latins, it will operate through its rays in matter since it will be amplified by a double virtue, that is natural and accidental, and thus the effect will appear more strongly ..."(72)

In the *Liber de vita* Ficino refers to Albumasar, Al-Kindi, Haly Abenrudian, Haly Albohazen(73) and most frequently simply to the *Arabes*.(74) Carol Kaske suggests that when he refers to these latter writers, Ficino means the authors of *Picatrix*, a treatise on sympathetic astral magic dating from the twelfth century with a strong Hermetic content.(75) Ficino would have been familiar with the Latin translation which, as is the case with the *Liber novem judicum*, differs somewhat from the Arabic original.(76) In this work he found a system of practical magic set in the context of Hermetic philosophical religion, with an emphasis on talismans, alchemy, statue-magic and daemonology. For example, in a remarkable passage in *De vita coelitus comparanda*(77) Ficino quotes "the Arabs" as saying that in the fashioning of images, the human spirit "if it has been intent on the work and upon the stars through imagination and emotion" is joined with the spirit of the world and the rays of the stars through which the *spiritus mundi* acts. This notion was to form the basis of his astrological music therapy, as we shall explore in the next chapter.

It is important to realise that the Latin translations of Arabic texts available in the Medieval and Renaissance periods were generally overlaid with interpretations and elaborations by the translators - Hermann of Carinthia's version of Albumasar and the *Liber novem judicum* being only two examples.(78) It would appear that the Arabic trend was towards concretisation and the significance of particulars in both natal and horary branches of astrology - a trend which was easily obscured by the Platonic convictions of twelfth century translators and commentators.(79)

PART TWO: Ficino and Determinism

3.5. 'The affinity of nature'(1)

To begin a consideration of Ficino's personal and innovative attitude towards and use of astrology and music in such a fostering of divine power through ritual, here is a letter, written in September 1462 when Ficino as a young man of twenty-nine had just received news of Cosimo de' Medici's patronage.(2) He was now enabled to embark on his career with the founding of the Platonic Academy and the translations of Plato - to enjoy a country house and a revenue which would remove all material and financial worries. In appreciation, Ficino writes to Cosimo, saying that the other day he had been singing a hymn of Orpheus to the Cosmos (*ad Cosmum*, which also means 'to Cosimo'), and he quotes the text of the hymn which ends "Hear our prayers, Cosmus, and grant a quiet life to a pious youth."(3) He continues:

"When I was celebrating that same hymn in an Orphic rite a few days ago, letters were delivered to me from my father [i.e. Cosimo, his 'spiritual' father], in which the wise Cosmio de' Medici, most worthy doctor of my life, said that he would reflect on my studies, that he would generously provide for me, kindly help me, and hospitably and piously receive me into his sacred dwelling. This thing came about not only through your magnificence, which indeed I admire greatly, but also through the ancient prophecy of Orpheus. Because it seemed that he [Orpheus] directed at you the hymn which he dedicated to the Cosmos, indeed to be asking on my behalf those things which he asked for in the purpose of the prayer. Moreover, you being moved by a certain heavenly instinct seem to have heard the hymn at the same time at which I was singing it and favourably to have granted those things which the entreaty earnestly requested ... "(my italics)(4)

This example of 'meaningful coincidence' in everyday life tells us much about Ficino's readiness to fully grasp, on a personal level, the implications of ritual invocation. Through his instinctive sense of *notio* he half seriously, half playfully connects his appeal to the Cosmos with Cosimo's granting of his request - nearly thirty years before commenting on Plotinus and Iamblichus, Ficino gives us a beautifully simple example of his belief in the power of the union of words and music to attract

beneficial heavenly influences and effect change in the material realm. In the true Plotinian spirit of disinterested participation in the cosmic play of forces and purity of intention, the intensity of Ficino's desire was directed upwards and not aimed directly at the person of his benefactor.

In his Preface to the Commentary on Plotinus addressed to Cosimo's grandson Lorenzo, Ficino makes a direct connection with this episode. He suggests that at the same time as his translations of Plato are being made available, the spirit of Cosimo (now dead) inspired Pico della Mirandola to come to Florence, who was born the same year that he embarked on the Platonic opus and who was in some way sent to lead him on, as Cosimo had wished, to Plotinus:

"By divine providence the outcome³ certainly seems to have been that while Plato was as it were being reborn, the hero Pico, who was born under Saturn the ruler of Aquarius, (under which I similarly had been born thirty years earlier), came to Florence on the very day that our Plato was published, and miraculously breathed into me that ancient wish of the hero Cosimo concerning Plotinus, a wish totally hidden from me but breathed into Pico from heaven."(5)

It was deeply significant for Ficino that Pico, "*sublimis Saturni filium*"(6) was also born under Saturn in Aquarius, and the two men's correspondence is full of allusions to the Saturnine wisdom which drew them together in a 'Platonic bond'.(7) Ficino's continual awareness of the cycles of Saturn, its connection with his vocation, relationships and temperament, is playful and imaginative and in no way bound by determinism. The meaningful significance of correlations between the heavens and everyday life excites and delights him, but always serves as a guide to 'right action' and never as an irrevocable limitation. We find him writing to his friend Giovanni Cavalcanti despite adverse planetary indications, because true friendship depends ultimately on God's decree, not the stars';(8) to the Archbishop of Florence he uses the symbolism of a horary chart to negotiate a profitable outcome to an adverse situation;(9) to Lorenzo de Medici he warns of difficult transits but only at the last moment, in order to save Lorenzo needless worry "for we are often accustomed to constantly anticipate evil or distant things by our predictions or occasionally to fabricate the present."(10) To Zoenobius Romanus Ficino is reluctant to

make any judgement on a horoscope with traditionally 'malefic' aspects since "it is of use neither to presage evil things nor is it appropriate to believe much by those things."(11) The constant reference to friends' horoscopes, planetary significations of events, transits, portents, synastry and elections together with an acute sensitivity to the implications of his own natal chart reveal Ficino to be deeply immersed in a symbolic attitude towards life(12) - an attitude which finds its finest expression in the incorporation of astrology into natural magic in *De vita coelitus comparanda*, to be discussed in chapter four.

3.6. The *Disputatio contra iudicium astrologorum*

I shall now consider Ficino's 'anti-astrological' texts in some detail, for a re-appraisal of his often mis-represented position towards astrology in general is an essential prelude to our understanding of his own personal incorporation of the art into a system of natural magic, as he so describes it in the *Liber de vita*. Garin's statement that Ficino, in the *Disputatio* "attacks the whole of divinatory astrology, destroying it down to its roots"(13) needs to be clarified - for the use of astrology as a basis for divination was, on the contrary, upheld by Ficino as its most legitimate application. His attack fell on those who abused the transformative potential of the divinatory moment by wanting to reduce it to a pseudo-scientific rational norm.

In June 1477, Ficino wrote to Francesco Marescalchi that he was working on a book on "the Providence of God and the freedom of human judgement, in which a case is moved against the predermination of the stars and the prophetic utterances of the astrologers".(14) He succinctly summarises for his friend the overriding message of the *Disputatio*, that the limitations experienced by a 'fate-bound' conception of universal law can be overcome by the potential of human free-will to see, understand and co-operate with personal destiny, which is determined by a higher (or more hidden) will than ours:

"I practise philosophy chiefly for this reason: since events themselves do not otherwise follow my will, at least I by my will shall follow events, for it is to a will which follows them that events conform ... But perhaps someone may say it

is foolish to wish to contend against unassailable fate. I, however, reply that it can be opposed as easily as one may wish to oppose it, since by that very opposition one may immediately overcome what one wishes. Surely the movement of the heavenly spheres is never able to raise the mind to a level higher than the spheres. But he who puts them under examination seems already to have transcended them, to have come near to God Himself and the free decision of the will ... Furthermore, although any adverse and, as I might say, fatal action habitually proceeds from one contrary position of the stars to another, no one dares to assert that will itself and reason, resisting the assumed force of the stars, arise from the force of the stars; but rather we understand that they flow from providence and freedom itself ..."(15)

To another correspondent, Francesco Ippoliti,(16) Ficino writes "I have written a book opposing the empty pronouncements of the astrologers" and he goes on to specify how such ignorant, 'petty ogres' deceive both themselves and the public at large by assuming astral causation; for in doing so, they deny the Providence of God, the justice of the angels, and the free-will of man. Their concrete predictions make people either complacent and lazy, or else terrified through anticipating imaginary evils - all of which is unnecessary since "if the Fates cannot be avoided, they are foreseen and foretold to no purpose."(17) Ficino condemns a totally deterministic attitude which denies the humanist ideal of man as master of himself; for human will, strengthened through philosophy, has "the power of something contrary and even superior in virtue" to fate. He acutely observes that

"if we consider the matter more carefully, we are moved not so much by the Fates themselves as by the foolish advocates of the Fates. Believe me, you will not yield to the Fates provided you do not believe these fools who veil in obscurity not the truth ... but falsehoods."(18)

Ficino's invective against these "word-mongers" (*homines loquacissimi*) is ruthless indeed, and he urges philosophers to wage war against such ignorance with the arms of wisdom, so that "those who aspire with such arrogance to climb to the world of the gods will in humiliation be cast down headlong to the infernal regions."(19) He appeals to God for strength in this battle, and ends by exhorting the human race to preserve its freedom and peace by triumphing over the "diviners .. who have for so long been shackling us to their illusions."(20) We find an explicit differentiation between such arrogant, "vulgar astrologers" (*plebei*) and

the "excellent authors of astrology" (*praecipui*) at the beginning of Ficino's Commentary on Plotinus' *Ennead* II.(21) He is at pains here to point out that not all astrologers are the ignorant variety, who concede far too much to the forces of the stars and know nothing of astronomy (and we must remember that, following the *Epinomis*, for the Platonic astrologer measurement and observation must provide raw material for the intuitive, applied skill of interpretation). The wise astrologers, Ficino understood from Plotinus, would refrain from imposing systems or making cut-and-dried prognostications through a humble recognition of the sheer complexity of causation involved, but would nevertheless be open to all the possible significations, inferences and incidental correspondences between heavenly patterns and sublunar events, actions or personal tendencies of character.

To Bernardo Bembo, Ficino emphasises again that in his *Disputatio* he is not condemning astrology in itself, but refuting "those pronouncements of the astrologers which remove providence and freedom." (22) No insight may be gained into the tangled web of human affairs without the ability to view them from a higher vantage point - and many astrologers, then as now, are as trapped in the world of opinion as those they attempt to advise: "Indeed, as carefully as true astronomers measure the heavens, so do vain astrologers misrepresent human affairs." (23)

3.7. Fate and free-will

We can only guess at Ficino's motivation for writing, but not publishing, a treatise which, to all but his closest circle, would suggest his firm opposition to astrological practices. It is as if, adopting an Aristotelian model of rational argument and writing in clear, exegetical prose, he wishes to sweep away all the deadwood of fatalistic attitudes by a common-sense critique of rigid and arbitrary astrological systems. Yet in his very approach, 'playing the game' of the rationalist and ridiculing a 'superstitious', literalist interpretation, he is in fact making the point that the meaningfulness and experience of astrology is not to be found by approaching it with such a linear, restricted logical viewpoint. To attempt to reduce it to a natural-scientific system will inevitably relegate its sphere of influence to the confines of the natural world and

the realm of temporality - and in Ficino's fervent humanism the human reason may potentially, and freely, attain to universal knowledge through transcendence of such a limitation. As he stresses in his detailed consideration of the parts of the soul in the *Theologia Platonica*, (24) in order to achieve true revelation even the condition of the philosophical enquirer, "given to the investigation of divine and natural questions" must be surpassed since it involves separation and measurement; the "dubious mind of natural philosophers" still remains embedded in worldly considerations. Level of being and level of insight are interdependent - as Trinkaus says, Ficino is continually trying to show "how man is the measure according to how he experiences." (25) Only non-action and purgation of the mind from earthly concerns may induce true prophetic insight - and astrological symbolism understood and taken up from this more unified perspective becomes a divinatory tool rather than a pseudo-rational 'science'. Ficino confirms this in his commentary on Iamblichus, echoing the first aphorism of the pseudo-Ptolemaic *Centiloquium*:

"I am of the opinion firstly that most certain truth in respect to the stars can be had through divine prophecy: and we can find out the whole [truth] neither by an enumeration of rules, nor by skilful declarations; and moreover I add that you cannot show definitively the impossible idea of how much pertains to mathematical knowledge, because opinions differ amongst themselves ... Astronomy, and other arts given by certain gods a long time ago, are confused by human opinion, and now indeed retain a tiny amount of divinity and truth ... it is impossible to give judgements for definite events, since we are unable to understand the confluence of all causes, unless we grasp it through divine inspiration." (my italics) (26)

The ability of the human reason to align itself with the will of God Himself - to become divine in the very act of knowing the divine - implies a complete transcendence of 'fate' in the liberation of the essential part of the soul from the determination of natural law, for the soul is capable of being freed from the common impulsion of fate and fortune by being endowed with intelligence. (27) It is this intelligence, affirms Jung, which leads the individual on his journey towards greater consciousness symbolised in the progressive differentiation and refinement of the zodiacal sign-qualities:

"the journey through the planetary houses boils down to becoming conscious of the good and the bad qualities in our

character, and the apotheosis means no more than maximum consciousness, which amounts to maximal freedom of the will."(28)

Once liberated, the soul can then exercise free choice and willingly 'choose' the life-pattern which appears, in some way, to be pre-ordained; if such a pattern is seen to be meaningful, it can no longer be termed 'fate' for the workings of divine Providence, experienced as fateful intrusions in the natural world, manifest as destiny on the intellectual level of the soul. In a short section of his Plotinus commentary, included in the *Disputatio*(29) Ficino calls on the authorities of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Enomaus, Diogenes and Ptolemy to substantiate his belief in the power of human will to counteract 'fate'. Through the exercise of philosophy the soul may become strengthened to resist the adverse influence of natural occurrences, so that the individual may be able to deliberate and use his mature judgement to make a choice of action: "By using reason man can examine what happens in his imagination and if he approves of it can then decide to act accordingly."(30) Ficino emphasises that in the working out of the natural order events cannot all be traced back to a divine origin - some things happen through natural causation, others through a fortuitous meeting of random elements (what we would call a 'chance occurrence' like the finding of a treasure-trove), some through human free decision and others through the direct will of the gods. Divine will is experienced as 'fate' in the realm of nature because there appears to be no alternative option on this level. Since no human action can be fated due to man's capacity for responsible decision, it follows that if such actions are experienced as 'bad fate' (such as, one might assume, robbery or murder), the fault is entirely due to a human moral defect. Ficino points out in his *Disputatio* that "Nothing disagreeable reaches us, without us finding amongst ourselves its manifest and sufficient cause, whether this concerns the body or the soul"(31) - a view echoed concisely by Jung:

"Much that proves to be abysmally evil in its ultimate effects does not come from man's wickedness but from his stupidity and unconsciousness."(32)

The 'evil' effects of natural disasters, seen as acts of God, may be accepted as part of the necessary workings of a harmonious universe, even if they appear discordant to our distorted perspective. Ficino would seem

to insist on a view of freewill which stretches the human intellectual potential to truly staggering heights, but he also acknowledges the presence of deeply-rooted, instinctual motivating forces which lie far beyond the domain of conscious choice, forces which might be termed 'unconscious complexes' in the language of depth psychology:

"We are motivated by the dispositions which descend to us from the universal natures in a long chain, through the intermediary of our nature, and we are completely unaware of them because they urge us on from within."(33)

Or, as Liz Greene observes,(34) "There are aspects to our motivation which go beyond 'free-will' - they are transpersonal, autonomous, even infernal and divine", starkly adding (with a pragmatic realism alien to Renaissance idealism) "sometimes compliance with the order of nature may be beyond the individual's resources."

It is certainly beyond the scope of this thesis to study in depth the huge question of the extent to which human motivations and actions are in some way determined by a force beyond our conscious control. But in the light of Ficino's intuitive apprehension of *kairos*, or the 'right moment' for freeing man's divine element and thus enabling him to overcome 'fate' or materiality, it is important to consider the philosophical and religious premises which underlay his imaginative response to such psychological transformation. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that Ficino's work with astrological music-therapy begins to heal the split in human experience between the dark, pitiless, irrational intrusions of *heimarmene* and the clear, purposeful sense of a personal destiny.

In his fervent defence of free-will, Ficino followed in the footsteps of St. Augustine and the early humanists Dante, Petrarch, Salutati and Lorenzo Valla.(35) Charles Trinkaus vividly and succinctly sums up the essential innovation of the Renaissance humanists - the emphasis on man as an *imago Dei*:

"Beginning with Petrarch, the humanists broke free from the bonds of religious externalism and objectivism that resulted from the application of the dialectical procedures of scholastic philosophy and theology to ordinary Christian life. The humanist turned back to man as a living, feeling subject ... God Himself had to be viewed by Petrarch as majestically free and moved more by his outpouring of love

or anger than by any attempt to sit down and make precise calculations. And man in his image and likeness would share these qualities on a lesser and weaker scale ... aware of the limitations of his capacity and the strength of the vicissitudes with which his life was beset, but equally aware of his position within the creation and encouraged by it, created in the image and likeness of God, destined to be master of all the world, and the replica in this of God and the universe .. Man's dignity lies in his acting in a providential way as he believed his God was doing, but not as though he were not a subordinate part of the divine providence itself and subject to it."(36)

Valla, in extolling the passionate side of human nature, justifying the force of man's emotional responses to "sweep him beyond the intellect"(37) through the power of images mediated by language and words, broke new ground with his "profound and magnificent insight" into the individual's potential for enriching and deepening his creativity with the fertilisation of a fully-experienced emotional life. The essential message in his *De libero arbitrio* of 1439 was that God has foreknowledge of men's actions but that this does not imply their necessity - for man can change his mind. This implication that within a determined pattern man can choose *how*, on what level, his particular 'fate' will be manifest - that he has the option of 'negotiating' and freely working within the confines of his personal destiny - was to be developed by Ficino into a system of practical magic not reserved solely for the high-minded theurgist, but accessible to all those sincerely seeking to improve their quality of life. In an early letter to Giovanni Rucellai on the nature of fortune,(38) Ficino advises his friend that the blows of ill-fortune may be overcome through exercising the gift of wisdom, which is not acquired through human effort but is a product of the outflow of the Good throughout the cosmic system, stemming from the first principle:

"This substance (intelligible life) in a circular movement begins and ends in itself, and all the movements of the circle return to the centre from where they move out to the circumference ... and because there must be harmonious proportions between the agent and that which is acted upon, Nature moves that in us which is natural, and the origin of nature moves that in us which is vital and intellectual and has the form of the Good."(39)

Human nature becomes the instrument of the Good, not disconnected and polarised, but far enough removed in the intricate web of creation from the

original impulse that the purity of intention of the Creator may be obscured and confused. For, suggests Ficino, our desires often become misdirected by the instinctual pull of bodily and sensual appetite - in this sense, 'fortune' appears to be in opposition if it does not conform to such desires. But, Ficino, points out in the *Disputatio*, man cannot desire against his will, whose very action is to desire.(40) The will is self-moving and cannot be compelled - when the good is grasped by the intellect and shown to the will it may then, propelled by the force of desire (and we must remember the etymological origin of *desiderare* - 'from the stars') voluntarily align itself with its destiny, which could be seen to be already implicitly ordained in the symbolism of the birth horoscope. "Desire itself causes understanding of the good" says Ficino(41) - and we have already seen how the desire of the heart is an essential ingredient for the efficacy of theurgic *anagōgē*.(42)

In the letter to Rucellai, Ficino explains that events experienced as fate are simply indications of God's will, manifesting in various guises as it works its way throughout the chain of being, and experienced differently according to the individual's level of awareness:

"That which we call fortune and chance, can be called fate in respect to universal nature and providence in respect to the intellectual and law in respect to the highest good."(43)

If man can align his free-ranging faculty of reason with the highest good itself, then he may resist fate by understanding the fundamental law from which it proceeds. To battle powerlessly against the inevitable is degrading and exhausting - far better, says Ficino (anticipating Jung), to make peace by

"conforming our will with its will and going willingly where it indicates, in order that it should not drag us there by force."(44)

This emphasis on the benefits to be gained from alignment with cosmic, as opposed to personal, law is found time and again in Ficino's correspondence. In a letter addressed to 'Mankind' he stresses the paradox that only by willingly accepting what is 'fated' (through self-

transformation, not manipulation of external events) can it be effectively changed:

"Why do we scheme audaciously to change fortune? To alter the course of fate? O Soul, I pray you, change this game, set your form aright! For thus shall you change fortune and alter the course of fate, and in an instant change for the better the form of the world itself for you."(45)

And in a letter to the Bishop of Volterra Ficino relates such an attitude to common assumptions regarding 'malefic' planetary positions, for to the extent to which one blames the stars, or other people, for one's ills, so one will suffer unnecessarily: "We think", says Ficino, "that stars and men's minds are adverse only to those who interpret these things with perverse minds."(46)

In another letter to his great friend Giovanni Cavalcanti(47) Ficino emphasises the importance of non-identification with the material realm in order to avoid being buffeted by the blows of fate. If one lives purely on the physical (or rather literal) level, then divine law will be experienced as the darkest face of Moira - 'fateful' events will be seen to occur as obstructions to instinctual desire or as external disasters sent to oppose and upset. The human body is attracted by the body of the world through a literalised, concrete manifestation of a 'fate' which, fixed within limitations, contains no possibility of transformation. It follows that predictions, astrological or otherwise, which concern themselves with literal, irrevocable outcomes (rather than with the psychological impulses which propel and attract them) can only come to pass on this level and allow no potential for inner transmutation and psychological tempering. Ficino tells Cavalcanti:

"Yet the force of fate does not penetrate the mind unless the mind of its own accord has first become submerged in the body, which is subject to fate ... Every soul should withdraw from the encumbrance of the body and become centred in the mind, for then fate will discharge its force upon the body without touching the soul. The wise man will not struggle pointlessly with fate. He will rather resist it by flight ... that is why Plato advises us to retreat ... from attachment to the body and involvement with worldly affairs, to the cultivation of the soul."(48)

Through the victory of spiritual over material values, the separation of body from soul, evil may be overcome. This alchemical notion, the *separatio* prerequisite for eventual re-union of the spiritual and material preoccupied Ficino in the first half of his life, finding fruit in his great *Theologia Platonica* on the immortality of the soul. But it would be wrong to assume a rejection or repression of the earthly nature - in the *Theologia*(49) Ficino asks "is the human body endowed with such dignity that it deserves to receive an immortal mind as its guest?" and replies "without any doubt", referring to the "marvellous beauty of all the various members." It is rather a matter of conscious self-observation and regulation of instinctual response. To all accounts Ficino never experienced sensual desire,(50) but he did enjoy the natural and material pleasures of good wine, music, and healthy living. James Hillman has pointed out that for Ficino the issue is one of life-perspective, not irrefutable dualism:

"When 'body' is disparaged in Ficino in order to affirm soul, it can be psychologised to mean the empirical, literal, physical perspective, particularly the perspective of practical actions which had less significance in Ficino's scheme of things than did Venus and the voluptuousness. The opposition is less between soul and fleshly sensual joy - for voluptuousness in Ficino was a model for spiritual delight - than between interiority and outwardness, or what we have called the metaphorical and the literal perspectives."(51)

Happiness, for Ficino, can only be achieved by the wise man who transcends the irrational chaos of nature through heroic adherence to the light of consciousness. As he wrote to the Cardinal of Pavia, "No one ever falls into the abyss who, established on high, looks into it with clarity and compassion".(52) Ficino's personal struggle for self-knowledge, his concern with disentangling his rational soul from the grips of powerful emotional drives (exemplified in the strong Aquarius/Scorpio polarity of his horoscope), is inextricably woven into the very fabric of both his philosophy and his practical life. The unity of spiritual aspiration with concern for soul in the world, the "universal understanding of things"(53) which he found in Plato, was complemented by the intuitive mysticism of Hermes Trismegistus. Together, these 'divine' representatives of the paths of speculative philosophy and revelatory religion led, for Ficino, to a possible conjoining of the objective and subjective realms in

an all-embracing wisdom of being. Yet it must be pointed out that there was an abyss which he could never cross - Mother Nature in her chthonic aspect remained anathema, and one can only speculate that Ficino's complete lack of relationship with the earthly feminine (with the crucial exception of his mother) may have been a direct reflection of a deep-rooted fear of his own contra-sexual nature with its powerful emotional drives. Within the safety of sublimated Platonic homosexual friendships the dark aspect of the *anima* does not have to be met. But the psychological implications of Ficino's theory and practice of love are the subject for another study. Suffice it to say that as torchbearer for the immense surge of enlightenment in the West known as the Renaissance, Ficino fulfilled his destiny to the hilt. He could only follow his desire, which manifested in allegiance to Minerva, not Helen,(54) and in 'marrying' the Church (thus 'sanctifying' the Platonic Academy), Ficino fully embraced the truth of his convictions.

In his Commentary on Iamblichus, Ficino tackles the subject of fate from the religious perspective.(55) Iamblichus presents the material and spiritual parts of the soul as separate entities, affirming that we are freed from fate through the higher part which may be strengthened through religious observances. It is through this first soul that we are joined to the gods, and just as the pursuit of philosophy will strengthen its capacity for intellectual understanding, so a similar devotion to cultivating a deep religious faith will re-affirm our innate sense of *notio*. Again, it is emphasised that only at this level of awareness may one's attitude towards fate be transformed; the supra-mundane gods, not the lower celestial ones, instigate the natures which carry out the already implicit fate in the world, so they alone can free us:

"For when the most important of them, which are in us, act, and the soul is called back to the higher parts of itself, then it is completely separated from those who subjugate it in generation."(56) (my italics)

As a complementary method to philosophical speculation, religious ritual dedicated to the higher gods may purify the soul, "dissolving lower things with a greater power", as we saw in the processes of theurgy. To view the cosmos with the inner eye attuned to the eternal, rather than temporal, dimension is to perceive the numinous quality of all natural things - to

see innumerable gods at work in natural processes. A humble devotion to these powers will free the ego-centred will and cultivate the very faculty of innate intuition necessary to grasp the workings of a higher will and thus overcome the adversities of blindly suffering fate. The common goal of these two perspectives - the transcendent intellectual and the deeply religious - confirms for Ficino "that there is the greatest kinship between Wisdom and Religion", as he entitled the proem to his *De Christiana religione*,(57) where he goes on to say:

"[the soul] as it pleases our Plato can, as though by two wings (that is by intellect and will) fly back to the heavenly Father and fatherland, and the philosopher relies on the intellect and the priest especially leans on the will, the intellect illumines the will and the will kindles the intellect ..."(58)

Ficino is insistent that the effects of bad fate are to be overcome through exercising the virtues of prudence, justice and piety, which he defines as a discrimination between spiritual and material concerns and the appropriate personal adherence to each.(59) He is no advocator of an unearthly spirituality - he begins the *Disputatio* by stressing that the order of the universe may only be understood through a thorough appraisal of both its higher and lower elements, and that both are necessary in correct proportions, although our ability to apprehend how everything fits together is limited. The "good" or God is not to be found in a transcendent paradise, but in the quality, or divinity, perceived in any part of the cosmic hierarchy (apprehended, as we have seen, through the corresponding human act of *notio*). (60) It is a question of *how* one sees, for God's wisdom is latent and hidden in the world, and qualitative perception, opening the 'inner eye', reveals it. Ficino's quotation from Orpheus, "you [divinity] observe inside all things, you hear inside all things and you arrange all things" (*omnia intus inspicis, omnia intus audis omniaque distribuis*)(61) in the *Disputatio* (his only reference to a *priscus theologus* amongst many astrological and Biblical authorities) focusses the attention on both the immanence of God in the world, and on the intuitive faculty required to perceive the 'occult' properties in nature. In the context of the work, this only serves to highlight the lack of such inner vision on the part of the ignorant, 'petty ogre' astrologers.

In particular, to achieve alignment with God's will in order to attain a clearer insight into his arrangement of human affairs, Ficino emphasises that patience is required, which accomplishes three things: firstly a contradiction of natural impulses through use of the will in suffering misfortunes gladly; secondly a conversion of what is necessary into what is voluntary; and thirdly the transformation of what appears to be evil into good.(62) In such a process, man strengthens his rational soul and approaches the condition of God Himself who acts through voluntary intention, not necessity.(63) Offering advice to his nephew Sebastiano Salvini,(64) Ficino urges him to transform his attitude towards suffering a difficult situation by willing it, for, he says, "unless you suffer willingly, you will certainly suffer unwillingly; and unless you allow yourself to be led, you will be seized and violently dragged away." He continues:

"it is patience more than all the other [virtues] that conquers fate; for patience, being in accord with the will of divine providence, changes what fate has decreed to be immutable and unavoidable, so that it makes the unavoidable voluntary. Just as he who acts badly turns what is good for him into evil, so he who suffers well turns what is bad for him into good ... Therefore, my Salvini, overcome fortune by bearing it, and that you may overcome all else, overcome yourself, as you have already begun to do."(65)

It is worth drawing a brief parallel here with the strikingly similar conclusions of depth psychology concerning the gradual reconciliation of opposing forces within the human psyche. In the words of Aniela Jaffé, one of Jung's most distinguished interpreters:

"The experience of meaning - which is what, ultimately, life is about - is by no means equivalent to non-suffering; yet the resilience of the self-aware and self-transforming consciousness can fortify us against the perils of the irrational and the rational, against the world within and the world without."(66)

In order to understand Ficino's condemnation of the practices of the 'petty ogres', it is necessary to summarise his arguments concerning the nature of the soul and autonomy of the human will (drawing on both the *Disputatio* and the *Theologia Platonica*, sections of the latter being incorporated into the former work). That he felt it important to begin the *Disputatio* with a detailed exposition of Aristotelian principles regarding

causation reveals his concern to emphasise the distinction between the intellectual speculation of true philosophy and the limited, and often misguided, attempts to form 'rational' explanations of astrology from within a merely human, or temporal, frame of reference. At best, the latter allows for laudable astronomical measurement and the examination of astrological configurations, a framework which the wise astrologer will use as a necessary basis for insight and understanding which, however, derive from a higher source - "with celestial virtue [man] ascends the heavens and measures them. With supercelestial intelligence he transcends the heavens."(67) At worst, such a short-sighted viewpoint encourages arrogant assumptions and dangerously inaccurate judgements - and Ficino's main aim is to prove that astrology cannot be stripped of its divinatory, or eternal, dimension and reduced to a pseudo-rational 'science' if it is to be used for the purposes of deepening self-awareness and re-connecting man with his divine nature.

3.8. The Rational soul

Man's unique position as a mean between heaven and earth was, for the Platonists, determined by the basic tripartite nature of his soul which partook of both realms. Plato understood the human soul to be composed of reason, appetite and the irrational spirit (*thumos*), which must be harnessed and regulated to serve Reason in the overcoming of the appetite's demands.(68) Harmony and rhythm were to be employed as an essential part of this training. Ficino, in the *Theologia Platonica*, describes a three-fold order within the soul of *Mind*, rational Soul and *Idolum* (imaginative faculty);(69) in his Commentary on the *Phaedrus* he incorporates the fourth element of nature and compares each order to the cosmic hierarchy:

"The understanding's swiftest circuit resembles the firmament's diurnal motion and the whole celestial machine's. The reason's slower circuit resembles the planets' motions: its more universal and contemplative circuit resembles Saturn, Jupiter and the Sun, its more particular and practical circuit, Mars, Venus, Mercury and the Moon. The imagination's period is like the aether's subcelestial revolution; nature's period, like air and water's revolution."(70)

Following Plotinus,(71) Ficino later elaborated on this basic structure with a further five-fold division of the soul: the lower soul, corresponding to man's material nature, consisted of firstly the bodily functions of propagation, nourishment and growth, secondly the five senses of external perception, and thirdly the imagination, or interior perception. The higher soul on the other hand comprised reason and mind. It is thus reason which occupies the mediating position between the material and the immaterial parts of the soul. In the *Disputatio* Ficino correlates this division with a five-fold progression of effects ranging from the necessary to the impossible, the rational soul corresponding to the central position of possibility which may be coerced by either side and which may voluntarily join itself to either.(72) As the mean between corporeal matter and the Good, it is "the mean between time and eternity, partly eternal and partly temporal, the mean between natural and divine things."(73) This part of the soul is autonomous - it may both enter into the passions of the body and ascend to the realm of the angels, being compelled by nothing other than its free choice. This voluntary act of direction, Ficino says, adds intelligence to the action, through which it is master of the limits and conditions surrounding it(74) - and it is the particular duty of man to develop and apply the understanding which allows him to exercise the judgement and choice of his rational soul. Things in the natural world come to pass through blind necessity - since the heavenly bodies partake of this order, they can in no way determine the actions of a man who is conscious of his soul's potential to transcend its temporal limitations:

"But if anyone should say that the movement of understanding is set in motion by the stars, whose nature is determined, then he shall remove this very reason of judgement, which is directed in a certain broad, unfettered and free motion in all directions, and in place of good judgement he brings in a certain limited instinct."(75)

This limited, human instinct is a far cry indeed from the deep, intuitive insight of *notio* or the discriminating awareness of the intellect through which an individual may "proceed from the principles of things in temporal succession to the conclusions in a universal concept."(76) However, the soul is connected to the order of fate through its lower faculty or *idolum*, which touches and exercises a guiding power over the body:

"through the *idolum* the soul is in the order of fate ... but is not under fate ... Thus the soul is placed in the laws of providence, fate and nature not only passively but as an actor ... Although in these three parts we are partially bound to the order of things and partially not bound, in a fourth we are entirely free and our own. This is the reason which we locate in the middle between the mind, the head of the soul, and the *idolum*, the foot of the soul."(77)

Ficino describes the *vim idolum* or imaginative power as a "vivifying force" which guides and nourishes the body" and which is an image or likeness of the rational soul. As an intermediary, it is like "a certain trace of the soul in the body, or a shadow" and maintains the life of both soul and body in a healthy co-operative balance.(78) In a remarkable passage, he appears to anticipate the Jungian concept of a collective unconscious or archetypal unifying stream of psychic life from which all individual minds, imaginations and bodies emerge:

"all minds like lights are reduced to one mind like one light, all imaginations [*idola*] and likenesses of souls to one imagination or the universal soul, all bodily natures, as if shadows of souls, rightly to the common nature of one body, as if the shadow of one soul. Our soul through its head, that is, mind, is governed by higher minds; through its lower power, that is, the imagination by which the body is governed, it unites with the imagination of higher souls; through the nature of its body, into which the imagination penetrates, it is united with the nature of the mundane bodies [i.e. planets], which it follows with the nature of this body."(79)

If the rational soul, through its voluntary action, chooses to follow the *idolum*, then it "submits to fate by a certain love"(80) and through purposefully directing the imagination may be understood to transform the adverse psychological effects of desire, pleasure, fear and pain (through which the *idolum* directly affects the physical body) into self-understanding. The idea that man may control his instinctual nature through what we would now term sublimation - using the imagination to contain, refine and transform the 'irrational', primitive and raw emotional responses, and that the deprivation of physical comforts and sensual pleasures may increase human creativity by forcing this very process ("[it] expands and proves its productive power")(81) is an astonishing psychological insight for the time, anticipating Jung's conclusions on the reconciliatory function of the symbol.(82) In Ficino's terms, under such

conditions man imitates God's act of creation in his artistic enterprises; he can improve and perfect nature through conjoining his reason to his phantasy, which in turn is fed by the "delights of the senses". In an encomium to the creative power of man,(83) Ficino places him at the centre of the universe, having the power to use all living creatures, whether animals or angels, "for learning and the miracles of magic." (84) So fervent is his belief in man as an *imago Dei* that he even suggests that man could recreate the heavens themselves if he had the right instruments and materials. It was certainly through the imaginal recreation of the heavens, as we shall see in the next chapter, that Ficino advocated working with one's natal horoscope. Such a process bears a striking resemblance to both ancient alchemical and modern psychotherapeutic techniques of active imagination.(85)

3.9. Contingency

In the *Disputatio* Ficino stresses the impossibility of predicting particular effects by observing that they proceed from God through the heavens towards lower things "not always inevitably ... for they can be changed and impeded, both by the occasional resistance of inferior natures, and by art at the same time as wisdom." (86) They will also vary according to local diverse conditions such as climate, upbringing and education.(87) He distinguishes three types of effects in the natural world which correspond to the three orders of Providence (wholly voluntary), Fate (negotiable) and Nature (necessary), which are voluntary (such as a person of sanguin temperament deliberately choosing serious occupations), contingent (such as changes in weather or ill-health) and necessary (such as the movements of the heavenly bodies). He gives the practical example of placing wax behind a stone so that it will not melt to illustrate the way in which human ingenuity may counteract natural effects. As man occupies the realm of contingency, he is given room for negotiation within certain limitations. It is not only by adopting a far-sighted and patient attitude that fate may be transformed - the wise man may also knowingly and skilfully intervene to manipulate matter in order to alter the way it receives or repels the natural, unchanging influences of heavenly bodies: "with the advice and help of the wise man and the physician things may be

avoided which will be produced as a result of the heavens."(88) Because of the superior motivating strength of the rational soul to that of the body, it has the ability to "mix together or reject the inclination of the heavens coming into the body"(89) - and in the third part of the *Liber de vita* we learn how this can be done through the arts of herbal medicine, talismanic magic and musical performance.

In ascending the Platonic hierarchy - the chain of animate creation - all diverse particulars are progressively reduced to single principles, and ultimately to the Good, One or God. Since the Good may only generate good, it follows that what is humanly experienced as evil or sin is a result of the mis-direction of the will, in the contingent realm. Since God acts voluntarily, and maintains the whole in proportion and harmony, it is not possible for vice to be generated in the order of providence. The harmony of the heavens can in no way cause the disharmony of man, whose suffering may always be attributed to his own ignorance and weakness. Both in the *Disputatio* and *Commentary on Plotinus*(90) Ficino is at pains to illustrate how the heavenly bodies can in no way be evil in nature, nor move men to evil actions, as they are animated by a rational soul uncontaminated by earthly nature therefore superior to that of man. Human will is free to interpret astrological effects as 'good' or 'bad' - it is free to either reinforce the natural tendency or to counteract it, since man's voluntary action forms the mean between natural necessity and divine will. Thus, planetary influences may be strengthened or diverted in many ways, and not only through art and 'magical' knowledge; also general human customs, regional characteristics, upbringing and education may modify, challenge or reinforce the general instincts signified by the heavens at the particular time and place of the soul's entry into the body.(91)

3.10. Providence

In a letter written towards the end of his life to Johannes Pannonius,(92) Ficino explains that in his practice of astrology his intention "was above all to serve divine Providence in the resuscitation of the ancients". He continues:

"If you have read attentively my disputation on the Star of the Magi, the chapters of our Theology and the books of Plotinus which deal with this question and which I have also translated, you would clearly understand that the care of public good which is concern for souls depends effectively, as their first and general causes, on higher spirits who are the ministers of all-powerful God; and at the same time proceeds in a certain way, as their proper and near causes, from human intelligences, as soon as they harmonise themselves with the superior spirits. Now, all this is signified by the heavenly figures and movements, in as much as they are instruments of divine spirits. Furthermore, you would learn that 'fate' which is the working out of heavenly causes, serves divine Providence. One can moreover say that our souls are most free when they respond fully to divine will."(93)

By naming Providence "the succession of minds"(94) in the *Theologia Platonica* Ficino is referring to the level of intellectual perception from which man may know, and conform to, the will of God. Such knowledge is absolute, transcending all divisions of past, present and future, creating "the external and internal coincidences of life perpetually afresh in every moment because every moment is one eternal moment."(95) At this level, all is understood to be directed towards the good, whereas natural processes in themselves do not necessarily lead in this direction. Any tendency towards defect of the will by the lower nature is ordered by God into something good, although this may be experienced as ill-fortune or disaster by individual human beings; for the ordering takes place "according as the dissolution of that one is the composition of this, and the misfortune of one or a few is the advantage of many."(96) God's ultimate justice and compassion is enacted through his punishment and forgiveness, his intention always being to lead the soul of man to its most perfect end. Thus direct divine intervention in the form of miracles or retribution may also play a part in the 'taking care' of the human race.(97) In this Aristotelian ordering of the world from a first cause, the human will, through trial and error, will be inevitably led back to an immutable higher will - namely that of God, not of the heavenly bodies as independent from the first motion.(98)

The connection of the intellectual level with Providence suggests the possibility of true prophecy, and indeed all forms of revelation through 'divine frenzy'. For when the free-ranging soul aligns itself with the

eternal order - transcending linear time-divisions of past, present and future - it may attain universal knowledge and thus predict events which will inevitably occur as part of the overall design. But in order for this to happen, says Ficino, the rational soul must be entirely emptied of earthly concerns, so that it is free, when prompted by the impulse of the sensual imagination, to participate in another order:

"When that influx of minds finds our reason emptied or free for the intellect, it shows it something of those things which pertain to universal knowledge of eternal matters or to the government of the universe, so that it foresees either the law of God and the orders of angels or the return of the ages and the revolutions of kingdoms. When the impulse of the *idola* and of the natures comes upon an entirely emptied reason and phantasy, something is revealed to it concerning the vicissitudes of times and the disturbances of the elements so that it can foresee future rains, earthquakes and similar things."(99)

This condition is very difficult to achieve, for although many of a philosophical temperament may receive insights or unexpected solutions to problems during sleep, the true prophet must transcend all attachment to "that customary investigation of the speculative reason" and embrace a condition of complete openness and non-action: "Their soul is more withdrawn while awake than that of any others, in sleep it is entirely withdrawn. Therefore the supernal impulse is easily observed by them."(100) When a human soul has become such an instrument of God, it may initiate or participate in events which appear to the ordinary man to be magical or even miraculous. In the *Theologia Platonica*, in agreement with Plotinus, Ficino presents a view of man as magus with no need for external ceremonial or theurgic ritual - for by virtue of purification of his soul alone man may realise a divine potential. In the words of Trinkaus:

"In the *Theologia Platonica* Ficino leads up to magic through man's rational, artistic, productive and scientific capacities. Here it is regarded essentially as a divinely aided extension of the rational and psychic, even proto-divine, powers with which man is endowed."(101)

3.11. 'Petty ogres'

I have already mentioned amusement afforded Pico, Poliziano and Ficino by the activities of some of their contemporary astrologers (see Introduction, page 13). But what kind of astrology does Ficino explicitly condemn in his *Disputatio* and *Commentary* on Plotinus? He begins the *Commentary* by making it clear that not all astrologers are to be criticised:

"the first chapter narrates in what way Astrologers - I don't say all of them, but many - think that by the forces and characteristics of the stars individual things are both signified and caused (both as regards external things and the body, or the mind and its actions) to be either good and honest or on the other hand evil and ugly. Indeed you will remember that the excellent authors of astrology do not tell of these things, but certain vulgar astrologers, completely ignorant of astronomy, divulge such things."(102)

In the *Disputatio* Ficino ridicules short-sighted literalism, superstitious generalisations and the limitations of making judgements from a merely empirical perspective, at the expense of the subjective fluidity of a metaphorical one. One finds here a parallel with his exhortation to "petty philosophers" (*minuti philosophi*)(103) to transcend the limitations of the judgement of the senses and purify their connection, through the soul, with divine things:

"They should become pure, and they will perceive pure things. They should finally experience in themselves, and they can, if they wish to, what they have been denying/desiring [*desiderant*] in the universe for a long time ... And they will prove in fact Socrates' opinion ... that there is but one way not only to reach but also to possess incorporeal things, namely, to make oneself incorporeal ..." (104)

To desire to be in harmony with the universe is to willingly work with one's given destiny - but to perceive a horoscope as an indicator of this destiny involves a fundamental change of perspective, a renunciation of human values in a voluntary alignment with divine. The 'petty ogres' remain in the world of opinion, catching unsuspecting clients like flies in a spider's web, which however may be easily broken by the wise man's superior strength.(105) Quoting St. Augustine on Job, Ficino adds that he

who visits such 'mathematicians' "buys masters from him, which it will please the mathematician to give, either Saturn, or Jupiter or Mercury. He entered a free man, so that having given coins he may leave a slave."(106)

Much of the *Disputatio* is devoted to a vehement critique of the fallacies of such astrologers with their literal presumptions, particularly the arbitrary and variable nature of their 'rules'. If astrologers disagree so much amongst themselves, complains Ficino, how can they ever give accurate judgements? He ridicules their direct attribution of human gifts to planets (orators and prophets are not 'made' by Mercury, kings are born under the same star as servants);(107) of animal powers and images to constellations (their images are fabricated in the sky and "rather it should be said that the heavens give something to those animals than receive from them");(108) their unimaginative, literal application of rulerships of signs to regions, occupations and parts of the body with no attempt to look beyond disjunct particulars for a higher connecting principle (How can the same signs cause different things in different regions? How can Saturn with the Sun rule both leatherworking and monotheism?);(109) their arbitrary divisions of the zodiac, illogical attribution of good and evil qualities to illusory parts of heaven (the moon's nodes);(110) of masculine and feminine, hot and cold properties to signs and planets;(111) the inconsistency of planetary signifiers (if Saturn is signifier of both the first and eighth houses, "therefore it signifies life and death which is inconsistent to reason")(112) - the list is endless. "All this is poetic metaphor", says Ficino, "not reason or knowledge".(113) The irony of this statement, in the light of his appreciation of poetic metaphor as a most powerful way of conveying eternal truths, cannot be fully appreciated without a clear understanding of the level at which his criticism is aimed. From the standpoint of the natural-scientific mind of the practical astronomer, such pseudo-rational claims are indeed fanciful and without foundation. It does not suit Ficino's purposes here to attempt to convince sceptical opposition (perhaps ecclesiastical) of the rightful place of such rules within a metaphorical rather than literal approach to astrology, for he evidently wishes to convince his readership of his apparent rejection of the practice as they understood it. That, in his later writings, he fully embraces and applies traditional astrological rules within his imaginative system of

psychotherapy, fully accepting the implications of the framework as a container for a most powerful 'poetic metaphor' implies no contradiction. If the realm of the imagination is valued, 'poetic metaphor' speaks directly to the heart. If 'scientific' objectivity is the judgemental norm, then it will mean nothing. In appearing to be disparaging, Ficino is in fact confirming his own symbolic approach. In the Commentary on Plotinus he specifically draws attention to the importance of understanding astrological figures as both literal and imaginary phenomena:

"Plotinus and Origen say that future things are in heaven from the beginning, as if in the form of letters or texts, which are to be explained gradually, or are perpetually written, [and] they understand the stars and figures to be both constructed out of the stars, and imaginary: likewise the degrees and parts and minutes of the signs: lastly the aspects and movements of the planets, and [those things which] proceed from them or are combined together anywhere. Indeed by this you may understand the universal heaven. For heaven is everywhere ... Indeed just as causes are common to things above the Moon and to inferior things, so are signs common: below the Moon indeed are particular causes, by which known things particular indications are derived from common things, and the whole of its body exists as if of one animal. Therefore it is necessary to consider carefully this animal of the world, all things both above and below the Moon, and to ponder on both things."(114)

By "above and below the Moon", we can understand eternal and temporal, or in terms of modes of perception, symbolic and literal. Without taking a unified perspective, the complexity and apparent contradictions stemming from partial vision will deter true understanding; in this Ficino likens the astrologer's task to that of the physiognomer.(115) The deterministic 'petty ogres' in their exclusive concern with quantifying particulars, predicting behaviour instead of being attuned to inner propulsions of the soul, reduce the infinite mystery and grandeur of the cosmic dance to delimiting, narrow categorisations, "puerile similitudes" (*pueriles similitudines*) as Ficino eloquently puts it.(116) Reading between the lines, his message is that both the pure fatalists and the scientific rationalists miss the point - using fixed reductionist assumptions to remain at a safe distance from the dangers of acknowledging their own participation in the mysterious play of cosmic forces, they avoid confrontation with the deeply disturbing and awesome issue of fate with all that it implies for human suffering and personal responsibility. As Liz

Greene asks, "How can one measure the places where fate enters a life?"(117)

3.12. Signification

In his exasperation with the practitioners of deterministic astrology, Ficino in his *Disputatio* asks how predictions can be made from a horoscope when a hundred thousand men born at different times may die in a shipwreck, fire, battle or plague on the same day.(118) He attacks vehemently a literalist assumption that particulars may be concretely predicted in the realm of contingency from astrological rules alone - but does not deny the possibility of prediction through a divinatory attitude, which may or may not use astrology as a tool. The most important point is that the individual's quality of being will determine the clarity and depth of his vision - our judgements will be confused to the extent that our perceptions are confused. Ficino quotes Ptolemy, that

"Our judgements fall between the necessary and contingent, nor must they be made distinct, but rather remain confused in he who observes the matter from a distance."(119)

He holds Plotinus as an example of an exalted state of being by whose purity of soul (*vis animae*) rather than mere knowledge of techniques foreknowledge of the future may occur, adding "hence that astrological judgement from the stars is not only made through their inspection, but also from the nature of he himself who judges."(120) There is no doubt, in Ficino's mind, that as we are part of universal nature so we are affected by the movements and changes of the heavenly configurations, and that all particular effects will turn out in accordance with this natural pattern in a process of reverberation.(121) But the nature of such events, he maintains, may only be predicted through the ability to see symbolically, and then only obscurely - because as we have seen, the exact nature of finite human acts depends on so many factors, in particular, the influences of natural instinct and human freewill. "Nor", says Ficino, "in the present appearance of the universe may indications of things in the past or future be presented unless in an arbitrary and indiscriminate way."(122)

In his *Commentary on Plotinus* Ficino gives "five indications why the stars signify our things, rather than cause them"(123) in an attempt to convince the reader through rational argument that 'cause and effect' astrology kills autonomy of will, whereas the reading of signs opens meaningful potentialities within personal destiny. Firstly, since an efficient cause cannot precede the first cause, and astrological figures are often perceived to be significant in retrospect, they cannot (in temporal, linear time) be said to be causes of past events. By this reasoning, neither can they be causes of future events; in both cases however they may announce them. Ficino is again drawing our attention to the nature of time - for the coincidence of 'eternal' and 'temporal' time cannot be evaluated in terms of a causality that implies a purely linear structure. The mode of connection in 'eternal' time is not causality but significance, which might be more accurately described as 'circular' and self-referencing as the meaningfulness of the event depends on the participation of the observer. Ficino gives the concrete example of Mars falling in the fourth house of a horoscope as corresponding to the sudden death of the parents or dissipation of an inheritance. He stresses that such events cannot be caused, in any technical sense, by this horoscope - but, we might say, these particular experiences - the concretely embodied 'fate' - may be signified for the individual by the highly-charged and often violent energies of Mars at work within the arena of family life, when the planet is activated by an appropriate transiting configuration. The actual manifestations may be variable and certainly impossible to predict, and how much the individual is adversely affected by an 'event' will depend on the degree to which he is identified with material, as opposed to spiritual, existence. To 'negotiate' with fate in this instance might be to transform the 'evil' effects of Mars by understanding the lessons to be learnt by self-reliance or poverty. The problem lies in the determinism of a future event, not in the symbolic reflection of such an event in the heavens - to make a concrete, material prediction deprives the soul of the ability to make such a transformation and may even provoke the occurrence on this level. As we saw in Ficino's letter to Lorenzo de' Medici (page 192), he was very reluctant to encourage negative emotions in his friend by predicting difficulties under particular transits, indicating that the more one anticipates a fearful event, the more one is predisposed

to experience one.(124) The 'petty ogres' are not only to be laughed at, they are to be feared, for they unwittingly play with fire.

Secondly, Ficino points out that since the horoscopes of relatives, or anyone closely connected to an individual, will represent something of the nature of their relationship to him and will in some way reflect a violent or traumatic event (such as his murder), the sheer complexity of associations cannot be understood as causes: "where things are dispersed in diverse or different things they are not causes but signs."(125) Most importantly, Ficino does not deny the validity of a birth horoscope but suggests that it signifies the freely-chosen destiny of the soul before incarnation within which implicit and ordained framework it is free to shape the course of a man's life, rather than an immutable, imposed set of fixed characteristics:

"if through the heavenly figure at birth the fate of the child is predicted and already laid down, this very figure does not carry out this destiny but declares it, and the child is not then constituted [by it] but signified. And the Platonists shall say that one's destiny was determined before conception when the soul chooses the body as it pleases."(126)

The third indication is the most important for our understanding of Ficino's divinatory attitude towards astrology. He reasons that since prediction of the future may occur through oracles, auguries, auspices, dream-interpretation, portents of doctors and farmers, omens and physiognomy, all of which rely on the examination and interpretation of signs, why should the pattern of the heavens not be used in the same way, as figures inscribed by divine influence, manifesting future things, but not acting or causing them. He asks, "Is this figure not clearly above us? But so are the flight of birds and claps of thunder, nor yet is it usual to expect future things through these phenomena as causes, but as indications."(127) And in the *Disputatio* Ficino had already stressed that heavenly configurations should be read as signs "no differently than in augury and auspices, when many things are thought to be portended through birds which are not at all made by the birds."(128) In fact through a divinatory approach, not through merely obeying rules, Ficino held that it was even possible to gain foreknowledge of particulars:

"... the aspect of the heavens shall be able to be free in which inscribed figures manifest future things by divine influence, but do not act: especially by consideration of celestial bodies those things may be foreknown which are unable to come into being in the normal course of that [the heavens'] bodily nature, such as certain human honours and oppressions, discoveries of treasures, thoughts of deliberation, changes of fortune which are peculiar to our affairs."(129)

I shall return to the emphasis Ficino places on divination a little later. To conclude his indications of signification, he fourthly stresses that if either evil or good things are portended by a particularly configuration of stars, it is more probable that they are declared by it than, since the stars cannot be evil in themselves, cause evil things or as bodies, cause effects in the immaterial soul which lies beyond corporeal nature. Fifthly, Ficino draws our attention to the practice of interrogations, or horary, where a question is posed and the answer divined from the current constitution of the heavens. He distrusts the ability of the astrologers to make accurate pronouncements about immediate, physical phenomena whose causes are to be traced to human temperament, custom, knowledge, and action or the chance convergence of circumstances, but does acknowledge the possibility of revealing more remote factors influencing the interrogation through signification:

"Of alien things and things very remote from us, [the astrologers] confirm that whatever may be replied from the present hour of interrogation is answered not through a cause but a sign."(130)

In the *Disputatio* Ficino explains the reason for his scepticism, for the efficacy of an interrogation depends on the intention and attitude of the querent, in the same way as that of a talisman or remedy will depend on the faith of the patient in the cure. This conviction is not a rational appraisal of the intellect alone, but includes a deep faith in the unfathomable workings of the 'unknown' powers of divinity. He quotes the Arabic astrologers Messalac (Masha'allah) and Zahel, the former advising that an interrogation should only be asked with great care about a thing of the utmost necessity, and the latter saying "Don't answer the player or the frivolous querent, but only he who eagerly desires and for whom the matter lies close to his heart, because the thing turns out in proportion to the

solicitude"(131) (my italics). The correspondence between the 'solicitude' or intent of the questioner and the movements of the heavens is, for Ficino, the essential point of emergence of the temporal and eternal. If no effort is made to 'tune in' to or engage with the divine dimension through a suspension of logical thought-processes, the verdict can only be dependent on human ingenuity, or simply be the result of natural working-out:

"Zael and Messalac say that the interrogation only has judgement and effect when it is with [made] with great solicitude, as if they desire that that alone is moved by the heavens, indeed that which is without solicitude, of whatever kind, often does not depend on the heavens. Therefore ... not all the acts of men are made by the heavens."(132)

Both interrogations and elections (the timing of particular activities and events in accordance with the stars) preserve intact the free-will of the enquirer. Ficino would have found authority for confirmation of his views in the writings of Albertus Magnus,(133) who saw in astrological judgements "the natural tie between philosophy and mathematics". Albertus understood any moment of interrogation to be an opportunity for an individual to gain fuller insight into the path of his personal destiny: "when a man interrogates, he comes then from his birth to the good or evil which his birth indicates."(134) Such intimations are beyond the accessibility of normal human consciousness, but may be encouraged by intentional participation in enhancing the quality of the moment. Ficino quotes Albertus to confirm his own view of elections: "Freedom of will is not repressed by the election of an excellent hour; rather, to scorn to elect an hour for the beginnings of great enterprises is not freedom but reckless choice."(135) For Ficino, the understanding and art of man - his quality of being and degree of wisdom - must precede any power of the heavens alone in the composition and use of images (he quotes the Ptolemaic dictum, *sapiens dominabitur astris*),(136) whether material, musical or divinatory (such as the horoscope itself). Then the rules of the game may be put to the service of (not substituted for) true insight, for "only the wise man, fortunate by nature, is capable of foreknowing any effect by the rules of science."(137)

Commenting on Plotinus, Ficino fully admits the possibility that contingent effects in the sublunar realm may well be indicated by heavenly movements and configurations; that signs may coincide, in the natural course of things, with human free choice. Sometimes on the other hand signs may be of no use if the efficient cause actually changes, through natural processes or human intervention, the implied outcome of the signification.

3.13. Portents

Astrological interrogations are, in the same way as oracles, auguries, and the portents observed by doctors and farmers, all ways of examining and assessing the future through signs, by the use of a flexible, imaginative but essentially natural faculty. Mention should be made here of the phenomena of portents as direct interventions by God, to be interpreted as signs of significant, dramatic changes in earthly affairs - 'bolts from the blue' which shake up the temporal order, intruding into human consciousness to disturb the comfort, but blindness, of its common condition. Of interest here is a letter by Ficino to Filippo Valori in 1492 on the nature of portents, (138) for it was commonly believed that a comet had signified the recent death of Lorenzo de' Medici. These sorts of prodigies, says Ficino, do not occur through chance or natural means, but "they contain in themselves an entirely superior mysterious nature." (139) He considers the idea that they derive directly from a divine order which surpasses all natural forces, and this leads him to formulate three kinds of portents with three particular spiritual origins: firstly the sublime order of spirits and angels who bring about comets, thunder, burning stars and similar phenomena, portending the deaths of noble souls; secondly the spirit or genius of a particular place or city which gives forth oracles, moves auguries and causes storms which announce the collective disasters of peoples and warn of imminent dangers; thirdly man's personal daemon or guardian angel who summons forth dreams and such occurrences as the frenzied barking of dogs which may warn either of death or recovery from illness. As ever, Ficino stresses that our interpretation of the various events and patterns will depend on our level of perception, our capacity for symbolic connection, not on the apparent literal significance of the event in

itself. The meaningfulness of the subjective experience cannot be judged from a rational viewpoint.

3.14. Prediction

Ficino continues with a detailed examination of the problems involved in giving judgements of future events.(140) How can we possibly discern, he argues, every particular event on earth from the general movements of the heavens, and how can we have the capacity to examine exactly their effects throughout creation? He admits that general effects or tendencies may be determined from studying a horoscope, but never the innumerable internal and external movements of a lifetime, even if we apply ourselves to the task daily. Ficino does not deny that the complex mass of stars and their motions convey some effects which are "accomplished through the nature of the place and the material",(141) but since astrologers believed there to be between 25,002 and 400,076 stars, many of which were hidden from human sight, in no way could they judge the absolute condition of all their effects. Ficino is awed by the sheer magnitude of the universe, and suspects the existence of planets as yet undiscovered due to their extreme altitude, but whose possible existence prevents the possibility of our obtaining definitive information. Man's life is too short to gain the complete knowledge of all individual powers and motions that would be required to make infallible judgements from 'scientific' evaluation alone.

It is interesting here to compare the view of the Roman astrologer Firmicus Maternus,(142) a stoic fatalist for whom astrology, as a predictive science, is infallible in its ability to make exact judgements from minute data. In the *Liber primus* of his treatise *Matheseos* he attacks those who maintain the impossibility of determined judgement:

"There are some ... opponents who say that they agree with us to a certain extent. In order to throw the whole doctrine into doubt and despair they say our teaching has great force. But they add that no one can get definite results because of the smallness of the degrees and minutes, the tremendous speed of the stars' orbits, and the inclination of the heavens. Thus they try to subvert the entire essence of our science by their apparent plausibility."(143)

In upholding "the unchanging nature of the astrological responses"(144) Firmicus' position is anathema to the neo-platonic philosopher for whom the individual's capacity to define meaningfulness depends on the quality of his being. Whether deterministic astrology 'works' or not is not the issue. The point is that it strips man of his autonomy and does not take account of the essential truth revealed by divinatory practices - that in the mirroring process of 'above' with 'below' man may choose to seek his 'good fortune' but is never compelled.

One of Ficino's most important points is that the heavens are in a continual state of flux so no assumptions may be held about the similar characters of individuals (he gives Romulus and Hannibal as examples) from single identical aspects - every moment in time will be of a different quality. It seems that Ficino knew about the precession of the equinoxes,(145) for he illustrates his point with the observation that even the fixed constellations move and change sign (one degree in a hundred years), and that it takes 36,000 years for the positions of all heavenly bodies to make an exact return. Appealing to a rational viewpoint, Ficino uses this information to point out that in no way can two people with similar configurations in their horoscopes but born at different times be predictably similar in character. The inevitable partial validity of all judgements according to rules alone is recognised by the wiser astrologers, who do not attempt to make them: "whoever is most learned in astronomy rejects judgements, indeed whoever is most ignorant daily makes them."(146)

We have ample evidence that in practice Ficino seriously studied his own horoscope and those of his friends, and was continually mindful of correlations, significations, retrospective synchronicities and warnings of difficult times. He had no doubt of the constant interplay between material and celestial life ("the fortune of life in the body, I say, greatly follows the current constitution of the heavens");(147) what he stresses here, however, is the impossibility of applying a purely rational analysis of all the ramifications of a fixed "heavenly figure which [the astrologers] fatally determine to each person"(148) in order to make a concrete prediction of particulars. Such astrologers profess to know the contingent through the necessary, an impossible philosophical premiss. Exasperated, Ficino asks "how may the astrologer know what the heavens may

be about to do tomorrow and after ten years, when he himself does not know what he is about to do today?"(149) He is particularly sceptical of their ability to catch the exact moment of birth, and convinced that the moment of infusion of the soul is impossible to determine in quantifiable terms. If the heavens are continually changing, different bodily parts of the baby will emerge at different times, and by the arguments of astrologers should therefore be ruled by different signs. Ficino stresses "it is impossible to understand such particular small parts of time"(150) and that the small, local movement of birth, no matter how accurately measured, cannot in itself give qualitative characteristics to the child. All these arguments of Ficino's lead to the central conviction that human knowledge is too limited to be able to comprehend, in purely quantitative terms, the complexity of factors at play in the 'freezing' of the birth moment - the positions of the heavenly bodies at the moment of conception, the moment of the soul entering the body, the exact time of emergence into light, the interplay of harmonious and inharmonious aspects, the powers of natural and material causes. His argument leads us to understand that the astrological birth moment cannot be regarded as purely 'objective' - it is as much a 'divinatory moment' to be understood symbolically as an interrogation. Ficino does not deny the importance of the ritual of observing the moment, but would object to the assumption that one can 'take up' such a moment according to a rational scientific norm and subject it to a similarly 'scientific' astrological analysis. This would deny the intrinsic coincidence of 'eternal time' in the equation, and prohibit the awesome and humbling intuition of an unknown dimension at work. Many different human tendencies, says Ficino, may stem from a single principle, and many diverse causes may lead to the same effects. Only a superior wisdom to ours, that of God, can know these things, for "the numbers and types of causes are concealed from human wisdom, and experiment errs, and signs deceive" and "all these things certainly embraced together, is the business of divinity."(151)

Having dismissed the false experimentation, illusory opinions and distorted prophecies of the petty astrologers, Ficino reveals how he believes prediction of events may genuinely take place:

"by whatever means, either by a rite about the future, or by some secret method, truths may be told to men, often this happens by chance, especially amongst those who say many

things ... for there are many things in life almost common to all, and happen contingently everywhere daily in many ways: for often either by chance or by skill it seems to be observed to be amplified by a natural, demonic or divine instinct."(152)(my italics)

Ficino himself (during the same period as the composition of the *Disputatio*), with a group of astrologers and philosophers predicted two years of plague, war, famine, deaths of princes and the appearance of a false prophet from particular astrological configurations.(153) That he was not always accurate somewhat ironically confirms his own misgivings, for the dedicatee of *De vita coelitus comparanda*,(154) to whom Ficino predicted a long life, died within a few months.

Ficino distinguishes between three ways of predicting, or rather, three levels of being which each provide for progressively limited contact with divinity and therefore diminishing capacity for unimpeded insight; divine infusion, natural instinct, and art.(155) The first way he describes as "that which happens from a divine cause, is formed by the cult of magic and by connection with daemons and the divining of the spheres."(156) It may occur when the human reason is subjected to the power of the divine mind, as in the rapture of divine frenzy, and is dependent on the receptivity of the individual to the influx of the numinous, which may be attained through magical rites which are a combination of both *divina sorte* and purposeful manipulation. The mediation of daemons was considered rather more dangerous, for it depended on the imagination of the individual being so disordered "that it is aptly affected by a daemon".(157) In their position in the spiritual hierarchy between human and divine levels, such spiritual beings are able to see more clearly; those abiding in the aether have more access to the portents of heaven, those in the lower air partake in earthly affairs and those in the middle, having recourse to both earth and heaven, mediate prophetic insight to man. But as their messages are mediated through the sensory imagination, rather than the intellect, the effects of their interference may be distorted, perpetrating illusory images of divine reality and confusing human understanding of divine portents. Not all daemons wish the human race well - some penetrate the imagination causing visions and dreams, distracting the intellect and selfishly converting it

to their own will, "[moving] the soul by means of illusions towards those things [they wish] to show it."(158)

In the *Disputatio Ficino* echoes St. Augustine's misgivings about such a method of prediction, for when astrologers predict by a "certain very hidden instinct" (*instinctu quodam occultissimo*) they may be misrepresenting the truth and deluding the unknowing minds of their customers. Of most interest to us is Ficino's belief that prediction may occur through the "divining of the spheres", that is, the use of astrology as part of a magical ritual of preparation and purification leading to unification with the divinity and facilitating a penetrating insight into the nature and workings of both the cosmos and the human soul. Natural prediction on the other hand is

"That which is by nature, is assisted by a certain melancholic temperament or tempered at the same time by celestial powers, by which the mind easily composes itself and divines by its own power of prophecy, or by the observation of the heavenly patterns."(159)

When human nature is so harmoniously tempered that it naturally works in accord with universal law, insights may be gained which are prevented by the common condition of mis-alignment of will which results in distorted perception. Such a refinement and purgation of the soul results in its apparent separation from the body and allows prophetic insight via dreams, visions caused by extreme illness and the intense introversion of the melancholic temperament. In the *Theologia Platonica* Ficino suggests that the minds of augurers, diviners, mathematicians (astrologers) and magicians, freed from their bodies, may comprehend past, present and future as one time:

"Thus when the mind of man was wholly separated from his body, he understood every place and every time (as happens amongst the Egyptians). Indeed the mind is naturally like this at all places and times, so that it may consider carefully many very remote things, remember all past time, anticipate the future, and is not forced to move outside itself, but turning inwards by leaving the body, it follows itself completely, either because its nature is omnipresent and eternal, as the Egyptians think, or because when it draws back into its own nature, immediately all things are joined to the divine will, and the limits of times and places are able to be understood."(160)

Since insights into the 'eternal' realm are not easily expressed in the language of the temporal (artistic forms being the most powerful mode of their direct communication), Ficino stresses the difficulty involved in interpreting dreams in everyday speech, and the immense skill and wisdom required to understand the significance of all the details.(161) This is why interpreters are often required, since the quick, intuitive Hermetic gift and the tranquil, profound stirrings of the Saturnian temperament are rarely found in the same person. Choleric and fiery people, says Ficino, need others to interpret their dreams, but melancholics (in which category he firmly placed himself) do not need intermediary interpreters since the things they foresee remain firmly embedded in their memory and are not confused with other more fleeting and less substantial images.(162) Nor is honest prediction solely the province of the learned or skilful man - for the simpler souls often have stronger intuitive gifts than those whose business it is to accumulate knowledge. Here Ficino was speaking from experience, for both his mother and maternal grandmother were 'clairvoyants', his mother Alessandra predicting several exact events through dreams.(163)

Prediction through art is divided into four methods: medicine, physiognomy, *auspiciu*m and astrology. In each case Ficino points out that judgement is very difficult for several reasons; firstly that a man's life is too short to learn all that would be required to make a perfect judgement; secondly that the mind is not always precise and clear at the exact moment when judgement is possible, and may easily misinterpret; thirdly the knowledge gained will often be ambiguous and deceptive in experimental conditions which can never be repeated exactly; lastly that judgement is impaired by the encroaching of both the imagination and the concerns of the body on the clear-sighted intellect.(164) This is the most fallible method of prediction, most reliant on purely human resources, and although beneficially operative in the physical realm through the prognostication of illness from a decumbiture chart, prediction of temperaments from a natal chart or general mundane trends from a solar return chart, or personal strengths and customs from physical characteristics, it will be severely limited if not applied in conjunction with either divine infusion or a natural instinct. But the art of augury through the interpretation of physical phenomena as signs has its place in

the hierarchy - "The person about to divine things from the world must observe from the world", (165) says Ficino, although great caution is needed as human, and even daemonic, vision is necessarily imperfect. Certainly Ficino likens the art of the horary astrologer to that of the diviner, who "shows that all things far and wide can be caught in particular moments" (166) - but this is a practice limited to literal effects in the material world and not to be confused with prophetic insight.

It is clear now that the astrologers who receive the full brunt of Ficino's condemnation are those who are unable to raise themselves from the world of opinion, full of snares and traps, and who rely on their own judgement instead of humbling themselves before a higher authority:

"Avicenna says astrologers are not to be believed because they do not have the full understanding of the whole heavens nor of the natures of lower things necessary to make a judgement, nor do they rely on demonstration, but on a certain experiment or prophecy and on oratorical and poetic trials. For human ingenuity conceals the number and quality of causes, experiments fail, signs deceive." (167)

(Jung sums up Ficino's very conclusion when he warns "We should be careful not to pare down God's omnipotence to the level of our human opinions"). (168) The wise astrologers will be very reluctant to make specific judgements, and here Ficino presents an amusing anecdote concerning a certain "excellent astronomer" Paulus Florentinus, who was unable to find anything in his horoscope which would confer on him longevity, yet he lived to be eighty-five. (169) If they do make accurate pronouncements, it would be due rather to the quality and strength of their soul than any skill at juggling information:

"Hence that astrological judgement from the stars is made not only through their inspection, but also from the nature of he himself who judges. Hence Ptolemy says: judgements of these things are uncertain to he who considers the [material] nature of things and the stars: indeed those who know future things from their superior nature are nearer to the truth on account of the dominant strength of their soul, although they may not have much knowledge derived from skill of this art." (170)

The 'petty ogres' live in a quantitative universe where it is not possible to preserve human free-will. It was abhorrent to Ficino to accept

the determinist proposal that astrologers could certainly foresee human acts for the principal reason that in such clear-cut predictions the infinite challenges of the 'possible' are fatally reduced to the necessary or the impossible, free-will is thus negated and choice denied. On this level, the more unconscious the individual, the more 'predictable' his fate would be, and this tenet negates everything Ficino strove for. "Astrologia non est scientia" says Ficino,(171) because true knowledge of first principles, "of determined and universal and eternal things", (172) can only stem from an inner unity of being, not a set of rules:

"Astrology is not great knowledge, for it is not knowledge, since it always proceeds from effects and indeed from those rarely proved and from greatly removed examples. But because the heavenly things from which it operates are great, it seems great to the small judgement of men."(173)

In a letter, incorporated into the *Disputatio*, entitled *Communis religio non fit a stellis*(174) Ficino gives as an example the simplistic attribution of Christianity to a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, which itself recurs every twenty years.(175) Rather, the great event of the birth of Christ may be signified by such a conjunction, but it would fall to the "experts in astronomy" who are inspired by divine truth and not reliant purely on astrological techniques, to foresee the Christian law through the added gift of prophecy:

"they may be able to distinguish something, since they understand what most powerfully follows out of the various strings of the lyre of the world, either consonant or dissonant, nay rather, if I may speak more truly, they prophesy."(176)

We shall continue in the next chapter with Ficino's appreciation of the psychological value of active imaging, but already in the *Disputatio* we read that astrological images, such as that of the virgin in the first face of Virgo, speak to the imagination and are meaningless fabrications if regarded purely literally.(177) Symbolic astrology can only be validated by those who are able to follow the signs, like the interpretation of a person's will through the observation of his gestures and words.(178) The emphasis Ficino placed on the meaningfulness of this intuitive, irrational, connective vision cannot be too highly stressed. R.J. Stewart in his excellent little book on Prophecy illustrates the process underlying the

use of archetypal patterns, astrological or otherwise, in the Socratic journey to self-knowledge:

"What is important is that any well-balanced pattern, be it simple or complex, will be sufficient to trigger our deeper levels of perception. Any pattern will suffice, providing we work in as honest and disciplined manner as possible ... any set of patterns must be followed through to its ultimate conclusion, which is, paradoxically, liberation from the patterns themselves."(179)

Such insights are achieved through the transmutation of everyday events into a symbolic pattern,

"re-attuning them so that their filtering effect becomes helpful and clarifying, rather than obstructive and obscuring. Only at this stage may we liberate ourselves from the apparent sequence of cause and effect."(180)

Ironically, it is perhaps only through the ability to find hidden meaning in the 'silly similitudes' so abhorrent to the rational mind that this can be achieved, and it is this intention, I believe, which lies behind Ficino's apparent condemnation of astrological procedures. What may seem to be a ridiculous superstition to some is an opportunity for engaging the imagination for others - we can take Ficino on a literal level and accept his criticism of 'scientific' astrology from a rational viewpoint, or we can 'turn around' and look underneath his words to discover his conviction of its value as a framework for irrational, subjective experience. This conviction is nowhere better illustrated than in Ficino's practical system of natural magic which uses astrology and music as the 'patterns' of the most radical transformative potential. But above all, his emphasis lay on the responsibility of the individual to use his imagination profitably - to tune and temper his inner being in order to reach his full potential as an instrument of divine will. It was in this process that astrology, for Ficino, found its most noble application. In a letter to a young member of the Medici family (probably commissioned to accompany Botticelli's *Primavera*)(181) we find a truly inspired testimony to 'humanistic' astrology. Ficino advises the young man to embark on the task of "disposing for himself" celestial things:

"... approach the task with good hope, free-born Lorenzo; far greater than the heavens is He who made you; and you yourself will be greater than the heavens as soon as you

resolve upon the task. For these celestial bodies are not to be sought by us outside in some other place; for the heavens in their entirety are within us, in whom the light of life and the origin of heaven dwell."(182)

Ficino points Lorenzo towards emotional equilibrium using the symbolism of the continual movement of the Moon, which should "avoid the excessive speed of Mars and the tardiness of Saturn" through dealing with each thing as it arises. The Moon should be directed to observe the benefits of Jupiter and of Venus, who signifies the precious nobility of human nature. Ficino warns that men can achieve nothing great on earth unless they first possess themselves, and that "men can be taken by no other bait whatsoever than their own nature." Self-knowledge leads to transcendence of 'fate':

"if by this reasoning you prudently temper within yourself the heavenly signs and the heavenly gifts, you will flee far from the menaces of the fates and without doubt will live a blessed life under divine auspices."(183)

I have attempted to show that Ficino criticised and ridiculed astrological practices not because he considered the framework or techniques *per se* to be worthless, but because he evidently felt that so many practitioners lacked the unity of perception required to penetrate beyond their literal application and understand that they were dealing with an experience which demanded total awareness of their own participation. Such an ability to marry the subjective and objective, eternal and temporal is a "gift of the soul"(184) which supersedes mere rational judgement, an innate *praesagium tibi naturale* that brings us back to the crucial concept of *notio* with which we began this chapter. Determinist prediction deprives the soul of the qualitative depth experienced when the 'eternal' or divine dimension interweaves in everyday events. Instead of encouraging the openness of heart which enables one to fully grasp every moment for its gifts, fatalistic prediction paralyses the very core of human potential by stripping man of his ability to create his own meaning. To live fully in the present, in Ficino's terms, is to make every temporal, sensual experience a contemplative one. "*Laetus in praesens*" was inscribed on the wall of his Academy,(185) a maxim echoed in advice to Giovanni Cavalcanti:

"We must live today, since he who lives for tomorrow never lives. If you desire to live now, live for God, in whom yesterday and tomorrow are nothing else but today."(186)

REFERENCES to Chapter Three

PART ONE: On the Knowledge of Divine Things

1. Pseudo-Ptolemy, *Centiloquium* aphorism 4. See ref.59 below
2. For reference see chapter two part two, ref.6
3. See chapter two p.153
4. *Op. om.* p.1874
5. *ibid.* p.1874
6. For an explanation of Platonic thought in relation to the psychological implications of the four elements, see Jung 'A Psychological Approach to the Trinity' in *Psychology and Western Religion* pp.177-193
7. *Op. om.* p.1874
:Esse nostrum, est Deum cognoscere, quia praecipuum esse animae, est intellectus suus, in quo idem est esse quod intelligere divina actu perpetuo.
8. *ibid.* p.1875:
Intellectus omnium opifex adest semper omnibus diis plenissime per actum unum in seipso manentem.
9. *ibid.* p.817:
Age iam mentem, Ferdinande, tuam in se ipsam, relictis sensibus, circulari quadam sui ipsius animadversione reflecte. Videbis protinus mentem tuam quando in seipsam, demisso corpore flectitur, esse incorpoream quandam sphaeram, cuius circumferentia quidem, id est, intelligentia et voluntas per incorporea voluitur. Centrum vero, id est, vita atque substantia, corporis alicuius cardini non innititur.
10. *ibid.* p.1874:
Non possumus solitis humanum rationis discursionibus attingere deorum pedissequos daemones, heroes, animos puros.
11. See Plato, *Republic* 484b. He distinguishes between the philosophers, who are able to perceive eternal and unchanging things, and others who "lose themselves and wander amid the multiplicities of multifarious things."
12. *Op. om.* p.1874:
acquiritur autem in rationali potentia studio quodam, nec tam comparationis, et coniecturae, quam separationi, et purificationis officio.
13. Ficino, *Liber de Sole*, *Op. om.* pp.965-975

14. *Op.om.* p.965:
librum hunc allegoricam et anagogicum esse potius quam
dogmaticum.
15. *ibid.* p.965:
Ab hoc igitur nos ad illam non tam rationibus in
praesentia, quam comparationibus quibusdam deductis ex
lumine, pro viribus accedemus.
16. *ibid.* p.966:
Quamobrem ubi multas supra coelum mentes angelicas
quasi luces, earumque ordinem et invirem, et ad unum
Deum patrem luminum asseverare studes, quidnam tibi
longis investigationum amabagibus opus erit? Coelum
suspice precor coelestis patriae civis ...
17. See Plato, *Republic* 507c-511e
18. *Op.om.* p.971:
tu certam similiter quantitatem sed interea cum luce
relinque virtutem, ut supersit lumen ipsum mirifica
virtute refertum, nec quantitate certa, nec figura
aliqua definitum, ideoque immensum imaginatione spatium
sua circum praesentia tangens. Ita nunc excedens
intelligentiam, sicut in seipso nunc exuperat aciem
oculorum. Hac ferme ratione Deum ... ac Sole pro
viribus invenisse videberis.
19. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* para.226
20. *Op.om.* p.1882, *De virtute sacramentorum*
21. *ibid.*:
Universales enim causae a particularibus effectibus non
moventur: unde nec ab intelligentiis nostris divina
principaliter moventur ad operandum, sed intelligentias
et affectionem optimam, puritatemque praecedere
necessarium est, tanquam con causas quasdam. Quae vero
principaliter divinam provocant voluntatem, ipsa sunt
sacramenta divina: atque ita divina a seipsis
incitantur neque ab ullo subdito principium actionis
accipiunt.
22. *ibid.*:
Nam nec etiam si noverimus, quae genus quodlibet
proprie consequuntur, subito consequimur ipsam eorum in
opere veritatem.
23. *ibid.*:
..sed super cognitionem unita est, et purificata
puritas id est, per potestatem cognitione superiorem.
24. *ibid.*: Deus autem vim efficacem imprimit.
25. Ficino, *Liber de vita* III.21.47. See ch.4 pp.283-4

26. *Op. om.* p.1876:
 Quando dii varias mundi partes urbes, aedes, statuas proprie sortiri dicuntur: intellige essentiam potentiamque illorum ubique in se vigentem, hoc aut illud potissimum illustrare, atque sicut lumen in se manens, sine mixtione divioneque sui diversa passim illuminat, ita dii.
27. *ibid.*
28. *ibid.:*
 Unde perficit omnia unitque cum extremis extrema, per media comprehendens in se omnia, et se ad sic reflectens sibi prorsus unitum. Quod quidem munus imitatur et mundus circulari motu, partiumque in unum connexionem, et conciliationem quadam transferente elementa vicissim in elementa, atque virtute superiorum ad inferiora mittente.
29. *ibid.:*
 vereri debet omnino de diis mundi causis aliena sentire.
30. *ibid.:*
 Si nonnulla est communio mundi ad numina quo ad essentia, vim, actionem spectat, nullaque condistributio, vel consortium, nulla nimirum nec coextensio, et condistributio secundum locum, atque determinans quantum ad illud pertinet, specie vel genere cogitato sunt, mutua comprehensio, et permixtio esse potest. Quae vero si totius omnino differunt, reciprocam inter si condistributionem, vel mixtionem, vel comprehensionem nullam prorsus admittunt.
31. *ibid.:*
 Certis namque materiis, invocationibusque munera deorum naturaliter attrahuntur.
32. Eugenio Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance* p.74
33. Isidori Hispaniensis Episcopi, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, lib.3 (XXVII):
 Inter Astronomiam autem et Astrologiam aliquid differt. Nam Astronomia caeli conversionem, ortus, obitus motusque siderum continet, vel qua ex causa ita vocentur. Astrologia vero partim naturalis, partim superstitiosa est. Naturalis, dum exequitur solis et lunae cursus, vel stellarum certas temporum stationes. Superstitiosa vero est illa quam mathematici sequuntur, qui in stellis auguriantur, quique etiam duodecim caeli signa per singula animae vel corporis membra disponunt, siderumque cursu nativitates hominum et mores praedicare conantur.
34. Ficino, *De amore* VI.11, Jayne pp.12-13, *Op. om.* pp.1349-50:
 Quinetiam quod mirabilius est, scientiae quoque non

solum aliae evanescent, aliae surgunt, neque semper
secundum scientias idem sumus, verumetiam una quaevis
scientiarum ferme idem paritur.

35. Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* p.310
36. See Eugenio Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance* pp.28-96, on Pico pp.78-96. This reference, p.61. See Pico's *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem*
37. See Plato, *Epinomis*: science and religion are united by number. See chapter one, pp.34-40.
38. Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance* p.93
39. Ficino, letter to Poliziano *Quid sentiat de astrologia*; *Op.om.* p.958. This letter can be interpreted as a warning to Poliziano that his life may be in danger. "You have known about these omens of the astrologers for a long time now" says Ficino, and urges his friend to overcome them with the strength of Hercules. He ends "Meanwhile on earth live a long time." In his reply (*Supp.Fic.II* pp.278-9) Poliziano acknowledges the presence of "evil and envious people" who appear to be a cause for some anxiety, and thanks Ficino for his love and concern.
40. Manilius, *Astronomica*, Rome 1st c.AD. For modern edition see *Astronomica* trans. G.P. Goold
41. Ptolemy, (c.100-78 A.D.) *Tetrabiblos* (150 A.D.), trans. F.E. Robbins
42. G. Cornelius 'The Moment of Astrology' pt.III
43. *ibid.* part I p.98
44. For a succinct presentation of Aristotle's theories of causation, see J. Barnes, *Aristotle* pp.51-7
45. Ptolemy. *Tetrabiblos* I.2.1
46. *ibid.* III.1.103-4
47. *ibid.* I.2.6
48. *ibid.* III.1.107
49. *ibid.* III.1.107
50. Of interest here is the motto of the most famous of English astrologers, William Lilly, whose frontispiece to *Christian Astrology* pronounces definitively "non cogunt" - the stars do not compel.
51. Coluccio Salutati, *De fato, fortuna e casu* quoted in Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance* p.33
52. David Pingree, 'Astrology' in *Religion, Learning and Science in the 'Abbasid Period* pp.290-300. This reference p.291

53. Richard Lemay, 'The True Place of Astrology in Medieval Science and Philosophy' p.70
54. This text is the *Apocalypse of Daniel*, preserved in a Greek translation by Alexius of Byzantium in 1245 AD "who reports that the Arabic text that he translates was turned into that language from a manuscript discovered by Mu awiyah (reigned 661-80) in the course of his campaign in the environs of Constantinople during the reign of Constans II (reigned AD 641-68)." (Pingree, 'Astrology' p.291)
55. Ficino would appear to refer to this work in his references to Messalac and Zahel (Masha'allah and Zael) in his *Disputatio contra iudicium astrologorum*, *Supp.Fic.II* pp.39,60
56. Masha'allah b. Athari al-Basari. Extant works survive in Latin, Hebrew and Persian. His book on genethliology, *Kitab al-Mawalid al-kabir* survives in Latin translation by Hugo of Santalla, 1141-51. See Pingree, 'Astrology' p.294
57. From the Latin text (1509 edition), translation runs:
 Of everything which has its being and, once created,
 flourishes beneath the orbit of the Moon, God the
 creator of worldly substance included in a six-fold
 order certain universal groupings of equal distinction
 ...
 Francis Carmody (*Arabic Astronomical and Astrological Sciences in Latin Translation: A Critical Bibliography*) p.108 mentions that "the many important variant readings [of this text] indicate that the editions are very corrupt and unreliable for detail." See Carmody pp.107-112 for details of sources and variants. The *Liber novem iudicium* was published twice anonymously in the 15th century.
58. Pingree, 'Astrology' p.293
59. *ibid.* p.298; Lemay, 'The True Place of Astrology' p.70. See also Lemay, 'Origin and Success of the *Kitab at-Tamara, Liber Fructus...*'
60. The two 12th century translators of Albumasar's *Introductorium in Astronomiam* were John of Seville (1133) and Hermann of Carinthia (c.1140). See Charles Burnett, 'Hermann of Carinthia and his Arabic sources'; Carmody, *Arabic Astronomical and Astrological Sciences* pp.88-91 (he calls Albumasar's work "one of the basic technical sources of Latin scientific literature" p.88); Lemay *Abu Ma'shar and Latin Aristotelianism in the twelfth century*. For information on Albumasar and his ideas I rely on Lemay.
61. *Supp.Fic.II* p.77. Other references to Albumasar: pp.32,33,36,38,39, 41,42,43,44,60,62. In the *Liber de vita* he is mentioned at 3.VI.79, 3.XVIII.8, 3.XXII.54
62. Lemay *Abu Mash'ar and Latin Aristotelianism* p.54
63. *ibid.* p.49
64. *ibid.* p.50

65. Al-Kindi, *De radiis* Baghdad 9th century. The edition by M.-T. d'Alverny and F. Hudry is of an anonymous Latin translation, the only one extant. The original Arabic text has not been discovered.
66. See Ficino, *Liber de vita* 3.XXI.15. Carol Kaske draws attention to the similarity between Al-Kindi's and Ficino's chapter headings (3.XXI note 3 p.453)
67. *De radiis*, d'Alverny & Hudry edition p.141
68. *ibid.* p.143
69. Ficino, *Liber de vita* III.21
70. *De radiis* ch.6: 'De virtute verborum'
71. *ibid.* chs.7-9
72. *ibid.* ch.6, d'Alverny & Hudry pp.236-7:
 Cum autem in aliqua voce concurrunt impositio
 significationis ab armonia facta et ab hominibus,
 geminatur virtus significationis illius vocis. Si enim
 hoc nomen, homo, ab armonica dispositione haberet
 significationem hominis, sicut habet ab impositione
 hominum latinorum, operaretur suis radiis in materiam
 cum fuerit prolatum virtute duplici, scilicet naturali
 et accidentali, et sic fortius surgeret in effectum, et
 idem est de omnibus aliis.
73. Haly Albohazen (1016-40) the son of Abenragel wrote *De iudiciis astrorum*. See Kaske, *Ficino, Three books on life* p.412, 1.IV note 1.
74. Ficino mentions Al-Kindi at *Liber de vita* 3.XXI.15; Haly Abenrudian at 2.XVIII.142; 2.XX.23; 3.XIII.4,13; 3.XVIII.183; Haly Albohazen at 3.VI.159; 3.XVIII.183; 'Arabes' at 1.XX.24; 3.II.14,89; 3.XXII.51,59; 3.III.23; 3.XII.36; 3.XVIII.18; 3.XX.21,36.
75. See Yates, *Giordano Bruno* pp.49-58
76. For a critical edition of the Latin version of *Picatrix* see David Pingree, (ed.) *Picatrix, the Latin version of the 'Ghayat al-Hakim'*. The treatise was translated into Latin from a Spanish intermediary translation, renamed *Picatrix* in 1256 at the court of Alfonso el Sabio and has been the most comprehensive work on astral magic available in Western Europe. See also Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance* pp.46-55; Yates, *Giordano Bruno* pp.49-56
77. Ficino, *Liber de vita* 3.XX.36
78. See Lemay, 'The True Place of Astrology' p.72
77. There is so much work still to be done on the original texts of Arabic astrological treatises that at this stage it is impossible to have a clear understanding of the main differences between their mode of thought and their Latin interpretations.

PART TWO: Ficino and Determinism

1. Ficino, *De amore* VI.10. Jayne p.127, *Op.om.* p.1438. See chapter four pp.268-9 and part one ref.67
2. *Supp.Fic.*II pp.87-8
3. *ibid.* p.87:
Exaudi nostras Cosme preces vitamque quietam pio iuveni tribue.
4. *ibid.* p.87-8:
Eundem ipse quoque hymnum cum paucis ante diebus ritu Orphico ad Cosmum celebrassem, extemplo ad me genitoris mei littere perferuntur, quibus certiore eddit quam prudenter Cosmus Medices vite mee saluberrimus medicus studiis meis consuluerit, quam benigne providerit, quam humaniter faverit, quam hospitaliter atque pie me sacris suis in laribus exceperit. Qua de re contigit ut non modo magnificentiam tuam, que quidem in nos ingentissima extitit ad te retulisse videtur hymnum quem Cosmo sacravit, pro me vero rogasse que in orationis calce rogavit. Tu autem celesti quodam afflatus instinctu exaudisse videris eo ipso tempore quo a nobis relatus est hymnus atque eadem que votum obsecrat tradidisse.
5. Ficino, Preface to Commentary on Plotinus, *Op.om.* pp.1537-1538:
Divinitus profecto videtur effectu, ut dum Plato, quasirena sceretur, natus Picus heros sub Saturno Aquariu postdente: sub quo et ego similiter anno prius trigesimo natus suera ac peruenies Florentia, quo die Plato noster est editus, antiquum illud de Plotino herois Cosmi uotu mihi prorsus occultu, sed sibi caelitus inspiratu, inde et mihi mirabiliter inspira verit.
6. *ibid.* p.901
7. e.g. *ibid.* pp.888-9, letter to Pico
Sed nonne et magnum aliquid fore decreuit Platoniorum documentorum copula ab initio supernus ille Saturn, in natali utriusque figura dominus.
8. Ficino, *Letters* vol.2 p.11, *Op.om.* p.724
9. *ibid.* pp.15-16, *Op.om.* p.726
10. *Op.om.* p.831:
Solemus enim saepe praedictionibus nostris mala vel procul futura anticipare dui, vel interdum fingere non futura.
11. *ibid.* p.857:
...sed neque mala ominari iuvat, neque his multum decet credere.

12. See for example, *Letters* vol.1 pp.125-6, 196; vol.2 p.30; vol.3 pp.32-3; vol.4 pp.52-3; *Op. om.* pp. 886,889-90,894-5,919,948,951,892,918. Ficino describes his own horoscope vol.2 pp.31-4 (*Op. om.* pp.752-3) and *Op. om.* p.901
13. Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance* p.67
14. *Letters* vol.3 pp.63-4, *Op. om.* p.776:
 Compono librum de providentia Dei et humani arbitrius libertate. In quo agitur contra astrorum necessitatem fatumque Astrologorum.
 Ficino's *Disputatio*, composed in 1477 was, for whatever reason, left unpublished. It is found in *Supp.Fic.II* pp.11-76
15. *Letters* vol.3 pp.63-4, *Op. om.* p.776:
 Hac potissimum ratione philosophor, ut quando quidem res ipsae aliter voluntate non sequuntur meam, ego saltem voluntate res sequar, sic enim voluntati sequenti res obsequuntus...At vero dixerit forte quispiam, fatui esse contra inexpugnabile fatum velle pugnare. Ego vero respondeo, tam facile posse hoc impugnari, ut quando quispiam impugna re voluerit, tunc primum eo ipso quod uult expugnet. Nempe coelestium sphaerarum motus nunquam altius mentem attollere potest, quam ad sphaeras. Nunc vero qui disputat contra illas eas iam transcendisse videtur. Atque ad ipsum Deum liberumque voluntatis arbitrium accessisse..
 .Praeterea cum actio quaelibet adversaria, et ut ita dixerim, peremptoria a contrario quodam in contrarium procedere soleat, nemo audeat confiteri voluntatem ipsam disputationemque fictae violentiae syderum repugnantem a syderum violentia proficisci, imo ab ipsamet providentia libertateque manare intelligamus, cuius gratia dixerimus contra fatum.
16. *ibid.* p.75, *Op. om.* p.781:
 Librum scripsi contra vana Astrologorum iudicia...
17. *ibid.*:
 Denique si fata vitari non possunt, frustra praevidentur et praedicuntur...
18. *ibid.*:
 At qui si diligentius rem ipsam consideremus, non tam fatis ipsis, quam fatuis fatorum assertoribus agimur. Non cedetis mihi credite fatis, si fatuis non credetis, qui obscuris non vera...sed falsa involunt.
19. *ibid.* p.76:
 Sed qui tam superbe ad superos ascendere moliuntur, miserabiliter praecipitabuntur ad infernos.
20. *ibid.* p.76 *Op. om.* p.782:
 Ut postque de divinatoribus non divinis, sed valde profanis, qui tamdiu suis non prestigius mancipant triumphaverimus, libere tamen clamare possimus.

21. *Op. om.* p.1609
22. *Letters* vol.3 p.48, *Op. om.* p.771:
 ...in quo illa Astrologorum iudicia, quae providentiae libertatique detrahunt...
23. *ibid.*:
 Nempe quam diligenter coelestia vere metiuntur
 Astronomi, tam multum circa humana inanes Astrologi
 mentiuntur.
24. See Trinkaus, *In our Image and Likeness* p.481
25. *ibid.* p.471
26. *Op. om.* pp.1905-6:
 Ergo vero censeo primum quidem haberi posse per divinum vaticiniu veritatem certissimam circa stellas: nec nos omnino regularum dinumeratione, nec artificiosis praedicationibus indigere: et insuper addo, te non penitus impossibilem inde notitia demonstrare quantum ad mathematicam scientiam pertinet, quod diversae inter illos seruntur opiniones quodue Cheremon and quibus alius contradicit...Astronomia, et aliae artes quondam a diis datae longo tempore humanis opinionibus confunduntur, exiguumque divinitatis, et veritatis denique retinet...Ergo est impossibile iudicare certos eventus, cum omnium causarum concursum comprehendere nequeamus, nisi per inspirationem divinam id assequamur.
27. See Ficino, *Theologia Platonica XIII.2*, *Op. om.* pp.289-90 (trans. Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance* p.71):
 Ergo iis quasi tribus rudentibus toti machinae colligamur, mente mentibus, idolo idolis, natura naturis, non aliter ac foetus in alio toti corpori materno per continuata lligamenta connectitur, unde et animae maternae, et corporis, et spiritus materni ipse quoque per animam suam corpus et spiritum percipit passiones. Anima igitur permentem est supra fatum, in solo providentiae ordine tanquam superna imitans, et inferiora una cum illis gubernans. Ipsa enim tanquam providentiae particeps, ad divinae gubernationis exemplar regit se, domum, civitatem, artes et animalia. Per idolum est in ordine fati similiter, non sub fato. Siquidem animae nostrae idolum, natura sua cum supernis idolis concurrit ad formandum corpus atque movendum. Per naturam quidem corpus est sub fato, anima in fato naturam movet. Itaque mens super fatum in providentia est, idolum in fato super naturam, natura sub fato, supra corpus. Sic anima in providentia fati, naturae, legibus, non ut patiens modo ponitur, sed et ut agens.
28. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* para.309
29. *Op. om.* p.1682

30. *ibid.*:
 cuius quidem usu quae in phantasiam inciderunt
 examinans, siquidem examinando probat, phantasiae
 concedit, atque ad agendum deinde movetur.
31. *Supp.Fic.II* p.29:
 Nihil nobis incommodi contingit, quin manifestam et
 sufficientem apud nos causam reperiamus.
32. Jung, *Psychology and Western Religion* para.291
33. Ficino, *Theologia Platonica XIII.2*, *Op.om.*p.291 (trans. Garin,
Astrology in the Renaissance p.72):
 Summatim his saepe pulsamur affectibus long ordine a
 naturis universalibus per propriam in nos
 descendentibus, et unde nobis ingerantur, penitus
 ignoramus.
 See also quotation from *Op.om.* p.289, ref.79 below
34. Liz Greene, *The Astrology of Fate* p.34
35. See *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* pp.641-9, Trinkaus,
In our Image and Likeness pp.761-74
36. Trinkaus, *In our Image and Likeness* pp.768-9
37. *ibid.* p.771
38. *Supp.Fic.II* pp.169-72, see Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio
 Ficino* pp.297-300
39. *ibid.* p.171:
 questa substantia circularmente da se principiando in
 se finisce, e tutti i movimenti per circolo ritornono
 al centro donde si mossono alla circonferentia ... Et
 perche intra l'agente et patiente debbe essere conforme
 proportione, la natura muove quello che in noi è
 naturale, et il principio della natura muove quello che
 in noi è vitale et intellettuale et boniforme.
40. *Supp.Fic.II* p.72
41. *ibid.* p.73
42. See chapter two pp.124,129
43. *Supp.Fic.II* p.171:
 Sicchè quello che per rispetto di noi si chiama fortuna
 et caso, so può chiamare fato rispetto della natura
 universale et providentia rispetto del principio
 intellettuale et regola per rispetto del sommo bene.
44. *ibid.* p.172:
 conformando la volontà nostra colla sua et andare
 volentieri dove ella accenna, acciocchè per forza non
 tiri.

On Jung and free-will, see particularly *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* para.379, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* para.87

45. *Letters* vol.3 p.13, *Op.om.* p.755:
Quid sortem nostram fortunamque deflemus? quid mutare fortunam temere cogitamus? quid flectere fatum? muta precor hunc anima ludum, tuam hanc figuram verte. Sic enim fortunam mutaveris fatumque flexeris, et mundi ipsius figuram in melius tibi subito verteris.
46. *ibid.* vol.2 p.24, *Op.om.* p.729:
Profecto putamus Authori et stellas, et hominum mentes iis solis adversus esse, qui haec perversamente interpretantur.
47. *Letters* vol.1 pp.94-5, *Op.om.* p.633
48. *ibid.* p.95:
... nec in mentem nostram fati vis penetrat, nisi ipse sua sponte prius in corpus fato subiectum immiserit. Nemo igitur adeo consilio suo viribusque confidat, ut morbos corporis, rerumque iacturas, devitare omnino posse se speret. Recipiat a corporis peste seipsum animus quisque, et in mentem suam se colligat, tunc enim vim suam fortuna explebit in corpore, in animum non transibit. Non pugnabit incassum vir sapiens contra fatum, se fugiendo potius repugnabit. Fugari non possunt adversa, sed fugi. Igitur hinc illuc, id est, ab amore corporis externarumque rerum cura ad animi denique cultum aufugere a Platone iubemur, aliter enim mala declinari non possunt.
49. Ficino *Theol.Plat.* X.2, *Op.om.* p.224 (trans. Trinkaus *In our Image and Likeness* p. 478):
Sed numquid humanum corpus ea est dignitate donatum ut mentem perpetuam excipere hospitem mereatur?
Proculdubio.
50. See for example, *Liber de vita* 2.XV.56; 2.XVI.35; 3.XXV.22; *De amore* VII.3,4,6,7
51. James Hillman, *Revisioning Psychology* p.255
52. *Letters* vol.2 p.68, *Op.om.* p.745; see chapter one part two, ref.57
53. Ficino, *Prooemium, Theol.Plat., Op.om.* p.78 (trans. Trinkaus, *In our Image and Likeness* p.465):
... in quibus universa consistit rerum perceptio et omnis institutio vitae totaque felicitas.
54. *Letters* vol.3 p.15, *Op.om.* p.756. See chapter one part two, ref.58
55. *Op.om.* p.1904 *De libero arbitrio et quomodo solvamus a fato*
56. *ibid.*:
Quando enim praestantiora eorum, quae nobis insunt,

agunt, et ad praestantiora sui ipsius anima revocatur,
tunc ab illis, quae eam in generatione devinciunt,
penitus segregatur...

57. *ibid.* pp.1-77
58. Ficino, *De Christiana religione, Op.om.* p.1 (trans. Trinkaus *In our Image and Likeness* p.735):
Nam cum animus ut Platoni nostro placet duabus tantum aliis (id est intellectu et voluntate) possit ad caelestem Patrem et patriam revolare ac philosophus intellectu maxime, sacerdos voluntate nitabit, et intellectus voluntatem illuminet, voluntas intellectum accendat.
59. *Letters vol.1* p.95, *Op.om.* p.633:
Prudentia, iustitia, sancitate. Prudentia quid Deo, quid mundo debeamus agnoscit, iustitia quod suum est mundo, sanctitas Deo quod suum est, tribuit. Itaque vir prudens corpus quidem suum mundi membrum, mundi ipsius revolutioni concedit, quocumque contigerit agitandum.
60. *Supp.Fic.II* p.14:
bonum ipsum ordinis universi est partis cuiuslibet qualitate praestantius.
61. *ibid.* p.21
62. *Op.om.* p.802, see Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* p.299
63. *Supp.Fic.II* p.12
64. *Letters vol.4* pp.17-18, *Op.om.* pp.788-9:
Quod nisi patiare libens, omnino patieris invites, et nisi te duci permisseris, traheris violentius et raptabere.
65. *ibid.:*
Patientia vero vel sola, vel maxime omnium expugnat fatum, quae enim fatum immutabilia necessariaque fore decrevit, patientia cum divinae providentiae voluntate consentiens, ita quodammodo mutat ut ex necessariis faciat voluntaria, sicut qui male agit, bona sibi convertit in malum, ita qui bene patitur mala sibi vertit in bonum, nempe in perferendis malis ipse bonus evadit ... Ergo Salvine mi, fortunam vince se tendo et ut alia vincas, (sicut coepisti) vince te ipsum.
66. Aniela Jaffé, *The myth of meaning* p.56
67. Ficino, *Theol.Plat. XIII.2, Op.om.* p.296 (trans. Trinkaus *Image and Likeness* p.483):
Caelisti virtute ascendit caelum atque metitur.
Supercaelesti mente transcendit caelum.

68. Plato, Republic IV 439-40, Phaedrus 246-57
69. Ficino, *Theol.Plat.* XIII.2, *Op.om.* pp.295-98. See Trinkaus, *Image and Likeness* p.476
70. *Op.om.* p.1368:
 Circuitus autem intelligentie velocissimus similis diurno firmamenti totiusque celestis machine motui. Circuitus rationis tardior similis est motibus planetarum: universalior quidem magisque practicus Marti, Veneri, Mercurio, Lune; imaginationis nature revolutioni aeris atque acque.
 (translation in M. Allen, *Marsilio Ficino and the Phaedran Charioteer* pp.100-1)
71. *Op.om.* p.1549, *Liber de vita* 3.XXII
72. *Supp.Fic.* II p.23
73. *ibid.* p.23:
 Unde media inter eternitatem et tempus esse videtur, partim eterna partim etiam temporalis, media inter naturalia et divina.
74. *ibid.* p.69
75. *ibid.* p.24:
 Si quis autem dixerit consilii motum ab astris, quorum determinata natura est, impelli, hic ipsam auferet consilii rationem, que in ampla quadam et soluta et libera ad omnes partes motione versatur, et pro consilio angustum quendam inducet instinctum.
76. Ficino *Theol.Plat.* XIII.2, *Op.om.* p.290 (trans. Trinkaus *Image and Likeness* p.477):
 Verum ratio interponitur, vis quaedam verarum propria animarum, per quam in universali conceptu a principiis rerum ad conclusiones temporali successione discurrunt effectus resolvunt in causas, causas iterum in effectus deducunt, discurrunt etiam conceptu particulari ad discursionis universalis exemplar.
77. *ibid.* (trans. Trinkaus *Image and Likeness* p.477):
 Per idolum est in ordine fati similiter, non sub fato ... Sic anima in providentiae, fati, naturae legibus, non ut patiens modo ponitur, sed ut agens ... Cum vero ex tribus illis partibus astringamur partim rerum ordini, partim non astringamur, ex quarta praecipue solvimur nostrique sumus omnino. Haec ratio est, quam inter mentem animae caput et idolum animae pedem mediam collocamus.
78. *ibid.* *Op.om.* p.289 (trans. Trinkaus *Image and Likeness* p.477):
 quasi quoddam vestigium animae in corpore, sive umbram

79. *ibid.* (trans: Trinkaus *Image and Likeness* p.477)
 omnes mentes tanquam lumina ad unam mentem tanquam
 lumen, omnia animarum idola et simulachra ad unum
 universalis animae idolum, omnes naturae corporum,
 quasi animarum umbrae, proprie ad communem naturam
 unius corporis, quasi umbram unius animae reducantur.
 Anima nostra per caput suum id est, mentem,
 superioribus mentibus rectitur, per vim infimam, id
 est, superiorum conspirat, per naturam corporis sui,
 cui idolum se insinuat, conciliatur naturis corporum
 mundanorum, quas natura huius corporis sequitur.
80. *ibid.* *Op. om.* p.290 (trans. Trinkaus *Image and Likeness* p.477):
 Quandoque ratio menti cohaeret, ubi surgit in
 providentiam, quandoque idolo obsequitur et naturae,
 ubi fatum suo quodam subit amore, dum sensibus confisa
 huc et illuc rerum sensibilibus occursum distrahitur ..
81. *ibid.* XIII.3, *Op. om.* p.296 (trans. Trinkaus *Image and Likeness* p.483):
 In quibus componendis saepe nullum corporis respicit
 commodum, nullum sensuum blandimentum, cum aliquando
 sponte ex iis incommodum et molestiam patitur, sed
 fecundae suae amplificationem approbationemque
 virtutis.
82. See Jung, *Psychological Types* XI paras.814-29
83. Ficino, *Theol. Plat.* XIII.3, *Op. om.* p.296; see Trinkaus *Image and Likeness* pp.482-4
84. *ibid.* (trans. Trinkaus *Image and Likeness* p.483):
 Non solum ad corporis necessitatem noster animus
 respicit, sicut bestiae naturae imperio mancipatae, sed
 ad oblectamenta sensuum varia, quasi quaedam pabula
 phantasiae ... Atque non modo elementis, verumetiam
 elementorum animalibus utitur omnibus, terrenis,
 aquatilibus, volatilibus ad escam, commoditatem et
 voluptatem, supernis caelestibusque ad doctrinam
 magicaeque miracula.
85. See Marie-Louise von Franz, *Active Alchemical Imagination*
86. *Op. om.* p.1682:
 non semper inevitabiliter ... Permutari enim et
 impediri posse, tum naturis inferioribus abilitate, et
 ordine coelitus inchoato.
87. *ibid.* p.1682
88. *Supp. Fic. II.* p.19:
 uterque fatetur prudentis et medici consilio auxilioque
 posse multa celitus proventura vitari.
89. *ibid.* p.28:
 ...ita ut possit inclinationem celitus in corpus
 venientem admictere vel reicere.

90. *Op. om.* p.1609
91. *Supp. Fic. II* pp.28,31; see also *Liber de vita III.XXI* on Ficino's rules for composing astrological music, which must take all these factors into account.
92. *Op. om.* pp.871-2, see R. Marcel Marsile *Ficin* p.586
93. *Op. om.* p.872:
 Tu quoque si Epistolam nostram de Magorum stella et similem in Theologia nostra disputationem, item Plotini libros hac ipsa de re tractantes, quos et traduximus, diligentissime legeris, plane intelliges officia publici boni ad animos pertinentia, dependere quidem praecipue velut a communibus primisque causis a supernis mentibus Dei summi ministris, proficisci etiam quodammodo tanque a causis propriis atque ultimis, ab humanis consiliis, ubi se supernis accomodant. Significari autem a figuris motibusque coelestibus, velut divinarum mentium instrumentis. Disces praeterea fatum, id est, coelestium feriem causarum providentiae divinae servire. Animos vero nostros tunc maxime liberos iudicari, quando maxime cum divina voluntate consentiunt.
94. Ficino, *Theol. Plat. XIII.2*, *Op. om.* p.288 (trans Trinkaus *Image and Likeness* p.476):
 Tres rerum ordines ad humanum animam pertinere videntur: providentia, fatum, natura. Providentia est series mentium, fatum series animarum, natura series corporum.
95. Liz Greene, *The Astrology of Fate* p.281
96. *Supp. Fic. II* pp.44-5:
 ... prout dissolutio illius est huius composition, et incommodum unius vel paucorum fit multorum commodum.
97. See Letter to Pope Sixtus, *Op. om.* pp.813-4; in this letter Ficino recounts how he and three others "equally devoted to both prophecy and astrology" considered the implications of a series of miracles which took place at Volterra and of disastrous forthcoming astrological transits, from which terrible famine and war were predicted. The purpose of the letter was to equate the power of Sixtus (signified by the miracles) to "tame fierce Mars and stern Saturn by his benevolence" with that of Divine Providence, which will always overcome fate. The malevolent planetary influences, says Ficino, were providential in that they allowed Sixtus to show his true colours and overcome his enemies - as the miracles signified he would.
98. See Aristotle, *On the Heavens III.1*, *On Generation and Corruption II.10*
99. Ficino, *Theol. Plat. XIII.2*, *Op. om.* p.291 (trans. Trinkaus *Image and Likeness* pp.480-1):
 Quando mentium ille influxus rationem nostram sortitur otiosam sive menti vacantem, ipsi aliquid ostendi

eorum, quae ad universalem aeternarum rerum cognitionem seu mundi gubernationem pertinent, ut vel Dei legem et ordines angelorum vel saeculorum restitutiones et regnorum mutationes praevideat. Quando idolorum naturarumque instinctus rationem omnino et phantasiam offendit vacuam, aliquid sibi portendit eorum quae ad temporum vicissitudines elementorumque turbationes attinent, ut futuram praevideat pluviam, terrae motus atque similia.

100. *ibid.*, *Op. om.* p.293 (trans. Trinkaus, *Image and Likeness* p.481):
... horum animus in vigilia vacat prae caeteris, vacat in somnis omnino. Quapropter supernus impulsus ab eo facile animadvertitur.

101. See Trinkaus, *Image and Likeness* p.487

102. *Op. om.* p.1609:

In primo igitur capite narrat, quemadmodum Astrologi, non omnes inquam, sed multi putant auribus moribusque stellarum et significari, et fieri singula, tum ad externa, tum ad corpus, tum ad animum actionesque animi pertineatur, siue bona honestaque sint, siue mala rursus et turpia. Tu vero memento non actores quidem ipsos Astrologiae praecipuos haec tradere, sed plebeios quosdam Astrologos, Astronomiae prorsus ignaros, talia divulgare.

103. *Op. om.* p.159, in Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* pp.217-8:

Resipiscant igitur quandoque minuti Philosophi, qui sensuum indicio freti, incorporalem divinamque esse animam cogitare non possunt.

104. *Op. om.* p.159:

Puri fiant, et pura percipient. Experiantur aliquando in seipsis, possunt enim modo velint, quod iam diu in universo desiderant, percipiunt ...Socraticamque mox sententia re ipsa probabunt...atque unicam ad incorporea non attingenda solum, sed etiam possidenda usam esse, seipsum videlicet incorporeum redere.

105. *Supp. Fic. II* p.39

106. *ibid.* p.26:

...Intrant ad mathematicum ut emanent sibi dominos, quos mathematico dare placuerit, vel Saturnum vel Jovem vel Mercurium. Intravit liber, ut datis nummis servus exiret.

107. *ibid.* p.34

108. *ibid.* p.47:

Dicendum est potius celum animalibus istis dare aliquid quam ab ipsis accipere.

109. *ibid.* p.38
110. *ibid.* p.39
111. *ibid.* p.42
112. *ibid.* p.41:
Ergo significat vitam et mortem quod rationi repugnat.
113. *ibid.* p.43:
Totum hoc poetica metaphora est, non ratio vel scientia.
114. *Op.om.* p.1622:
Proinde quod Plotinus, et Origenes aiunt, futurorum quasi literas in coelo, vel scriptas esse ab initio, paulatimque explicari, vel perpetuo scribi, intelligunt stellas, figurasque tum consecras ex stellis, tum imaginarias: Item signorum gradus paresque minutas: denique Planetarum aspectus et motus, et quae consequuntur haec ubilibet, vel comitantur. Tu vero coetum hic intellige universum. Est enim ubique coelum: ... Supra Lunam quidem sicut rerum inferiorum cause sunt communes, ita et communia signa: intra Lunam vero sunt causae propriae, quibus cognitis communia in propria deriuantur indicia, totumque hoc quasi animalis unius corpus existit. Oportet igitur in mundano hoc animali, tum supra Lunam, tum infra circumspicere cuncta, atque inuicem pensitare.
115. *ibid.*
116. *Supp.Fic.II* p.37
117. Liz Greene, *The Astrology of Fate* p.37
118. *Supp.Fic.II* p.70
119. *ibid.* p.68: (Pseudo-Ptolemy Centiloquium aphorism 1)
Judicia nostra sunt inter necessarium et contingens neque dari distincta debent, sed confusa instar eius qui rem eminus inspicit.
120. *Op.om.* p.1626:
Hinc Astrologicum illud iudicium ex stellis non solum fit per earum inspectionem, sed etiam ex ipsius natura qui iudicat.
121. *ibid.* p.1632
122. *ibid.* p.1621:
neque enim possent in praesenti hac universi facie praeferri indicia praeteritorum atque futurorum, nisi res passim rebus, tempora temporibus certo quodam et consequenti ordine necterentur.

123. *ibid.* p.1621: *Indicia quique quod stellae significant potius nostra, quam agant*
124. See part one, ref.10 above; *Op.om.* p.831:
Solemus enim saepe praedictionibus nostris mala vel procul futura anticipare diu, vel interdum fingere non futura.
125. *ibid.* p.1622:
ubi vero in diversis haec dispersa sunt, non causas, sed signa videntur.
126. *ibid.*:
Denique si per coeli in nativitate figuram fatum pueri iam pridem facti praedicitur, haec ipsa figura fatum non efficit, sed declarat: sicut et puer non tunc efficitur, sed declaratur effectus. Sed et ante conceptionem fatum Platonici dicent fuisse conceptum, quando videlicet anima corpus elegit.
127. *ibid.*:
An videlicet nobis est illa figura superior? Sed avium quoque volatus, et tonitrus superiores sunt, neque tamen per haec ut per causas, sed tanquam per indica solent aucupari futura.
128. *Op.om.* p.851:
... non aliter quam in auguriis auspiciisque multa per aves portendi putantur, quae tamen per aves minime sunt.
129. *ibid.* p.1622:
...poterit et coeli facies esse liber, in quo figurae scriptae divinitus. praeferant ventura, non agant: praefertim si confideratione coelestium corporum praenoscantur, ea quae fieri nequeunt corporalis illius naturae tenore, scilicet certae certis temporibus hominum dignitates atque depressiones, inventiones thesaurorum, cogitata consiliorum, mutationes fortunae que propriae atque nostrorum.
130. *ibid.*:
Vel de praesentibus utrum fiant de rebus et alienis a nobis et longe distantibus, confirmant quicque ex praesenti interrogationis hora respondetur, non per causam responderi, sed signum.
131. *Supp.Fic.II* p.39:
Noli respondere iocanti vel leviter querenti, sed solum anhelanti et cui maxime cordi res illa sit, quia res exit secundum quantitatem sollicitudinis interrogantis.
132. *ibid.* p.60:
Zael et Messalac dicunt interrogationem habere iudicium et effectum solem, quando est cum sollicitudine magna, quasi velint eam solam moveri a celo, illam vero que

est sine sollicitudine qualis fit sepe non pendere a
celo. Ergo ab illis habemus non omnes hominum actus a
celo fieri.

133. Albertus Magnus, *Speculum astronomiae* quoted in Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance* p.115
134. *ibid.*
135. *Liber de vita* 3.XII.122:
Non enim libertas arbitrii ex electione horae
laudabilis coercetur, sed potius in magnarum rerum
inceptionibus electionem horae contemnere est arbitrii
praecipitatio, non libertas.
136. *Op. om.* p.1628
137. *Supp. Pic. II* p.66:
...solus sapiens naturaque fortunatus effectum aliquem
scientie regulis presagine valeat.
138. *Op. om.* pp.931-2, letter to Valori, *Causae prodigiorum in obitu
principis contingentium*
139. *ibid.* p.931.
... habent in se mysteria natura prorsus superiora.
140. *ibid.* p.1623: *multis de causis iudicium de futuris est difficillimum*
141. *ibid.*:
Sapiens nemo negabit, stellas omnes, quae nobis
innumerabiles sunt ad effectum quemlibet conferre
nonnihil, ex earum que confluxu commune aliquid, et id
quidem pro natura loci et materiae confici.
142. Firmicus Maternus (335 A.D.), *Matheseos libri VIII* trans. Jean Rhys
Brams. This treatise was the most complete Latin work on astrology in
the ancient world.
143. *Julii Firmici Materni matheseos libri VIII* ed. W. Kroll & F.
Skutsch, I.III.18 (Brams pp.15-16):
Addunt etiam quidam, ut nobis ex aliqua parte
constentiant et ut eblandito consensu totam istam
scientiam dubitationis desperatione exturbent, habere
quidem doctrinam istam vim maximam, sed ad liquidum
propter partium minorumque brevitatem ac velocissimum
siderum cursum caelique prorsum rotatae vertiginis
lapsum neminem pervenire posse confirmant, ut ista
eorum veri simili definitione sermonis totius scientiae
substantia subruatur.
144. *ibid.* I.III.25 (Brams p.16):
Nos vero, licet sit nobis tenue ingenium et angustiae
orationis paene inefficax sermo, cum deberemus ipsius
rei veritate refutare quae dicunt et responsionum

apotelesmatumque constantia divinae istius scientiae
confirmare praecepta ...

145. See also Ficino, *De stella Magorum*, *Op.om.* p.489, where he gives the supposed horoscope of Christ.

146. *Supp.Fic.II* p.48:

Hinc fit ut doctissimi quique in astronomia iudicia
sperant, ignorantissimi vero quique quotidie iudicent.

147. *Op.om.* p.1625:

Sors quoque vitae in corpore, inquam, sequitur maxime
praesentem coeli constitutionem.

148. *ibid.*:

...figuram certe coelestem quam destinare fatalem
unicuique solent...

149. *Supp.Fic.II* p.34:

Denique quomodo sciet astrologus, quid celum facturum
sit cras postque annos decem, cum ipse nesciat quid
ipsemet hodie sit facturus.

150. *ibid.* p.46:

Impossibile est autem tam minutas temporis particulas
comprehendere.

151. *Op.om.* p.1626:

Humanum namque ingenium tum causarum numerus et
qualitates latet, tum experientia fallit, tum signa
decipiunt...

... cum vero ex omnium mixtione dico, non lumina tantum
coelestia, sed etiam inferiorum vires te complecti,
divinitatis est proprium.

152. *ibid.* p.1625:

Sed memento quocumque modo, vel ritu circa futura, vel
quomodocumque abstrusa hominibus vera dicantur, id
saepe casu contingere, apud eos praesertim, qui plurima
dicunt: ...quia multa sunt in vita omnibus ferme
communia, multisque undique modis quotidie
contingentia: nonnunquam quod vel casu, vel arte
videtur esse perspectum, instinctu potius naturali,
sive daemonico sive divino fuisse prolatum.

153. See part two, ref.97 above. The configurations were a Mars/Saturn
conjunction in Virgo, Eclipse of Moon in Aquarius, and difficult
Mars/Jupiter aspect.

154. Ficino, *Prooemium in librum de vita coelitus comparanda* 1.18

155. *Supp.Fic.II* p.49, *Op.om.* p.1620

156. *Op.om.* p.1620:

Ad illam que fit ex causa divina, recipitur magica
cultu et cognatione demonum spherarumque divinans.

157. *ibid.* p.1626:
 Daemonico, quando imaginario sic affecta, ut opportune pulsetur a daemone.
158. *Supp.Fic.II* p.27:
 Ita per phantasmata illuminata animam ad ea que vult monstrare movet.
 In his *Apologia contra Savonarola* (*Supp.Fic.II* p.77) Ficino states his belief that evil daemons were responsible for the wicked friar's behaviour:
 Quibus autem rationibus Astrologi simulque Platonici Savonarolam multis diversisque vel infelicibus syderum influxibus inflatum fuisse conicerent, in presentia disputare non expedit. Sed ut summam dicam, ex diversis infortunatisque syderum influxibus atque confluxibus saltem velut ex signis quibusdam Astrologi forsitan cum Platonice coniecturam facerent Savonarolam immo ut rectius loquar Savonarolam variis improbisque demonibus fuisse subiectum.
159. *Supp.Fic.II* p.49:
 Illa que fit natura, adiuvatur a complexione quadam melancolica vel temperata simulque celesti virtute, quibus facile animus in se colligitur et sua divinitate divinat, vel impressionis celestis animadversione.
160. *Op.om.* p.288:
 Ergo quando animus hominis omnino erit seiunctus a corpore, omnem (ut est apud Aegyptios) comprehendet locum, et omne tempus. Imo vero iam pene est talis animus suapte natura ubique et semper, qui ut multa loca et remotissima circumspectat, atque ut totum recolat praeteritum tempus, et futurum anticipet, non cogitur extra se progredi sed relicto corpore in se adversus, id prorsus assequitur, aut quia natura sua ubique est et semper, ut arbitrantur Aegyptii, aut quia cum in naturam suam se recipit, statim numini coniungitur omnes et locorum, et temporum terminos comprehendenti.
161. *ibid.* p.293
162. *ibid.*
163. See incidents related in *Letters* vol.1 pp.49-50 (*Op.om.* pp.615-6) and Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* pp.309-10
164. *Supp.Fic.II* p.49
165. *Op.om.* p.1622:
 Idem observare debet in mundo divinatorius ex mundo
166. *ibid.* p.1626:
 auspex et aruspex, siquid in hoc est veri, ostenta passim et omnia singulis aucupari momentis.

167. *ibid.* p.1626:

Hinc Avicenna in metaphysicis negat Astrologis esse credendum, quia neque cuncta coelestia teneant, neque naturas inferiorum ad iudicium necessarias, neque nitantur demonstratione, sed experientia quadam, vel vaticinio, probationibusque Oratorius atque Poeticis. Humanum namque ingenium causarum numerus et qualitates latet, tum experientia fallit, tum signa decipiunt.

On the essence of Avicenna's philosophical stance, I can do no better than quote S.H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* p.191 (source: Gutas, *Avicenna* pp.3-4):

A close study of the 'esoteric' writings of Ibn Sina will reveal that the 'Oriental Philosophy' is not a philosophy in the rationalistic sense, nor a system of dialectic to fulfil certain mental needs; rather, it is a form of wisdom or a 'theosophy' which has for its purpose the deliverance of man from this world of imperfections to the 'world of light'. It is non-Greek in the sense that the specific 'genius' of the Greeks of the historical period was dialectical. They even hid Egyptian, Orphic, and Babylonian mysteries, upon which Pythagoreanism was based, under a veil of dialectics. The 'Oriental Philosophy' removes this veil and seeks to present the *philosophia perennis* not as something to satisfy the need for thinking but as a guide, or at least doctrinal aid, for the illumination of man which arises from the inner experience of its author. Its language is therefore primarily symbolic rather than dialectical even if it begins with Aristotelian logic and employs some of the cosmological ideas of the Peripatetic philosophers.

168. Jung, *Psychology and Western Religion* para.291

169. *Op.om.* p.1626, *Supp.Fic.II* p.66

170. *Op.om.* p.1626:

Hinc Astrologicum illud iudicium ex stellis non solum fit per earum inspectionem, sed etiam ex ipsius natura qui iudicat. Hinc Ptolemæus: Iudicia huius ambigua sunt ei, qui rerum naturas stellasque considerat: cui illi vero, qui ex meliori parte futura cognoscunt, propinquiores sunt veritati propter vim animæ in eis dominantem, quamvis non multam huius artis peritiam habeant.

171. *Supp.Fic.II* pp.33,68

172. *ibid.* p.33:

...de determinatis et universalibus et sempiternis...

173. *ibid.* p.68:

Non est magna scientia astrologia, quia nec scientia est, cum ab effectibus semper et illis quidem raro probatis exemplisque procedat valde remotis. Sed quia

magna sunt celestia de quibus agit, parvi iudicii
hominibus magna videtur.

174. *Op. om.* p.851, letter to Federico of Urbino
175. *Op. om.* p.849. On the significance of the Saturn/Jupiter conjunction for the birth of Christ, see Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance* pp.21-3 (on Albumasar's *De magni coniunctionibus*); Jung, *Aion* paras.128-9; M. Hyde Jung and *Astrology* pp.13-26
176. *Op. om.* pp.849-50:
atque tunc demum cernere nonnihil possint, cum quod
potissimum ex diversis mundanae citharae fidibus vel
consonum, vel dissonum sequatur, intelligunt, imo, ut
verius loquar, vaticinantur.
177. *ibid.* p.851
178. *ibid.*
179. R.J. Stewart, *Prophecy* p.38
180. *ibid.* p.8
181. *Letters* vol.4, pp.61-3, *Op. om.* pp.835-6
182. *ibid.* p.835:
Magnum certe, aggredere tamen bona spe, ingenue
Laurenti, maior admodum est ille coelo, qui te fecit,
maior coelo eris et ipse cum primum aggredi
constitueris. Non enim sunt haec alicubi nobis extra
quaerenda, nempe totum in nobis est coelum, quibus
igneus vigor inest et coelestis origo.
183. *ibid.* pp.835-6:
Si hac ratione prudenter tibi ipse in te coelestia tum
signa, tum munera temperaveris, omnes fatorum minas
procul effugies, auspiciisque divinis vitam absque
dubio beatam agas.
184. *Supp. Fic. II* p.50
185. *Op. om.* p.609
186. *ibid.* p.632, in Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* p.295:
Vivendum est autem hodie, qui enim cras vivit nunquam
vivit. Si vis hodie vivere, vive Deo, in quo heri et
cras nihil aliud sunt, quam hodie.

CHAPTER FOUR: MARSILIO FICINO, THE SECOND ORPHEUS

PART ONE: Natural Magic

4.1. Ficino, Doctor of Souls

"What human music is, anyone may understand by examining his own nature. For what is that which unites the incorporeal activity of the reason with the body, unless it be a certain mutual adaptation and as it were a tempering of low and high sounds into a single consonance?"(1)

In this chapter I shall attempt to examine the ideas underlying Ficino's practical music-making, and the role of astrological music in his system of natural magic. In the second part of the chapter I shall consider the role of Orpheus as Ficino's musical authority and model, the tradition within which he worked, his own performance practice, and his contributions to early Renaissance music-theory. For Ficino, the combination of words and music, together with carefully prepared circumstances of performance, were in service to nothing less than an alchemical process (expressed above by Boethius in a musical analogy) of uniting the conflicting elements of mind, soul and body into a harmonious whole. The chief text to be considered in this context is the third part of his medical treatise, the *Liber de vita*, which Ficino wrote when he was fifty-six years old in 1489. This text, *De vita coelitus comparanda* ('On fitting one's life to the heavens') draws heavily on neo-platonic magical sources (Iamblichus, Proclus, Synesius) as well as the Hermetic Asclepius and particularly the Arabic treatise on sympathetic magic, *Picatrix*, which Ficino would have known from its Latin version(2) and in which he would have read: "All sages agree that the planets exercise influence and power over this world ... from this it follows that the roots of magic are the movements of the planets."(3) However Ficino's chief inspiration was undoubtedly Plotinus.

The text was included by Ficino amongst his Commentaries on Plotinus, being an elaboration on Plotinus' *Ennead* IV.3.11.(4) In this work Ficino relies on medical, astrological, magical and theurgic sources to achieve a

unique synthesis with an overall emphasis on the value of the subjective role of the imagination in achieving bodily and spiritual health. The 'complete' man must be both scholar and magus, understanding his position as a link between planes of reality as well as knowing what practical action to take to maintain and enhance his harmony and equilibrium. The mutual dependence of music and astrology as an integral part of medical and therapeutic practice was of course well-established in the Arabic tradition,(5) and astrological knowledge was an indispensable requirement for the European physician and herbalist.(6) Music theorists had long been speculating on the correspondences between musical pitches and heavenly bodies,(7) but it was Ficino who integrated all these strands into a practical system of psychological tempering which foreshadows modern techniques of holistic therapy.

I shall begin with a passage from a letter written by the young Ficino to his friend Peregrino Agli on the nature of 'divine frenzy'(8) - a subject to which I shall return later in this chapter. Here we find a beautifully evocative philosophical justification for the power of music, revealing the intensity of the twenty-four year old Ficino's enthusiasm for Plato and his youthful ardour in pursuing the spiritual path of purification. He describes musical experience as one of remembering - the drawing-together of the soul as it is enticed back to the condition of divine unity whence it came:

"But the soul receives the sweetest harmonies and numbers through the ears, and by these echoes is reminded and aroused to the divine music which may be heard by the more subtle and penetrating sense of mind. According to the followers of Plato, divine music is twofold. One kind, they say, exists entirely in the eternal mind of God. The second is in the motions and order of the heavens, by which the heavenly spheres and their orbits make a marvellous harmony. In both of these our soul took part before it was imprisoned in our bodies. But it uses the ears as messengers, as through they were chinks in this darkness. By the ears ... the soul receives the echoes of that incomparable music, by which it is led back to the deep and silent memory of the harmony which it previously enjoyed. The whole soul then kindles with desire to fly back to its rightful home, so that it may enjoy that true music again. It realises that as long as it is enclosed in the dark abode of the body it can in no way reach that music. It therefore strives wholeheartedly to imitate it, because it cannot here enjoy its possession."(9)

The imitation of *musica mundana* is then a most effective way of stimulating the desire of the soul to realise its divinity, to achieve self-knowledge. Following Plato, Ficino calls purely instrumental music "superficial and vulgar", but music combined with poetry is able to capture the essence of "heavenly harmony" through the numerical proportion of the verse, whose meaning reaches the mind: "It expresses with fire the most profound and, as a poet would say, prophetic meanings, in the numbers of voice and movement. Thus not only does it delight the ear, but brings to the mind the finest nourishment, most like the food of the gods ..." (10) As we shall hear from the Bishop Campano (see pages 289-90), Ficino himself was observed to reach such heights of frenzy in his own improvisation to the lira, and I shall be discussing in more detail later the implications of Platonic frenzy for the Renaissance performing artist. Most importantly, in this letter Ficino sets the precedent for the exalted function of the Orphic hymn settings which were to become the means for the psychological transformation pioneered in the *De vita coelitus comparanda*.

In later writings we find Ficino exploring in more detail the theory of hearing, and also justifying his use of music as a medicine of the soul. He clarifies his position as a 'doctor of body and soul' in a letter to Antonio Canigiani, written in 1476, on the subject of music. (11) His theme is the close connection between medicine and music, which he introduces by way of astrological analogy:

"Astrologers might relate these two, Canigiani, to a conjunction of Jupiter with Mercury and Venus. They consider that medicine comes from Jupiter and music from Mercury and Venus. Followers of Plato, on the other hand, ascribe them both to one god, Apollo, whom the ancient theologians thought was the inventor of medicine and lord of the sounding lyre." (12)

Apollo, as the numinous representative of the Sun, is, for Ficino, the exemplary regulator of the cycles of nature. It is Apollo's four-string lyre which resounds in the ordering of the seasons which is itself imitated in the healthy balance of humours in the body: "So, since the patron of music and discoverer of medicine are one and the same god, it is hardly surprising that both arts are often practised by the same man." (13) But most importantly, the parts of the soul are maintained in harmony with the parts of the body, and music will act on the soul in the same way that

medicine acts on the body - this, says Ficino, has been proved by his own experience. In this letter, Ficino draws our attention to the theory of the transmission and perception of musical sound which underlies his own improvisatory hymn-singing. Since song is the product of mind, imagination and feeling, it will act powerfully on all these faculties in the listener:

"For sound and song arise from consideration in the mind, the impulse of fantasy and the desire of the heart, and in disturbing the air and lending measure to it they vibrate the airy spirit of the listener, which is the link between body and soul. Thus sound and song easily arouse the fantasy, affect the heart and reach the inmost recesses of the mind; they still, and also set in motion, the humours and the limbs of the body."(14)

Ficino cites Pythagoras and Empedocles(15) as examples of *magi* who used "serious music" to quell unruly passions, and "different modes" [*aliis modulis*] to stimulate lazy minds. We shall find ample evidence that he modelled his own practice on these classical precedents in *De vita coelitus comparanda*. I shall consider the vital concept of *spiritus* in relation to Ficino's music-theory a little later, but in this letter to Canigiani it is important to focus on Ficino's allusions to the 'fantasy' as the mediating realm between incorporeal sound and physical sensation. Ficino understands the Boethian distinctions between *musica mundana*, *humana* and *instrumentalis* to correspond to the functions of intellectual speculation, imagination and speech - but he extends the musical analogy to the harmonious physical movements of dancing. It is the "first music" of the soul which may be reflected in any human art-form:

"The first music takes place in reason, the second in fantasy and the third in words; thence follows song and after that the movement of the fingers in sound. Lastly the movement of the whole body in gymnastics or dancing. Thus we may see that the music of the soul is led by steps to all the limbs of the body. It is this music that orators, poets, painters, sculptors and architects seek to imitate in their work. Since, therefore, there is such strong communion between the music of the soul and of the body, is it surprising that both the body and the soul may be set in order by the same man?"(16)

Ficino ends his letter with Plato's recommendation that solemn and calm music is "the most wholesome remedy for spirit, soul and body" and adds that he himself often sings to the lyre "to banish vexations of both soul

and body, and to raise the mind to the highest considerations and to God as much as I may."(17)

In his extensive Commentary on the *Timaeus*(18) Ficino again deals with the nature of musical sound, distinguishing between its material and spiritual action, and confirming its superiority over any other form of sense-perception through its action on the airy *spiritus* and its congruity with the human soul. On Plato's succinct definition in *Timaeus* 67a ("Sound may be generally defined as an impulse given by the air through the ears to the brain and blood and passed on to the soul ... rapid movement produces high-pitched sound, and the slower the motion the lower the pitch") he comments:

"Musical consonance occurs in the element which is the mean of all (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 things, and the origin of circular motion. 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 listener's souls; thus it preeminently corresponds with the soul... 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 entirety."(19)

The sympathetic action of like on like, as the singer transmits his emotion to the listener, is a direct reflection of the conformity of the enraptured performer's soul with God, and thus a channel is forged, with the singer (or the skilled orator) as the finely-tuned mediating instrument, between the listener and the divine realm.(20) As Ficino wrote to Lorenzo Lippi:

"... the speaker who is most deeply moved himself will move others most deeply, whereas the man who sings one tune and plucks another from his lyre totally offends the ear. Divine music is the true harmony of thought, word and deed."(21)

With the emphasis on the refined quality of being of the performer as a prerequisite for a truly moving performance we find a parallel with Ficino's

discriminatory attitude towards astrologers. The *musica instrumentalis* of the astrologer, his rhetorical gifts and interpretative skills, are meaningless and misleading unless he has become a channel for a higher wisdom. Indeed all forms of artistic expression will ultimately depend for their effects on the clarity with which the artist receives intimations of divinity - which could be defined as glimpses of the archetypal forms which underlie and empower conscious life experience - symbolised in planetary characteristics, and conveyed as 'affects' through the half-corporeal imaginative faculty. To Piero Vanni, Ficino complain about the sorry condition of those artists who are purely concerned with the technicalities of the material aspect of their practice, and unable to bring it into harmony with the qualitative dimension of the soul:

"For there is a constant battle between body and soul, between the senses and reason .. [mortal men] lay out the parts of buildings to a measure, and tune strings on a lyre to a hair's breadth, but they never attempt to harmonise the parts and movements of the soul."(22)

Whereas a true musician is one whose technical expertise is in service to the promptings of his soul, who understands the value of self-knowledge:

"The duty of the musician is to portray the beauty of song in sound, and the fineness of speech in song. It is also his duty to remember that harmony in the motions of the soul is far more needful than harmony in voices. For ill-proportioned and a stranger to the muses is the musician to whom, while voice and lyre sound harmoniously together, mind sounds discordantly."(23)

Hearing is more powerful than smell, taste or touch since they are entirely material and do not penetrate the depths of the soul. As for sight, it may only transmit static images, for visual impressions have no direct contact with the airy spirit present in the ear.(24) Hearing puts the soul in direct contact with the movement of the cosmos - musical sound links the soul and body through acting on the *spiritus*, the words of a text reach the intellectual faculty and move the mind. Hence, for Ficino, the recitation of a text highly-charged with meaning to musical accompaniment was the most all-embracing means of tempering the whole man and bringing his soul and body into conformity with the *musica mundana* of the macrocosm: through the movement of the air a song acts on the body, through the emotion of the performer it acts on the senses and the imagination, and

through the meaning of the text rational content is transmitted to the mind.

4.2. Spiritus

Ficino is of course not original in his theory of hearing which is essentially Aristotelian(25) and owes much to the writings of Boethius, Avicenna and Albertus Magnus.(26) But he goes beyond the Aristotelian theory of the air inside the ear resonating to external vibrations(27) by identifying it with the *spiritus*, the airy element which connects body and soul through a process of attraction: "in the universe a sort of bait or kindling for linking soul to body is that very thing we call spirit"(28) he writes. In his alchemical endeavour to unite *psyche* and *soma* into a harmoniously functioning entity, the spirit becomes the essential element of mediation between the realm of sense-perception and the soul, bringing a desired effect to bear through its affinity with 'airy' sensations - as Ficino explains in a letter to Francesco Musano, where we also find a direct reference to his therapeutic music in practice and evidence of his struggle to master the techniques of natural magic:

"As soon as you were cured of your wrongly diagnosed tertian fever by our medicines, both you and Giovanni Aurelio paid your respects to our Academy, as if it were your own doctor. You then asked for and heard the sound of the lyre and the singing of hymns ... within us nature has bonded body and spirit with the soul. The body is indeed healed by the remedies of medicine; but spirit, which is the airy vapour of our blood and the link between body and soul, is tempered and nourished by airy smells, by sounds, and by song ... In nature a union is made from soul, body and spirit. To the Egyptian priests medicine, music and the mysteries were one and the same study. Would that we could master this natural and Egyptian art as successfully as we tenaciously and wholeheartedly apply ourselves to it!"(29)

Ficino is also original in his very desire to bring speculative analogies between cosmic, human and instrumental music into a practical therapeutic context, and to explore the reasons for specific types of music achieving specific psychological reactions.(30) In this respect he preshadows the aims and practices of the musical humanists of the Florentine Camarata, a century later. Since D.P. Walker has written comprehensively about Ficino's music-spirit theory,(31) I only intend to

summarise here the chief characteristics of the spiritus and its important role in the transmission of musical sound.

Spiritus, for Ficino, was an active connective principle at work in both macrocosm and microcosm. As such, it corresponded to all orders of creation, operating in cosmic, imaginative and physiological realms but always in service to the functions of the *anima mundi* and the human soul. We saw in chapter one (page 34) that in the *Theologia Platonica* he describes its movement as a *circuitus spiritualis*, "a divine influx, flowing from God, penetrating through the heavens, descending through the elements and finishing up in lower nature".(32) In *De vita coelitus comparanda*, spiritus is described as the medium through which stellar influence reaches the human soul, a medium which is captured most effectively by music. In the first chapter of this treatise we read that the cosmic spirit, as the active agent of the World Soul, spreads the power of Soul through all things in the form of a quintessence which can be found most concentrated in certain substances such as wine, white sugar, gold and precious stones.(33) When the human spirit is strengthened by the cosmic spirit through absorbing the rays of the stars, then their gifts may pass into our soul and body.(34) The spirit may be separated from the grosser material which contains it and generate its own properties when applied to other matter - in one of his rare direct references to alchemy, Ficino suggests that this is how baser metals may be turned into gold: "Diligent natural philosophers, when they separate this sort of spirit from gold by sublimation over fire, will employ it on any of the metals and will make it gold."(35)

In quality, the spirit is a subtle body composed of fire, air and water which in the human being is drawn out of the four humours by the soul. D.P. Walker understands it to be synonymous with the neo-platonic astral body which the soul acquires from the stars and planets as it descends into the physical body,(36) referred to by Ficino in his Commentary on the *Phaedrus* as a "celestial, sempiternal body" (*coelestia corpora atque sempiterna*) which acts like a chariot for the individual soul.(37) In the *De amore* he explains:

"Any soul which falls into its earthly body under the domination of Jupiter conceives for itself during its descent a certain pattern for making a man corresponding to the star of Jupiter. This pattern the soul is able to

imprint very exactly on its astral body because that is very well disposed to receive it. If the soul finds on earth a seed which is similarly well disposed, the soul then imprints on that seed a third image which is very much like the first and second ..."(38)

In the same chapter Ficino goes on to describe the *spiritus* in physiological terms as "a certain very thin and clear vapour produced by the heat of the heart from the thinnest part of the blood"(39) which receives the powers of the soul and transmits them to the body. It is the spirit which also transmits the images of incorporeal substance - such as music or visual impressions - through the organs of sense to the soul, and may be activated by the desire of the individual to align his spirit with that of the cosmos:

"Our *spiritus* is in conformity with the rays of the heavenly *spiritus*, which penetrates everything either secretly or obviously. It shows a far greater kinship when we have a strong desire for that life and are seeking a benefit that is consistent with it, and thus transfer our own *spiritus* into its rays by means of love, particularly if we make use of song and light and the perfume appropriate to the deity like the hymns that Orpheus consecrated to the cosmic deities."(40)

In *De vita coelitus comparanda* Ficino, in an attempt to stay within the bounds of Christian orthodoxy, does not refer to the astral origins of the *spiritus*, but concentrates on the procedures through which the human spirit may become more celestial. When the cosmic spirit flows into matter it necessarily loses its efficacy and becomes obstructed, but its true power, diffused via the planetary and stellar rays, may be identified by those practised in 'magic' and astrology who experiment with the re-distribution and intensification of *spiritus* in the material world. The chief aim of such natural magic, defined by Ficino as "the kind of magic ... practised by those who seasonably subject natural materials to natural causes to be formed in a wondrous way"(41) is self-knowledge through bringing one's *musica humana* into accord with *musica mundana* - "attuning one's life to the heavens" (as the title suggests) and thus to a divine cosmic order. For Ficino, this process involves a conscious regime of purification through constant application to the rays of the Sun, the image of God, which in itself contains a synthesis of all the other planetary qualities. When the spirit has become truly solar, "the celestial gifts located mainly in it

will overflow not only to our body but also to our mind".(42) For Ficino, there could be no more effective way of purifying the spirit than through an Orphic incantation to Apollo, the Sun god.

4.3. The alchemical coniunctio

"The practice of Magic is none other than marrying the universe"(43)

The 'mutual adaptation' of the incorporeal and corporeal aspects of the human being referred to by Boethius (see quotation on page 254) required the mediation of a middle ground where the materialisation of spirit and the spiritualisation of matter could take place and thus forge a unity between seemingly irreconcilable opposites - the realm of the soul, to be engaged both through the workings of the imagination and the reality of sensory experience. The transformative potential of Ficino's music-therapy cannot be fully appreciated without an understanding of the central notion of alchemy - the purification and refinement of the soul which would eventually lead to total unity of being; the discovery of the 'gold' of self-knowledge. This, for Ficino personally, was to be pursued through the trials and tribulations of his Saturnine temperament - "Do not doubt that Saturn has quite a bit to do with gold" he says.(44) He believed that the art and craft of astrology in practice was meaningless unless applied to the task of self-understanding; for, like all religious systems, the outer framework functioned as a container for the highly 'irrational' and subjective nature of the personal experience. We can see that Ficino's condemnation in the *Disputatio* was chiefly aimed at those astrologers who identified solely with the container, blind to the possibility of alchemical transformation through fully embracing their own participation in a process which could never be 'rational' and 'objective'.

It is hardly surprising that he did not consciously embrace the role of 'alchemist' - his search for the *lapis philosophorum* could never be confined to chemical experiment.(45) In a letter to the ducal secretary Jacobus Antiquarius, Ficino shows us that his view of the common alchemist paralleled that of the 'petty ogre' astrologer. Both were oblivious to the psychological quest implicit in their work and rarely achieved true or lasting results - whereas, in agreement with Jung, Ficino saw 'real'

alchemy as being the transformation of being wrought through intentional purification of the instinctual nature:

"Indeed, as greatly as those very vain men, who are commonly called Alchemists, are false in their opinions, and deceived by fortune whenever they strive to forge inferior metals into gold, so for [the Platonists], who subdue concupiscence, anger and action in contemplation to the best of their ability, the matter daily turns out according to their desire, in as far as they obtain gold in place of the other metals - that is, the most most precious things for the most vile, and eternal things for the transitory."(46)

In psychological terms, we could say that the introspective philosopher is able to withdraw his projections from matter to his own psyche. Alchemists and astrologers are mistaken when they believe they are dealing 'objectively' with either material forms or another person's psychic processes - for they are inevitably projecting their own unconscious.(47) Ficino undoubtedly realised that the struggle towards self-consciousness, or knowing 'God', involved a rigorous attempt to 'take back' such projections and work with the highly irrational yet profoundly meaningful stirrings of the imagination. Astrology provided a perfect framework of symbols for the process of what would now be called 'active imaging', and this is precisely how Ficino instructs the reader to use it in his *Liber de vita*. The 'natural magic' of this treatise, ostensibly firmly allied with medical practice, nevertheless betrays an underlying familiarity with alchemical precepts, and we also find in the correspondence with Pico della Mirandola thinly-veiled evidence of a mutual understanding that the 'hermetic secret' of alchemical transformation lay at the heart of their philosophical and religious pursuits.(48) It is highly significant that in the *Liber de vita* Ficino, after a life-long commitment to a vocation of uniting Mind and Soul, finally incorporates the physical realm into the alchemical *coniunctio*, thus redeeming the lost 'feminine' element of earth. This practical handbook was written in homage to his physical father, the doctor Diotifeci, who Ficino felt impelled to redeem after thirty years of platonic speculation under the spiritual guidance of his 'other father', Cosimo de' Medici:

"I, the least of priests, had two fathers - Ficino the doctor and Cosimo de' Medici. From the former I was born, from the latter reborn. The former commended me to Galen as both a doctor and a Platonist; the latter consecrated me to the divine Plato. And both the one and the other alike dedicated Marsilio to a doctor - Galen, doctor of the body,

Plato, doctor of the soul. Therefore, for a long time now I have practiced the medicine salutary to souls under Plato: after translating all his books, I straightway composed eighteen books concerning the immortality of souls and eternal happiness, so to the best of my ability repaying by Medici father. Thinking I ought next to repay my medical father, I have composed a book *On Caring for the Health of Learned People*."(49)

Unlike the ineffectual alchemist who believes he is only dealing with material properties, it is the 'natural philosopher' who knows the true secret of the *lapis philosophorum*, which means procuring the marriage of 'above' and 'below' - firmly weaving spiritual threads into the very warp and weft of earthly existence in pursuit of the *unus mundus* or marriage of eternity and temporality. In a homely simile Ficino likens this process to that of agriculture, which prepares a field and seed to receive heavenly gifts and prolongs the life of a shoot by grafting. He adds:

"The doctor, the natural philosopher, and the surgeon achieve similar effects in our bodies in order both to strengthen our own nature and to obtain more productively the nature of the universe. The philosopher who knows about natural objects and stars, whom we rightly are accustomed to call a Magus, does the very same things: he seasonably introduces the celestial into the earthly by particular lures just as the farmer interested in grafting brings the fresh graft into the old stock."(50)

In *De vita coelitus comparanda*, Ficino appeals to the imagination of the reader as a vessel within which the symbolism of astrology, properties of talismans, images, foods, colours, meanings of words and particular sounds of music may be savoured and directed towards a balancing and enhancement of everyday life. Such magic depends on the sympathetic correspondences between chains of being (deriving from Proclus' *De sacrificio*) whose members may all signs or lures which amplify understanding and enhance meaningful experience. As already mentioned, through the function of astrological symbolism as a mediating frame of reference for the imagination, a union of the two opposing polarities of heaven and earth, or eternal and temporal, may be facilitated. This aim, conveyed through the metaphor of revelatory religious experience by Hermes Trismegistus, was given the image of the marriage of King and Queen, or Sun and Moon (the *coniunctio oppositorum*) by the alchemists,(51) and can be seen to represent the striving of Renaissance man to fully realise his own potential

'divinity' in the sense of uncovering, and uniting with, the latent power of what Jung has defined as the 'unconscious' mind:

"science began with the stars, and mankind discovered in them the dominants of the unconscious, the 'gods', as well as the curious psychological qualities of the zodiac: a complete projected theory of human character. Astrology is a primordial experience similar to alchemy. Such projections repeat themselves whenever man tries to explore an empty darkness and involuntarily fills it with living form."(52)

One cannot of course expect Ficino to share Jung's psychological insight; he lived and worked firmly within a Platonic/Christian tradition of an ensouled and hierarchical universe. But he certainly went a long way towards overcoming the determinist 'scientific' assumptions of the traditional Ptolemaic astrological system through championing the cause of irrational experience in the *Liber de vita*. Although this practical handbook was written in honour of his father, the doctor Diotifeci, Ficino already suggests in his *Proem* that the 'medicine' he will be advocating would far exceed his father's traditional expectations. Learned people, says Ficino, distrust the efficacy of purely terrestrial medicines,(53) and this led him to formulate a programme for spiritual and bodily health with an approach which can be seen to be homeopathic, not allopathic, in its methods. Ficino says he added *De vita coelitus comparanda* to the first two books "so that from the very living body of the world, a more vigorous life might be propagated as if from a vine into our own body, which is in a way a part of the world's body."(54) Certainly it is extraordinary to read Ficino's opinion that

"the intention of the imagination does not have its power in fashioning images or medicines as it does in applying and swallowing them. And so if anyone .. wears an image which has been properly fashioned, or certainly if anyone uses a rightly made medicine, and yearns vehemently to get help from it and believes with all his heart and hopes with all his strength, he will surely get a great deal more help from it."(55)

Although Ficino was familiar with the standard astrological authorities from whom he had a thorough grounding in rules and techniques, we have seen in the previous chapter that he considered such a framework in itself to provide an incomplete, albeit necessary, basis for judgements of character or events. Those who assume 'objective truth', who ignore or reject the

significance of subjectivity, of desire and intent, cannot be diviners. Behind the 'frozen' categorisations of the literally-minded astrologers there are fluid archetypal principles at work which mold and form the deepest layers of the soul and can be apprehended, as we have seen, only through an experience of introspective contemplation, not of applied thought-processes. The purely intellectual representation of an experience cannot bring about an inner change since it denies the coincidence of subject and object (the *adaequatio*, or similitude of what is known to the faculty of knowing) so necessary for true insight.(56) The meaning of your life, says Ficino, will only become clear when a capacity for symbolic imaging is developed as a mediating ground between the temporal and eternal (or one might say conscious and unconscious) dimensions of life.(57) In Jungian terms, a symbol is only effective when it is 'alive' in the sense of forming a conjunction with subjective experience and thus initiating a flow of unconscious contents into conscious awareness.(58) In the Platonic animated cosmos we find a supreme example of psychic projection onto matter, creating powerful living symbols in the form of gods and daemons. The material and spiritual realms are linked by a middle ground of these subtle bodies, which appear to be 'living' precisely because, resonating within the microcosm of the human psyche, they reflect back archetypal human qualities and thus facilitate the arduous task of self-knowledge:

"The place of realisation is neither mind nor matter, but that intermediate realm of subtle reality which can be adequately expressed only by the symbol. The symbol is neither abstract nor concrete, neither rational nor irrational, neither real nor unreal. It is always both."(59)

The use of the half-corporeal *imaginatio* (or *idolum*) to effect physical changes was, in Jung's view, the key to understanding the alchemical *opus* - and Ficino in the *Liber de vita* encourages the reader constantly to pay attention to the processing of images, to establish a flow and correspondence between soul and matter. This is perhaps what Jung would term the actualisation of unconscious contents in the realm of subtle reality.(60) For example, Ficino advises the reader to construct an "archetypal form of the whole world" (*formam mundi totius archetypam*) in bronze, at the moment of the Sun's entry into Aries (the spring equinox), and to constantly contemplate its motions (he suggests it might be a mechanical model).(61) Or to paint a "figure of the universe" on one's

bedroom ceiling in blue, green and gold (the colours of Jupiter, Venus/Moon and the Sun) so that the image of its harmonious proportion may be held, like a mandala or symbol of unity, in the mind and may tune and temper the soul into conformity with its order through the meditative process of active visualisation.(62) After contemplation of such an image the individual "will not note with so much attention the spectacle of individual things as the figure of the universe and its colours"(63) and will be led to "fashion a better image" of the harmonious order of the heavens in his own imagination. Concentrating on the temperateness of Jupiter, for example, and consciously cultivating an ordered and moderate life-style, will naturally attract his gifts and regulate tendencies to excess. All this would appear to conform with the alchemical notion that the chaotic prima materia may be transformed by a wheel-like, rotating substance:

"The transforming substance is an analogy of the revolving universe, of the macrocosm, or a reflection of it imprinted in the heart of matter. Psychologically, it is a question of the revolving heavens being reflected in the unconscious, an *imago mundi* that was projected by the alchemist into his own prima materia."(64)

Ficino instructs us to imitate the "revolving heavens" in the physical movements of dance,(65) in a painted or fashioned reproduction of the cosmos, or in the imitation of *musica mundana* in words and song.(66) The latter was undoubtedly the most powerful way of facilitating psychological tempering.

4.4. Sympathetic magic in *De vita coelitus comparanda*

For the Platonist, the attunement of the human soul with its divine 'pattern' as reflected in the heavens is none other than an act of love. For Ficino, erotic love is essentially a sublimated, imaginative process of inner connection through which the significance of the reflection of cosmic harmony and the intuition of its source is made accessible, whether initially stirred by a part of the natural world, a work of art or a human being. In his elaboration on Plato's *Symposium*, the *De amore*, Ficino anticipates the practical advice of his later work by setting a context for

his natural magic firmly rooted in the Platonic notion of love as an active force of affinity in nature:

"But why do we think that Love is a *magician*? Because the whole power of magic consists in love. The work of magic is the attraction of one thing by another because of a certain affinity of nature. But the parts of this world, like the parts of a single animal, all deriving from a single author, are joined to each other by the communion of a single nature ... the parts of this great animal, that is all the bodies of the world ... borrow and lend natures to and from each other. From this common relationship is born a common love; from love, a common attraction. And this is the true magic."(67)

Ficino goes on to describe how the function of art is to be "handmaiden" to this natural process, to enhance and intensify it: "For where anything is lacking in a natural relationship, art supplies it through vapours, numbers, figures and qualities at the proper times."(68) In this Commentary, Ficino as Platonist puts forward the view of the "ancients" that it is the daemons who inspire wise men with knowledge of the appropriate arts, for they have a clearer knowledge than man of the inter-relation between natural things. In the Apology to his *Liber de vita*, a book of practical advice, Ficino as a Christian priest treads carefully, assuring the reader that he does not approve of magic which relies on daemonic intervention, but only that "which, by natural things, seeks to obtain the services of the celestials for the prosperous health of our bodies".(69) Man himself can be a Magus, a "cultivator of the world",(70) tempering the lower parts of the world to the higher in direct imitation of God's own work and his love for man. Ficino ends his exposition on magic in the *De amore* by calling on the power of words and song to attract beneficial influences and people:

"Men charm and win men over to themselves through the powers of eloquence and the measures of songs, as if by certain incantations. Moreover, they drug and capture them with worship and gifts exactly as though with enchantments. Therefore no one can doubt that love is a magician, since the whole power of magic consists in love, and the work of love is fulfilled by bewitchments, incantations, and enchantments."(71)

This process of attraction is the theme of *De vita coelitus comparanda*. At the beginning of the work, Ficino sets forth a context within which we are to understand the working of 'natural magic'. The working of this

magic fundamentally depends on the recognition and clarification, on the part of the magician/philosopher, of the channels of ascent and descent throughout the hierarchy of creation. Both Frances Yates and Eugenio Garin have discussed Ficino's debt to the Latin Picatrix in terms of the role of man as 'magus'(722) - there is no doubt that Ficino too was convinced that man is only half man unless he combines scholarship with practical operations(73) and that ultimately it is the self-knowledge of the individual which leads to an awareness of the inextricable connection between the movements of the heavens and those of the human soul. But for his theory of magic Ficino relies heavily on Plotinus, *Ennead* IV.3-5,(74) and I shall now briefly consider the premisses he sets forth at the beginning of *De vita coelitus comparanda* to provide a context for the function of music and song as magical operations.

For both Plotinus and Ficino sympathetic magic is made possible by the mediating function of the World Soul, which permeates the realms of both unmoving intellect and changing matter. It is the World Soul which transmits to each individual species its seminal reasons, by which their essential form is fashioned. Through the seminal reason, each species on earth corresponds to its Idea in the divine mind - it is the 'divine seed' within all forms of manifest creation, the underlying factor of unique, generic differentiation between species. The reason provides the connective principle with the Ideas, opening a channel for the gifts of higher worlds to flow into lower creation. The World Soul moves and acts with the lunar qualities of receptivity, fluctuation and connection, aided by the particular entities called daemons. Because their nature is in part corporeal, they can be attracted by earthly materials - but as already stressed, Ficino is very careful to deny any direct attraction of daemons into matter during his magical or theurgic operations. Whatever his theoretical justification for 'licit' magic, however, what occurred in practice during Ficino's 'spiritual' operations such as contemplative hymn-singing undoubtedly effected subtle changes in the deepest 'layers' of the soul, and was intended to. Ficino had his own reasons for appearing to keep well within the boundaries set by ecclesiastical authorities: "In all the things which I discuss here or elsewhere, I intend to assert only so much as is approved by the Church";(75) he says, and "Let us by no means ever attempt anything forbidden by holy religion ..."(76) even though his appreciation of the individual's responsibility in imaginatively creating

his own meaning in life led him to some very unorthodox rites and practices. We can safely assume that Ficino knew very well the potential of ritual magic to transcend all attempts to classify or differentiate its effects. Reading between the lines, we find a tacet approval of the kind of magic which involves drawing benefits from a realm beyond that of the heavenly spheres.(77)

In chapter I of *De vita coelitus comparanda* Ficino describes the earthly material forms within which the World Soul has sown her seminal reasons as 'baits' or 'divine lures'(78) - for they attract and entice the World Soul back into themselves through the very kernel of divinity that she has planted within them. The drawing-down of the Soul qualities into earthly forms will be dependent not only on their essential affinity, but also on the careful alignment of particular quality and specific time,(79) the right moment when like is drawn into like by virtue of natural coincidence or by artificial human intervention. Electional astrology is an effective method of determining such a moment and forms an essential part of Ficinian magic - for it enables man to participate in the divine cosmic ordering through the application of his free-will, as confirmed by Albertus Magnus.(80) In choosing a specific time to intervene, for example in the performance of an Orphic hymn to the Sun at a time when the Sun is rising in order to foster one's 'solar' qualities, man is demonstrating his control over natural forces for his own psychological benefit. Such a technique may also be applied to help others, when carried out in conjunction with a careful consideration of their horoscope.

The World Soul also sowed her particular seminal reasons in the stars,(81) and constructed the configurations and images of the zodiac and its manifold divisions, together with the fixed star constellations, and she determined the proportional arrangement of the stars within and without the zodiac belt. The material forms of all lower things depend on these "well-ordered forms"(82) in a dependence of mutual interplay and resonance, or reciprocal synchronous signification, not one of linear development through cause and effect. The various changeable celestial formations all proceed from the stable seminal reasons implanted in the heavenly bodies, which in turn derive from the transcendent Intellectual Forms, and the Forms themselves are eventually reducible to the One. The seminal reasons, when in their pristine condition contained within the Soul, are united;

when distributed and sowed in stars, daemons or earthly substances, they are necessarily separated out. This idea provides a philosophical explanation for the contemplative perception of the fundamental unity of all things in the world, which lies beyond a discursive, logical analysis of their immediate, peculiar concrete reality and separateness. Ficino stresses that the particular attributes and endowments of individuals are produced by the World Soul

"not so much with the aid of celestial forms and figures as by the location of the individual stars and the relation of the motions and aspects of the planets both among themselves and with respect to the stars which are above the planets."(83) (my italics)

In other words, the planets play no active, willful part in the installation of particular human attributes; rather, their various configurations and aspects both amongst themselves and in relation to the fixed stars automatically correspond, at any given moment, to a similar pattern mirrored in the soul of the human being. As Copenhaver puts it, "men wise enough to recognise the gifts simply took advantage of their presence, through magic or through prayer".(84) In this elaborate system of correspondences Ficino places particular emphasis on the Sun which is reflected in the human microcosm through the physical organ of the heart. The heart, as the seat of the divine seed in man, conveys qualities of soul throughout the body, in the same way as the Sun generates the World Soul in the visible universe:

"Now our own soul beyond the particular forces of our members puts forth a general force of life everywhere within us - especially through the heart as the source of the fire which is the nearest thing to the soul. In the same way the World-soul, which is active everywhere, unfolds in every place its power of universal life principally through the Sun. Accordingly, some thinkers say the entire Soul, both in us and in the universe, dwells in any member but most of all in the heart and in the Sun."(85)

The heart, as we saw in chapter one, represents a form of knowing from the depths of the soul rather than the rational analysis of the mind. It is the meeting place, the place of synthesis and fertile communion, of Apolline consciousness and Dionysian irrational instinct, and its power may be increased by the intentional cultivation of solar properties, to be achieved through the assimilation of substances and activities which

contain them and particularly on the day and hour of the Sun. Ficino agrees with the "Arab astrologers" that the fundamental nature of man is solar,(86) with the additional properties of Mercury and Jupiter (intelligence and temperance). Saturn is not to be found as a "common quality" of all men but "he signifies an individual set apart from others, divine or brutish, blessed or bowed down with the extreme of misery".(87) The Moon, Venus and Mars signify "affects and actions common equally to man and to the other animals."(88) Ficino stresses that the cultivation of a particular planet's gifts involves the active participation of the individual. One encourages the properties to flow by preparing oneself to receive them in an act of purification - through eating particular foods, cultivating particular friendships, contemplating images and talismen composed of particular stones and metals, absorbing particular fragrances or playing and listening to particular texts set to specifically-chosen musical harmonies. In this form of magic there is no manipulation of 'occult' forces, but a subjective process of adaptation in order to receive more powerfully the powers already present in the sensual world:

"For the more powerful the cause, the more ready it is to act and therefore the more inclined to give. A little additional preparation, therefore, on our part suffices to capture the gifts of the celestials, provided each accomodates himself to that gift in particular to which he is particularly subject."(89)

We attract Saturn, for example, through indulging in the Saturnine pursuits of philosophy, solitude and magic; the Moon, through a "vegetable existence".(90) In this context, Ficino gives the general rule that "solemn music belongs to Jupiter and the Sun, merry music to Venus, the middle sort to Mercury"(91) and specifies that, in considering an individual's particular needs, one would have to know the ruling planet of his natal chart, "beg grace from that star rather than from another", and await its gift.(92) Ficino stresses, giving the 'Arabes' as his authorities, that this magic works through the coincidence of outer and inner - the application of the human spirit to the world spirit achieved both through "physical science and our affect"(93) - a combination of 'objective' knowledge of correspondences and astrological methodology, and the 'subjective' emotional response of intent and desire.

Ficino considers the power of music and words in his magic in chapters XXI and XXII of *De vita coelitus comparanda*. But in the preceding chapters he prepares the reader by discussing the probable means by which images and inscribed figures effect physical and psychological changes - and since audible music can be compared to "figures in motion", the same theories apply. "You are not unaware that harmonious music through its numbers and proportions has a wonderful power to calm, move, and influence our spirit, mind and body"(94) says Ficino, explaining that music acts in the same way as astrological figures (that is, the varying aspects made by the planets and stars between themselves at any given moment in their perpetual cycles), affecting our bodily temperament and inner harmony: "by their harmonious rays and motions penetrating everything, they daily influence our spirit secretly just as overpowering music does openly."(95) Ficino again hints here at the two most important conditions for the efficacy of natural magic: knowledge of the very particular quality of a particular moment, and intuition of the occult properties of the stars and planets. The coincidence of planetary configuration with earthly event (such as the playing of music, making of an image, use of a medicine) is crucial, and man has the responsibility to put his free-will to use in electing such times to obtain maximum benefit:

"just as a given thing is fortunately born and coalesces and is preserved not elsewhere than here nor at any other time but just then, so also such or such a material action, motion, or event does not obtain full or perfect efficacy except when the celestial harmony conduces to it from all sides."(96)

The notion of the occult or secret properties of matter, that is, those influential qualities beyond sense perception but nevertheless profoundly affecting our own psychological balance through their effect on the *spiritus* is central to Ficino's magic. These qualities may be hidden, but they are natural, and as such the Magus who perceives them is a natural philosopher and not a conjuror.(97) In his late work *De Sole*, Ficino talks of the "two lights" of the Sun and stars, one visible and obvious, the other innate but beyond the scope of our senses: "Clearly all heavenly things have brought with them their own light at their birth, but it escapes our notice, being either infinitesimal, or hidden from us, or with a certain fineness and brilliance, or for another reason."(98) It is this occult ray which, he believes, can implant hidden powers in images. It

carries gifts from the imaginations and minds of the stars and planets as ensouled beings, comprising a force which gains its intensity from both their mental dispositions and the rapid motions of their bodies. This ray acts on the spirit which is most similar to it in nature according to the particular property of the star or planet from which it emanates - in an instant a particular combination of rays will fall and connect with a material which is either especially prepared to receive it, or attracted by natural affinity. This is made possible, Ficino says, because air (and to a lesser extent, sound) "passes right away through solid things and influences them with a quality of its own."(99)

The art of understanding the planetary and stellar significations in order to attract the occult benefits of their rays at the most propitious times is acknowledged by Ficino to be very difficult: "It is truly a discipline of special importance to grasp correctly which spirit, which force, which thing these planets especially signify."(100) Ficino's use of the word *significant* here is crucial - it is important not to imagine that he is referring to any direct, causal action when he adopts Al-Kindi's ray theory to explain the co-incidence and inter-penetration of cosmic and human spirit.(101) Rather, the 'ray' theory would appear to be a metaphorical way of explaining the instantaneous, synchronous connection of above and below which results in an overwhelming sense of meaningfulness and participation in a 'play of forces' beyond one's control. We have seen that Ficino himself experienced such a meaningful coincidence after singing a hymn to the Cosmos (see page 191), where he refers to a "certain inspired heavenly instigation" (*celesti quodam afflatus instinctu*) at work, bringing him the benefit of Cosimo's patronage.

Certainly the reader of *De vita coelitus comparanda* would have to be an expert astrologer to put Ficino's magic into practice. His detailed instructions on the observation of planetary qualities and aspects implies a continual awareness of the movement of the heavens, in particular the phases and aspects of the Moon. She acts as a transmitter of the benefits of the three most benefic planets, the Sun, Jupiter and Venus, (which Ficino names "the three Graces")(102) to things below, and her movements must be closely observed when choosing the right time to sculpt an image, take a medicine, pick a herb, or perform an incantation. One should also ensure that the planet whose influence one wishes to cultivate is in its

dignity and term,(103) and take note of rulerships for particular parts of the body. This was of course standard medical practice - but Ficino extends the notion of 'health' to all mental and bodily activity. Above all, he recommends cultivating the power of Jupiter, which contains all the properties of the Sun, Venus and Mercury and through its temperateness will regulate the motions of the heart, natural procreative force and vital spirit.(104) If one thoroughly grasps the symbolic significance of planetary characteristics, it is possible to order life-experiences, surroundings and even friends consciously, to achieve maximum correlation with both one's innate nature as symbolised by a natal horoscope, and with the current disposition of the heavens.(105) This, suggests Ficino, cannot be done unless one keeps mind and body in active imitation or counter-imitation of planetary movements. Stagnation of mind or body would prevent any point of contact arising, for it must be a two-way process of interaction between above and below:

"When you fear Mars, set Venus opposite. When you fear Saturn, use Jupiter. And see to it that you engage in some continual motion, just so you avoid weariness; and make sure that your own motion is the opposite of the external motions which are secretly going to harm you, and that you imitate so far as possible the action of the heavens. But if you can pass through larger spaces in your motion, you will thereby imitate the heavens all the more and will get in contact with more of the strengths of the celestials which are diffused everywhere."(106)

The aim is to render oneself more receptive, to refine perception and sensibility and, most importantly, to bring the physical dimension of existence into harmony with the purified mind, as the 'music of the body' is expressed in ritual dance:

"While experiencing ... the motion of shining water, of clear air, of a fire that is not too close, and of the sky, you will receive the motion of the life of the world; if you yourself also move lightly, and in almost the same way - executing as many gyrations as you can without dizziness, traversing the celestial bodies with your eyes, and revolving them in your mind."(107)

Later in the work Ficino describes the feeding of the 'spiritual body' with the subtle counterparts to the gross elements, wine for earth, odour of wine for water, sound and song for air and light for fire.(108) The two 'higher' elements of air and fire are ascribed to Apollo, and the two lower

of earth and water to his "brother and inseparable companion"(109) - thus the Apollonine and Dionysian aspects of existence are married in the intermingling of the elements and the absorption of their fine qualities - abundant taking of wine (as long as drunkenness was avoided) was highly recommended by Ficino, who apparently carried a flask around with him for (one assumes) spiritual nourishment.(110) Purification of the spirit should lead to the transcendence of earthly materiality through transforming and refining it, which will liberate the man from domination by his instinctual desires and the strengthen his conscious will. In an earlier letter to the Cardinal of Aragon Ficino uses the ray metaphor to illustrate this process of cleansing and polishing, which he sees to be accomplished through the complementary experiences of philosophical reasoning and religious faith:

"Men's minds are the eternal and everlasting rays of [the] sun enveloped by the black cloud of the body, but through reasoning and desire they may choose to reflect themselves back into their sun. Rays certainly bounce back just as from their beginning they sprang forth. Therefore, since minds at any time can flow back into their sun by any uplifting method they choose, be it pious contemplation or right loving, they must have flowed out naturally from there, that is from eternity itself."(111)

All astrological techniques lead, for Ficino, to this end. The spiritus, being Jovial, Solar, Venereal and Mercurial in nature is naturally inclined to attract similar properties from the spiritus mundi and convey them to the organs of the body - "a healthy spirit does not have much in common with Saturn, Mars or the Moon"(112) says Ficino, for these planets are heavy with melancholy, irascibility and natural instinct. However, he departs from tradition in recommending the potential beneficial effects of Mars and Saturn when used homeopathically as antidotes ("just as doctors sometimes use poisons")(113), and especially in his radical understanding of the power of Saturn as a significator of philosophical speculation. The steady pursuit of Saturnine occupations may recall the spirit from the outer to the inner faculties and aid contemplation of "the more secret and the higher subjects."(114) In conformity with the spiritus, light, colour, odours, "motions of the mind" and musical sound may, as carriers of 'occult' gifts, directly affect the mind and thence the body - and music in particular may induce vivid emotional 'affects' when combined with a text:

"Sounds and songs which are pleasing and agreeable pertain to all the Graces and to Mercury; sounds which are quite threatening and fearful, however, represent Saturn and Mars."(115)

This is the general principle behind Ficino's astrological music-making, which he will elaborate in some detail. But to consider why and how such music may affect both performer and listener we must consider his attitude towards the therapeutic use of images as tools for aligning psyche with cosmos.

4.5. Images

Ficino is extremely careful when discussing the possible power of engraved or sculpted images.(116). He continually emphasises that medicines taken internally will prove more efficacious(117) and insists that if images do appear to affect the wearer or observer, it is due rather to the latent occult power of the material from which the image is made, or which is released when the material is pounded and heated.(118) He reassures the reader that his detailed consideration of images is merely a reporting of what "others" think about them in the course of his interpreting Plotinus - these "others" being either quoted as 'magicians and astrologers', Arabs or Egyptians.(119) As a priest, Ficino could not appear to approve of what could be seen as idolatrous image-worshipping, roundly condemned by St. Augustine,(120) although as a natural magician prepared to experiment with anything which might prove conducive to spiritual or bodily health one suspects an attraction to the ancients' convictions on this matter which he is continually at pains to conceal. "Many justly doubt whether [engraved] images ... have any celestial power. I also often doubt it, and, were it not that all antiquity and all astrologers think they have a wonderful power, I would deny it"(121) he protests, adding "I ... have warned you here at the outset that you must not think I approve the use of images, only recount it."(122)

Brian Copenhaver has pointed out that Ficino had some difficulty in reconciling the theurgic practices of Iamblichus and the Chaldaean Oracles (whose ultimate aim was pure *gnosis* or union with the One) with Plotinus' magic of natural correspondence, and with his Christian convictions : "If

the Platonist in Ficino was perhaps tempted to follow this sublime path in his magic, the Christian in him must have trembled to aim so high except through rituals sanctioned by the Church"(123) suggests Copenhaver, nicely encapsulating ^ Ficino's dilemma in reconciling his unbounded intuitions and "fundamental Platonist yearning" with the limitations imposed on their written expression by ecclesiastical authority. However, Ficino's life and work stand as testimony to the unshakeable unity of being he pursued through the complementary paths of philosophy and religion: Ficino the Platonic magus and Ficino the Christian were not divided except, we may assume, in the minds of the "petty philosophers". In his *Apology to the Liber de vita* Ficino anticipates such opposition:

"The title [*De vita*] will act as a pleasant bait, then, and will attract as many as possible to taste of it; but in such a great number, a good many will be ignorant ... and not a few malicious to boot. Someone therefore will say: Marsilio is a priest, isn't he? Indeed he is. What business then do priests have with medicine or, again, with astrology? Another will say: What does a Christian have to do with magic or images? And someone else, unworthy of life, will begrudge life to the heavens."(124)

Copenhaver sees a "tension between Ficino's learning and his faith"(125) revealed in the *De vita* - rather, I feel, the tension is to be found between Ficino and the traditional views of the Church authorities to which he was subject.(126) The fact that the *Liber de vita* is intended to be of practical use, and that seven out of twenty-six chapters of part three are concerned with artificial images would in itself suggest more than mere curiosity on Ficino's part. However, he professes to adhere to the constraints stipulated by Thomas Aquinas(127) - that inscriptions and characters on talismans are to be condemned as they have no natural power in themselves and may be wilfully directed towards daemons, but that a representation of an astrological figure, a reflection of the "celestial countenance", may catch the force of that celestial figure through natural attraction and sympathetic resonance,(128) and Ficino confirms this opinion

"Insofar as [the engraved figures] are made at the right time when the celestial ones are dominant and are made to conform exactly to them ... when one lute sounds, does not another echo it? It only does so if it has a similar shape [figuram] and is placed opposite, and the strings on it are similarly placed and tuned."(129)

The archetypal forms of a sphere or a cross will be particularly powerful receivers and dispositors of occult influence,(130) but any inscribed or engraved imitative images will be of the same immaterial property as light, odours and sound - they prepare the matter on which they are depicted to receive the most potent concentration of celestial influence which is then transmitted to the wearer, onlooker or listener:

"You should not doubt, they say, that the material for making an image, if it is in other respects entirely consonant with the heavens, once it has received by art a figure similar to the heavens, both conceives in itself the celestial gift and gives it again to someone who is in the vicinity or wearing it."(131)

It is the physical act of carving, or we might say of striking the strings of the lyre, at the astrologically propitious moment, which opens the channel for effective interchange and correspondence, which can be greatly intensified by additional rituals:

"[the Arabs and Egyptians think that] through rays caught at the right time and through fumigations, lights and loud tones [tonosque vehementes], the spirits of the stars can be introduced into the compatible materials of images and can work wonders on the wearer or bystander."(132)

Unless one 'enters into the play of forces' in the Plotinian sense, by putting oneself into a participatory role and wholeheartedly desiring a benefit, astrological sympathetic 'magic' can only remain a quaint and ineffective theory. Ficino says the gifts from the celestial souls will overflow to the human soul exposed to them "not so much by some natural means as by the election of free will or by affection".(133) When the will and feeling are both fully engaged in the operation, when the human spirit is "intent upon the work and upon the stars through imagination and emotion", then it may join the cosmic spirit and "a certain vital power" (vivida quaedam virtus) is poured into the image (or song), "especially a power which is consistent with the spirit of the operator."(134) A spirit thus purified will naturally be attracted by another similar to it in nature, and may transfer the "vital power" to the other.(135) It cannot be emphasised too strongly that the efficacy of Ficino's use of visible or audible images relies on the fervent emotional participation of the operator - "yearning vehemently" (vehementer affectet)(136) for an effect, having unremitting faith in the celestial influence and above all in love

as the agent of spiritual transformation will lure a particular gift. The procedure is reciprocal - love attracts the benefit and the benefit provokes the love, in a dynamic interplay of microcosmic and macrocosmic forces:

"Now ... love and faith toward a celestial gift are often the cause of celestial aid; and love and faith in their turn perhaps sometimes originate from this fact - that the kindness of the heavens is already befriending us for this very gift."(137)

Ficino would appear to have realised the notion elaborated by Jung that an archetype cannot be adequately represented unless emotion is added to its image, as Jung explains in *Man and his Symbols*:

"[Archetypes] are at the same time, both images and emotions. One can speak of an archetype only when these two aspects are simultaneous. When there is merely the image, then there is simply a word-picture of little consequence. But by being charged with emotion, the image gains numinosity (or psychic energy); it becomes dynamic, and consequences of some kind must flow from it...[Archetypes] are images that are integrally connected to the living individual by the bridge of the emotions."(138)

The "secret mutual connivance"(139) between observer and observed, or between the stuff of the cosmos and the psychic state of the 'magician'/astrologer, provides the very key to the effectiveness of Ficino's music-therapy.

4.5. The power of words and song

Chapter XXI of *De vita coelitus comparanda* is devoted to 'The power of words and song for capturing celestial benefits', and it is here that Ficino gives us his rules for composing, or improvising, astrological music. He begins by suggesting that the power of emotionally-charged spoken words may intensify the effect of an image - again attributing the idea to, we may infer, Arabs and Egyptians:(140) "they hold that certain words pronounced with a quite strong emotion have great force to aim the effect of images precisely where the emotions and words are directed."(141) The argument of Thomas Aquinas, that inscribed words are 'unnatural' and must therefore inevitably be addressed to daemonic intelligences, is not

understood by Ficino to apply to spoken or sung words in the Pythagorean tradition of musical healing. In fact he makes a point of disapproving of 'incantations' which were aimed at any manipulation of intervening daemons, emphasising "we are not teaching philtres but medicine".(142) The implication is that we are to understand Ficino's own use of music in ritual to be of another order, and he is able to gain all the more credence through the writings of his neo-platonic authorities on the power of words - Origen, Synesius, Al-Kindi, Zoroaster and Iamblichus.(143) He also had evidence of the morally therapeutic use of words and music in the practices of his supreme master Pythagoras and the neo-platonist Proclus, who also sang Orphic Hymns. He would have read in Iamblichus' *Life of Pythagoras* that Pythagoras derived his musical practices from the disciples of Orpheus himself - and it was Orpheus, as both ancient theologian and inspired musician, who provided Ficino with a perfect model for his speculative and active music-making.

It is undoubtedly the underlying philosophical assumptions which lend such weight and authority to Ficino's natural magic. In his *Commentary on Plato's Charmides* we find the following rationale for the use of verbal prayers or orations in the process of tempering the soul and body:

"The Magi promise immortality to bodies with their religious songs [carminibus]. In his *Alcibiades* Plato says that the magic of Zoroaster is none other than divine worship; moreover he adds that both the soul and body are tempered either for ever or at least preserved from death for a long time not so much by magical songs/incantations, but also by philosophical reasoning. Indeed that utterance [oratio] which may be directed towards the complete temperance of the listener, and attain it, requires two things most powerfully - both the power infused by God, and the knowledge furnished by philosophy. Plato called an utterance composed from these two things a magical incantation; with which first Phoebus, then the Pythagoreans miraculously dispelled diseases from soul and body ."(144)

Ficino agrees with Socrates that it is extremely difficult to achieve a "harmonic tempering" of both the parts of the body and the parts of the soul, and that the work of attuning the whole being with the heavens is infused with both celestial and supra-celestial powers, through corresponding affinities of mind, knowledge and words (*tum animo, tum rationibus, et verbis*). (145)

In a letter to Bartolomeo della Fonte Ficino gives the astrological association of Mercury with the Sun and Venus as poetic justification for the inextricable relationship of the numerical and rhythmic properties of music with fine speech:

"Were we ever allowed to hear [Mercury] speak, we should frequently hear him mingling the melodies of his lyre with his words, particularly since he is always totally united, or at least closely linked, with Phoebus, the father of serious music, and with Venus, the mother of lighter music ... "(146)

But for Ficino the supreme precedent for the power of verse combined with rhythm and harmony to move both performer and listener is given by Plato's notion of poetic frenzy in *Ion* and *Phaedrus*.(147) In the letter quoted earlier to Peregrino Agli (page 256) Ficino echoes the Platonic conviction that the inspired performers are not those who merely use voices and instruments to create pleasant harmonies, but those who know how to imitate the "inner reason and knowledge" of the heavens in their declamation of lyric poetry:

"It is these, who, inspired by the divine spirit, give forth with full voice the most solemn and glorious song ... For the more superficial kind which I have just mentioned does no more than soothe with the sweetness of the voice, but poetry does what is also proper to divine harmony. It expresses with fire the most profound, and as a poet would say, prophetic meanings, in the numbers of voice and movement. Thus not only does it delight the ear, but brings to the mind the finest nourishment, most like the food of the gods; and so seems to come very close to God."(148)

Ficino's discrimination between 'magic' incantations intended for manipulative, self-seeking purposes, and those which arise from the humility of the devout poet who becomes a channel for a divine power thus justifies his emphasis on musical and verbal ritual in *De vita coelitus comparanda*. In the movement downwards through the neo-platonic chain of being from spirit to matter, reflected in the hierarchical rank of the planets from Saturn to the Moon, Ficino describes seven corresponding steps or stages of manifestation. Words, sounds and song, all dedicated to Apollo or the Sun, are found in the fourth, central position, midway between the material concerns of the Moon, Mercury and Venus and the immaterial, emotional and spiritual domains of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. Ficino tells us that he is giving this 'octave' of

correspondences in order to show the similitude of medical compounds, concocted with astrological knowledge, to music specially composed according to planetary significations:

"tones [tonis] first chosen by the rule of the stars and then combined according to the congruity of these stars with each other make a sort of common form, and in it a celestial power arises. It is indeed very difficult to judge exactly what kinds of tones are suitable for what sort of stars, what combinations of tones especially accord with what sorts of constellations and aspects. But we can attain this, partly through our own efforts, partly by some divine chance [divina quadam sorte].(149)

Human diligence and divine intervention, the latter being dependent on the former, combine in a performer thoroughly grounded in musical and rhetorical technique and theory who then allows himself to become seized by the *furor poeticus*. The astrological music, Ficino suggests here, is improvised or composed according to the practitioner's knowledge of musical/astrological theory (perhaps involving traditional analogies between modes, intervals and planets) and his intuitive, unreflected inspiration. The astrologer/musician would intensify the effect of his music by taking into account the 'pattern' or 'model' [norma] of the heavens, choosing tones or intervals which correspond to this pattern, then composing them into an order and harmony which in some way imitates this *musica mundana*, in the re-creation of the harmonious intervals which underlie the very structure of the cosmos. Before giving us his rules for composition, Ficino again stresses that this procedure in no way involves wilful action on the part of the stars, but is a method for the wise man to adapt himself to "the occult and wonderful gifts" of the stars' natural influence.(150) Ficino's three rules for "accommodating our songs to the stars" are somewhat musically unspecific but demand expert understanding of astrological symbolism:

"The first [rule] is to inquire diligently what powers in itself or what effects from itself a given star [stella], constellation [sydus] or aspect has - what do they remove, what do they bring? - and to insert these into the meaning of our words, so as to detest what they remove and approve what they bring. The second rule is to take note of what special star rules what place or person and then to observe what sorts of tones and songs these regions and persons generally use, so that you may supply similar ones, together with the meanings I have just mentioned, to the words which you are trying to expose to the same stars. Thirdly, observe the daily positions and aspects of the stars and

discover to what principal speeches, songs, motions, dances, moral behaviour, and actions most people are usually incited by these, so that you may imitate such things as far as possible in your song, which aims to please the particular part of heaven that resembles them and to catch a similar influx."(151)

The power of such a song, says Ficino, will provoke both singer and audience to imitate the qualities it itself is imitating through its action on the airy spiritus, which is akin to it by nature.(152) This music-spirit is conceived by Ficino to be like a living animal, composed of warm air, "still breathing and somehow living".(153) It carries both emotion and meaning, and its influence will depend in part on its congruence with the heavens and in part with the "disposition of the imagination" (*imaginationis affectum*) of the singer → the meaningfulness of the experience being dependent on the synchronicity of 'outer' and 'inner', objective and subjective dimensions. The singer must be a finely-tuned instrument whose quality of spirit has been rendered strong and solar, for such "vital and animal power" (*vitalis animalisque virtus*) will readily attract the music-spirit - particularly if, in addition to the rules already mentioned, the ritual is also conducted at a suitably elected astrological hour. The three essential requirements for the conception of such a music-spirit are therefore the vital, solar power of the singer's own spirit, the propitious moment and the singer's intention, which involves and unites the desire of his heart and the focussing of his imagination. Then, Ficino suggests, both mental and physical diseases may be dispelled or induced "since a musical spirit of this kind properly touches and acts on the spirit which is the mean between body and soul, and immediately affects both the one and the other with its influence."(154)

We are given some idea of the various musical characteristics of each planet. Ficino stresses that all music proceeds from Apollo, but that Jupiter, Venus and Mercury are also musical to the extent that they naturally partake of solar qualities. However, Saturn, Mars and the Moon "have voices [*voce*s] but no song [*cantus*]". To understand this distinction one must go back to Aristotle,(155) where he distinguishes between *sonus* and *vox*. *Vox* refers to "a particular sound made by something with a soul and has a certain significance";(156) that is, a sound with meaning. It can also mean a named pitch.(157) Ficino is here equating *vox* with the

Aristotelian sonus, and cantus with his vox. He describes the voices of Saturn as "slow, deep, harsh and plaintive", those of Mars "quick, sharp, fierce and menacing, and the lunar ones of an intermediate quality.(158) As for the music of the other planets,

"The music of Jupiter is deep, earnest, sweet and joyful with stability. To Venus, on the contrary, we ascribe songs voluptuous with wantonness and softness. The songs between these two extremes we ascribe to the Sun and Mercury: if with their grace and smoothness they are reverential, simple, and earnest, the songs are judged to be Apollo's; if they are somewhat more relaxed, along with their gaiety, but vigorous and complex, they are Mercury's."(159)

Ficino instructs us to use "their songs", with appropriate musical sounds, at the right hour (when the petitioned planet is 'dignified')(160) to so purify the human spirit that it will naturally attract the response of the planetary spirit:

"When at the right astrological hour you declaim aloud by singing and playing in the manners we have specified for the four gods, they seem to be just about to answer you like an echo or like a string in a lute trembling to the vibration of another which has been similarly tuned."(161)

Ficino mentions that a prayer, like a song, achieves its effects through a similar natural power "when it has been suitably and seasonably composed and is full of emotion and forceful".(162) Certainly his own practice of reciting the hymns of Orpheus to the lyra combined musical skill with invocation to particular deities - and these texts would appear to be the most appropriate candidates for the kind of astrological singing specified in *de vita coelitus comparanda*. As Pico della Mirandola - Ficino's *frater mysticus* in his spiritual alchemy(163) - stated in his *Conclusiones*, "Nothing is more effective in natural magic than the hymns of Orpheus, if the correct music, intent of the soul and other circumstances known to the wise were to be applied."(164) However, although Ficino himself undoubtedly used the hymns for such religious, ritual purposes, his 'rules for composition' do not exclude the possibility of specially-composed words to suit a particular individual - indeed he would hardly expect his intended readership to have access to the Orphic texts or necessarily find them meaningful.

The gifts which are attracted through the 'occult' powers of the stars when the spirit is exposed in this way may, as we have seen, also be enticed through the use of images, medicines and odours. But they may equally be harnessed through affinity of soul, rather than of matter, vapour or air. So beyond the Solar domain of music and dancing we find "well-accorded concepts and motions of the imagination" (Mars), "fitting discourses of reason" (Jupiter) and "tranquil contemplations of the mind" (Saturn), all of which may reap the benefits of these three higher planets all the more powerfully than "inferior things" due to their greater affinity of nature.(165). We may imagine, for example, that unguents might accommodate one to receive the harmonising influence of Venus, but would not be so useful in attracting the intellectual acumen of Jupiter. For this reason, Saturn is greatly propitious to intellectual contemplation, but experienced as hostile to those still caught up in worldly affairs or emotional concerns (the spheres of Jupiter and Mars). The imagination, reason and understanding are all located in the soul, and Ficino suggests here that when these three planets are invoked it is the soul, rather than the body, which is directly affected. There follows, in chapter XXII, a eulogy to Saturn as the true philosopher's gold, the planet signifying the extremes of misery or the capacity to transcend fate. For the average human being, Saturn signifies worldly frustration, struggle and melancholy, and needs to be tempered by good doses of Jupiter, in an allopathic cure of the compensation of opposites. However, for the true contemplative Saturn offers an incomparable gift of intellectual union with the divine mind itself.(166) That Ficino was preoccupied with the trials and tribulations of Saturn, and with the compensatory temperance of Jupiter, reflects the astrological symbolism of his own natal horoscope which is dominated by a Saturn-Jupiter opposition across the horizon (the ascendant-descendant axis).(167) His advice to those of overly Saturnine temperament to seek out Jovial friends is based on personal experience, as he writes to the Archbishop of Amalfi:

"You have divined, I think, how much I have long wanted to live my life with someone of a Jovial nature, so that something of a bitter, and as I might say, Saturnine element, which either my natal star has bestowed on me or which philosophy has added, might eventually be alleviated by the sweet fellowship of someone born under Jove."(168)

In *De vita coelitus comparanda* Ficino is essentially concerned with finding Jupiter, that is, the fire and water of the imagination and the soul (astrologically Jupiter rules the fiery sign Sagittarius and the watery sign Pisces) as a healthy counterbalance to the heaviness of an overindulged duty-bound Saturn (the ruling planet of the earth-sign Capricorn). This approach to maintaining the health of mind and body requires an active imagination, willingness to suspend rational judgements and preconceived ideas, and above all a symbolic attitude towards every aspect of life. Too much Saturn dries and hardens - Jupiter irrigates and tempers. Ficino has much to say about the conflicts and complements of these two planets, but this is material for another study. Suffice it to say here, in the context of Ficino's music-making, that he quotes Orpheus in the *Hymn to Eros* as saying that the higher cosmic divinities possess keys to free us from fate, (169) understood as the blows of fortune which appear to inevitably correlate with adverse aspects in the heavens. It is Love - in the Platonic sense of the desire for self-knowledge - which unlocks the door to free-will and choice. To achieve this is to freely enter the domain of Saturn, where he no longer becomes a threat but a friend. Ficino knew from his own experience that this freedom, evoked by Orpheus, could be encouraged by the imitation of the heavens in words and music. What could be more appropriate to marry to the echo of *musica mundana* than the poetry supposedly stemming from the pen of Orpheus himself?

PART TWO: Musica Instrumentalis

4.7. Orpheus redivivus

In a letter to Paulus Middelburgensis, written when he was nearly sixty, Ficino looks back at the astonishing cultural developments he has witnessed during his lifetime and considers the singing of lyric poetry *ad lyram* to be amongst the greatest achievements of the Florentine Renaissance:

"This age, like a golden age, has brought back to light those liberal disciplines that were practically extinguished; grammar, poetry, oratory, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and the ancient singing of songs to the Orphic lyre. And all this in Florence".(1)

But it was not only Ficino who held this revival of classical ideals in such high esteem - for many of his friends and contemporaries Ficino's own musical skill recalled that of the legendary poet-musician Orpheus himself, whilst his re-discovery of the hymns attributed to Orpheus added a theurgic dimension to his singing which excited the humanists in their enthusiasm to re-create the ancient rhetorical practices of the Greeks, with their ethical and therapeutic aims. Ficino's friend Johannes Pannonius wrote to him that some astrologers had foretold that he would revive the study of ancient philosophy, and that

"they added to confirm their judgement, that at a certain destined time you would restore to the light the ancient sound of the cithara, and the singing, and the Orphic hymns which had previously been consigned to oblivion."(2)

Ficino's close friend and fellow Academician, the poet Poliziano (whose own semi-opera, or favola 'Orfeo' was produced in Mantua in 1480) wrote:

"His lyre ... far more blessed with good fortune than the lyre of Thracian Orpheus, has brought back from the underworld what is, if I am not mistaken, the true Eurydice, that is Platonic wisdom with its broadest understanding."(3)

Another friend sent a gift of a shirt from Poland with the words: "This foreign costume will make you a true Orpheus, since you already have his singing and his lyre"(4) and in a poetic conceit, Naldo Naldi wrote of how the soul of Orpheus passed by transmigration through the bodies of Homer, Pythagoras and Ennius before being reincarnated in Ficino.(5) He also wrote an epigram to the figure of Orpheus painted on Ficino's *cythara* - which was possibly a *lira da braccio*, but more likely some sort of harp (see pages 318-9) - praising the power of Orpheus to move trees and wild beasts(6). Ficino's patron, friend and fellow Platonic enthusiast, Lorenzo de' Medici, wrote that Marsilio's lyre was none other than the one placed amongst the constellations by the gods,(7) immortalising him in his poem *L'Altercazione*: when wandering in the countryside musing on the conflicts of court and country life, Lorenzo is stilled by the sound of Marsilio's lyre:

"... una nuova voce a se gli trasse
Da più harmonia legati e presi,
Pensai che Orfeo al mondo ritornasse

O quel che chiuse Tebe col suon degno,
Si dolce lira mi pareva sonasse."(8)

"I thought that Orpheus had returned to the world."

And from his friend, the poet and scholar Bishop Campano who was passing through Florence in 1471, we have an eye-witness account of Ficino in performance, seized by divine frenzy:

"If curly-haired Apollo plays upon Marsilio's cithara, Apollo falls defeated in both dexterity of hand and his singing. And there is frenzy; when he sings, as a lover to the singing of his beloved, he plucks his lyre in harmony with the melody and rhythm of the song. Then his eyes burn, he leaps to his feet and he discovers music which he never learnt by rote."(9)

Ficino himself confirms this ability to arouse a sympathetic reaction in his audience when he writes to Alessandro Braccio that he had been performing some of his verses, which were truly the work of an inspired poet, "filled with the music and frenzy of the Muses" since his performance of them *ad citharam* roused both himself and his listeners to frenzy.(10) But Ficino was no self-aggrandising artist. He accepted others' praise with an attitude of humble deference: "You praise my lyre", he writes to Giovanni Aurelio, "with songs worthy of praise. I, in turn, will praise your songs with the lyre. Would that my lyre were worthy of praise so that what you say were true."(11) Not only was Ficino so gifted - he mentions to Bernardo Rucellai that he heard Lorenzo de' Medici, "moved by divine frenzy", sing prayers to the lyre,(12) and we know that Pico della Mirandola and Baccio Ugolini, both members of the Academy, were skilled performers.(13) But such music-making was not for mere entertainment - as we have seen, it formed an integral part of Ficino's programme of psychological balancing and tempering. To Sebastiano Foresi, a poet and musician who both made and played the lira he writes "we play the lyre precisely to avoid becoming unstrung ... may the well-tempered lyre always be our salvation when we apply ourselves to it rightly"(14) and gives us several examples of his own resorting to music to ease the stresses of his study-prone Saturnine temperament. To Foresi again:

"after I wrote 'farewell' to you, dear Foresi, I got up and hurriedly picked up my lyre. I began a long song from the Orphic liturgy. You also, in your turn, when you have read this 'farewell' again, if you are wise, will get up without

delay, and pick up your lyre willingly, the sweet solace for labour."(15)

The friendship of Foresi and Ficino was consolidated by their making music together - "for I speak to others with tongue or pen, but often to you with plectrum and lyre"(16):

"What are you doing today, my Foresi? Are you playing the lyre? Take heed that you do not play it without Marsilio! Otherwise, if you break faith with me, the strings of your lyre will sound completely out of tune to you. As often as I sing with my lyre, I sing in harmony with you."(17)

To Giovanni Cavalcanti, who accused him of complaining too much about the trials of Saturn, he wrote

"You command me, my Giovanni, to sing a hymn of recantation to Saturn, about whom I have recently complained a great deal ... I accuse a certain melancholy disposition, a thing which seems to be very bitter unless, having been softened, it may in a measure be made sweet for us by frequent use of the lyre."(18)

We can see from these examples and anecdotes that music-making played an important part in Ficino's every-day life - but it must not be forgotten that it was the ritual aspect of the performance, the role of music and words as elements of an intentional 'magical' operation where 'diligence and divine chance' combined to effect psychological transformation, which stirred the magus in him. The power of appropriate music at an appropriate time could lead the soul to 're-member' itself in an act of immense spiritual significance, as Ficino reminds Foresi with the words "may the well-tempered lyre always be our salvation when we apply ourselves to it rightly".(19) We have seen, in the example of his early letter to Cosimo (page 190), that Ficino was alert and sensitive to the synchronous and meaningful correlations between his ritual hymn-singing and outer events. We find another, somewhat humorous, example of this playful symbolic attitude in a letter to his great friend Giovanni Cavalcanti, whom he would like to visit him at Careggi.(20) Ficino says that he often whilst walking at sunrise through the woods, prayed to Apollo with his lyre, for as Orpheus moved oaks and stones with his playing, so he, Ficino, should be able to move the wooden and stony Giovanni to Careggi. But Apollo replies that his prayers will not work, for Giovanni is not made of stone and wood

but of iron. He says Ficino had better use the magical art of Zoroaster to transform the stone of the hills into a magnet, and draw his friend there by force. So, says Ficino, that is what he is trying to do, but it seems to be in vain. It would be so much better and easier than trying to change stones by this work if Giovanni would just change his mind and decide to visit - for as long as he wants to remain iron-like, Ficino's magical efforts are in vain. On receiving such a letter, how could his friend not comply with his request? The letter itself achieves the magical effect which was initiated in the ritual singing, we may imagine, of an Orphic hymn to Apollo at dawn.

4.8. The Orphic hymns

In Constantinople in 1423 a manuscript of Homeric hymns was found containing hymns attributed to Callimachus, Orpheus and Proclus.(21) The Orphic hymns, consisting of epithets in honour of Greek gods, were evidently used in rituals as they included the names of appropriate fumigations. To the men of the Renaissance they would seem to have stemmed from the pen of Orpheus himself, revered as both legendary musician and theologian.(22) I do not intend to consider in detail here the origins of Orphic cults and practices, or the various historical and mythological references to Orpheus in antiquity, as this material has been well covered elsewhere.(23) Suffice it to say that Ficino and his circle had no doubt about the authenticity of Orpheus' venerable reputation, which embraced two complementary aspects; the role of a *priscus theologus* - the founder of an esoteric mystery religion from whose disciples Pythagoras himself was believed to have learned his theory of musical proportion underlying all creation(24) - and that of a magical singer who descended to the underworld to bring back his wife Eurydice.

Religious Orphic rituals were themselves inextricably associated with Orpheus' skill as a poet and musician. On the famous expedition of the *Argo*, Orpheus was the effect-producing singer who stilled the music of the sirens;(25) in the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice he charms Charon with his song to row him over the river Styx to the underworld. This magical power inherent in his music which moved stones, animals and men underlines the

shamanic aspect of Orpheus' role as a religious leader, a role which for Ficino was essential as a model for the frenzy-possessed poet who was inspired directly by God. In his *De amore* Ficino sees Orpheus' writings as testimonies to his being seized by all four forms of Platonic frenzy - as a priest and prophet through his hymns and authority as an ancient theologian, as a lover through his passion for Eurydice which led him to the underworld, and as a musician through his inspired lyre-playing. In all these guises, Ficino stresses, it is the power of love which Orpheus brings into the world. 'Orphic' magic can only be effective by virtue of the all-pervading force of love, connecting and co-ordinating all elements of the cosmos in an alchemical process of four successive stages leading to ultimate unity with the *unus mundus*:

The first madness [poetic] tempers the unharmonious and dissonant things. The second [religious] makes the tempered things into a single whole from parts. The third [prophetic] makes it a single whole above parts. The fourth [amatory] leads it to the One which is above being and above the whole... That Orpheus was seized by all of these madneses, his books can testify."(26)

As an ancient theologian, next in line to Hermes and embodying the first Greek source of esoteric wisdom, Orpheus' importance for Ficino as a true religious and spiritual authority can hardly be overestimated. Ficino had the authority for Orpheus' position in this genealogy from Iamblichus, Proclus(27) and St. Augustine, for whom Orpheus predicted Christian truths.(28) His cult in the ancient world appears to be associated with personal religious need and purification of the soul rather than with public cults and exoteric religious practices - but so many cults and mysteries were connected with his name that it is impossible to identify specific 'orphic' rituals or find a unity of practice or belief. In general Orpheus was considered to be the founder of the 'mysteries', and in the words of Linforth:

"not only the poetry, but the music, the mimetic representation, the symbolism, the whole action of the ritual, which, based on significant myth, leads to ecstasy and religious transport, thus profoundly moving the soul of man, strengthening it and renewing it, were looked upon as the 'arts of Orpheus'."(29)

We can understand how Orpheus as *priscus theologus* lent such stature to Ficino's authentic identification with him as a musician and poet. Ficino's musical relationship with the Orphic hymns, which cannot be separated from his intellectual excitement at their significance, must date from very early in his Platonic career. We do not know much about his early education, but Della Torre suggests that Ficino had acquired his musical skills when a boy, perhaps at the hands of Luca da S. Gemignano.(30) Certainly by the time he received his benefice from Cosimo he was a skilled improviser and accompanist, and we have his own words as evidence that he was interested in natural magic when "still a youth".(31) As we have seen in the letter to Cosimo, these two interests of music and magic were united in his singing of Orphic hymns to magical/religious ends before he embarked on his translations of Hermes and Plato. Indeed it would appear that the Orphic hymns, together with the Orphic *Argonautica*(32) were among Ficino's first translations from Greek in the early 1460s. His biographer Giovanni Corsi confirms his hymn-singing as one of the first results of his excursion into the Greek authors:

"in a short time, when he was thoroughly versed in Greek literature ... he expounded the hymns of Orpheus, and it is said that he sang them to the lyre in the ancient style with remarkable sweetness."(33)

In a letter to Martinus Uranius over thirty years later,(34) Ficino relates how he was reluctant to publish these Orphic translations at the time lest he be accused of polytheism and demon-worship, and also because he had a strong belief in the importance of preserving their 'divine' content from misunderstanding:

"I have always been reluctant to publish the literal translations I made in my youth, for my private use, of the *Argonautica* and *Hymns* of Orpheus, Homer and Proclus ... I didn't want readers to think I was trying to bring back the ancient worship of the gods and daemons, now for so long rightly condemned. For just as the Pythagoreans of old were careful not to reveal divine things to the vulgar, so I have always been careful not to make profane things common property."(35)

That Cosimo, for one, enjoyed the young Ficino's 'orphyic' singing to the lyre and found it morally uplifting is testified by an affectionate anecdote. We find Cosimo at Careggi - "not so much for the purpose of

improving my fields as myself" - inviting Ficino to come to his villa with the newly-translated Plato, "for there is no employment to which I so ardently devote myself as to discover the true road to happiness." He adds, "Come then, and fail not to bring with you the Orphic lyre."(36) At the Platonic Academy, which was flourishing in the 1470s, evenings would often end with verses sung to the *lira*. We read in Della Torre(37) of a rhetorical exercise (probably taking place in 1473) when Ficino asked five promising young Academicians to prepare orations to Italian princes, as encouragement to wage war with the Turks. Five others, including Poliziano, took the places of the princes. Colucci tells us that everyone present was so overcome by emotion at the power of Giovanni Cavalcanti's oration that Ficino took up his lyre and sang some verses from the *Aeneid* to restore the lost tranquillity.

Why did Ficino consider the texts of the Orphic hymns to be such appropriate vehicles for therapeutic ritual invocation? We have already seen that Pico found them to be most effective for the practices of natural magic (page 286), and indeed his thirty-one 'Orphic Conclusions' tell us much about the rarefied mysticism surrounding the use of the hymns in occult ritual in the Academy. Their meaning could only be intuited by the initiate, it could not and should not be revealed openly, as the first conclusion stipulates ("the secret magic first elicited by us from the hymns of Orpheus must not be expounded in public")(38) and its efficacy depended on a positive, subjective resolution on the part of the practitioner:

"Whoever denies that it is possible to understand intellectually and perfectly, sensible properties by the way of secret or occult analogy, will not understand the essence of the Orphic Hymns."(39)

In other words, the hymns became the very means by which sense perception could be transmuted into intelligible knowledge, and this process demanded a symbolic attitude towards the world, the Plotinian capacity to turn round and see with other eyes, to read past the evidence of the senses and find the deeper significance accessible only to the intellect. The ability to be led towards greater self-understanding through using the power of analogy was a prerequisite for finding meaning in these ritual, incantatory prayers to the Greek gods. Ficino would have

been convinced that a supplication to a divinity, carried out with heartfelt intent and desire, would bring about a psychological transformation not through a reciprocal action by an externalised deity but through the internal workings of the imagination - 'active imaging' techniques. In this he followed the example of the Platonist Gemisthus Pletho, who as a visitor to the Council of Florence in 1438-9 was responsible for Cosimo's determination to revive Plato and thus indirectly for the Academy itself.

D.P. Walker suggests that Ficino's Orphic singing derived from Pletho's own ritual hymn-singing.(40) Pletho certainly copied the hymns and composed his own, with elaborate instructions for singing them, taking into account the appropriate musical modes, physical postures, days and times of day.(41) Many of his hymns were addressed to planetary and stellar deities, in particular the Sun, although as a polytheist and fervent anti-Christian Pletho also invoked higher, abstract metaphysical principles, a practice which would have been anathema to Ficino. However, the intent of Pletho's religious ritual was the subjective transformation of the worshipper, and in that he certainly foreshadowed Ficino. In singing such hymns, he wrote:

"We are moulding and stamping our own imagination and that part of us which is most akin to the divine ... making our imagination tractable and obedient to that which is divine in us."(42)

Ficino knew of the crucial role Pletho played in the revival of Platonism in Florence,(43) but it is unlikely he had access to any of his writings.(44) The direct historical link between the two men's hymn-singing is thus tenuous - Pletho's polytheistic paganism and strict determinist philosophy would not have endeared him to Ficino as a monotheistic upholder of free-will. But the spiritual link, the *intentio animi* with which they both approached the very use of incantation and invocation cannot be denied. For Ficino, the spirit in which one worshipped must be more important than the external appearance or peculiarity of the rite.(45) However, Walker plausibly suggests(46) that a possible reason for Ficino's reluctance to publish his Orphic translations might have been a desire not to be seen to be following in the footsteps of one so antagonistic towards the Christian faith. As far as Pico and

Ficino were concerned, the 'gods' of which Orpheus sang were "not ... deceiving devils .. but they are the names of natural and divine virtues."(47) They could find no contradiction between upholding the ultimate divine principle of unity and recognising the many manifestations of this divinity as archetypal powers diffused throughout the hierarchy of creation.

4.9. Harmonia

In the Pythagorean tradition, the study of number, or harmonic science, holds the key to both the ordering of the cosmos in its perfect equilibrium and to its audible representation in musical sound - so it is via harmonia that we move from the the exalted intellectual intentions behind Orphic incantations to Ficino's actual performance of them and the stylistic and musical conventions within which he worked as an improvvisatore.

Ficino's sole excursion into the practical application of musical harmonia is contained in a letter to his fellow philosopher-musician Domenico Benivieni(48) entitled *De rationibus musicae*;(49) this letter is highly significant in that it represents a departure from the rigours of traditional Pythagorean principles in favour of accomodating the practices of contemporary performers. Ficino also attempts here to unite the experience of astrological aspects with the nature of musical intervals - providing, perhaps, a key to the 'rules for composition' of his astrological music set forth in *De vita coelitus comparanda* (see page 284). But before considering this letter in some detail, we must look briefly at the concept of harmonia as it manifested in the medieval and early Renaissance theorists' systems of *musica mundana, humana* and *instrumentalis* analogies and in their understanding of the inherent expressive properties of modes; for in formulating his astrological music theory, it is highly probable that Ficino paid particular attention to the subtle variety of ethical effects traditionally associated with the differing arrangement of tones and semitones within a musical scale. In the *De amore* he wrote:

"Musicians make acute and grave tones, which are different by nature, more friendly to each other, by means of certain intervals and modes. From this derive the composition and

sweetness of harmony. They also temper slower and faster motions to each other in such a way that they become very good friends, and produce rhythm and harmony."(50)

As we saw in chapter one, *harmonia* in the Pythagorean tradition encompassed the harmonious relation of the individual or microcosmic part of the cosmos to the whole, in such a way that each individual became a reflection of the whole through its attunement to cosmic harmony.(51) The human soul, consisting of a tripartite divine, human and animal nature, was considered to be a harmony in itself, the fine tempering of which - the "tuning of the soul into consonance with the celestial harmony"(52) - would result in virtue. Similar tempering of the body would result in physical health, and the tuning of a musical instrument into the exact and simple numerical proportions underlying the cosmos (1:2, 3:2, 4:3) would reproduce its underlying nature in sound and thus produce music which could unite soul and body both with the cosmos and with each other. Thus, the maintainence of 'perfect' intervals in a tuning system, for the Platonists, was crucial and formed the basis for music's ethical properties. But within the limitation which the boundaries of octave, fourth and fifth imposed on sound, differing combinations of lesser intervals gave rise to the varying genera of tetrachords (diatonic, chromatic and enharmonic) and their combination into modes, as Ficino describes while commenting on the *Philebus*:(53)

"For if you cross from semitone to tones, you have the diatonic scale, serious and steady. If you go through several semitones, you have the soft chromatic scale. But if you go in a way through lesser tones, you have the difficult harmonic scale. And this is what Plato tells us to notice about music ... the Pythagoreans and Orphics called harmony the measured arrangement which results in one voice being adjusted to another when all is observed."(54)

Orpheus even assumes the role of prime music-theorist for Ficino, as the originator of the concept of the tetrachord as the four-stringed lyre of Apollo which regulates the order of the seasons:

"Orpheus introduced the tetrachord: for in the *Hymn to Phoebus* he gives Phoebus a lyre with four strings and he says summer comes when Phoebus touches the top string, winter when he touches the bottom one, autumn and spring when he touches the two middle ones."(55)

In the transformation of musical thought brought about by the pursuit of classical ideals in the fifteenth century, the Greek modal theory was perhaps the most fascinating element for the Renaissance musician as it corresponded to their growing concern with the personal, emotional response of the listener, in contrast to the complex theory of the medieval modal system based on plainchant.(56) The various qualities of the modes and their effects on the human being were commonly tabulated amongst medieval theorists in their discussions on the power of music;(57) for example, the twelfth-century Johannes Afflighemensis in his *De musica* devoted a chapter to "How different people are affected by different modes", noting that "The modes have individual qualities of sound, differing from each other, so that they prompt spontaneous recognition by an attentive musician or even by a practised singer."(58) Both Ugolino of Orvieto (1380-1457) and Jacques de Liège (1260-1330) were concerned with *musica humana* as a purpose of practical music; in his *Speculum musicae*, the largest surviving medieval music treatise on *musica humana*, Jacques de Liège compares the spiritual and physical condition of man to musical pitch: "the body serves as an image of the low notes and the soul of the high ones" and envisions *musica humana* not only as the union of body and soul, but also as the union of the soul with its inherent virtue, or *potentia*.(59)

The interdependence between the three kinds of music gave rise to an elaborate system of correspondences between modes and planetary motions amongst the medieval music theorists, who were inspired on the one hand by the pagan vision of Martianus Capella, on the other by the Christian Dionysius Areopagitus.(60) The mid ninth-century Aurelian of Réôme was the first writer of a music treatise to compare modes to the motions of planets and to consider the musical and emotional experience of hearing the song of the angelic choirs,(61) and it became standard practice amongst theorists of a Platonic bent to speculate on the correspondences between angelic hierarchies, planetary distances, parts of the soul and musical pitches. In the words of J. Dauphiné, "les trois musiques ... deviennent, comme dans la polyphonie, trois voix qui chantent respectivement leur propre chant et la mélodie commune."(62)

In the fifteenth century two key figures emerge before Gaffurius as representatives of a new approach to musical cosmology which emphasised the

participation of man in the cosmic hierarchy, and both have either indirect or direct influence on Ficino's own synthesis of astrology and music. They are Giorgio Anselmi and Bartolomé Ramos de Pareja, and their work deserves closer investigation. Giorgio Anselmi of Parma, like Ficino, combined activities as musician, astrologer, doctor and magician, producing six treatises, of which three (*De musica*, *Astronomia* and *Opus de magia disciplina*) are of interest to us. Only the *De musica* of 1434 has received the attention of modern scholars.(63) Whereas the *Astronomia* deals with objective, 'scientific' astrology in the Ptolemaic tradition, Anselmi's treatise on magic demonstrates a participatory use of astrological ritual involving images and orations to planetary daemons which links it directly with Ficino's *Liber de vita*, although it is doubtful whether Ficino would have read it.(64) Discussing the role of ceremonial, Anselmi has this to say on the purpose of incantation: "Indeed an incantation is a religious bringing forth of words necessary for the execution of the intention whose parts are: invitation, invocation, conjuration, oration and imprecation."(65) In the *Oratio Saturni* Anselmi calls on Saturn not only as the bringer of sadness and hardship but of wisdom, intellect and memory and the understanding of hidden things,(66) which testifies to the fact that Ficino was not the first to discover the planet's hidden treasures. This treatise certainly requires a modern translation and edition to enable us to place Anselmi more clearly in context as an early Renaissance magus.

Whatever Anselmi's occult practices, his music treatise is more conventional; in the words of Handschin, "a monument to the revival of Platonism in the first half of the 15th century" and a prized possession of Gaffurius (who links Anselmi and Ficino by drawing on both men's work).(67) The treatise is based on Boethius' *De institutione musicae*, in three sections dealing with *musica mundana*, the tonal system and choral singing. In the first section, Anselmi's emphasis is on correspondences, with an amplification of the medieval systems of chains of being - he combines the Christian model of angels singing their endless *Sanctus* with pitches of planets in their individual movements and the harmonies made by the relationship of the planets' epicycles to the fixed stars.(68) Each planet is assigned to an angelic order, and the pitch of each planetary sphere varies according to its relative position - it is not fixed.(69) The whole produces harmony in accordance with the laws controlling the World Soul.

Anselmi's interest in astrology is illustrated in his comparison of planetary epicycles and astrological aspects with musical intervals: he relates the diatonic genus to the planets' cycles, the chromatic to the slowly-revolving fixed stars.(70) However, despite the customary section on *musica humana* and the ethical power of music,(71) Anselmi's treatise remains essentially speculative, not practical in scope. For a radical departure from traditional Pythagorean theory in the service of the practising musician, we must look to Ramos de Pareja in his *Musica practica* of 1482, written only two years before Ficino's *De rationibus musicae*, in the neighboring town of Bologna.(72)

By the early fifteenth century, more emphasis was being placed on the importance of practical, as well as speculative, dimensions of the musician's art; we read, for example in Ugolino of Orvieto's *Declaratio musicae disciplinae* that the true musician must have command of both through mind and senses.(73) With the discovery of more classical texts, the importance of *ethos* for humanist musicians grew and with it the need to find a way of uniting contemporary musical practice with classical ideals. For the Platonic musician, the aim of music must be liberation from the realm of the senses to a vision of true reality, yet paradoxically this may only be achieved through sense-perception of the image or echo of this reality. Those who place empirical experimentation before intellectual speculation ("preferring to use their ears instead of their minds")(74) in their pursuit of harmonic analysis are prone to error, as Socrates points out in the *Philebus*:

"Music-making ... produces harmony by trained guesswork rather than by measurement: for example, consider the playing of stringed instruments, which uses guesswork to pinpoint the correct length of each string as it moves. Consequently, there is little in it that is reliable, much that is uncertain."(75)

However, the practising musician of the Renaissance, however devout a Platonist, was required to accommodate both the fast-developing emancipation of the consonant third and the compromise demanded by technique and aural perception into his speculative philosophy. He could no longer be content with *musica speculativa* as the sole concern of the true musician - the gap was closing between the theoreticians and the performers. Ramos' *Musica*

practica is revolutionary in that in it he revises the standard Pythagorean tuning system, combining perfect fourths and fifths with consonant thirds and sixths, achieving the just intonation ratios of 4:5 and 5:6 for major and minor thirds and laying the foundation for a system of equal temperament.(76) In suggesting that performers should judge intervals by their ears, advocating the slight tempering of fifths if necessary, he was the first theorist to deny the authority of such giants as Boethius and Guido d'Arezzo and incurred much opposition from his contemporary traditionalists, particularly Gaffurius who still regarded thirds as irrational intervals (the Pythagorean major third of 81:64 and minor of 32:27). Ramos advocated an 'easier' division of the monochord for the benefit of those musicians who want to sing, not speculate:

"The regular monochord has been subtly divided by Boethius with numbers and measure. But although this division is useful and pleasant to theorists, to singers it is laborious and difficult to understand. And since we have promised to satisfy both, we shall give a most easy division of the regular monochord."(77)

Despite their rivalry, Gaffurius borrowed (but did not acknowledge) Ramos' diagram representing the interrelation of Muses, planets and modes for the frontispiece of his *Practica musicae* of 1496 and for insertion in Book IV of his *De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum* opus of 1518(78) (see Appendix 1.1, page 368); both men, in including the Muses in their analogies, were most likely to have been directly influenced by Ficino, for whom, following Plato, the Muses represented personifications of musical pitch; one was assigned to each orbiting sphere, and one to the overall concord supposedly produced by the whole harmonious movement of the heavens.(79)

It would also seem that Ficino was aware of Ramos' innovations, as we shall see. Ramos, in his correspondences between the three musics, goes further than any of his predecessors or contemporaries (including Ficino) by specifying the type of *musica instrumentalis* which could induce a state of being in the individual corresponding to planetary influences. He aligns, for the first time, Muses, planets, musical pitches and the emotional affects of the eight modes, comparing each mode to a humour and thus making the connection between *musica humana* and *instrumentalis*.

Although Ramos uses the standard sources of Martianus Capella, Macrobius, Ptolemy and Boethius, his synthesis of cosmic and human music through the connection of modal ethos with planets goes beyond Boethian *musica speculativa*. Ramos illustrates his analogies in a complex diagram of spirals which recall the planets in their spheres and which is curiously reminiscent of Ficino's description of sound as a series of spiralling ovals in his commentary on the *Timaeus*.(80) This Oroboros image (demonstrated even more graphically in Gaffurius' version) is of course a powerful alchemical one (see page 48), and suggests a hidden dimension of spiritual unity beyond the apparent intellectual game of analogy (see Appendix 1.2, page 369). We see Ramos attempting to connect *musica mundana* with actual auditive experience, and it is not such a great step from here to Ficino's astrological 'music therapy' technique. '

Both Nicolaus Burtius in 1487(81) and his supporter Gaffurius concentrate on the emotional effects of modes - Gaffurius links the qualities of modes with emotional states, planets, signs of the zodiac and Muses (see pages 324-5), and intervals with parts of the soul(82) following the precedent of Ptolemy in Book three of his *Harmonics*.(83) Ficino never mentions specific modes in relation to ethical effects, but we can perhaps infer from his rules for composition in the *De vita coelitus comparanda* that he was aware of the subtle preferences in different regions for particular pitches or sound-qualities (*toni*) which may also imply their relationship within a melodic pattern in the sense of a mode.(84) Ptolemy's speculations on the correspondences between the inter-relationships between the zodiacal signs and musical intervals may also have inspired Ficino's formulation of the rules, and undoubtedly formed the basis of his letter written five years earlier, to which we now return.

Ficino begins *De rationibus musicae* by summoning the authority of Hermes Trismegistus, who tells us that both the 'true music' of the mind and the its reflection or echo in audible music were given us by God so that we may both imitate and honour him.(85) He reveres Pythagoras precisely because he gave equal importance to both the theoretical and the practical aspects of such worship - for Ficino, intellectual speculation demands to be balanced by activity in the world, and this is reflected in his attitude towards music. As William Bowen has discussed in reference to this

letter,(86) the study of harmonic science, being based on number as the intermediary between the incorporeal and corporeal realms, should involve both philosophical inquiry and musical practice, and no musician worthy of the name would pursue one aspect at the expense of the other. Ficino devotes the rest of his letter to a study of consonance and dissonance, not as a dry theoretical exposition, but, as we would expect, in the vivid, imaginative and qualitative language of metaphor.

In his Commentary on the *Timaeus*, when dealing purely theoretically with the Pythagorean tetraktys as a model for the structure of the cosmos, Ficino had necessarily established the perfect intervals of fourth, fifth and octave as the primary musical ratios.(87) However, to the ear of the practising musician, the consonance of the third and sixth is evident, and in both his *De amore* and in *De rationibus musicae* Ficino confirms this opinion. In the *De amore* he wrote:

"In Music ... artists investigate what numbers love what numbers either more or less. They find the least love between one and two and between one and seven. Between one and three, four, five or six, they find a stronger love."(88)

In his letter Ficino postulates a 'syntonic' scale where the third with the ratio of 5:4 is included amongst the elementary concords yet without jeopardising the supremacy of the tetraktys; for such a ratio may be expressed as 1+1/4:1.(89) Indeed, the third is singled out as the first interval "to delight the ear" since it is the first interval whose tempering, by an extra fourth part, falls within the tetraktys and therefore allows an easy return to a state of unity:

"now three parts are easily added to one to achieve unity, for the number three is considered by many to be indivisible, all embracing and the most perfect of all, in which particulars it corresponds most closely to unity."(90)

It is the ear, says Ficino, which must judge when two notes are dissonant with each other, when they most clearly sound as two notes. The more clearly they are perceived to blend into a single note, the more consonant the interval, for this is in accord with the nature of hearing which "itself is one and arises from one". The hearing is "soothed by

unity and offended by duality", and it is Ficino's priority as one performer writing to another to concentrate on audible sound production and aural discrimination.(91) In this respect he is not interested in setting out theoretical minutiae; although the resulting scale involves two different sized tones (9:8 and 10:9), Ficino only specifies the former, adding vaguely that "a smaller ratio produces a semitone".(92) In keeping with musical practice, the third is even considered more consonant than the fourth - he talks of the "gentle harmony of the third" as "recalling Cupid and Adonis" and of the perfect triad of third, fifth and octave, "more pleasing than the rest", reminding us of the nature of the three Graces.(93) William Bowen has pointed out that the conflict between Ficino's desire to accommodate the requirements of contemporary practice with traditional principles "signals a characteristic problem of Renaissance harmonic science which was eventually resolved by abandoning traditional theory all together."(94)

Using the analogy of the Hermetic procession of the soul, or the neo-platonic *emanatio-conversio-remeatio* from its original state of unity through incarnation and return to God, Ficino describes the qualities of concords and discords within a musical scale, giving clear precedence to the pleasing quality of thirds and sixths:

"The lowest note, because of the very slowness of the motion in which it is engaged, seems to stand still. The second note, however quite falls away from the first and is thus dissonant deep within. But the third, regaining a measure of life, seems to rise and recover consonance. The fourth note falls away from the third, and for that reason is somewhat dissonant; yet it is not so dissonant as the second, for it is tempered by the harming approach of the subsequent fifth, and simultaneously softened by the gentleness of the preceding third. Then, after the fall of the fourth, the fifth now arises; it rises ... in greater perfection than the third, for it is the culmination of the rising movement; while the notes that follow the fifth are held by the followers of Pythagoras not so much to rise as to return to the earlier ones. Thus the sixth, being composed of the double third, seems to return to it, and accords very well with its yielding gentleness. Next the seventh note unhappily returns, or rather slips back to the second and follows its dissonance. Finally the eighth is happily restored to the first, and by this restoration, it completes the octave, together with the repetition of the first, and it also completes the chorus of the Nine Muses,

pleasingly ordered in four stages, as it were: the still state, the fall, the arising and the return."(95)

The final two sections of the letter concern the physical and astronomical causes of harmony, relating the fundamental Pythagorean intervallic ratios to the realms of the senses, elements and planets. Ficino gives the standard Platonic theory(96) concerning the proportional relationship of elements, both in respect to each other and to human senses: sight with fire, hearing with air, smell with a vapour blended from air and water, taste with water and touch with earth. He considers how the varying elemental proportions present in the sense of hearing correspond to the ratios of the perfect consonances - hearing contains one degree of earth, one and a third of water, one and half of fire and two of air, which is why these consonances resonate most powerfully.(97) In following Plato, Ficino does not attempt to be consistent with his previous statement concerning consonant thirds and sixths. He somewhat cursorily summarises the views of the Platonici then moves onto a subject which holds more personal fascination and scope for exploration - the relationship between astrological aspects and musical intervals.

In this section, Ficino draws heavily on Book three of Ptolemy's *Harmonics*.(98) Ptolemy, as we have seen in chapter three, was concerned with the 'scientific' exposition of astrology as a logical system. As a mathematician, he sought to show that the principles underlying *musica mundana, humana* and *instrumentalis* formed a rationally coherent structure from which perceived beauty of sound, virtue of soul and cosmic order naturally result. Although basically adhering to Pythagorean principles, Ptolemy diverges from the orthodox Platonic strand in taking as his foremost criteria the world of appearance and sense-perception; in the words of Andrew Barker, for Ptolemy "the task of harmonics is to explicate the mathematical foundations of systems whose beauty and excellence is evident to the ear, not those of some other, purely theoretical constructions."(99) It is these underlying mathematical patterns of organisation which reveal to us the unity of the human soul with the cosmos and which are represented audibly in musical structures - they can be known through scientific investigation and constitute an unshakeable reference point in relation to the instability of material manifestation.

Ptolemy specifies analogies between concords and distinctions of soul,(100) modulations of tonos (mode) and life-crises,(101) between the twelve tones of the two-octave Greek scale and the signs of the zodiac(102) and between planets and pitches, based on the relative distances of the bodies from the earth.(103) In the correspondences between the interrelationships of zodiacal signs - whether harmonious or discordant - with musical concords and discords, Ptolemy maintains a rigorously objective perspective. His purpose is to show that astrology is a science, dependent on number. As we would expect, Ficino is more concerned with a qualitative appraisal of the human experience of astrological aspects as a determinant for musical consonance; thus the third, which corresponds to the sextile aspect (a division of sixty degrees between the first and third signs, Aries to Gemini) must be harmonious, as the aspect is indisputably 'friendly'; the fourth will inevitably sound dissonant as the square aspect (a division of ninety degrees) is traditionally a meeting of discordant, unblending natures (such as fiery Aries to watery Cancer). However, Ficino is never limited by the bounds of an earthly perspective; all seemingly adverse phenomena must be blessings in disguise. This attitude does not allow him to take the fatalistic line of determinist astrology, where the square aspect is considered irreparably malefic.(104) He therefore compromisingly calls the fourth a "middling dissonance".(105)

In his Commentary on Plotinus of five years later, Ficino goes even further. In upholding the Plotinian vision of cosmic unity he insists on the incompatibility of the concept of dissonance with the divinely-ordered harmony of the heavens, in which all tends towards the good of the All. Certain musical intervals are only considered dissonant due to the imperfection of the earthly condition - in their archetypal model they all contribute to the perfection of the whole:

"Indeed not only is Cancer not dissonant from Aries, but it is consonant, for those parts are both of one greatly uniform body and of the same nature (which are discordant amongst us by harmonic tempering) and no less in heaven than in musical song are all things consonant amongst themselves. And so perhaps it is permitted for us to devise human music from the heavenly harmony, for the Pythagoreans called the heavens the lyre of God. Therefore the union of the Planets represents for us the consonance of the octave, for this seems to blend with the first tone; indeed the heavenly opposition, which takes place in the seventh [house], also for us represents the most dissonant

of all, the seventh tone; the sextile aspect, which is in the third sign, [corresponds to] the third tone, the square to the fourth, the trine which is in the fifth house, to the fifth. Thus when in our musical consonance the fourth or seventh tones occur, which are dissonant in themselves, nevertheless together with the others they bring about agreeable harmony, and so all the aspects are judged to be necessary for absolute concord much more greatly in the harmony of the heavens. Hence it is that the wiser Astronomers, having observed a square aspect, or a sextile, or a trine, not only do not shudder, but eagerly desire it; it also means that through time units of seven, whether of days of illness, or years of life, in which the Moon or Saturn reach square aspects, the changes in us are not always for the worst, but often for the better."(106)

In *De rationibus musicae* Ficino gives a more detailed comparison of the qualities of aspects with intervals, emphasising the philosophical perspective which transcends the conventional interpretations of the astrologers. After comparing the 'harmonious and friendly' trine to the perfect fifth, he continues:

What shall we say of the sixth sign, by which is signified the soft and so to speak weak consonance of the sixth note? Although astrologers in judging a natal chart consider this weakness to be bad, nevertheless the ancient theologians think it is useful, since man himself is in truth mind itself, and the body is the prison of both man and mind, and the frailty of the prison will be useful in the future to he who is enclosed in it. After this, the seventh sign, which they call angular, is very vigorous in its discord, opposing the first, and seems in its clear hostility to prefigure the seventh tone in music, which with its vigorous and vehement quality is now most clearly dissonant from the first [tone]. There follows the eighth sign, which because death is assigned to it by the astrologers, is considered unfavourable by the common people; however in the opinion of the ancient theologians it is most fortunate for the celestial mind, since it finally dissolves its earthly prison and frees it from the dissonance of the elemental world, restoring it to its heavenly harmony. It is not without good reason therefore that it signifies the absolute consonance of the eighth tone which returns to the beginning .." (107)

In an adaptation of the Ptolemaic twelve-tone system, Ficino completes his journey around the zodiac by relating the ninth to twelfth signs back to the first with the corresponding intervals of fifth to second, again likening the fourth to the "human, middling discord" signified by the tenth

sign of worldly ambition, and the third to the eleventh sign of human friendship. The twelfth sign, "allotted to hidden enemies and prison", recapitulates the extreme dissonance of the second.(108)

When Ficino instructs us to find tones or modes which correspond to the pattern of the heavens in *De vita coelitus comparanda*, we may imagine that he would have these analogies in mind. The fact that he is more interested in the psychological implications of audible intervals than Ptolemy is reflected in a significant divergence in his system. Ptolemy does quite clearly state that our souls' movements correspond to the motions of musical intervals within a melody, and that they can be thus moulded by the specific idiosyncracies of its intervallic steps ("[the melody] draws our souls towards the conditions constituted from the likenesses of the ratios";(109)) but his concern for perfect mathematical symmetry does not allow the metaphysical or philosophical dimension to intrude. He compares the opposition aspect to an octave,(110) whereas for Ficino the dissonance of the seventh most clearly corresponds to the experienced tension of the opposition aspect in practice. What is more, the resolution of the seventh into the perfect concord of the octave musically embodies a metaphysical potential which for Ficino would provide its ultimate justification. Psychologically it could be seen to represent the resolution of the tension of opposites within the individual, the final alchemical *coniunctio* of mind with soul. Spiritually it embodies in sound the final release of the dissonance and tension of earthly existence into the perfect harmony of the divine realm through the transcendence of death, symbolised by the eighth sign of Scorpio.(111) Ficinian *harmonia* is far from a rational study of harmonic ratio for its own sake - as in all his writings, we are continually drawn into the dimension of irrational experience and led to reflect on the nature of the human condition.

4.10. Ficino as *improvisatore*

It remains to look at the exoteric tradition within which Ficino, as a performing artist, developed his particular style of declamatory song as a vehicle for his esoteric quest. I shall therefore end this thesis with an attempt to place him in the context of the indigenous Italian musical

activity of the late *quattrocento*, with a consideration of his performance practice together with speculations on the type of instrument he may have used and on his choice of musical form for his hymn-singing and astrological improvisations.

During the late fifteenth century the most popular form of secular music in aristocratic circles (especially in vogue at the courts of Lorenzo and Piero de' Medici) was the French chanson, and indeed during the entire century Italian musical culture was dominated by French and Flemish composers. The Flemish polyphonists - the *oltremontani* - brought an elaborate contrapuntal style to the most popular form of sacred vocal music, the ceremonial Latin motet. Such a polyphonist was Heinrich Isaac (known as Arrigo Tedesco), resident in Florence from 1484 to 1494, who was music tutor to Lorenzo's sons, and who composed a setting for Poliziano's lament on Lorenzo's death.(112) It is inconceivable that Ficino would not have had some contact with Isaac as an intimate of the Medici circle, but the two men would have had little in common. Ficino's music was in service to his philosophy and of an intensely personal significance - he would find little of interest in the concerns of the professionally-trained court composer.(113)

Of indigenous Italian vocal music, two main genres can be distinguished towards the end of the century. Firstly the popular carnival songs - *canti carnascialeschi*(114) - which celebrated their golden age under Lorenzo who, strongly influenced by Platonic ideals of artistic and musical representation, infused mythological and Platonic themes into the lavish processions and *trionfi*. The sacred counterpart to these festivities were the *sacre rappresentazioni*(115) whose musical content consisted of *laude*, the religious form of the *frottola* using the same poetic metres.(116) However, in tracing the roots of Ficino's performance practice we must look to the other major trend in native Italian vocal music, that of the self-accompanied singer or *improvvisatore* who improvised on the lute, *lira da braccio* or *viola*, either to sung verse in the standard poetic forms of *strambotti*, *terze rime*, *sonnetti*, *ode* and *capitoli*, or in an unmeasured, quasi-declamatory manner recited epic poetry, chivalric cycles, biblical extracts or Greek and Latin verses to a spontaneous chordal accompaniment.(117)

The encouragement of both these styles by the humanists, who believed they were imitating the practice of the ancients, was directly opposed to the "convoluted scholastic thought"(118) of the polyphonic school. I tend to agree with James Haar that "When Marsilio Ficino took up his lyre ... to sing the Orphic Hymns he would not have concerned himself with mensural rhythms and contrapuntal rules, whether he knew anything about them or not, because the ancients knew nothing of all this."(119) The new Renaissance ideal centred on the importance of the individual and his subjective response to a work of art. The new genre of humanist-musician was concerned with the effective transmission of the meaning of the text, in collaboration with appropriate musical harmony and mode, and he arrived at his representation from the innate musicality of poetic verse structure. He was more interested in the immediate effects produced on the listener than in the technical aspects of composition - which inevitably gave rise to a re-evaluation of the accepted theories of consonance and dissonance.(120) However towards the end of the century "a better understanding between humanists and polyphonic composers"(121) emerged, due to the activity and writing of a new breed of humanist-theorist such as Tinctoris and Gaffurius.

For the Platonist, poetry is the first music and as such must command *musica instrumentalis* as its servant - "the humanist poets ... regarded the musical performance of their verses as a natural extension of the process by which language becomes poetry".(122) It is the importance of the text which determines the aesthetic value of the music, which in turn acts to 'spiritualise' the words. As we saw earlier in this chapter, the addition of music to a text enabled its content to be transmitted more effectively to the human soul. The *aria* or 'spirit' of a piece of music (such as dance music, popular melodies or simple *frottole*) was to be found in its particular intangible quality - if this was married to the meaning of a text its power to move the listener would be intensified. Paolo Cortese, who in his *De cardinalatu* of 1510 gives us a vital insight into performance practice around the turn of the century (although, as Pirrotta points out, his literary interest was "more faithful to the letter than the spirit of classicism")(123) describes different ways of singing according to the Phrygian, Lydian and Dorian modes,(124) and he emphasises the ethical effect of poetry enhanced by a musical setting:

"When the rhythms of the words and sentences are combined with the sweetness of the melodic modes, nothing can prevent the audience from being exceedingly moved because of the power of the ear and of its similarity to the soul. And this happens quite often when either vehement motions are represented in the singing by the verses, or the spirits are exhorted to the learning of morals and knowledge, on which human happiness is dependent."(125)

Such a marriage of words and music was not to be found in the scholastic polyphonic tradition, where the skilled invention of intricate contrapuntal imitation reigned supreme.

The distinction between the two trends within this genre of accompanied song tends to blur, particularly towards the end of the century. Latin verses were both set to pre-composed, measured music and declaimed in a freer, recitative style with a discreet accompaniment. The art of setting poetry to music from which the genre of the *frottola* flowered, paying close attention to word-stress and homophonic chordal accompaniment, could be seen to fall half-way between the French *chanson* and the art of the *improvvisatori*.(126) Of this repertoire we have many surviving examples in the ten publications of the Venetian printer Petrucci, from 1504-14.(127) It is much more difficult to speculate on the type of music used by the true *improvvisatori*, such as Ficino himself, for nothing remains written down - indeed it was unnecessary and inappropriate to commit the inspiration of the moment to paper. However we do know that the most praised performers were those whose accompaniment was the most simple and tasteful, so as not to obscure the clear presentation of the text. Ficino's contemporary Vincenzo Calmeta praises two celebrated *improvvisatori* of the day for their art of musical understatement:

Cariteo and Serafino ... have been foremost in our day, and have striven to accompany their rhymes with easy and simple music, that the excellence of their witty and sententious words might be better understood: for they have the judgement of a discerning jeweller, who, wanting to display the finest and whitest pearl, will not wrap it in a golden cloth, but in some black silk, that it might show up better."(128)

4.11. Performance practice

The most essential and highly-regarded ingredient of the *improvvisatore's* art, from the Platonic point of view, was his possession by *furox divinus* which enabled him to communicate divine truth through his direct visionary or intuitive channel to the intelligible realm (see chapter two, part five). The creation of the 'inspired madman'(129) utterly eclipses those who think that technique alone will make them good artists, and this inspiration, springing from the Muses, will flow from poet to performer to audience like the power of a magnet.(130) So highly does Ficino regard the frenzy of the musician, that he goes further than Plato in stipulating that "any madness, whether the prophetic, hieratic or amatory, justly seems to be released as poetic madness when it proceeds to songs and poems".(131) This concept is elaborated in his letter to Agli mentioned on page 255, where Ficino distinguishes between two forms of music-making: that which attempts to imitate *musica mundana* merely through beauty of sound and harmonious interplay of voices, and that far superior form which takes as its priority the communication of the meaning of a poetic text:

"Some [men] imitate the celestial music by harmony of voice and the sounds of various instruments, and these we call superficial and vulgar musicians. But some, who imitate the divine and heavenly harmony with deeper and sounder judgement, render a sense of its inner reason and knowledge into verse, feet and numbers. It is these, who, inspired by the divine spirit, give forth with full voices the most solemn and glorious song. Plato calls this solemn music and poetry the most effective imitation of the celestial harmony ... it expresses with fire the most profound and ... prophetic meanings... In Plato's view, this poetic frenzy springs from the Muses; but he considers both the man and his poetry worthless who approaches the doors of poetry without the call of the Muses, in the hope that he will become a good poet by technique."(132)

The poets are the interpreters of the gods, and in their condition of spiritual possession appear to become entirely removed from the constraints and norms of accepted human behaviour: "Whoever experiences any kind of spiritual possession is indeed overflowing on account of the vehemence of the divine impulse and the fullness of its power: he raves, exults, and exceeds the bounds of human behaviour" says Ficino in his Commentary on the

Phaedrus.(133) When music is in service to such a condition, the possibility of the psychological transformation of the listener is intensified. In the *De amore* Ficino describes the therapeutic function of such divinely-inspired music in the process of tempering the discordant soul, ill at ease in its 'fallen' condition:

"Therefore first there is need for the poetic madness, which, through musical sounds, arouses those parts of the soul which are asleep, through harmonious sweetness calms those which are perturbed, and finally, through the consonance of diverse things, drives away dissonant discord and tempers the various parts of the soul."(134)

But in addition to the submission to such a highly-charged state of rapture, the musician must cultivate a manner of performance which allows effective transmission of the power from the creative source to his audience. The tensile equilibrium sustained by a combination of free-flowing, divine inspiration with a disciplined, consciously cultivated quality of total technical ease and mastery - Ficino's "diligence and divine chance"(135) - allows a merging of the eternal and temporal dimensions in a moment of great transformative power. At such moments, the magical element of *grazia* can be manifest, the spiritual 'grace' (*[[il] dono della natura e de' cieli*(136)) by means of which the listener may be reminded of the ideal music beyond the audible. This subtle, restraining quality is defined by Baldassare Castiglione in his famous book on the nature of the ideal courtier, *Il Cortegiano*, as *sprezzatura*.(137) Literally meaning 'disdain', *sprezzatura* refers to the consciously-cultivated nonchalance, the artificial decorum through which the inner tension of *furor* is channelled. In his admiration for this *arte che non appare esser arte*(138) Castiglione anticipates by almost a century the enthusiasm of Guilio Caccini and the Florentine Camerata for the style and technique of the solo singer as a virtuoso with his effortless execution of intricate vocal ornamentation.

Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* is an entertaining and lively discussion between a group of aristocrats at the Palace of Urbino, between 1508 and 1516, which provides us with a picture of the most highly-regarded attributes and accomplishments of the ideal Renaissance man. The qualities to be prized are appropriate action, moderation in all things, the creation

of a refined *persona*, perfect integrity and cultivated tastes. Intrinsic to the cultivation of the *persona*, or faculty of mediation between the inner man and the world, is *sprezzatura*, the notion of superb execution of a skill with consummate ease, mastery and nonchalance. There must be no hint of self-importance, rather, it demonstrates a literal 'self-consciousness' implying self-knowledge, not false humility or egocentricity. In the words of Ludovico di Canossa:

"I have discovered a universal rule which seems to apply more than any other in all human actions or words: namely, to steer away from affectation at all costs ... and to practise in all things a certain nonchalance which conceals all artistry and makes whatever one says or does seem uncontrived and effortless. I am sure that grace springs especially from this."(139)

In a musical performance, *sprezzatura* involves a combination of concealed technical accomplishment and personal charisma, or *aria*. Castiglione presents a view of the new Renaissance musical artist, valuing the highly-charged, erotic quality of live performance over theoretical speculation.(140) Appropriate gesture and movement (imitating the motions of the spheres, Ficino would say) aids the effective delivery of a text, a practice which was evidently abused by some contemporary performers - the theorist Gaffurius in 1496 even went so far as to say "an extravagant and indecorous movement of the head or hands reveals an unsound mind in a singer".(141) The image created by the performer should seem totally effortless and spontaneous, no matter how much work has been expended behind the scenes on technical and musical preparation: "for to reveal intense application and skill robs everything of grace".(142) A performance was no less than an attempt to reflect the order and harmony of the cosmos on an earthly plane, with the maximum concealment of human effort. If the musician was inspired by a divinity, then the quality of his performance must appear to transcend the imperfections of earthly sweat and toil. Such a conviction would lead to the heights of ingenuity in the following century, when the extravagant musical rituals of the Italian court entertainments and *intermedii* employed complex machinery to produce seemingly miraculous effects. For Ficino, the *sprezzatura* of a performance would involve all the ingredients of natural magic which he sets forth in *De vita coelitus comparanda* - appropriate colours, fumigations, astrologically elected times, consideration of current planetary aspects

and movements, all in service to the skill and inspiration of the performer. Thus the magician/musician consciously composes his art of performance, yet avoids affectation, since every element is exactly appropriate for his task. He knows that he is merely an instrument, but only an instrument of the finest quality and clearest material would be worthy of conveying a message from the gods.

We may speculate that it is the charisma of a well-cultivated *sprezzatura*, when combined with and fertilised by the performer's inner condition of rapture or frenzy, which incites the *meraviglia* or marvel of the audience.(143) They are astounded by the unaffected expertise and moved by the inspired communication of the musician, and in the Platonic sense, the wings of their souls may begin to grow.(144) The very word *meraviglia* conjures up a surprise at new aspects of reality, a departure from normal experience, a startling flash of wonder at the combination of the human and divine, perfectly suiting the Renaissance love of paradox. In a woodcut from the poet Luigi Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore*(145) we see an *improvvisatore* with his *lira da braccio*, performing before an enraptured audience, profoundly moving at least one listener who is overcome by his emotion:



Castiglione also uses the concept of *sprezzatura* to refer to the element of spice produced in a musical piece by the appropriate insertion of a perfectly-judged discord:

"This is because to continue in perfect consonances produces satiety and offers a harmony which is too affected; but this disappears when imperfect consonances are introduced to establish the contrast which keeps the listener in a state of expectancy, waiting for and enjoying the perfect consonances more eagerly and delighting in the discord of the second or seventh, as in a display of nonchalance."(146)

He also anticipated Caccini in his admiration for carefully-studied yet seemingly improvised vocal ornamentation, provided it was used in moderation; the singer must seem to be capable of more than he reveals.(147) Castiglione describes specific ornamentation which would not become crystallised in print until Caccini's *Le Nuove Musiche* at the end of the century, and he confirms the popularity of solo-singing both *alla viola* and to the accompaniment of viols (*viole da arco*), whose sound he describes as *soavissima e artificiosa* - "extremely sweet and skilfully cultivated".(148) He regards monodic singing *alla viola* to be the most effective for communicating *il bel modo e l'aria* of the voice, which is not then obscured by the effects of many voices singing together; in this way "the instrument gives the words a really marvellous charm and effectiveness".(149)

In considering the question of the instrument Ficino himself is most likely to have played, we enter a rather bewildering forest of terminology which has received varying interpretations by modern scholars. Of the instrument Castiglione refers to as *viola*, Haraszti points out that this is most likely to mean a plucked instrument (the *viola da mano*) such as the guitar-shaped, softer equivalent to the lute, the *vihuela*.(150) Kemp agrees, but suggests that *viola* always refers to the *vihuela*, when in fact it clearly often means *lira da braccio*.(151) Becherini avoids definitions altogether.(152) We can however assume that *viola* at this time tends to refer to any bowed, stringed instrument, and also to a plucked equivalent, but distinct from the lute family.

Castiglione firmly distinguishes between solo singing to a viola and to a viol consort - the *viola da arco*. Contrary to the assumption of at least one modern translation,(153) singing to a solo viol (that is, a member of the *viola da gamba* family) was not common practice. Distinctions are further confused by the increasingly popular use of the *lira da braccio* in humanist circles; a bowed, chordal instrument often depicted in the hands of Orpheus)(154), and known as *viola* and *cetra* as well as *lira*. Becherini quotes a description of the *improvvisatore* L'Unico Aretino which testifies to the use of *cetra* for the *lira*, the only instrument held under the chin: "*si disponeva con la cetra in collo a dire all'improvviso*".(155) Such an instrument was undoubtedly played by the well-known Ferrarese composer-performers Francesco and Alfonso della Viola and the Florentine Baccio Ugolini, who played the title role in Poliziano's *Orfeo* (see page below).

Contemporary distinctions between plucked and bowed instruments are given in Tinctoris' treatise *De inventione et usu musicae* of c.1484.(156) Tinctoris tells us that the *lyra* is commonly called *lute* (*leutum*) and is an umbrella term for all similar instruments: *viola*, *rebec*, *guitar*, *cetula* and *tambura*.(157) He gives the origin of the *lyra* as Spanish, from which evolved the instrument which the Italians call *viola* and the French 'half-lute' (*dimidium leutum*). The *lute*, he says, is much larger and shaped like a tortoise-shell. He specifies that the Italian *viola* is the *lira da braccio* which plays simple chords and has sympathetic strings untouched by the player's bow.(158) Tinctoris emphasises that in Italy and Spain the *viola* is often played without a bow, and in Spain given the name *vihuela*, which suggests that the *lira da braccio* was sometimes plucked.(157) Cortese (in *De cardinalatu*) evidently means *vihuela* when he refers to the 'Spanish lyre' (*hispana lyra*) as being generally softer and more uniform in sound than the *lute* (as well as more tedious to the ear!).(159) The *vihuela*, as originated in Spain, had both plucked and bowed versions.(161) However, Tinctoris specifically mentions that the *viola* with a little bow (*arculo*) is particularly used *ad historiarum recitationem*.(162) Tinctoris provides us with evidence that *lyra* refers to all varieties of chordal instrument used as accompaniment in the late fifteenth century. We have no evidence of self-accompanied singers using a bowed viol, which with its curved bridge would not easily lend itself to chordal accompaniment and

which in any case only evolved, through a modification of the *vihuela da arco*, at the end of the century.(163) Pirrotta somewhat confusingly assumes *viola* to mean *viol*, but then says it was shaped like the *vihuela* and plucked.(164) The most sensible conclusions would appear to be that the *viola da mano* refers to any plucked, guitar-shaped instrument commonly known as *vihuela*, while the *viola da arco* refers to a bowed version of the same or to the *lira da braccio*. This is in accord with Tinctoris' definitions.

For the humanists, singing to the *lyra* or *cithara* (Ficino uses the two terms interchangeably) conjured up an ancient performance practice of rhetorical declamation of lyric poetry, not necessarily a particular instrument.(165) When Ficino speaks of his 'Orphic lyre' we cannot be sure whether he means *lute*, *vihuela*, *lira da braccio*, or even a harp-like imitation of an ancient lyre. In support of the latter, we have three possible pieces of evidence. The memorial bust by Andrea Ferrucci (see frontispiece) in Florence Cathedral shows him holding a volume of Plato in the manner of a harp, which may however be purely an artistic conceit since it was created twenty-three years after Ficino's death; Ficino's letter to Foresi (see pages 290-1) suggests that he played an instrument that required a plectrum; and Bishop Campano in his eye-witness account of Ficino's performance (see pages 289-90) uses the verb *percutere*, to strike, beat or hit (*percutit ille lyram*). Since in the late fifteenth century the lute was still being played with a plectrum (although the custom was dying out), it is by no means unlikely that Ficino played it. He himself used the verb *pulsare* (see reference 17 to this part) which means to strike, hit, touch or knock an instrument. Unless Ficino is using this term figuratively, it is unlikely to refer to the action of a bow (which might be expressed simply by *sonare*).

However, the bowed *lira* was undoubtedly the instrument most clearly associated with Orpheus in contemporary iconography,(166) and that most favoured by lyric and narrative poets for their self-accompaniment as it was thought to have been invented by the ancient Greeks. But we must also take into consideration the question of the circumstances in which Ficino played his *lyra*; neither *lute* nor *lira* would be as easily portable as a harp, and Ficino certainly took his instrument out into the woods of

Careggi. I would also speculate, and this is pure speculation, that Ficino would have been more likely to prefer the relatively simple immediacy of a plucked harp/lyre to the extreme technical intricacies of a lute or lira. His performance style was highly idiosyncratic and entirely in service to his philosophy. He would have used his instrument to enhance the direct communication of the text by providing appropriate harmonic support which must never be obtrusive or over-elaborate - the aim was not to display technical prowess. That much we can safely assume; however, in the end we must concede that its exact nature remains ambiguous.

What of Ficino's contemporary improvisatory performers? That *improvvisatori* existed in mid-15th century Italian courts who were exemplars of Orpheus, ravishing the audience with their arie and technical expertise, is well attested. Castiglione refers to the ability of the singers Bidone and Marco Cara:(167)

Bidone's style of singing is so skilful, quick, vehement and passionate, and of such melodious variety, that the spirits of those listening are excited and aroused, and feel so exalted that they seem to be drawn up to heaven. Then the singing of our own Marchetto Cara is just as moving, but its harmonies are softer; his voice is so serene and so full of plaintive sweetness that he gently touches and penetrates our souls, and they respond with great delight and emotion."(168)

The singer-lutenist Pietrobono of Ferrara, active from the 1440s to 1480s, received the most widespread adulation amongst his contemporaries,(169) famed by poets, writers and theorists for his improvised singing of narrative verse to the lute.(170) In the words of Lockwood, "of Pietrobono not a note of written music is preserved, yet he is beyond doubt one of the most important figures in all of 15th century music, certainly in Italy."(171) In the poem *La Sforziade* by Antonio Cornazano completed in 1459,(172) recreating in Homeric vein a wedding banquet for Francesco Sforza of three years earlier, a musician is called on to play after a stirring speech about war. This is Pietrobono, "whom the stars have endowed with soothing and pacifying" (*che in musica le stelle havean dotato/pascer l'orecchia di dolce armonia*) who proceeded to sing of contemporary love-affairs, accompanying himself on the *cetra* - probably Cornazano's classical synonym for a lute.(173) "He sang to the

cetra in well-ordered verses" (*cantava in cetra ad ordinata frotta*), "and he guided the whole in semitones, always adjusting and syncopating, and the tenor followed his cantoni" (*la guidava tucta in semitoni, /proportionando e sincoppando sempre, /e fugiva el tenore a i suoi cantoni*). (174) To this music, he added "the most vivid words" (*Dando col suon vivissime parole*). Cornazano compares him to both Apollo and Orpheus, and although, as Pirrotta points out (175) one cannot rely too much on Cornazano's exact use of technical terms to describe Pietrobono's 'syncopated' style, it was evidently idiosyncratic and spontaneous. *Frotta* probably refers to any traditional narrative poetic metre, in which his verses were composed.

We have several indications that mid-century lutenists played monodically, accompanied by either another lute or a *viola da arco* - the *tenorista*, sustaining an established melodic pattern or 'tenor' as a basis for the other's improvisation. (176) Paolo Cortese implies that Pietrobono played monodically in a high register, (177) noting that his contemporary lutenists (c.1510) played polyphonically. Whereas the "simple repetition in the high region" was considered to be the style "used by the ancients", in modern-day practice this would be "joined by a connection of all single sounds from the lower region" (*quo simplex antiquorum per hyperboleon iteratio ab hypate singulorum coagmentatione iungeretur*). Cortese describes this polyphonic style of lute-playing as having "the most delightful impact on the ear; for those sure-fingered proceedings, now repetition, now stopping, now lessening and almost interlacing of sounds, are in the habit of creeping easily into the minds of men with their exquisite sweetness." (178) Despite Cortese's evidence, however, we find Tinctoris describing Pietrobono's playing not only in two parts, but also in three and four. (179) Tinctoris may well have heard Pietrobono play in Naples or Ferrara in the 1470s (180) and was speaking from experience. But whatever Pietrobono's style (and over his long career it inevitably changed and adapted to new techniques), it was the *cantus-tenor* feature of the unwritten music genre which gave rise, at the end of the century, to the four-part *frottola* repertoire, and improvised singing became more closely intermingled with 'composed' music. (181)

The Milanese Serafino Aquilano was called the "star of secular music". (182) Cortese tells us that Aquilano renewed the genre of singing

poems to the lute, and was followed by "a multitude of imitative court singers".(183) Aquilano's biographer Vincenzo Calmeta describes his activity as a *citharedo*, singing Petrarchan sonnets to the lute at the house of Paolo Cortese in Rome.(184) Calmeta stresses the popularity of composing verse which was then sung by the *citharedi*, and implies that Aquilano's style was to set verses to measured musical metres, particularly the *strambotto*.(185) Other famous *citharedi* included Bernardo Gareth ('Il Chariteo') at the court of Ferdinand of Aragon at Naples, who sang both classical verse and his own *strambotti*,(186) Antonio di Guido in Florence (a favourite of the Medici), Leonardo da Vinci(187) and, of most interest to us, Baccio Ugolini, a close friend of Ficino who took the title role in the production of Poliziano's *Orfeo* in Mantua in 1480.(188)

Ugolini was a priest and envoy of the Medici to the cardinal legate of Bologna and to the Gonzaga court, but he was also renowned as a poet and musician and displayed a considerable literary talent. Again we find Cortese singing his praises for "singing *ex tempore* on the lyre in the vernacular tongue", (189) echoed by Raffaello Brandolini: *tum maxime vernaculis ac pervenendis canendis ex tempore ad lyram versibus*.(190) In his extensive study of Poliziano's work, Pirrotta considers the significance of the choice of Ugolini for the part of Orpheus and of the poetic form of *strambotto* in which Orpheus sings his lament *Dunque piangemo* to the lyre.(191) He points out that, for the humanist Poliziano, Orpheus represents the personification of "poetry as song", (192) but that "[*Orfeo*] contains no trace of the reflections of Ficino's Orphic mysticism which some have desired to see in it."(193) But Ugolini was a priest, not a professional singer, and he would have brought to the role far more than technical expertise or musical professionalism. As a member of Ficino's Platonic Academy,(194) Ugolini would have had frequent discussion with his fellow priest and musician Ficino about both religious and musical matters. We have proof of the men's friendship in two letters from Ficino to Ugolini,(195) and of Ugolini's interest in Ficino's teachings from a letter of 1492, where Ficino gives Ugolini as among the audience at his lectures on Plato in the late 1460s.(196) Tomlinson plausibly speculates that here Ugolini would have been introduced to the concept of poetic frenzy in relation to Orpheus and also to Ficino's early formulation of his ideas concerning natural magic, as he expounded on his recently completed *De*

amore.(197) Ugolini would have heard Ficino speak of Orpheus' prestige as an ancient theologian,(198) and would no doubt have been impressed by Ficino's admiration for and performance of the Orphic hymns.

In 1474 Ficino wrote to Ugolini specifically about poetic frenzy,(199) praising some of the latter's verses and clearly indicating the common ground from which both men's musical activity took root. For Tomlinson this proves that Ugolini "was an initiate of Ficino's Platonic musical thought"(200) - it certainly suggests that Ugolini would have considered his role as Orpheus six years later to carry a responsibility of a nature more fitting to his religious calling than merely to his musical skill. With a second letter of 1493,(201) Ficino sent Ugolini a copy of his *Liber de Sole*, suggesting a continued respect and mutual understanding between the two men on a philosophical level. By this time, Ficino's interest in magic, astrology and the occult had become fully incorporated into his Platonism, and his views on music were related to an astrological therapy formulated, as we have seen, in *De vita coelitus comparanda*. From his early ardour for philosophical speculation, Ficino was now concerned with psychological transformation, and the Orphic hymns became vehicles for an alchemical *coniunctio* of man and cosmos. The symbol of the Sun, representing psychic wholeness and unity, became a central focus for Ficinian musical magic(202) and Ugolini, we can assume, would evidently have shared Ficino's esoteric ideas about the exalted function of performing a hymn to the Sun-god Apollo, the father of Orpheus. Considering the close friendship of Ficino and Poliziano, I rather agree with Tomlinson that we can postulate that there was more to the purpose of staging *Orfeo* than artistic extravagance for the purpose of a court entertainment. For those who had ears to hear and eyes to see, a realm of significance far beyond the elegance of Poliziano's text would be revealed, deriving from Ugolini's personal attitude and intention towards the meaningful symbolism of his role. The musical forms, specific instruments and playing styles of the *improvvisatori* are undoubtedly important aspects of research, but in considering Ficino as a musician one must never forget that such external features were in service to a fervent ideology and religiosity. In Ugolini we find a representative of what Tomlinson has called "an élite Florentine cult of Orphic musical magic"(201) - in a

sense, he stood in for Ficino himself as he embodied the divine singer-magician at the Mantuan court.

4.12. Musical form

We can distinguish four main types of musical 'container' for sung verse at the end of the 15th century, or *musica per poesia*: the standard measured verse-setting, or *frottola*; a freer, more improvisatory and melismatic setting of verse to a simple accompaniment; improvisation of a melody to a pre-existing aria or harmonic framework; and spontaneous, chordal, improvised accompaniment to declaimed verse, whether spoken, half-spoken, or sung. It was also popular practice to improvise poetic stanzas to set musical frameworks, or *poesia per musica*. The genre of which we have most surviving examples is that which is identified by the collective name *frottola*, (204) which includes all measured musical settings of vernacular verse set to the standard poetic forms of *ballata*, *strambotto*, *capitolo* amongst others, as well as *laude* and freer, more improvisatory forms. This distinctly Italian form of secular vocal composition, simple, direct and homophonic in reaction to the intricacies of the northern polyphonists, is at once courtly and popular, artful and uncontrived, and paved the way for the freer and more elaborate madrigal. The *frottole* were the first secular music ever printed (by Petrucci in Venice between 1504 and 1514), and provide us with a rich and varied sample of the many kinds of accompanied song in vogue around the turn of the century. Since the roots of the *frottola* lie in popular performance practice, some of these compositions are examples of an older, more improvisatory style, and it is amongst this repertoire than we can perhaps glimpse something akin to Ficino's own style of recitation.

The greatest number of *frottola* settings are basically four-part in texture (to be performed by a voice and three viols, lute or keyboard, or purely instrumentally) to provide a simple, homophonic accompaniment for verse, which could be varied in mood and expression according to the sentiment required. Pirrotta has pointed out that it was the *strambotto* form which found most favour with the vernacular poets: "from the time of Leonardo Giustinian [1383-1446] until the end of the century, the

strambotto was the form of poetry for music most assiduously cultivated by Italian men of letters as a vehicle for the most passionately lyrical sentiments".(205) Also known as *ottava rima*, each stanza consisted of eight lines of eleven syllables with a rhyme scheme of abababcc, and this was the form to which Orpheus sang his lament *Dunque piangemo*. Its use by Orpheus to charm the god of Hades "puts the strambotto on a par with the Latin verses as the representatives of the noblest form of sung poetry", in the words of Pirrotta,(206) and he gives three musical examples of strambotti, including settings of texts by both Baccio Ugolini himself and Serafino Aquilano (see Appendices 2.1, 2.2 page 370), to illustrate the kind of musical setting we might expect Poliziano's Orpheus to have employed.(207)

The keyword for such *musica per poesia* is simplicity. The settings of Latin verses generally reveal a greater restraint and plainer declamatory style than the Italian, which often employ melismatic flourishes and subtle syncopations as a contrast to plain recitation. In Petrucci's fourth book of 1505 entitled *Strambotti, ode, frottole, sonetti et modo de cantar versi latini et capituli* he provides musical settings for the amateur poet/musician to add his own verse - he called such a framework the *modo* or *aer* of the poetry. In his first book (1504) we find a Horace Ode set by Pesenti (Appendix 2.3, p.371) which illustrates such a simple style.(208) This manner of setting lyric poetry according to syllable length and stress, and according to mode, is illustrated by the music theorist Gaffurius in his *De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum opus* of 1518. An avid Platonist, Gaffurius was directly influenced by Ficino's translations of Plato; in particular his *Timaeus*.(209) This is reflected in Gaffurius' treatment of cosmic harmony; in the frontispiece woodcut Gaffurius shows the analogies between Muses, musical pitches, modes, planets and signs of the zodiac (see Appendix 1.1 page 368). In Book IV, chapter ten Gaffurius gives a setting of a Sapphic poem about the origin of the Muses and their relation to planets and modes, and the characteristics of modes corresponding to planets. Set in two voices, the upper in Dorian mode and the lower in Hypodorian, the simple rhythmic structure of breves and semibreves fits the text strictly syllabically.(210) In his example, Gaffurius sets the seventh stanza which deals with the relation of planets, modes and pitches in connection with Orpheus' lyre-playing (see Appendix

2.4, page 371). However, this form of uniting text and music is still essentially a composition, and not an improvisation.

We find more dramatically expressive examples in Latin religious texts (*laude*), such as *Passio sacra* and *Ave panis angelorum* (Appendices 2.5 and 2.6, pp.372-4)(211) which use pauses and frequent changes of pulse to highlight the declamation of the text - in a manner, one may assume, not unlike those who improvised their own accompaniments. One could imagine Ficino had such a heartfelt, noble quality in mind, in service to religious contemplation, when he resorted "to the solemn sound of the lyre" to still the "vexations of mind and body".(212) However it is unlikely that he would have set the Orphic texts to any measured, pre-composed scheme. He was not first and foremost a theorist or composer, but a performer for whom the grip of *furor divinus* and the immediate communication of the inner meaning of the text demanded spontaneity and attention to the needs of the moment. It is therefore probable that his musical declamations were much more akin to the practices of the *improvvisatori* who accompanied their *cantari* (poetry designed for improvised music) with a simple chordal support from lute, *lira da braccio* or *vihuela*. The essence of such performances was the *aria* or personal style of the musician - his immediate presence and impact on the audience, his charisma and rhetorical gift.

Amongst the *frottola* repertoire we find a few pieces which perhaps illustrate something a little closer in spirit to Ficino's style, although it remains a general characteristic of this genre that little attempt is made to express the inner meaning of the text musically, and this would have been Ficino's prime consideration. Perhaps the most unique song amongst the published *frottola* repertoire is *Se mai per maraveglia* (Appendix 2.7, page 375)(213) which must be the nearest written example we have of the improvised monody of the time - certainly the text allows for a more 'affecting' interpretation than the majority of surviving examples. It is an anonymous setting of text dramatically portraying the passion of Christ, and the only example of a freely-improvised *capitolo* form of verse, where the last line of the last quatrain was normally set to different music. In this case, there is no indication of how to sing it, and one assumption is that it was recited. The vocal line is stark and declamatory, over free lute interjections, giving ample scope for

characterisation of the meaning of each verse and for the singer to display his art of moving the emotions with true sprezzatura. In a more Mercurial spirit, we find *Chui dice* from Petrucci's sixth book of 1505. This anonymous setting (Appendix 2.8, page 376) is in the improvisatory style of Leonardo Giustiani (1383-1446), a poet-singer renowned for his improvisations to the lira (214) - Petrucci evidently giving an example of what was by now an archaic form. The melismatic solo vocal line uses the insubstantial text as a vehicle for its mercurial meanderings and syncopations over a simple two-part accompaniment. Illustrating an art of highly skilled vocal invention and technical expertise at the expense of the text, such a piece provides a glimpse of an improvisatory style which pre-dates the mid-century humanist revival of 'ancient' practices and serves to contrast with the radical new emphasis on textual communication and clarity of declamation.

Thirdly, we must mention the style of improvising poetic verse over a standard harmonic pattern or aria. These 'set melodies' originated in the recitation of epic poetry to ottava rima stanzas, which gained popularity in the fifteenth century. A variety of standard melodies evolved, the most popular being settings to Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* such as the *Ruggiero*. (215) It is possible that Ficino would have used a similar method of simple harmonic frameworks within which spontaneous declamation would be contained and regulated, perhaps related to the varying characteristics of planets and deities - he certainly must have had access to a rich source of melodic and harmonic formulae to be drawn on when appropriate. However, I would suspect that his own style was too intentionally eccentric and idiosyncratic to be solely reliant on traditional poetic or musical forms.

Finally, in search of Ficinian performance practice, we must consider the thriving yet unwritten tradition of improvisers who declaimed their verses over an unmeasured, spontaneous chordal accompaniment inspired by the moment, who were not limited by the written note, and who used a variety of vocal effects involving both speech and song to achieve maximum 'affect'. Intoned recitation was an integral part of the Florentine *sacre rappresentazioni*, (216) and Poliziano's *Orfeo* contained spoken recitative in alternation with measured song. Indeed the poet held half-sung recitation in the highest esteem, as we find in a letter in which he describes hearing

the eleven-year-old Fabio Orsini in Rome, "almost transported out of my senses" by Fabio's consort singing, and most impressed by the sprezzatura of his solo declamation of verses in honour of Piero de' Medici:

"His voice was not entirely that of someone reading, nor entirely that of someone singing: both could be heard, and yet neither separated one from the other: it was, in any case, even or modulated, and changed as required by the passage. Now it was varied, now sustained, now exalted and now restrained, now calm and now vehement, now slowing down and now quickening its pace, but always it was precise, always clear and always pleasant: and his gestures were not indifferent or sluggish, but not posturing or affected either. You might have thought that an adolescent Roscius was acting on the stage."(217)

Is this the kind of delivery Poliziano would also have admired in the music-making of his friend Ficino? We can be sure that Ficino's personal manner of singing both Orphic hymns and astrological songs was idiosyncratic and intensely attuned to the requirements and quality of the moment. We saw in his instructions for astrological singing that of utmost importance was the relevance of both music and text to the individual and to the current astrological aspects - to microcosm and macrocosm. Much is left to the imagination, but the intention is clear; to mirror both the performer's and listener's psyche in music which on one level sought to imitate the harmony of the cosmos as reflected first and foremost in the human soul, and on another to arouse the meraviglia of the listener through sensual intoxication. It was an intensely personal experience and second-hand vehicles, in the form of other people's compositions, could not by definition fulfil this function.

I hope to have shown, over the course of this thesis, how both astrology and music were, in the hands of Ficino, powerful, practical means of engaging the soul of man and regulating his psychic life. Ficino as philosopher cannot be separated from Ficino as magician, for such a distinction perpetuates the very gulf he strove to overcome between intellect and intuition, mind and soul, reason and faith. His vocation was to communicate the eternal within the temporal, to 'heal souls' suffering in their earthly discord, using a language of symbol and musical sound which spoke directly to the imagination. His work of 'natural magic' sowed the seed for a tremendous surge in occult activity in the following century

- Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, Francesco Giorgi, John Dee, Giordano Bruno and Robert Fludd all owed their Hermetic and Cabalistic systems and experiments - albeit more ambitious (and often more hubristic) in their aims - to the rediscoveries of the humble Florentine and his disciple Pico della Mirandola. Ficino's genius lay in his ability to penetrate to the core of human nature, reveal it to his fellow man, and with compassion and humour to teach him that happiness lies in a unified life. I can do no better than to end with a quotation from a letter to Lotterio Neroni, which demonstrates concisely this fervent intention and direction which lay behind all Ficino's external activity, and to which his musicianship and astrological skills were in service:

"With every power I have I always endeavour to set in motion whatever the counsel of the wise, and careful reasoning, persuade me is good. I am not relating this good to some external benefit, which would be in the future, short-lived, and dependent on the choice of men or fortune; but first and foremost to that true joy which is experienced in the very action of the good. Even if this good and this joy can be described as temporal, since the good is not followed, nor the joy experienced continuously in the same way, yet they lie deep within ourselves and in our will. Indeed, good of this kind gives satisfaction both in the present and in eternity. I say this not because I now enjoy eternity directly but for no reason other than that I understand that this good accords with the form of the good, that is with the eternal knowledge and art of almighty God. Therefore, just as I have related that good back to inner joy, so I relate joy back to the form of the good; so that clearly by this reasoning the good may please me, and thence I myself may best please God, the good of all good, without whom nothing can please me."(218)

REFERENCES to Chapter Four

PART ONE: Natural Magic

1. Boethius, *De institutione musica* I.2, quoted in O. Strunk, *Source Readings in music history* vol.I p.85. Full translation in C.M. Bower, *Boethius: Fundamentals of Music*. Boethius (born c.480 A.D.) was a Roman statesman, philosopher and mathematician and the chief author through whom knowledge of ancient Greek music was transmitted to the Middle Ages.
2. See chapter three part one, ref.76
3. Quoted in Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance* p.49
4. See Kaske, *Three Books on Life*, pp.24-31, 45-55
5. For a discussion of the connection between music and medicine in Islamic tradition, see J.C. Bürgel, *The Feather of Simurgh* ch.4: 'Music, Nourishment of the soul' pp.89-118. Pp. 94-5 Bürgel illustrates Arabic 'therapeutic' systems involving elaborate systems of correspondences between *musica humana* and *instrumentalis*; firstly between lute-string, rhythm, zodiacal quarter, element, wind, season, quarter of month, quarter of day, humour, quarter of life, faculties of soul and body and external actions, and secondly between musical modes, zodiacal signs, elements, qualities, humours, gender and time of day or night. Ficino would have learned first from Aristotle and Galen that astrology was essential for the practice of medicine. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.6-8, L. Thorndike *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* vol.1, pp.178-80; Galen's treatises on astrological medicine. More source material available in Kaske, *Three Books on Life* p.81 note 1. On the tradition which Ficino inherited, see C. Burnett, 'Astrology and Medicine in the Middle Ages'.
7. Joscelyn Godwin (*Harmonies of Heaven and Earth* pp.125-30) distinguishes two main types of planet-scales favoured by ancient and medieval writers. Firstly, the 'Pythagorean' system, where the planetary spheres are placed at intervals "comparable to those stoppings of a string that produce a scale." This system is essentially based on the nine-stringed Greek lyre with different tuning variants. Examples in Pliny, *Natural History* II, 19-20; Martianus Capella, *The Marriage of Mercury and Philosophy* II, 169-99; Censorinus, *De die natali* XIII, 3-4; Nicomachus, *Enchiridion* III; Quintilianus, *De musica* III.22; Theon of Smyrna, *Mathematics* III.15. The second variety are not associated with astronomical distances but their tones are caused by the motions of the planets, differences in pitch being due to different rates of revolution (Godwin p.130). This was upheld by (amongst others) Cicero, *Dream of Scipio* in Macrobius, *Commentary* pp.73f.; Boethius, *De institutione musica* I.17; Giorgio Anselmi, *De musica* I 148-55; Ramos de Pareja, *Musica practica* III. Since the planets' revolutionary periods do not fit a diatonic scale, Godwin points out that this system is purely symbolic and may be considered in two ways; from a geocentric position, where the fixed

stars move the fastest and the Moon the slowest, or relative to the Zodiac where the Moon is the fastest planet and the fixed stars are immobile. Both types of planet-scale give the central note of the Greek tuning system to the Sun, and may be seen as complementary 'natural-scientific' and 'symbolic' perspectives.

8. *Letters* vol.1 pp.42-48, *Op.om.* pp.612-5
9. *ibid.* p.45, *Op.om.* p.614:
per aures vero concentus quosdam munerisque suavissimos animus haurit, hisque imaginibus admonetur, atque excitatur ad divinam musicam, acriori quodam mentis et intimo sensu considerandam. Est autem apud Platonicos interpretes divina musica duplex: alteram profecto in aeterna Dei mente consistere arbitrantur: alteram vero in coelorum ordine, ac motibus, qua mirabilem quendam coelestes globi orbisque concentum efficiunt: utrisque vero animum nostrum, antequam corporibus clauderetur participem extitisse, verum iis in tenebris auribus velut rimulis quibusdam, ac cunctis utitur, hisque imagines, ut saepe iam diximus, musicae illius incomparabilis accipit. Quibus in eius qua antea fruebatur harmoniae, intimam quandam, ac tacitam recordationem reducit, totusque desiderio servet, cupitque ut vera musica rursus fruatur, ac sedes proprias revolare, quumque id se quam diu tenebroso corporis habitaculo circumsepta est, adipisci nullo modo intelligat, eam cuius hic possessione frui nequit, nititur saltem pro viribus imitari.
10. *ibid.* p.46, *Op.om.* p.614:
Alii namque vocum numeris variorumque sonis instrumentorum coelestem Musicen imitantur, quos certe leves, ac pene vulgares musicos appellamus: nonnulli vero graviori quodam firmiorique iudicio divinam ac coelestem harmoniam imitantes, intemae rationis sensum notionesque inversum, pedes ac numeros digerunt: hi vero sunt, qui divino afflato spiritu gravissima quaedam, ac praeclarissima carmina ore, ut aiunt, rotundo prorsus effundunt. Hanc Plato graviolem musicam poesimque nominat, efficacissimam harmoniae coelestis imitatricem: nam levior illa, de qua paulo ante mentionem fecimus, vocum est, vocum atque motuum numeris gravissimos quosdam, et ut Poeta diceret, delphicos sensus ardentius exprimit, quo fit, ut non solum auribus blandiatur, verum etiam suavissimum, et ambrosiae coelestis similimum menti pabulum afferat, ideoque ad divinitatem propius accedere videatur.
11. *Letters* vol. 1 pp.141-4, *Op.om.* pp.651-2
12. *ibid.* p.142, *Op.Om.* pp.651-2:
Astronomi Canisiane, forsitan duo haec ad concursum Iovis et Mercurii, Venerisque referent. Opinantes ab Iove medicinam, a Mercurio et Venere musicam proficisci. Platonici autem nostri ad unum Deum, scilicet Apollinem,

referunt. Quem prisci Theologi Medicinae inventorem, ac citharae pulsandae regem existimaverunt.

13. *ibid. Op. om. p.652:*

Quum ergo idem fit Musicae dux, medicinaeque repertor, quid mirum utramque artem saepe ab iisdem hominibus exerceri.

14. *ibid.:*

nam quum cantus sonusque ex cogitatione mentis, et impetu phantasiae, cordisque affectu proficiscatur, atque una cum aere facta et temperato, aereum audientis spiritum puliet, qui animae corporisque nodus est, facile phantasiam movet, afficitque cor et intima mentis penetralia penetrat. Corporis quoque humores, et membra sistit, et movet.

15. Empedocles, the formulator of the idea of the four elements, was not only a Pythagorean philosopher but also a practising shaman, combining natural-scientific exploration with magical ability, such as the power to stay winds, cause or prevent rain and even revive the dead. For source references and speculations on Greek shamanism see Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* pp.135-56. On Empedocles in particular, Dodds suggests:

"Empedocles represents not a new but a very old type of personality, the shaman who combines the still undifferentiated functions of magician and naturalist, poet and philosopher preacher, healer, and public counsellor. After him these functions fell apart; philosophers henceforth were to be neither poets nor magicians ... It was not a question of 'synthesising' these wide domains of practical and theoretical knowledge; in their quality as Men of God [the shamans] practised with confidence all of them; the 'synthesis' was personal, not logical." (p.146)

Ficino would have known of Empedocles from Iamblichus' *Life of Pythagoras* 113 (trans. T. Taylor ch.25 section 113 pp.60-1) where Iamblichus relates an incident of Empedocles preventing a man from committing murder by playing to him on the lyre (further information on this incident is given in Bürgel, *Feather of Simurgh* p.99, who attributes the story to Ibn 'Ali al-Katib). Ficino found inspiration for his own synthesis of speculative philosophy and practical magic in the figures of Pythagoras, Empedocles and Orpheus, all of whom embodied the combination of knowledge and religious faith which characterised the line of *prisci theologi*. For Ficino, these men represented the essential unity of mind and soul, objective and subjective knowledge which he took upon himself to emulate, teach and leave for posterity in his writings.

16. *Letters vol. 1 p.143, Op. om. p.652:*

prima Musica in ratione consistit, secunda in phantasia, tertia in sermone, hanc sequitur cantus, cantum digitorum motus in sono, sonum totius motus corporis in gymnastica, et tripudio. Videmus igitur animae musicam gradatim ad omnia corporis membra deduci. Quam etiam Oratores, Poetae, Pictores, Sculptores, Architecti in

suis operibus imitantur. Quum ergo tanta inter animae corporisque musicam communitio sit, quid mirum ab eodem homine tam corpus, quae animam temperavi?

17. *ibid.*:

vero gravem eligit, et constantem tanquam saluberrimam spiritus, animae corporisque medicinam. Ego autem, ut de Marsilio tuo aliquid dicam, eo consilio post Theologiae, vel medicinae studia gravioribus fidibus cantibusque frequenter incumbo, ut caetera sensuum oblectamenta penitus negligam, molestias animae, corporisque expellam, mentem ad sublimia Deumque pro viribus erigam...

18. *Op. om.* pp.1438-84 *Commentarium in Platonis Timaeum*. I am grateful to Carlo Lo Presti, University of Turin, for the loan of his thesis *Corporeità e immaginazione come indici dell'espressione musicale tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*. Of particular interest are Capitoli II, 'La teoria musicale di Ficino' and IV, 'Il De vita e il *Commentarium in Timaeum*'.

19. *Op. om.* p.1417, in Walker, 'Ficino's spiritus and Music' p.137:

Musica consonantiam in elemento fieri omnium medio, perque motum, et hunc quidem orbicularem ad aures pervenire: ut non mirum sit eam animae convenire, tum mediae rerum, tum motionis principio in circuitu revolubili. Adde quod concentus 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... Concentus autem per aeream naturam in motu positam movet corpus: per purificatum aerem concitat spiritum aereum animae corporisque notum: per affectum, afficit sensum simul et animum: per significationem agit in mentem: denique per ipsum, subtilis aeris motum penetrat vehementer: per contemplationem lambit suaviter: per conformem qualitatem mira quadam voluptate perfundit: per naturam, tam spiritalem, quam materialem, totum simul rapiat et sibi vendicat hominem.

20. See Plato, *Ion* 533d f.

21. *Letters vol.1* pp.162-4, *Op. om.* p.658:

... maxime movet alios qui ipse movet maxime, omnino autem offendit aures qui aliter canit ore, aliter pulsat lyram. Divina Musica est rectus cogitationum verborum actionumque concentus.

22. *ibid.* p.104, *Op. om.* p.637:

Est enim inter corpus et animam, sensum et rationem pugna perpetua ... edificiorum partes ex amissis disponunt, fides in lyra ad unguem temperant, ut autem animi partes motusque concinant, numquam tenant.

23. *Letters vol.2* pp.64-7, *Op. om.* pp.744-5:

Musici, in sono gratiam, cantus in cantu sermonis

elegantiam imitari: meminisse etiam, motus animi, multo magis oportere consonantes esse, quam voces. Inconcinnus enim alienusque a musis est musicus, cui dum consonat vox lyrae mens dissonat.

24. See Walker, 'Ficino's spiritus and Music' pp.134-7
25. The main text being Aristotle, *De anima* II.8
26. See Charles Burnett, 'Sound and its perception in the Middle Ages' pp.52-5
27. Aristotle, *De anima* 423b-424a
28. Ficino, *Liber de vita* 3.XXVI.7:
in universo esca quaedam sive fomes ad animam corpori copulandam est ille ipse quem spiritum appellamus.
29. *Letters* vol.2 pp.49-50, *Op. om.* p.609:
Cum primum tertiano notha medicinis nostris expulsa, una cum Ioanne Aurelio Academiam nostram tanquam medicum tuum salutavisses, citharae sonum cantumque hymnorum postulati a nobis, et impetrasti... naturam in nobis corpus et spiritum cum anima coniuxisse. Corpus quidem remediis medicinae curatur. Spiritus autem qui aereus sanguinis vaporem, et quasi quidem animae corporisque nodus, aereis quoque odoribus sonisque et cantibus temperatur, et aliter ... Apud naturam unum quiddam est ex anima et corpore, spirituque compositum. Apud Aegyptios sacerdotes una eademque facultas erat, pharmacis fidibus, mysteriis occupata. Utinam hanc naturalem et Aegyptiam facultatem tam foeliciter assequamur, quam obnixae libenterque sectamur.
30. See Walker, 'Ficino's spiritus and Music' p.146, note 6
31. *ibid.*, also Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*
32. See chapter one part one, ref.89
33. Ficino, *Liber de vita* 3.I.85
34. *ibid.* 3.II.89
35. *ibid.* 3.III.20:
Qualem spiritum physici diligentes sublimatione quadam ad ignem ex auro secernentes, cuius metallorum adhibebunt aurumque efficient.
36. Walker, 'Ficino's spiritus and Music' pp.145-6
37. *Op. om.* p.1364; see M. Allen, *Marsilio Ficino and the Phaedran Charioteer* p.76

38. Ficino, *De amore* VI.6, *Op. om.* p.1343 (in Jayne, *Plato on Love* pp.113-4):
 Quicumque animus sub Iovis imperio in terrenum corpus delabatur, certan quandam in ipso descensu sibi concipit hominis fabricandi figuram Iovis astro convenientem. Hanc in aethereo sui corpore tanquam optime affecto exprimit exactissimam. Si nactus in terris semen fuerit similiter temperatum in eo quoque tertiam figuram pingit, primae secundaeque simillimam.
39. *ibid.* *Op. om.* p.1344:
 Anima et corpus natura longe inter se diversa spiritu medio copulantur, qui vapor quidam est tenuissimus et perludicus, per cordis calorem ex subtilissima parte sanguinis genitus.
40. *Op. om.* p.1747:
 ... similiter spiritus noster radius illius tam occultis, quam manifestis omnia penetrantibus. Evadit etiam longe cognatior, quando erga vita 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 hymnos mundanis numinibus consecravit.
41. Ficino, *Liber de vita, Apologia* 1.80:
 Alterum vero eorum qui naturales materias opportune causis subiciunt naturalibus mira quadam ratione formandas.
42. *Liber de vita* 3.IV.23:
 Atque ita ex hoc spiritu tanquam in nobis medio coelestia bona imprimis insita sibi in nostrum tum corpus, tum animum exundabunt ...
43. G. Pico, *Conclusiones numero XV secundum propriam opinionem de intelligentia dictorum Zoroastris et expositorum eius Chaldaeorum* no.13 (*Omnia quae extant opera* p.159)
44. *ibid.* 3.II.54:
 Neque diffidas Saturnum habere nonnihil in auro...
 See also *Letters* vol.1 p.161, *Op. om.* p.658:
 Our Plato placed the higher part of the soul under the authority of Saturn, that is in the realm of mind and divine providence, and the lower part under Jupiter, in the realm of life and fate. Because of this the soul seems to have a double aspect, one of gold and one of silver. The former looks towards the Saturnine and the latter to the Jovial.
- (Partem quidem animae superiorem Plato noster in regno Saturni, id est, in mentis et providentiae, inferiorem autem in regno Iovis, id est, vitae, vitae fatigue locavit. Quapropter anima iam bifrontis instar vultum

geminum habere videtur, aureum, scilicet et argenteum, illo Saturnia, hoc Iovalia respicit.)

45. Nevertheless, there does exist a spurious treatise, attributed to Ficino, on alchemy: *Marsilii Ficino Florentini, Liber de arte chimica* in J.J. Mangeti, *Bibliotheca chemica curiosa artis auriferae* (1702). A note on the title page states: "Hunc librum saepius citat Evraldus Vogetius tanquam Marsilii Ficini, ut et etiam Theob. de Hogelande in Proemio etc. itaque illi Authori non male a nobis tribuitur." Despite a mention of the murder of Pico della Mirandola (p.176 - and it is curiously ambiguous whether this refers to Giovanni Pico's death in 1494 or his nephew Gianfrancesco's in 1533) this treatise is almost certainly a forgery, but its existence demonstrates both the desire to lend alchemy a philosophical authority and the belief that Ficino did practise the art. See J. Clark, 'Marsilio Ficino among the Alchemists' pp.50-4; Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* p.424 n.192. Jung himself refers to Ficino as "physician and alchemist" (*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* p.314 n.76). The direct influence of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, made available by Ficino's translation, certainly seemed to inaugurate a new form of 'spiritual' alchemy in the Renaissance associated with magic and the cabbala. Frances Yates (*Giordano Bruno* p.150) suggests that the alchemical practices of Paracelsus were based on both the *Corpus Hermeticum* and Ficino's new natural magic of the imagination (p.151). In terms of the psychological implications of alchemy, it hardly matters whether one gives the name 'alchemist' to Ficino - that he intentionally set out to achieve a spiritual and psychological purification and transformation which would lead to unity and harmony of mind, soul and body is beyond question.
46. *Op. om.* p.861:
Quantum vero vanissimos illos, quos vulgo Alchimistas appellat, totiens et fallit opinio, et fortuna frustratur, quotiens inferiora metalla conflare in aurum molliuntur, tantum his qui concupiscentiam, iracundiam, actionem contemplationi pro viribus subigunt, res ipsa quotidie uccedit ad votum, adeo ut pro caeteris metallis aurum, id est, pro vilissimis pretiosissima et pro caducis aeterna reportent.
47. See M. Hyde, 'Jung and Astrology: A Critique'. This ref., *Astrology Quarterly* vol. 58 no.3 p.151
48. See chapter one, p.47
49. *Ficino, Liber de vita, prooemium ad Magnanimam Laurentium Medicem patriae servatorem* l.17:
Ego sacerdos minimus patres habui duos: Ficinum medicum, Cosmum Medicem. Ex illo natus sum, ex isto renatus. ille quidem me Galieno tum medico tum Platonico commendavit; hic autem divino consecravit me Platoni. Et hic similiter atque ille Marsilium medico destinavit: Galienus quidem corporum, Plato vero medicus animorum. Iamdiu igitur sub Platone salutarem animorum exercui medicinam, quando post librorum omnium eius interpretationem, mox decem atque octo De animorum

immortalitate libros et aeterna felicitate composui, ita pro viribus patri meo Medici satisfaciens. Medico vero patri satis deinceps faciendum putans, librum De litteratorum valetudine curanda composui.

50. *ibid.* 3.XXVI.51:
Similia quaedam efficit medicus et physicus et chirurgicus in corpore nostro tum ad nostram fovendam, tum ad universi naturam uberius comparandam. Idem quoque philosophus naturalium rerum astrorumque peritus, quem proprie Magum appellare solemus, certis quibusdam illecebris coelestia terrenis opportune quidem nec aliter inserens quam insitionis studiosus agricola veteri recentem stipiti surculum.
51. See for example Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* part IV, 'Rex and Regina' paras.349-543, with numerous references in *Psychology and Alchemy* and *Alchemical Studies*.
52. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* para.346
53. *Prooemium to the Liber de vita* 1.29
54. *ibid.* 1.30:
ut ex ipso mundi corpore vivo vita quaedam vegetior in corpus nostrum, quasi quoddam mundi membrum, velut ex vite propagaretur.
55. *ibid.* 3.XX.57:
Proinde imaginationis intentionem non tam in fabricandis imaginibus vel medicinis vim habere, quam in applicandis et assumendis existimo, ut si quis imaginem (ut aiunt) gestans rite factam, vel certe medicina similiter utens, opem ab ea vehementer affectet, et proculdubio credat speretque firmissime, hinc certe quam plurimus sit adiumento cumulus accessurus.
56. See Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* para.777
57. *Liber de vita* 3.XIX
58. On 'Symbol' see Jung, *Psychological Types* XI paras.814-29; G. Cornelius, 'The Moment of Astrology' pt.VI
59. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* para.394, this quotation para.399
60. See e.g. Jung 'The Concept of the Collective Unconscious' in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, especially paras.100-103
61. *Liber de vita* 3.XIX.3
62. *ibid.* 3.XIX.30,45. An example of such an 'image of the world' that Ficino advocates would perhaps be the astrological frescoes in the Schifanoia palace in Ferrara, painted 1469-70. See Bertozzi, *La Tirannia degli Astri*

63. *ibid.* 3.XIX.52:
Et egressus domo non tanta attentione singularum rerum
spectacula, quanta universi figuram coloresque
perspiciet... Tu vero praestantior in te finges
imaginem.
64. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* para.172
65. *Liber de vita* 3.VI.170, 3.XI.16
66. *ibid.* 3.III.21-2
67. Ficino, *De amore* VI.10, *Op.om.* p.1348 (Jayne, *Plato on Love* p.127):
Sed cur magnum putamus amorem? Quia tota vis magicae in
amore consistit. Magicae opus est, attractio rei unius
ab alia, ex quadam cognatione naturae. Mundi autem
huius partes, ceu animalis unius membra, omnes ab uno
autore pendentes, unius naturae communione invicem
copulantur. Ideo sicut in nobis cerebrum, pulmones, ita
in gentis huius animalis membra, id est, omnia mundi
corpora, connexa similiter mutant invidem naturas et
mutuantur: ex communi cognatione communis innascitur
amor, ex amore communis attractio. Haec autem vera
magica est.
68. *ibid.*:
Ars enim ubi naturali cognationi deest aliquid, per
vapores, numeros, figuras, qualitates opportunis supplet
temporibus.
69. *Liber de vita, Apologia* 1.59:
Neque de magia hic prophana, quae cultu daemonum
nititur, verbum quidem ullum asseverari, sed de magia
naturalis, quae rebus naturalibus ad prosperam corporum
valetudinem coelestium beneficia captat, effici
mentionem.
70. *ibid.* 1.68:
certe quidam mundicola est.
71. *De amore* VI.10, *Op.om.* p.1348 (Jayne, *Plato on Love* pp.127-8):
Viri eos eloquentiae viribus, et carminum modulis, quasi
quibusdam in cantationibus deliniunt, sibique
conciliant: cultu praeterea, et muneribus non aliter
quam veneficiis placant et capiunt. Quapropter nemini
dubium est, quin amore sit magus, cum et tota vis
magicae in amore consistat, et amoris opus
fascinationibus, incantationibus, veneficiis expleatur.
72. See this chapter part one, ref.2 above
73. See Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance* p.51
74. See B. Copenhaver, 'Renaissance Magic and Neoplatonic philosophy:
Ennead 4.3-5 in Ficino's De vita coelitus comparanda'

75. *Liber de vita* 3, 'Ad lectorem' 1.35:
In omnibus quae hic aut alibi a me tractantur, tantum assertum esse volo, quantum ab ecclesia comprobatur.
76. *ibid.* 3.VIII.79:
Nihil omnino tentemus a sancta religione prohibitum.
77. *ibid.* 3.XV.85:
Per haec insuper confirmant nonnulli etiam illud magicum: per inferiora videlicet superioribus consentanea posse ad homines temporibus opportunis coelestia quodammodo trahi, atque etiam per coelestia supercoelestia nobis conciliari vel forsitan prorsus insinuari. Sed postremum hoc illi viderint.
78. *ibid.* 3.I.26,30-1
79. *ibid.* 3.I.32
80. See chapter three, p.219. R. Marcel (*Marsile Ficin*, p.491), gives an example of Ficino's practical application of elections: he elected the time for laying the foundation stone of the Strozzi palace in Florence at sunrise on 16th August 1489, together with four others. See *Supp.Fic.II* p.307:
Philippus Stroctius in memoriis vitae suae (Lorenzo Strozzi, *Vita de Filippo Strozzi* ed. Bini Bigazzi 1851 p.70): Ebbe tal punto (i.e. diem XVI Augusti 1489 quo domus Stroctiana aedificari coepta est) dal soprannominato Benedetto Biliotti e Maestro Niccolo e Maestro Antonio Benivieni medici, el vescovo de' Pagagnotti e M. Marsilio, tutti lo approvorono per buono.
81. *Liber de vita* 3.I.45
82. *ibid.* 3.I.56:
A quibus formis ordinatissimis dependent inferiorum formae
83. *ibid.* 3.I.67:
non tam sub adminiculo formarum figurarumque coelestium quam situ stellarum et habitu motionum aspectuumque planetarum, tum inter se, tum ad stellas planetis sublimiores.
84. B. Copenhaver, 'Iamblichus, Synesius and the Chaldean Oracles' p.453
85. *Liber de vita* 3.I.69:
Anima quidem nostra ultra vires membrorum proprias communem ubique promit in nobis vitae virtutem, maxime vero per cor, tanquam ignis animae proximi fontem. Similiter anima mundi ubique vicens per Solem praecipue suam passim explicat communis vitae virtutem. Unde quidam animam et in nobis et in mundo in quolibet membro totam potissimum in corde collocant atque Sole.
86. *ibid.* 3.II.13

87. *ibid.* 3.II.26:
Saturnus non facile communem significat humani generis
qualitatem atque sortem, sed hominem ab aliis
segregatum, divinum aut brutum, beatum aut extrema
miseria pressum.
88. *ibid.* 3.II.28:
Mars, Luna, Venus affectus et actus homini cum ceteris
animantibus aequae communes.
89. *ibid.* 3.II.8:
Quo enim potentior causa est, eo est promptior ad
agendum, eo igitur propensior est ad dandum. Exigua
igitur praeparatio nobis insuper adhibita sufficit
coelestium muneribus capiendis, si modo quisque ad id
praecipue se accommodet, cui est praecipue subditus.
90. *ibid.* 3.II.76:
Lunae per victum plantis similem.
91. *ibid.* 3.II.79:
tum vero musicam gravem quidem Iovis Solisque esse,
levem Veneris, mediam vero Mercurii.
92. *ibid.* 3.II.82:
Propria vero unicuique regula fuerit explorare quae
stella quid boni cuique in genitura promiserit, atque ab
ea potius quam ab alia repositum gratiam ...
93. *ibid.* 3.II.90:
Ubi etiam probant ex applicatione quadam spiritus nostri
ad spiritum mundi per artem physicam affectumque facta
...
94. *ibid.* 3.XVII.28:
Non ignoras concentus per numeros proportionisque suas
vim habere mirabilem ad spiritum et animum et corpus
sitendum, movendum, afficiendum.
95. *ibid.* 3.XVII.32:
Hae namque harmonicis tum radiis, tum motibus suis omnia
penetrantibus spiritum indies ita clam afficiunt, ut
musica praepotens palam afficere consuevit.
96. *ibid.* 3.XII.109:
Unde sicut res quaedam non alibi quam hic nec alias quam
tunc proprie nascuntur feliciter et coalescunt atque
servantur, sic et materialis actio, motus, eventus talis
aut talis non alias efficaciam sortitur effectumque
perfectum quam quando coelestium harmonia ad idem
undique consonat.
97. See Copenhaver, 'Scholastic Philosophy and Renaissance Magic' pp.525-
6, 539. Ficino's medical authority on occult properties would be
Galen (e.g. *De affectuum renibus insidentium dignotione et curatione* -
for further references see Copenhaver, 'Scholastic Philosophy' p.525
n.7) who stressed the importance of the 'indescribable properties' of

natural remedies which act 'from the whole substance' and whose effects cannot be rationally understood.

98. Ficino, *Liber de Sole XI, Op.om.* p.972 ;
Omnia sane coelestia proprium lumen nascentia secum
attulerunt, sed vel exiguum, vel nobis occultum, sive
raritate quadam et candore, sive alia de causa lateat.
99. *Liber de vita 3.XVI.19:*
Siquidem aer et qualitas eius et sonus minus efficax
solida transit subito et sua quadam afficit qualitate.
100. *ibid. 3.VI.1:*
Praecipua vero disciplina est recte tenere quem
spiritum, quam vim, quam rem potissimum hi planetae
significant.
101. Ficino mentions Al-Kindi at *Liber de vita 3.XXI.15*. He would also
have confirmation from Plotinus, *Ennead IV.4.35*: "without choosing to
do so, any [heavenly body] gives off a kind of irradiation from
itself." (trans. Armstrong)
102. *Liber de vita 3.III.5*
103. *ibid. 3.X*. In this chapter Ficino uses specific astrological
terminology to give detailed instructions for electing times to make
medicines. See Kaske, *Three Books on Life, 'Traditional Material and
Innovations'* pp.31-8. She gives the following explanation for
'dignity' and 'term': "Any given sign [of the zodiac] offers many
other relations to the planets: it is to one planet a debility, but a
dignity - namely a house (or domicile) and an exaltation - to two
others; each third of it is allotted as a 'face' to a different
planet; and varying still smaller arcs of it are allotted to different
planets as their termini, fines, 'bounds' or 'terms'."(p.35)
104. *ibid. 3.VI*
105. For example, Ficino himself was only too aware of his need for Jovial
companions to counteract his melancholic, Saturnine tendencies (see
letter to the Archbishop of Amalfi quoted on p.287) He would have
understood the opposition of Saturn and Jupiter in his natal chart,
falling across the Ascendant/Descendant axis, to reflect the
importance of finding his own Jovial qualities through 'the other'
(the seventh house traditionally symbolising the marriage partner.
See this chapter part one, ref.167 below; *Op.om.* p.901: "in Leone
Jovem in septima"). Other references to the balancing of Jupiter and
Saturn: *Letters vol.2* p.16; *Liber de vita 2.VII.73; 2.XVI.14; 3.I.114;*
3.IV.55; 3.V.18; 3.VI.5; 3.VI.42; 3.VI.61; 3.VI.170; 3.XI.52;
3.XXII.18; 3.XXII.58; 3.XXIV.7
106. *Liber de vita 3.VI.170:*
Denique ubi Martem times, oppone Venerem. Ubi Saturnum,
adhibe Iovem. Ac da operam ut in perpetuo quodam pro
viribus motu verseris, tantum defatigatione vitata, ut
et proprium motum externis motibus clam nocituris
opponas, et coelestem actum pro viribus imiteris. Quod
si poteris spatia motibus ampliora peragere, sic et

coelum potius imitaberis, et plures coelestium vires
passim diffusas attinges.

107. *ibid.* 3.XI.16:

Igitur ad motum nitentis aquae, sereni quoque aeris
ignisque moderate distantis atque coeli motum mundanae
vitae suscipies, si ipse quoque leniter et ferme
similiter movearis, quosdam pro viribus gyros agens,
vertigine devitata, coelestia lustrans oculis, mente
versans.

108. *ibid.* 3.XXIV.29

109. *ibid.* 3.XXIV.35:

Fratres certe sunt individuique comites Phoebus atque
Bacchus. Ille quidem duo potissimum vobis affert: lumen
videlicet atque lyram; hic item praecipue duo: vinum
odoremque vini ad spiritum recreandum ...

110. *ibid.* 3.XXIV.46. *Della Torre Storia dell'Accademia Platonica*
p.811 relates an anecdote that Ficino carried a hip-flask of wine with
him at all times.

111. *Op. om.* p.817 (trans. School of Economic Science):

Aeterni huius Solis radii quidam sempiterni sunt hominum
mentes, caliginosa nube corporis circumfusae, sed in
suum se Solem cogitatione, et affectu pro arbitrio
reflectentes. Ita profecto resiliunt, sicut ab initio
suo inde profilierunt. Ergo cum possint aliquando medio
quovis sublato in Solem suum, tam rite contemplando,
quam recte amando refluerent, proculdubio inde absque
medio effluerunt videlicet ab ipsa aeternitate proximae
sine dubio sempiternae.

112. *Liber de vita* 3.XI.65:

Saturni, Martis, Lunae sanus communiter spiritus non
multum habet ...

113. *ibid.* 3.II.58:

Iam vero si quis convicerit Saturnum et Martem natura
moxios esse, quod equidem nunquam crediderim, tamen his
quoque utendeum, quemadmodum venenis nonnunquam utuntur
et medici ...

114. *ibid.* 3.XI.85:

Unde ad secretiora et altiora contemplanda conducit.

115. *ibid.* 3.XI.140:

Soni quinetiam cantusque grati blandique ad Gratias
omnes spectant atque Mercurium; minaces autem admodum
atque flebiles Martem praeferunt et Saturnum.

116. See Copenhaver 'Scholastic Philosophy' pp.531-49 on the opinions of
Ficino's Christian and Arabic precedents and authorities on the use of
amulets and images, in particular Thomas Aquinas (*Summa contra
gentiles* III, 92, 99, 104-5; *Summa theologiae* I, 65, 91, 2, 110, 115, II-
II, 96, 2; *De occultis operibus naturae* 9-11, 14, 17-20); St. Augustine

(De doctrina christiana 2.21.36, 29.45); Avicenna (Liber canonis Avicennae fol.33); Galen (De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis 10.2.1, 19, 21, 6.3.10, 10.2.19) and Albertus Magnus (De mineralibus 2.3.5ff; Speculum astronomiae 11, 16)

117. Liber de vita 3.XIII.38; XV.104

118. ibid. 3.XV.70; 3.XVI.95

119. ibid.3. XVI.119; 3.XVIII.80; 3.XX.30

120. See Copenhaver, 'Scholastic Philosophy' p.528

121. Liber de vita 3.XV.102:
merito diffidunt plerique imagines eiusmodi coelestem
aliquam virtute habere. Ego quoque ambigo saepius ac,
nisi et omnis antiquitas et omnes astrologi vim
mirabilem habere putarent, habere negarem.

122. ibid. 111:

si te prius hic admonuero, ne putes probare me usum
imaginum, sed narrare.

One finds both Ficino and Jung in agreement with regard to the use of unorthodox remedies; Jung almost repeats verbatim Ficino's opinion expressed in his letter to Poliziano (*Op. om.* p.958) when he says "The irrational fullness of life has taught me never to discard anything, even when it goes against all our theories ... or otherwise admits of no immediate explanation." ('Foreword' to the *I Ching* p.xxxiv)

123. Copenhaver, 'Iamblichus, Synesius and the Chaldaean Oracles' p.452

124. Liber de vita, Apologia 1.16:

Igitur esca tituli tam suavis quam plurimos alliciet ad
gustandum, sed in numero tanto ignorantes plerique
futuri sunt (ut arbitror), maligni quoque non pauci.
Alius ergo dicet: Nonne Marsilius est sacerdos? Est
profecto. Quid igitur sacerdotibus cum medicina? Quid
rursum cum astrologia commercii? Alius item: Quid
Christiano cum magia vel imaginibus? Alius autem et
quidem indignus vita vitam invidebit coelo.

125. Copenhaver, 'Iamblichus, Synesius and the Chaldaean Oracles' p.455

126. See Kaske, *Three Books on Life*, 'Repercussions' pp.55-70 for a discussion of the conflicts with the Church resulting from the publication of the *Liber de vita*.

127. Copenhaver, 'Scholastic Philosophy' pp.531-7

128. ibid. p.533 (referring to Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* III 104-5)

129. Liber de vita 3.XVII.53:

quatenus opportune fiunt dominantibus illis atque
examussim ad illas configurantur ... Nonne sonante
cithara quadam altera reboat? Ob id tantum, si et ipsa
similem figuram habeat atque e conspectu si posita, et
fides in ea positae et intentae similiter.

130. *ibid.* 3.XVIII.16. See Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* paras.121-3, *Psychology and Religion, West and East* paras.258-80 on the symbolism of the cross.
131. *ibid.* 3.XVII.61:
 Ergo ne dubites, dicent, quin materia quaedam imaginis faciendae, alioquin valde congrua coelo, per figuram coelo similem arte datam coeleste munus tum in se ipsa concipiat, tum reddat in proximum aliquem vel gestantem.
132. *ibid.* 3.XX.30:
 Similiter [Arabes et Aegyptii] stellarum spiritus per radios opportune susceptos suffumigationesque et lumina tonosque vehementes competentibus imaginum materiis inseri, mirabiliaque in gestantem vel propinquantem efficere posse.
133. *ibid.* 3.XXII.114:
 expositos, inquam, non tam naturali quodam pacto quam electione arbitrii liberi vel affectu.
134. *ibid.* 3.XX.41:
 Tradunt Arabes spiritum nostrum quando rite fabricamus imagines, si per imaginationem et affectum ad opus attentissimus fuerit et ad stellas, coniungi cum ipso mundi spiritu atque cum stellarum radiis, per quos mundi spiritus agit; atque ita coniunctum esse ipsum quoque in causa, ut a spiritu mundi per radios quidam stella alicuius spiritus, is est vivida quaedam virtus, infundatur imagini, potissimum hominis tunc operantis spiritui consentanea.
135. *ibid.* 3.XX.48
136. *ibid.* 3.XX.60
137. *ibid.* 3.XX.73:
 Iam vero amor ipse fidesque erga coeleste donum saepe coelestis adminiculi causa est, atque vicissim amor et fides hinc aliquando forsan proficiscitur, quod ad hoc ipsum iam nobis faveat clementia coeli.
138. Jung, *Man and his Symbols* p.87
139. Jung, *Synchronicity* p.85. In his theory of synchronicity, Jung postulates two distinct ways in which the 'a-causal' connecting principle has its effect: firstly independently of human consciousness and intervention (such as represented by the Platonic theory of Ideas), where two or more causally unrelated events coincide in time and have the same or similar meaning, and secondly where the meaning is dependent on the observer being 'drawn in' to the event and on his subjective response to it. Jung, like Ficino, suggests that astrologers tend to delude themselves that the effectiveness of their art can be proved 'scientifically' and objectively, because they are inevitably implicated in their judgements:
 "Had the astrologers (with but few exceptions) concerned themselves more with statistics and questioned the

justice of their interpretations in a scientific spirit, they would have discovered long ago that their statements rested on a precarious foundation. But I imagine that in their case too, as with me, a secret mutual connivance existed between the material and the psychic state of the astrologer. This correspondence is simply there like any other agreeable or annoying accident, and it seems doubtful to me whether it can be proved scientifically to be anything more than that."

See also Jung, 'Foreward' to Wilhelm's *I Ching* or *Book of Changes* and M. Hyde 'Jung and Astrology' pts I and II

140. *Liber de vita* 3.XX.21

141. *ibid.* 3.XXI.1:

Verba praeterea quaedam acriore quodam affectu pronuntiata vim circa imagines magnam habere censent ad effectum earum illuc proprie dirigendum, quorsum affectus intenduntur et verba.

142. *ibid.* 3.XIII.22, 3.XXI.6:

non enim philtrea docemus sed medicinas.

143. *ibid.* 3.XXI.14; see Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.25, 5.45, 8.37; Synesius *De somniis* 132C3-7 (Ficino's translation in *Op.om.* p.1969); Al-Kindi, *De radiis* ch.6; Zoroaster, fragment 150 of the *Chaldean Oracles* in Des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques* pp.169-70; Iamblichus *De mysteriis* 7.4-5 (Ficino's version in *Op.om.* p.1902)

144. *Op.om.* p.1306:

Magos carminibus suis immortalitatem corporibus polliceri. Magicen Zoroastris Plato in Alcibiade nihil aliud, quae divinum cultum esse dicit: hic insuper addidit, non magicis tantum carminibus, verum etiam philosophicis rationibus, et temperari animus, et corpus vel semper, vel diu saltem procul a morte servari. Profecto oratio illa, quae temperatiam audientibus omnino sit persuasura, atque insuper effectura, duo potissimum exigit, et vim a Deo infusam, et rationes a philosophis comparatas. Atque orationem e duobus nominat magicam. Qua Phoebus primo, deinde de Pythagorici morbos ab animo et corpore mirabiliter expellebant.

145. *ibid.* p.1307

146. *Letters* vol.2 p.9, *Op.om.* pp.723-4:

Hunc igitur si quando loquentem nobis audite liceret, audiemus frequenter verbis suis nonnullos citharae suae modulos permiscentem. Praesertim quum ipse semper tum Phoebos musicae gravioris, id est, poesis patri, tum Veneri levioris musicae matri ...

147. *Ion* 533d, *Phaedrus* 245a

148. *Letters* vol.1 p.46, *Op.om.* p.614:

hi vero sunt, qui divino afflati spiritu gravissima

quaedam, ac praeclarissima carmina ore, ut aiunt, rotundo prorsus effundunt... nam levior illa, de qua paulo ante mentionem fecimus, vocum duntaxat suavitate permulcet: poesis autem, quod divinae quoque harmoniae proprium est, vocum atque motuum numeris gravissimos quosdam, et ut Poeta diceret, delphicos sensus ardentius exprimit, quo fit, ut non solum auribus blandiatur, verum etiam suavissimum, et ambrosiae coelistis similimum menti pabulum afferat, ideoque ad divinitatem propius accedere videatur.

149. Liber de vita 3.XXI.42:

sic ex tonis primo 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 toni qualibus convenient stellis, quales item tonorum compositiones qualibus praecipue sideribus aspectibusque consentiant. Sed partim diligentia nostra, partim divina quadam sorte non aliter id assequi possumus ...

150. *ibid.* 3.XXI.60:

Aptare vero se ipsum ad occultas dotes eius atque mirificas solius sapientis est officium.

151. *ibid.* 3.XXI.62:

Prima est exquirere quas in se vires quosve ex se effectus stella quaelibet et sidus et aspectus habeant, quae auferant, quae ferant; atque verborum nostrorum significationibus haec inserere, detestari quae auferunt, probare quae ferunt. Secunda considerare quae stella cui loco maxime vel homini dominetur; deinde observare qualibus communiter hae regiones et personae tonis utantur et cantibus, ut ipse similes quosdam una cum significationibus modo dictis adhibeas verbis, quae sideribus eisdem studeas exponere. Tertia situs aspectusque stellarum quotidianos animadvertere, 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 suscepturis influxum.

152. *ibid.* 3.XXI.95. See Kaske, *Three Books on Life* note 14 p.454

153. *ibid.* 3.XXI.82:

spirans adhuc et quodammodo vivens ...

154. *ibid.* 3.XXI.112:

praesertim quoniam spiritus eiusmodi musicus proprie tangit agitque in spiritum inter corpus animamque medium et utrunque affectione sua prorsus afficientem.

155. Aristotle, *De anima* II.8 402b 5-6, 420b 31-2

156. See C. Burnett, 'Sound and its Perception in the Middle Ages' pp.46-7

157. e.g. in Boethius, *De institutione musica* (also I.12-14 vox denotes human voice); Guido d'Arezzo, *Micrologus*; Heinricus of Augsburg *Musica quaestio* 109 (assigning specific pitches to planets). See this chapter part one, ref.7 above
158. *Liber de vita* 3.XXI.122:
Iam vero voces tardas, braves, raucas, querulas Saturno tribuimus; Marti vero contrarias, veloces acutasque et asperas et minaces; medias vero Lunae.
159. *ibid.* 3.XXI.124:
Concentus autem Iovi quidem graves et intentos dulcesque et cum constantia laetos. Contra Veneri cum lascivia et mollitie voluptuosos cantus adscribimus. Inter hos vero medios Soli tribuimus et Mercurio. Si una cum gratia suavitateque sunt venerabiles et simplices et intenti, Apollinei iudicantur. Si una cum iucunditate remissiores quodammodo sunt, strenui tamen atque multiplices, Mercuriales existunt.
160. See this chapter part one, ref.103 above
161. *Liber de vita* 3.XXI.130:
adeo ut cum eorum more opportune canendo et sonando clamaveris, responsuri protinus videantur vel instar echo, vel sicut corda quaedam in cithara tremens, quotiens vibratur altera temperata similiter.
162. *ibid.* 3.XXI.144:
Memento vero orationem apte et opportune compositam et affectu sensuque plenam atque vehementem similem cantibus vim habere.
163. In the *Apologia* to the *Liber de vita* (1.130) Ficino refers to himself and Pico as the brothers Phoebus (Pico) and Dionysus (Ficino): "I often call him my Phoebus and he in turn calls me Dionysius and Liber, for we are brothers" (Hunc ego saepe Phoebum appello meum, ille me Dionysium vicissim atque Liberum). Elsewhere (2.XX.42) he elaborates on the relationship between Phoebus and Bacchus, saying "Phoebus and Bacchus are always inseparable brothers; the two are practically identical ... they are always brothers and comrades and practically always second selves." (Phoebus et Bacchus semper individui fratres sunt; ambo fere sunt idem ... Semper ergo fratres comitesque sunt, fere semper alter alter et idem.)
164. Pico, *Conclusiones numero XXXI no.2, Omnia quae extant opera* p.159:
Nihil efficacius hymnis Orphei in naturali Magia, si debita musica, animi intentio, et caetera circumstantiae quas norunt sapientes, fuerint adhibitae.
See chapter two part one, ref.134 for full title
165. *Liber de vita* 3.XXII.9:
per imaginationis conceptus motusque concinnos, per congruas rationis discursiones, per tranquillitas mentis contemplationes.
166. *ibid.* 3.XXII.35

167. Ficino talks about his own horoscope in two letters: to Giovanni Cavalcanti (*Letters* vol.2 pp.33-4, *Op.om.* pp.732-3) and to Martinus Uranius (*Op.om.* p.901). The second account is the more accurate:
ascendisse tunc Aquarium ferme medium, una cum Piscibus,
arbitror. Saturnum in Aquario tunc Orientis angulum
tenuisse, Martem in eodem, Carcerem duodecima tenuisse,
in Scorpione solem, atque Mercurium in domo nona, Lunam,
in Capricorno: in Leone Jovem in septima. Ibidem in
Virgine Venerem, in Ariete Fortunam.

A detailed study of Ficino's natal chart in relation to his life and work has yet to be undertaken - forthcoming paper by author.

168. *Letters* vol.4 p.60, *Op.om.* pp.804-5:
Vaticinatus es, (arbitror) quam vehementer optarem
iamdiu penes aliquam Iovialem vitam agere, quo nescio
quid amari, atque, ut ita dixerim, Saturni quod mihi vel
inseruit genesis, vel adiunxit philosophia, aliquando
dulcissimo Iovis alicuius commertio leniretur.
169. *Liber de vita* 3.XXII.101. See Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 8.6-7
(Ficino's version in *Op.om.*p.301), *Orphic Hymn to Eros* in ed. Abel,
Orphica p.89, no.58.4; Kaske, *Three Books on Life* note 10 p.456.

PART TWO: Musica Instrumentalis

1. *Op.om.* p.944:
Hoc enim seculum tanquam aureum, liberales disciplinas
ferme iam extinctas reduxit in lucem, grammaticam,
poesim, oratoriam, picturam, sculpturam, architecturam,
musica, antiquum ad Orphicam Lyram carminum cantum.
Idque Florentiae.
2. *Op.om.* p.871:
Adduxerunt item ille Astrologi ad suum iudicium
confirmandum quod fatili quodam tempore antiquum
cytharae sonum, et cantum, et carmina Orphica oblivioni
prius tradita luci restituisses ...
3. Angelo Poliziano, *Opera* p.310:
longe felicior quam Thraciensis Orphei ... veram ni
fallor Eurydicen hoc est amplissimi iudicii Platoniam
sapientiam revocavit ab inferis.
4. *Supp.Fic.II* p.225:
Orphea sed verum faciet te barbara vestis
cum tibi sit cantus illius atque lyra.
5. *Ibid.* p.262:
Ad Marsilium Ficinum.

Panthoidem priscum post fata novissima silvas
Orphea mulcentem substinuisse ferunt.
Post hunc ingressus divini corpus Homeri
Cantavit numeros ore sonante novos.
Pythagore post hec manes intrasse benignos
Dicitur et mores edocuisse probos.

Inde ubi digressus varios erravit in annos,
Ennius accepit in sua membra pius.
Qui simulac vates mortalia vincla reliquit
Et moriens campos ivit ad Elisios,
Illic usque manens alios non induit artus
Neve sacrum passus deseruisse nemus,
Marsilius donec divina e sorte daretur,
Indueret cuius membra pudica libens.
Hinc rigidas cythara quercus et carmine mulcet
Atque feris iterum mollia corda facit.

6. *ibid.* p.225:
Orpheus hic ego sum, movi qui carmine silvas,
Qui rabidis feci mollia corda feris.
Hebri quamvis unda fluat velocior Euro,
Victor tamen cantu substitit illa meo.
7. Lorenzo de' Medici, *L'Altercazione* cap.II, in *Opere* vol.II p.41.
Quoted in Della Torre, *Storia dell'Accademia Platonica*
p.791:
Forse caduta è dal superno regno
La lira ch'era tra le stelle fisse
8. *ibid.*
9. Quoted in Della Torre, *Storia dell'Accademia Platonica* p.791:
Marsilii citharam crispus si tentet Apollo,
Et dextra et cantu victus Apollo cadit.
Et furor est, cum cantat amans cantante puella
Ad flexum, ad nutum percutit ille lyram.
Tunc ardenti oculi, tunc planta exurgit utraque,
Et quos non didicit, comperit ille modos.
10. *Letters* vol.1 p.198, *Op.om.* p.673:
Plato noster in Dialogo qui Ion inscribitur, carmine
ille solum divina Musica musarumque furore infusa poetis
existimant, quæ quand Musica humana cantantur, et
cantorem ipsum, et audientes quodammodo concitant in
furorem. Alexandri vero carmina heri ad Marsilium
scripta esse talia mox cithara mea pluribus audientibus
comprobavit ... Quamobrem non tam diligentiae tuae, quæ
tamen est non mediocris, quam musarum aspirationi tuam
hanc debes Braccio poesim.
11. *Letters* vol.1 p.144, *Op.om.* p.651:
Laudas Lyram Aureli nostram, carminibus laude dignis.
Ego carmina tua vicissim Lyra laudabo. Sed ut laude
digna. Ut tu vera loqueris.
12. *Letters* vol.1 p.179, *Op.om.* p.665:
Audivi quandoque Laurentium Medicem nostrum nonnulla
horum similia ad lyram canentem, furore quodam divino,
ut arbitror, concitum.
13. Pico owned copies of Ptolemy's *Harmonics*, Ficino's *De rationibus
musicae* and a *musica nova impresa* which may have been Ramos de
Pareja's *Musica practica*. See C. Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Musical*

Thought pp.30-31. On Ramos, see pp.300-2 of this thesis; on Baccio Ugolini, pp.321-3

14. Letters vol.4 pp.16-17, *Op.om.* p.788:
nos ... (ut ita loquar) lyrare ne delyremus ... salva
fit semper nobis rite vocantibus cithara mediocris.
15. *Op.om.* pp.822-3:
Postquam tibi modo scripsi Vale, surrexi properavi,
sumpsi lyram. Incoepi longum ab Orphei carmine cantum.
Tu quoque vicissim, postquam legeris hic iterum Vale,
(si sapis surge), protinus surge, libens sume lyram,
laborum dulce lenimen.
16. Letters vol.4 p.16, *Op.om.* p.788:
Caeteris enim lingua tantum, vel calamo loquor, tibi
vero saepe plectroque lyraque alioquin plectra sine te
mihi silent, mutua sine te mihi lyra.
17. Letters vol.2 p.14, *Op.om.* p.725:
Mi Foresi, quid agis hodie? Lyram pulsas? Cane ne hanc
sine Marsilio tuo pulses. Alioquin si fidem fregeris,
fides tibi penitus dissonabunt. Ego quotiens ad lyram
cano, tecum concino, non est mihi suavis absque amico
suavissimo melodia.
18. Letters vol.2 p.33, *Op.om.* pp.734-5:
Iubes, mi Joannes, ut Saturno, de quo superioribus
diebus valde quaerebar, palinodiam canam ... accuso
melancholiam, rem, ut mihi quidem videtur, amarissimam,
nisi frequenti usu citharae nobis quodammodo delirita
dulcesceret.
19. See this chapter part two, ref.14 above
20. *Op.om.* p.844:
Aura qualibet et leviolem te esse putare, si forte
putares ipse me levi quadam commatum aura, tum vere
superiore, tum autumnno praesenti, ab urbe in colles
secessisse charegianos. Sed absit ut eum ullo pacto
levem putem, qui vel faxis est gravior. Nempe cum non
absque ratione iudicavissem, multo satius fore te huc ad
me mantem ascendere, quam me his temporibus ad te monte
descendere, saepe Apollinem obsecravi, ut lyrae nostrae
illa nunc Orphei Amphionisque dictaret carmina, quibus
illi quondam quercus et saxa movebant, quo ipse te
arboreum, meo iucidio, saxumque traherem? Respondit
Phoebus. Erras, Marsilii, nimium, non enim arboreus,
aut lapideus, (ut opinaris), est Ioannes, alioquin iam
pridem tua illum (mihi crede) cithara rapuisses, non
lapideus, inquam, imo ferreus est Ioannes. Hoc ergo
maioris est artis opus. Quare posthac non loco, sed
forma mutare, saxa conabere. Ingens istud vecchii
montis saxum, (ut potes) metamorphosea Zoroastris arte
transferas in magnetem, ita demum ferreum illum huc
hominem attrahes. Haec modo nobis oriente Sole, in ipsa
vecchii montis silva deambulandibus Apollo consuluit.

Haec igitur in praesentia molior. Vide precor amice,
 quam ardua tui gratia moliar. Vide quam frustra te
 cogente laborem. O quanto melius, quantoque facilius te
 sponte Ioannes mutari tua, quam meo saxa labore mutari.
 Cum primum ipse ferreus esse desieris, tunc ego frustra
 laborare iam desinam.

21. See I. Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus* pp.179-89. Linforth stresses the paucity of evidence surrounding their use for any ritual purpose: "Everything about the hymns, except what can be learned from the text itself, is a matter of speculation."(p.182)
22. The hymns are considered to be by a variety of authors, from the early centuries A.D., perhaps the leaders of mystery sects; see Cornford, 'Mysticism and Science' p.140:
 "The rise of mystical cult-societies or non-social religious groups seems to coincide with the breaking up, in the sixth century, of the old social units based on the theory or fact of blood-kinship. It had also psychological causes: there was a deepening and quickening of religious experience - the revival associated with the name of Orpheus."
23. For example, Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus* pp.1-173; Walker, 'Orpheus the Theologian' pp.100-7; J. Warden, *Orpheus* pp.3-50.
24. In Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagorica*. See chapter two part one, ref.86
25. See Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus* pp.4-9; Warden, *Orpheus* pp.6-12. Sources include Pindar Fourth Pythian ode (462 B.C.); Euripides *Hypsipyle* (end 5th c.); Simondes fragment (556-468 B.C.); Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* (4th c. B.C.); the *Orphic Argonautica* (an account of the voyage of the Argo dating from the early centuries A.D., supposedly by Orpheus).
26. Ficino, *De amore* VII.14, *Op.om.* pp.1361-2 (Jayne, *Plato on Love* pp.170-1):
 Primus itaque furor inconcinna et dissonantia temperat.
 Secundus temperata unum totum ex partibus efficitur.
 Tertius unum totum supra partes. Quartus in unum quod super essentiam, et super totum est ducit.... Omnibus his furoribus occupatum fuisse Orpheum libri eius testimonio esse possunt.
27. Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagorica* XXVIII; Proclus, *In Platonis theologiam* I.vi. See E. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* pp.36-7.
28. St. Augustine, *Contra Faustum* XIII.15. See Warden, *Orpheus* p.91
29. Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus* p.296. See pp.291-306 for Linforth's "conclusions and guesses" on Orphic religion.
30. See Della Torre, *Storia dell'Accademia Platonica* p.789
31. Ficino, *Liber de vita* 3.XV.44:
 Ego autem cum haec explorata hactenus habuissem, admodum

gratulabar cogitabamque iuvenis adhuc magneti pro
viribus insculpere coelestis Ursae figuram ...

32. See ref.25 above; Ficino's version was unpublished - see ref.35 below
33. G. Corsi, 'The Life of Marsilio Ficino' in Letters vol.3 p.138
34. *Op. om.* p.933, written in 1492.
35. *ibid*; (translation in Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* pp.456-7):
Argonautica et hymnos Orphei et Homeri et Proculi,
Theologiamque Hesiodi, quae adolescens (nescio quomodo)
ad verbum mihi soli transtuli ... edere nunquam placuit,
ne forte lectores ad priscum deorum daemonumque cultum
iamdiu merito reprobatum revocare viderer. Quantum enim
Pythagoricis quondam curae fuit ne divina in vulgus
ederent, tanta mihi semper cura fuit, non divulgare
prophana ...
36. Letters vol.1 p.32, *Op. om.* p.608:
Contuli heri me in agrum Charegium, non agri, sed animi
colendi gratia, veni ad nos Marsili quamprimum. Per
tecum Platonis in nostri librum de summo bono, quem te
isthic arbitror iam e Graeca lingua in Latinam, ut
promiseras, transtulisse. Nihil enim ardentius cupio,
quam quae via commodius ad felicitatem ducat cognoscere.
Vale et veni non absque Orphica lyra.
37. Della Torre, *Storia dell'Accademia Platonica* pp.806-7, quoting an
anecdote by Benedicto Coluccio.
38. Pico, *Omnia quae estant opera* p.159:
Secretam Magiam a nobis primum ex Orphei hymnis elicitam
fas non est in publicum explicare.
39. *ibid.*, *Conclusiones numero XXXI* no.7:
Qui nescierit perfecte sensibiles proprietates per viam
secretae Analogiae intellectualizare, nihil ex hymnis
Orphei sanum intelliget.
40. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic* pp.60-2.
41. The surviving portions of Pletho's hymns (*Nomoi*) are edited by C.
Alexandre in *Traité des Loix*. See R. Webb, 'The Nomoi of Gemistos
Plethon in the Light of Plato's Laws'
42. Pletho, *De legibus* quoted in Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic* p.61
43. See *Op. om.* p.1537:
Magnus Cosimo Senatus consulto patriae pater, quo
tempore concilium in Graecos atque Latinos sub Eugenio
Pontifice Florentiae tractabatur, Philosophum graecum
nomine Gemistum, cognomine Plethonem, quasi Platonem
alterum de mysteriis Platoniceis disputantem frequenter
audivit, e cuius ore ferventi si afflatus est protinus,

sic animatus, ut inde Academiam quandam alta mente
conceperit, hanc oportuno primo tempore pariturus.

44. See Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic* pp.60-63
45. See Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* p.281, where he quotes from Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Laws* (Op.om. p.510):
... quemadmodum ligna quae casu exsiccavit ventus saepe
mox natura ignis accendit, similiter posse animos ex
religioso quodam ritu, quamvis apud sapientes minus
probato, perfunctos occultis modis meliori numine
corripir, ut qui nescientes quomodo in mentem ipsam
seorsum a sensibus ascenderunt, ex alto iam feliciter
accendantur.
46. Walker, 'Orpheus the Theologian' p.109
47. Pico, *Omnia quae extant opera* p.159, *Conclusiones numero XXXI* no.3:
Nomina deorum, quos Orpheus canit, non decipientem
daemonum, a quibus malum et non bonum provenit, sed
naturalium virtutum, divinarumque sunt nomina, a ver Deo
in utilitatem maxime hominis, si eis uti sciverit, mundo
distributarum.
48. On Benivieni and other musicians in the Platonic Academy, see Della
Torre, *Storia dell'Accademia Platonica* pp.788-800
49. In *Supp.Fic.I* pp.51-5
50. Ficino, *De amore* III.3, *Op.om.* p.1329 (Jayne, *Plato on Love* pp.66-7):
Il voces acutas, et graves matura diversas certis
intervallis et modulis sibi invicem magis amicas
faciunt. Ex quo harmoniae compositio et suavitatis
nascitur. Tardiores etiam motus et velociores ita
invicem temperant, ut amici potissimum fiant, et
rhythum concinnitatemque exhibeant.
51. cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 47d; the attunement of the human soul is a process
of the restoration "of understanding and what is understood to their
original likeness to each other."
52. See Cornford, 'Mysticism and Science' p.150
53. For a thorough explanation of the extremely complex modal systems of
the ancient and medieval theorists, see article on 'Mode' in *The New
Grove* vol.12 pp.376-450
54. In M. Allen, *The Philebus Commentary* ch.XXVIII p.269:
Nam si semitono in tonum ac tonum sit transitus,
clatonos oritur melodia gravis et constans; si per
semitonos plures eatur, chromatica mollis; si autem per
minora quodammodo, harmonica difficilis. Atque haec
sunt quae iubet Plato circa musicam animadverti, in
Pythagorici atque Orphici, harmoniam vocaverunt eam
concinnitatem, quae in vocum modulis ex eiusmodi
observatione resultat ...

55. In M. Allen, *The Philebus Commentary* ch.XXVIII p.266:
 Induxit autem tetrachordum Orpheus. Nam in hymno Phoebilyram Phoebodati quattuor cum fidibus, dicitque aestatem produci cum acutam tangit, hiemem cum gravem, cum medias duas autumnum atque ver.
56. See Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Musical Thought* p.7. According to Palisca the Greek modal theory as laid down by Boethius was first re-discovered by Johannes Gallicus (1415-73) who taught at a school at the Gonzaga Court in Mantua founded in 1424 by Vittorino da Feltro, where astrology also formed part of the curriculum. He also points out that many early Renaissance theorists merely applied ancient ideas to the existing Church modes.
57. For example, in Guido d'Arezzo (c.1030), *Micrologus* XIV; Hermannus Contractus (d.1054), *De musica*; Frutolfus of Michelsburg (before 1100), *Breviarum de musica et tonarius*; Johannes Afflighemensis (c.1100), *De musica* XVI; Jacques de Liège (1260-1330), *Speculum musicae*; Uglino of Orvieto (1430), *Declaratio musicae disciplinae*
58. Johannes Afflighemensis, *De musica* XVI, in W. Babb, *Hucbald, Guido and John on Music* p.133, 1.109-113. This ref. 1.110
59. Jacques de Liège, *Speculum musicae* XIV.8
60. Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*; Dionysius Areopagitus, *The Mystical Theology and the Celestial Hierarchies*. See Regino of Prüm (842-914), *Epistola de armonica institutione*, excerpts in Meyer-Baer, *The Music of the Spheres and the Dance of Death* p.349; Aurelian of Réôme (mid 9th c.), *Musica disciplina* VIII; Anonymous 11th c. hymn, *Naturalis concordia cum planetis* quoted in Meyer-Baer p.78; Jacques de Liège, *Speculum musicae* XIII
61. Aurelian of Réôme, *Musica disciplina* VIII.23-8
62. J. Dauphiné, 'La Musique des Eléments' p.32
63. Anselmi, *De musica* ed. G. Massera. Source is ms.H 233 in the Ambrosiana Library, Milan, dated Parma, 15th april 1434
64. The *Astronomia* source is Vatican Library cod.4080 (15th century); the authenticity of the *Opus de magia disciplina* is more open to doubt. Massera (pp.16-17) mentions another treatise on magic by Anselmi, *Quarta pars quarti tractatus Giorgii Parmensis de modis specialibus imaginum octavi orbis*, Vatican Library cod.5333 (1542) and suggests that it may form part of the *Opus de magia*, found in the Laurenziana Library ms.Plut.44.35 (16th century). These sources remain to be clarified. See L. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* IV p.242 ff, V p.118
65. Anselmi, *Opus de magia disciplina* fol.7v:
 Incantatio quidem est relligiosa verborum prolatio
 necessaria ad exequutionem propitii cuius sunt partes:
 Invittio, Invocatio, Coniuratio, Oratio et Imprecatio.
66. *ibid.* fol.79v:
 Tuum est consilium sapientia et intellectus et memoria:

occulta et profiddurra cognosceri et intelligere et
ormentiam et stolidatem et ignoratium ubi vis extubere.

67. See J. Handschin, 'Anselmi's Treatise on Music annotated by Gafori'; this ref. p.130; C. Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Musical Thought* says "Ficino, by making the *Timaeus* accessible through his translation and commentary, gave the speculation about cosmic harmony a fruitful new direction."
68. See Massera, introduction to Anselmi's *De musica* pp.19-22
69. John Scotus Eriugena was the first to give a flexible interpretation of planetary pitches; see J. Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth* pp.140-2; on Anselmi, pp.142-3
70. Anselmi, *De musica* I.153-5
71. *ibid.* I.139
72. Not much is known about the life of Ramos, except that he was born in Baez about 1440 and lectured at the university of Salamanca. By 1472 he had left Spain and was certainly in Bologna in the 1480s when his treatise was published and where he gave lectures on Boethius. Two years later he travelled to Rome, where he was possibly a member of the Vatican choir. See O. Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History* vol.2 p.10
73. Ugolino of Orvieto, *Declaratio musicae disciplinae* ed. A. Seay p.147
74. Republic 531
75. *Philebus* 56a
76. Ramos, *Musica practica* III.2.3, ed. J. Wolf pp.96-99, trans. in Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History* vol.2 pp.12-14
77. Ramos, *Musica practica* I.1.2, ed. Wolf p.4, trans. in Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History* vol.2 p.11
78. See J. Haar, 'The Frontispiece of Gafori's *Practica musica*' p.14; C. Miller, introduction to Gaffurius' *De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum opus* pp.17-8; also, Gaffurius *Theorica musica* I.2, IV.3,8 on modes, pitches and planetary orders.
79. Ficino, *Theologia Platonica* IV.1, *Op.om.* pp.130-1. See also *Op.om.* pp.652, 1458-60; M. Allen, *Marsilio Ficino and the Phaedran Charioteer* pp.84, 194-6; *Letters* vol.1 p.143. Platonic sources for the Muses as creators of harmonia include Alcibiades 108c:
What is the art which includes harping and singing and teaching the measure correctly? ... Who are the goddesses that foster the art? The Muses.
Also, *Timaeus* 47d
80. *Op.om.* p.1456
81. Nicolaus Burtius, *Opusculum musices*, Bologna 1487

82. Gaffurius, *De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum opus* IV.1-17. For example, in IV.9 he attributes the Mixolydian mode to Saturn and the Dorian to the Sun "for in its median position among the seven primary modes it shares its own tetrachord with the other modes: the Sun has a median position among the seven planets and customarily gives light or heat to other planets from its own rays." (in C. Miller translation, p.189)
83. For a modern translation, see A. Barker *Greek Musical Writings* vol.2. I discuss this treatise again on p.306
84. Ficino, *Liber de vita* III.21.65; see p.284. The Latin *tonus* generally refers to tone, note, pitch or interval, whereas the Greek *tonos* can mean mode, pitch, accent, metre, tension or sound-intensity - it has a more qualitative connotation (from Liddell-Scott Greek Lexicon).
85. *Supp.Fic.I* p.51
86. See W. Bowen, 'Ficino's Analysis of Musical Harmonia'
87. *Op.om.* pp.685-97
88. Ficino, *De amore* III.3, *Op.om.* pp.1329-30 (Jayne, *Plato on Love* pp.66-7):
 Idem in Musica observatur: cuius artifices, qui numeris, quos numeros, aut magis, aut minus diligant, investigant. Ii inter unum ac duo, atque unum et septem minium amorem inveniunt. Inter unum vero, tria, quatuor, quinque, sex, amorem vehementiorem reperiunt.
 Ficino's source is Plato, *Symposium* 187:
 "Music may be called a knowledge of the principles of love in the realm of harmony and rhythm."
89. *Supp.Fic.I* pp.52-4: *De causis consonantie communibus*. See Bowen, 'Ficino's Analysis' p.23
90. *Supp.Fic.I* p.53 (trans. School of Economic Science):
 Tria vero uni ad ad unum facile ad unum facile admoventur. Ternarius enim numerus individuus et comprehensor et perfectissimus omnium apud multos habetur, qua in re cum unitate maxime congruit.
91. *ibid.* p.54:
 Quamobrem quotiens voces duas maxime discernit ut duas, offenditur maxime. Ubi vero discernit minus, minor ibi offensio provenit. Ubi denique minime minima. Appetit quidem auditus unum, quoniam et ipse unus est atque ab uno, sed unum cupit ex multis perfecte conflatum atque ea proportione compositum, qua et ipse unum quiddam naturaliter contemperatur ex multis. Denique quoniam auditus ipse multitudine quadam naturalium partium constat in unam formam penitus conspirantium, ideo numerum vocum libenter adsciscit in vocem unam atque concentum perfecte redactum.

92. *ibid.* p.51:
Mitto nunc quod sexquioctava quidem tonum, minor vero semitonum edit.
93. *ibid.* p.51:
Tertio sexquiquarta, ex qua vocis tertie lenis nascitur harmonia Cupidem refert et Adonem ... Praecipue vero tertia, quinta, octava ceteris gratiores tris nobis Gratias referunt.
94. Bowen, 'Ficino's Analysis' p.24
95. *Supp.Fic.I* p.52:
Principio vox illa gravis ob ipsam motionis tarditatem in qua versatur quasi stare videtur. Secunda vero omnino cadit a prima ideoque penitus dissonat. Tertia demum spiritu quodammodo resumpto quasi resurgit consonantiamque recuperat. Quarta vero cadit a tertia atque iccirco pene iam dissonat, haud tamen ita dissonat ut secunda, accessu videlicet lepidissimo imminentis quite conditio atque interim precedentis tertie lenitate permulcta. Posthec vero quinta post casum quarte iam resurgit, resurgit inquam perfectius quam vox tertia, quippe cum vocalis resurrectionis hec impleat summum. Cetera namque post eam redire iam potius in priores quam resurgere a Pythagoricis iudicantur. Sexta igitur redire videtur ad tertiam, ex qua bis replicata componitur, ac lenitate quadam molli tertie maxime congruit. Deinde septima vox infeliciter revertitur immo relabitur in secundam eiusque sequitur dissonantiam. Octava denique in primam feliciter restituitur, quae quidem restitutione dum octavam cum prima iterum repetita componit, novem Musarum complet chorum ex statu vocis et casu, resurrectione quoque et reditu quasi quattuor gradibus concinne dispositum.
96. Plato, *Timaeus* 54c-68d
97. *Supp.Fic.I* p.54
98. Ficino's familiarity with Ptolemy's work is testified by *Liber de vita* 3.IV.53 (referring to *Harmonics* III.15):
Ptolemaeus, ubi de consonantia disputat, Iovem ait cum Sole prae ceteris perfectissime consonare ...
99. A. Barker, *Greek Musical Writings* vol.2 p.271
100. Ptolemy, *Harmonics* III.5; the octave corresponds to the intellectual part of the soul, the fifth to the perceptive part the the fourth to the animating part.
101. *ibid.* III.7
102. *ibid.* III.9. See also Quintilianus, *De musica* III.23, Gaffurius, *De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum opus* IV.17
103. Ptolemy, *Harmonics* III.16

104. The opposition and square aspects were considered discordant because they are composed of signs of opposing natures which tend to conflict with each other rather than compromise. See Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* I.13. Ptolemy takes as his starting point for the division of the zodiac into opposition, trine, square and sextile aspects "the two fractions and the two superparticulars most important in music" namely the perfect 4th and 5th. See also Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Introduction to Arithmetic* I.19, II.26

105. *Supp.Fic.I* p.55:

quartum vero etsi dissonum, tamen ut aiunt dissonum mediocriter, quais est apud musicos vocis quarte natura.

106. *Op.om.* p.1615:

Iam vero non solum non dissonat Cancer ab Arietie, sed consonat, partes enim utraeque sunt corporis plurimum uniformis, et suapte natura, quae apud nos dissonant haronice temperantis, neque minus in coelo, quam in musico cantu inter se omnia consonant. Sic et nobis forsitan excogitare licebit humanam musicam ex harmonia coelesti coelum namque Pythagorici, Dei lyram appellaverunt. Coitum igitur Planetarum apud nos octavae vocis consonantia referat, haec enim cum prima coire videtur, oppositionem vero coelestium, quae fit in septimo, vox quoque apud nos septima similiter omnium dissonantissima repraesentat sextilem aspectum, qui fit in tertio signo vox tertia, quadratum quarta, trinum qui in quito fit, quinta. Sicut ergo in consonantia nostra inde pendente quarta vox, vel interdum septima, quae per se dissonarent, tamen una cum caeteris ad gratiam consonantiae conferunt, sic et multo magis in harmonia coelesti aspectus omnes ad absolutam concordiam necessarii iudicantur. Hinc fit ut sapientiores Astronomi quartum aspectum adiunctum, vel sextili, vel trino, non solum non horreant, sed exoptent: fit etiam ut per septenarios, vel dierum in morbis, vel annorum in vita, quibus quadraturae, vel Lunae, vel Saturni mox veniunt, mutationes in nobis non semper in peius, sed in melius quandoque contingant.

107. *Supp.Fic.I* p.55:

Quid vero de sydere sexto dicemus, quo quidem mollis et ut ita loquar infirma sexte vocis consonantia designatur? Hanc utique infirmitatem etsi astrologi in genesi iudicanda esse malam existimant, prisci temen theologi ideo utilem esse putant, quoniam homo ipse re vera ipse sti animus, corpus vero animi hominisque carcer, carcerisque infirmitas ei qui carcere sit inclusus futura sit utilis. Sydus posthec septimum angulare ut aiunt atque discordia iam primo opposita manifestisque inimicitiis valde robustum septimam musice vocent prae se ferre fidetur, robusto quidem com tono seu vehementi potius manifestissime iam a prima voce discordem. Sequitur octavum sydus quod etsi quia morti ab astrologis deputatur vulgo infaustum videtur, est tamen priscorum sententia theologorum celesti animo felicissimum, quippe cum terrenum illi carcerem denique

solvens et ab elementalī dissonantia liberet et consonantiae celesti restituat. Quapropter non iniuria absolutam atque ad principium redeuntem vocis octavae significat consonantiam.

108. *ibid.* pp.55-6:

Quid vero de sydere decimo? Ambitionem quidem noc apud astrologos humanae discordiae fundamentum, apud vero musicos vocis quarte discordiam quasi humanam mediamque ostendit. Undecimum deinde humane amicitie signum amicam demonstrat vocis tertie melodiam. Postremo duodecimum inimicis occultis et carceri deputatum dissonum declarat lapsum secunde vocis a prima.

109. Ptolemy, *Harmonics* III.7

110. *ibid.* III.8 (trans. A. Barker):

Hence the configurations of stars that are diametrically opposite one another in the zodiac are the most invigorating of all of them, as are those among the notes that make an octave with one another.

111. See Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* I.17.38

112. *Quis dabit capiti meo aquam.* For information on Isaac in particular and sacred music in 15th-century Florence in general, see F. D'Accone, 'Heinrich Isaac in Florence' and 'The Singers of San Giovanni'; A. Seay, 'The 15th-century Cappella'; J. Haar *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music in the Renaissance* pp.23,31,36; G. Reese, *Music in the Renaissance* pp.169-71, 212-17

113. However, we do find evidence of Ficino's admiration for the organist at the Cappella di San Giovanni, Squarcialupi (d.1475). E. Haraszti ('La Technique des Improvisateurs de Langue Vulgaire et de Latin au Quattrocento' p.24 n.3) quotes a manuscript in the Biblioteca Leopoldina Laurentiana in Florence which contains a collection of verses set to music celebrating Squarcialupi's skill: *Collectio cantionum Italicarum cum notis musicis. Carmina variorum clarissimorum vivorum in laudem A. Ssq.* with verses by Marsilio Ficino, Angelo Poliziano, Lorenzo de' Medici etc.

114. See Reese, *Music in the Renaissance* pp.167-71; F. Ghisi *I Canti Carnascialeschi*

115. See Reese, *Music in the Renaissance* pp.171-3

116. *ibid.* pp.165-7

117. See Haar, *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music* p.82, Haraszti, 'La Technique des Improvisateurs' p.21

118. N. Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi* p.22

119. Haar, *Essays* p.35

120. See Pirrotta, 'Music and Cultural Tendencies' p.138, *Music and Theatre* p.22

121. Pirrotta, 'Music and Cultural Tendencies' p.142
122. Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre* p.22
123. Pirrotta, 'Music and Cultural Tendencies' p.143
124. De vitandis passionibus, quoted in Haraszti, 'La Technique des Improvisateurs' p.27
125. Text and trans. in Pirrotta, 'Music and Cultural Tendencies' pp.151-2, 155:
nam cum verborum sententiaeque numeri cum modorum
suavitate coniunguntur, nihil cause esse potest quin
propter aurium vim animique similitundinem maxima
permotto in audiendo fiat idque tum fere saepe evenire
solet, cum versibus aut turbidi canendo representat
motus, aut animi morum, disciplinaeque insititione
admonentur, in qua sita foelicitas humana fit.
126. See Haar, *Essays* p.44
127. See Reese, *Music in the Renaissance* p.155
128. V. Calmeta, *Prose e lettere edite e inedite* pp.20ff. quoted in
Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre* p.27. See also Pirrotta p.23 on Calmeta
himself as commentator and critic.
129. Phaedrus 245
130. *Ion* 533-6
131. Ficino, *Commentarium in Phaedrum*; text and translation in M. Allen,
Marsilio Ficino and the Phaedran Charioteer pp.84-5:
Quamobrem furor quilibet, sive fatidicus sive
mysterialis seu amatorius, dum in cantus procedit et
carmina, merito in furorem poeticum videtur absolvi.
132. *Letters* vol.1 p.46, *Op. om.* p.614:
Alii namque vocum numeris variorumque sonis
instrumentorum coelestem Musicen imitantur, quos certe
leves, ac pene vulgares musicos appellamus: nonnulli
vero graviori quodam firmiorique iudicio divinam ac
coelestem harmoniam imitantes, intimae rationis sensum
notionesque inversum, pedes ac numeros digerunt: hi vero
sunt, qui divino afflato spiritu gravissima quaedam, ac
praeclarissima carmina ore, ut aiunt, rotundo prorsus
effundunt. Hanc Plato graviorem musicam poesimque
nomiat, efficacissimam harmoniae coelestis imitatricem
... quod divinae quoque harmoniae proprium est, vocum
atque motuum numeris gravissimos quosdam, et ut Poeta
diceret, delphicos sensus ardentius exprimit ... Oriri
vero poeticum hunc furorem a Musis existimat, qui autem
absque Musarum instinctu Poeticas ad fores accedit,
sperans quasi arte quadam Poetam se bonum evasurum:
inanem illum quidem, atque eius poesim esse censet,
eosque Poetis, qui coelesti inspiratione ac vi
rapiuntur, adeo divinos, saepe numero Musis afflatos

census exprimere, ut ipsimet postmodum extra furorem
positi, quae protulerint minus intelligant.

133. *Op. om.* p.1365:

Quicumque numine quomodolibet occupatur, profecto
propter ipsam impulsas divini vehementiam, virtutisque
plenitudinem, exuberat, concitatur, exultat, finesque et
mores humanos excedit.

134. Ficino, *De amore VII.14*, *Op. om.* p.1361 (Jayne, *Plato on Love*
pp.170-1):

Poetico ergo furore primum opus est, qui per Musicos
tonos quae torpent suscitet: per harmonicam suavitatem
quae turbantur, mulcet: per diversorum denique
consonantiam, dissonantem pellat discordiam, et varias
partes animi temperet.

135. Ficino, *Liber de vita* 3.XXI.47

136. Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano* Book I. The edition I have used
for the original Italian (1528) is unpaginated; English translations
in G. Bull, *The Book of the Courtier*. See B. Becherini, '*Il*
Cortegiano e la Musica' p.92

137. Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano* Book I. See Becherini '*Il*
Cortegiano' p.92. I am grateful to Anthony Rooley for first
introducing me to the concepts of *sprezzatura* and *grazia* and their
importance for the study of Renaissance performance practice.

138. Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano* Book I. See also G. Caccini,
preface to *Le Nuove Musiche*, where he talks of "una certa nobile
sprezzatura di canto" present in his new manner of singing (ed. Wiley
Hitchcock, p.44)

139. Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano* Book I (Bull p.67):
trovo una regola universalissima: la qual mi par valer
circa questo in tutte le cose humane, che si facciano, o
dicano più che alcuna altra. Et ciò è fuggir quanto più
si pò: et come un asperissimo et pericoloso scoglio la
affettazione, et per dir forse una nova parola, usar in
ogni cosa una certa *sprezzatura*, che nasconda l'arte, et
dimostrò ciò che si fa, e dice venir fatto senza fatica,
e quasi senza pensarvi. Da questo credo io che derivi
assai la *grazia* ...

140. See W. Kemp, 'Some Notes on Music in Castiglione's *Il Libro del*
Cortegiano' p.360

141. Gaffurius, *Practica musica* ed. I. Young, p.181

142. Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano* Book I:
Vedete adunque come il mostrar l'arte, è un così intento
studio, levi la *gratia* d'ogni cosa.

143. See ref.149 below

144. In Plato, *Phaedrus* 251

145. Published in Florence, c.1500. Given that in this poem Pulci lampoons Ficino and his Academy (and generally caused Ficino much anger by his slanderous and underhand behaviour towards him - see Letters vol.1 pp.168-170) it has been suggested that this illustration represents Ficino himself.
146. Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano* Book I (Bull p.69):
 Ciò procede che quel continuare nelle perfette genera satietà, e dimostra una troppo affettata armonia, il che mescolando le imperfette, si fugge, col far quasi un paragone, donde più le orrechie nostre stanno suspese, e più avidamente attendono, e gustano le perfette: e dilettonsi tal'hor di quella dissonantia della seconda, o settima, come di cosa sprezzata.
147. *ibid.* Book I (see Kemp, 'Some Notes on Music' pp.355-6):
 [la sprezzatura] porta ancor seco un'altro ornamento: il quale accompagnando qual si voglia actione humana, per minima che ella sia, non solamente subito scopre il saper di chi la fa, ma spesso lo fa estimare molto maggior di quello che è in efetto, perche ne gli animi deli circunstante imprime opinione che chi così facilmente fa bene, sappia molto più di quello che fa: e se in quello che fa ponesse studio, e fatica, potesse farlo molto meglio ... un musico se nel cantar pronuncia una sola voce terminata con suave accento in un gropetto duplicato con tal facilità, che paia che così venga fatto à caso, con quel punto solo fa conoscere che fa molto più di quello che fa.
148. *ibid.* Book II (Bull p.121)
149. *ibid.* Book II (Bull p.120):
 tanto di venustà ad efficacia aggiunge alle parole che è gran meraviglia.
150. Haraszti, 'La Technique des Improvisateurs' p.20
151. Kemp, 'Some Notes on Music' p.358
152. Becherini, 'Il Cortegiano e la Musica' pp.86,91
153. See Kemp, 'Some Notes on Music' p.358
154. On the *lira* see article in *The New Grove*, vol.11 pp.19-24. Becherini ('Il Cortegiano e la Musica' p.91 n.31) quotes Agnolo da Firenzuola (*Opere* 1802) on the revival of the Greek custom of accompanied singing, who clearly equates the viola with the *lira*:
 a quelli massimamente che avessero qualche dimestichezza con le Muse, era la viola, o vogliam dire la lira, assai più conveniente.
 On the iconography of Orpheus playing this instrument, see G. Scavizzi, 'The Myth of Orpheus in Italian Renaissance Art, 1400-1600' in ed. J. Warden, *Orpheus, the Metamorphoses of a Myth* pp.111-162. See note 166 below. Philip Pickett (*Behind the Mask; Monteverdi's L'Orfeo* p.15) has drawn attention to the direct connection between Ficino's magical singing of the Orphic hymns *ad lyram* and Orfeo's

invocation to Apollo in Act III of Monteverdi's opera. Orfeo, ostensibly singing to Charon, could also be seen to call on his father Apollo, accompanied by a halo of strings in imitation of a lira:

"Orfeo now turns to his father with an incantation exactly as prescribed by Marsilio Ficino. He offers up a most restrained and dignified prayer for Apollo's aid, calling down his father's benign magic; he 'accompanies' himself on the *lira da braccio*; he chooses the appropriate key of G (*Sol*), even beginning his incantation on the keynote G (*Sol*); he calls on the benign star by name (*Sol*); and he mentions the colour or metal associated with it (*aurea*)."

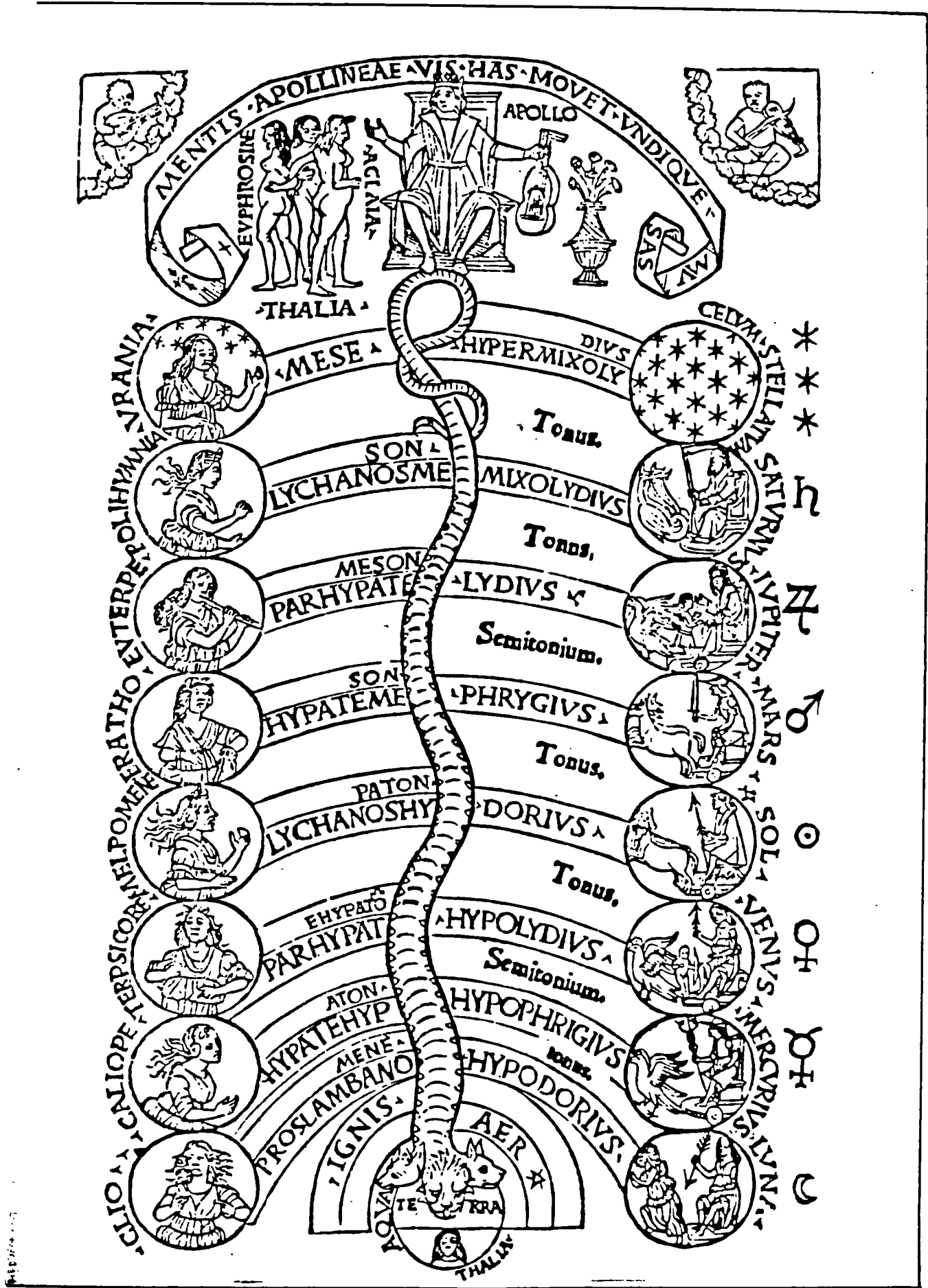
155. Becherini, 'IL Cortegiano e la Musica' p.86
156. The relevant passage is quoted in Haraszti, 'La Technique des Improvisateurs' p.20 (from Karl Weinmann, *Johannes Tinctoris* (1446-1511) und sein unbekannter Traktat: *De Inventione et usu musicae*. Eine historisch-kritische Untersuchung Regensburg 1917 p.42)
157. *Cetula* probably refers to *cithara* (Latin) or *cetra* (Italian) - I was unsuccessful in tracing it in any dictionary. Tinctoris (*De inventione et usu musicae*, quoted in Haraszti, 'La Technique des Improvisateurs' p.20) defines it as a folk instrument, used by "certain rustics" (*quosdam rusticos*) for their songs and dances. *Tambura* is defined as an arabic instrument like a mandolin, *cetra*, guitar or lute (*Dizionario Etimologico Italiano* V, Florence 1957)
158. Tinctoris, *De inventione et usu musicae* (Haraszti p.20):
A Graecis (ut aiunt) comperta, non solum forme (sicut illa) differens a leuto, sed etiam chordarum dispositione ac pulsatione, Enimvero sive tres ei sint chorda simplices ut in pluribus per geminam diapentem sive quinque (ut in aliquibus) sic et per unisonos temperate inequalecta hoc est tumide sunt extente ut arculus (quum chorda eius pilis equinis confecta sit recta) unam tangens, justa libitum sonitoris, alias reliquat inconcussas.
159. As confirmed by Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre* p.29
160. Quoted in Pirrotta, 'Music and Cultural Tendencies' text p.150, trans. p.154:
quod idem fere effert de hispana lyra dicendum, nisi eius equalis lentaque suavitas soleret aurium satietate serni longiorque similitudo videretur, que expectari aurum terminatione possit.
161. See I. Woodfield, *The Early History of the Viol* chapter 3, *The vihuela de mano* pp.38-60
162. Tinctoris, *De inventione et usu musicae*, quoted in Haraszti, 'La Technique des Improvisateurs' p.20:
Viola vero cum arculo nonsolum ad hunc usum sed etiam ad historiarum recitationem in plerisque partibus orbis assumitur.

163. See I. Woodfield, *The Early History of the Viol* chapter 5 on the introduction of the viol into Italy, pp.95-8 on the vihuela da arco.
164. Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre* pp.9,23
165. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* defines cithara as 'lyre' and lyra as 'lyre' or more generally as "a poet's inspiration or powers". The *Dictionary of Medieval Latin* (London 1975) defines cithara as 'harp'. For the Italian equivalents, the *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* (Turin) gives the following definition for cetra or cetera: "ancient lyre, also lyric poetry and inspiration, lyric poetry itself" and describes a lira as an ancient instrument smaller than a cetra but in the same lyre-form.
166. Although we also find him playing lute and lyre: see ed. Warden, *Orpheus* pp.112,115,126,139, representations by Lucca della Robbia, Maso Finiguerra, Francesco del Cossa, Agostino Veneziano.
167. Bidone was an esteemed singer who worked in Ferrara and Mantua at the beginning of the 16th century. He was credited with having no equal in vocal technique, astounding listeners with his fast ornamentation and sudden dramatic effects. Marco Cara was a more traditional composer/improviser who cultivated a smooth, refined style of solo song with accompaniment. See Kemp, 'Some Notes on Music' pp.154-5, who points out that in referring to these two musicians Castiglione "is restating the accepted Platonic-Aristotelian classification of the modes by their ethical qualities of relative excitation and mollification." (p.355)
168. Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano* Book I (Bull p.82):
 [La] maniera dal cantare di Bidon ... è tanto artificiosa, pronta, vehemente, concitata, e di così varie melodie, che i spirti di chi ode tutti si commovono, e s'infiannano, e così sospesi par che si levino in fino al cielo. Ne men commove nel suo cantar il notro Marchetto Cara, ma con più molle armonie: che per una via placida, e piena di flebile dolcezza intenerisce, e penetra le anime, imprimendo in esse soavemente una dilettevole passione.
169. On Pietrobono, see Haraszti, 'La Technique des Improvisateurs' p.25; L. Lockwood, *Music in Renaissance Ferrara* pp.98-108; Pirrotta, 'Music and Cultural Tendencies' pp.139-41, *Music and Theatre* p.26
170. See Lockwood, *Music in Renaissance Ferrara* p.99; Pietrobono's skill is praised by Cornazano, Guarino, Cortese and Tinctoris among others.
171. Lockwood, *Music in Renaissance Ferrara* p.68
172. Cornazano, *La Sforziade* Book 9, canto VIII. The quotations are from lines 6,25,49,63. See Haraszti, 'La Technique des Improvisateurs' p.25; Lockwood, *Music in Renaissance Ferrara* p.102, Pirrotta 'Music and Cultural Tendencies' pp.144-5
173. See ref.165 above

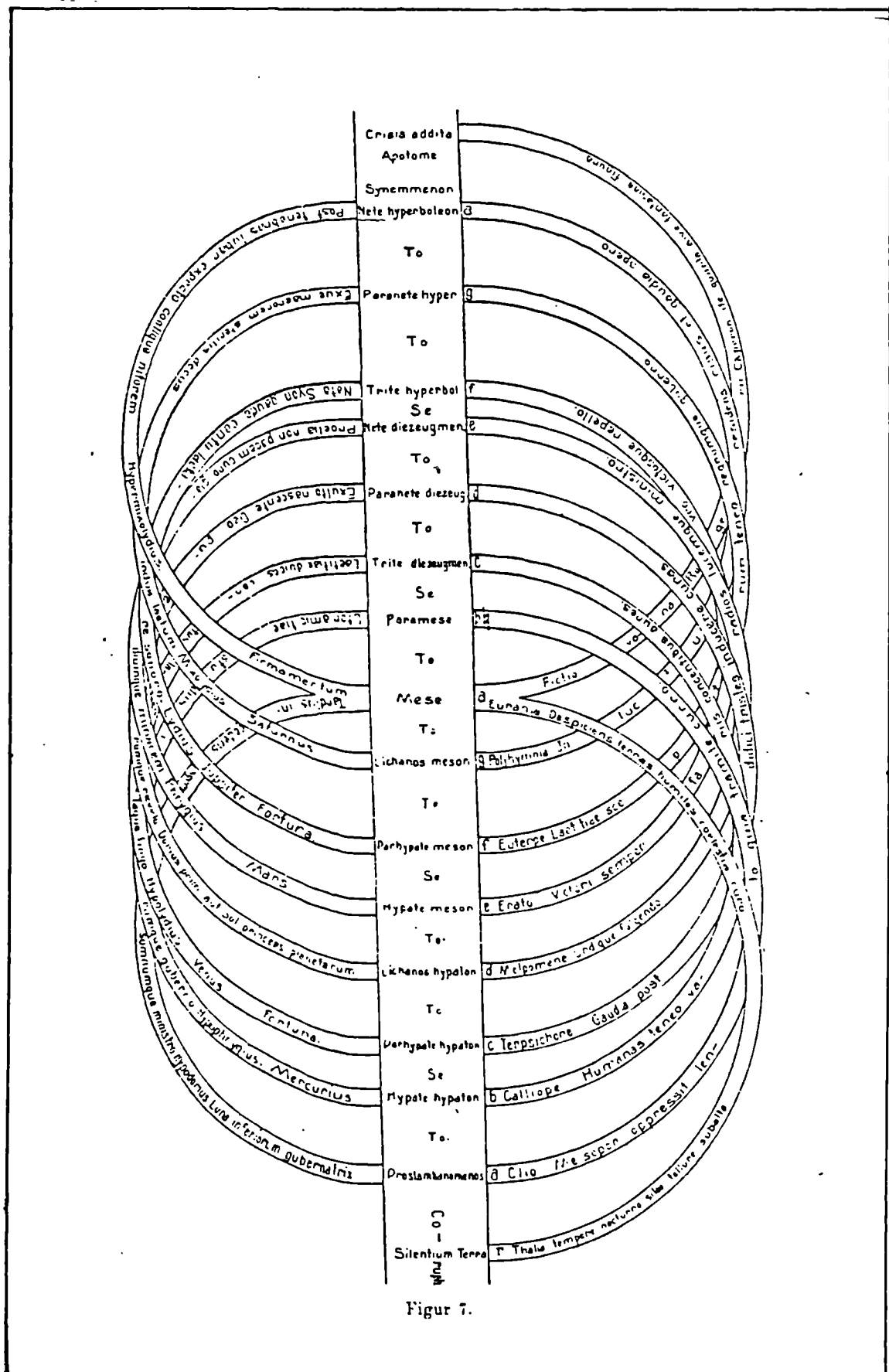
174. *Cantoni* here probably refers to the top strings of the lute, not the lower ones, allowing for *Cornazano's* poetic license and lack of technical musical knowledge; see note 177 below.
175. *Pirrota*, 'Music and Cultural Tendencies' p.146
176. See *ibid.* p.26
177. In *De cardinalatu*, quoted in *Pirrota*, 'Music and Cultural Tendencies' p.150, trans. p.154:
 enim Petrus bonus Ferrariensis et hi qui ab eo manarunt
 frequenter per hyperboleon iteratione utebantur.
178. *ibid.* pp.149, 153:
 quaeque maxime iucunda aurium mentione iudicantur: nam
 illi certi digitorum cursus tum iteratio, tum conclusio,
 tum vocum extenuatio et quasi interductio facile in
 hominum mentes irreperere exquisita suavitate solent.
179. *Tinctoris*, *De inventione et usu musicae*, quoted in *Haraszti*, 'La Technique des Improvisateurs' p.25:
 Petrus Bonus alii quod molto difficilium est soli,
 cantus non modo duarum partium verum etiam trium et
 quatuor artificiosissime promunt.
180. See *Lockwood*, *Music in Renaissance Ferrara* p.103
181. See *Pirrota*, *Music and Theatre* p.26
182. By *Cortese*; see *Pirrota*, 'Music and Cultural Tendencies' p.143
183. *ibid.* pp.151,155
184. See *Calmeta*, *La vita di Serafino Aquilano 1505* p.63, mentioned by *Haraszti*, 'La Technique des Improvisateurs' p.18
185. *Haraszti* (*ibid.* pp.17-18) describes the atmosphere at *Cortese's* Roman Academy, where the participants passed the time being entertained by *Serafino*, "con harmonie de sua musica et con l'arguità di suoi strambotti".
186. See *ibid.* p.17
187. *ibid.* p.17
188. For an extensive discussion of *Poliziano's Orfeo*, its dating, style of performance, instrumentation, musical form etc. see *Pirrota*, *Music and Theatre* chapter 1: 'Orpheus, singer of strambotti'
189. *Cortese*, *De cardinalatu*, in *Pirrota*, 'Music and Cultural Tendencies' p.161
190. *R. Brandolini*, *De musica et poetica* in *A. Ancona*, *L'Origine del Teatro Italiano* pp.106-7, quoted in *Haraszti*, 'La Technique des Improvisateurs' p.26
191. *Pirrota*, *Music and Theatre* pp.24-36

192. *ibid.* p.24
193. *ibid.* p.15
194. On Ugolini's involvement with the Academy, see Della Torre, *Storia dell'Accademia Platonica* pp.796-800
195. See Tomlinson, 'Authentic Meaning in Music'
196. *Op. om.* pp.936-7
197. Tomlinson, 'Authentic Meaning in Music' p.130. Ficino's *De amore* was completed in 1469. See chapter four, pp.268-9 of this thesis.
198. In his *De amore* I.3 (*Op. om.* p.1323, Jayne pp.37-8) Ficino wrote:
 "In the *Argonautica*, when Orpheus ... sang about the beginnings of things, following the theology of Hermes Trismegistus, he placed Chaos before the world, and located Love in the bosom of that Chaos, before Saturn, Jove and the other gods; and he praised Love in these words: 'Love is the oldest, perfect in himself and best counselled'." (*Orpheus in Argonautica, cum de rerum principiis coram Chirone heroibusque cantaret, Mercurii Trismegisti Theologiam sequutum: chaos ante mundum posuit, et ante Saturnum, Iovem, caeterosque deos. Amorem in ipsius chaos sinu locavit, laudavitque his verbis: antiquissimum seipso perfectum, consultissimumque Amorem...*)
 and at *De amore* III.3 (*Op. om.* p.1330, Jayne p.67):
 "The god Orpheus rightly called [Love] 'clever, double-natured, holding the keys of all things'." (*Hunc merito divus Orpheus appellavit solertem bigenium, omnium claves habentem.*)
199. *Letters* vol.1 pp.198-9, *Op. om.* pp.634-5
200. Tomlinson, 'Authentic Meaning in Music' p.131
201. *Op. om.* p.951
202. See ref.154 above
203. Tomlinson, 'Authentic Meaning in Music' p.134
204. See Reese, *Music in the Renaissance* pp.155-83
205. Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre* p.25
206. *ibid.* p.25
207. *ibid.* pp.32,33,35
208. See also Haar, *Essays* p.46; Horace Ode in Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre* p.31
209. On the connection between Ficino and Gaffurius, see O. Kinkeldy, 'Franchino Gaffuri and Marsilio Ficino'

210. C. Miller, in his introduction to *De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum opus* (p.16 n.22) points out that this setting is one of the earliest attempts to set Latin humanist verse syllabically. The poet is Lancinus.
211. Sources: K. Jeppesen, *Die mehrstimmige italienische Laude um 1500* 1935
212. Letters vol.1 p.143, *Op. om.* p.652:
 Ego autem, ut de Marsilio tuo aliquid dicam, eo consilio
 post Theologiae, vel medicinae studia gravioribus
 fidibus cantibusque frequenter incumbo, ut caetera
 sensuum oblectamenta penitus negligam, molestias animae,
 corporisque expellam ...
213. Source: F. Bossinensis, *Tenori e contrabassi intabulati col sopran in canto figurato per cantar e sonar col lauto, libro secondo* 1511
214. Petrucci's sixth book contains the only three settings in this style in the whole of the *frottola* repertoire, and since nos. 2 and 5 are definitely ascribed to Giustiniani, it seems probable that this one also stems from his pen. The popularity of his style is evident from Petrucci's use of the term 'Giustiniana' to indicate a composition in this florid style with improvisatory ornamentation. See Haar, *Essays* pp.32-3
215. See Haar, *Essays* pp.92-99
216. See Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre* pp.14,20
217. Poliziano, *Letters* Book XII, quoted in Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre* p.36
218. Letters vol.3 p.17, *Op. om.* p.757:
 Studeo pro viribus semper id agere, quod bonum esse tam
 prudentum consilium, quum ratio diligens persuaserit.
 Neque noc ipsum ad externum aliquem refero fructum, qui
 et futurus sit et brevis, et in hominum, vel fortunae
 arbitrio positus, sed primum quidem ad verum illud
 gaudium, quod in ipsa boni actione percipitur. Quod
 quidem bonum gaudiumque et si temporale dici potest,
 quoniam non continue similiter exercetur atque sentitur,
 initium tamen est, et in nostro arbitrio situm.
 Eiusmodi vero bonum in praesentia aeternitateque placet.
 Non istud dico, quia ego nunc prorsus ipsa fruor
 aeternitate, sed quia ego nunc prorsus ipsa fruor
 aeternitate, sed quia intelligo id non ob aliam rationem
 nisi quia ideae, id est, aeternae rationi Deique
 omnipotentis arti congruit, congruere menti, atque
 placere. Proinde quemadmodum bonum illud ad intimum
 gaudium retuli, ita refero gaudium ad ideam, ut
 videlicet ea ratione mihi placet bonum, ut ipse Deo
 maxime placeam, omnis boni bono, sine quo nihil potest
 mihi placere.



Appendix 1.1. Frontispiece to Gaffurius, *Practica musica* 1496



Figur 7.

Appendix 1.2. from Ramos de Pareja, Musica practica III.3. 1482

Strambotto. Testo attribuito a Baccio Ugolini. Dal ms Milano, Biblioteca Trivulziana, 55, ff. 159-167 (omessa la parte dell'alto).

La mor-te tu mi da-i pel mi-o ser-

-vi - - - re E per ser-vir - tian-chi - - o

vo - - glio la mor - - - te.

Strambotto. Testo di Serafino Aquilano. Dal ms Parigi, Bibliothèque Nationale, Rés. Vm. 676, ff. 74v-75r (omessa la parte dell'alto).

I - te, su - spi - ri, là... [i - te, su - spi - ri]

do - ve A - mor vi me - - - na

Et di - te che per le - i mia vi - ta... [mi - a

vita, mia vi - ta] ha tol - - - ta

In - te - ger vi - tae sce - le - ri - sque pu - rus Non e - get
 Mau - ris ia - cu - lis nec ar - cu Nec ve - ne - na - tis gra - vi - da sa -
 git - tis, Fu - sce, pha - re - tra.

Mu - si - ces se - ptem - que mo - dos pla -
 Mu - si - ces se - ptem - que mo - dos pla -

ne - tae, cor - ri - gunt se - ptem to - ti - dem -
 ne - tae, cor - ri - gunt se - ptem to - ti - dem -

- que chor - dis. Thra - cis an - ti - qui ly -
 - que chor - dis. Thra - cis an - ti - qui ly -

ra per - son - a - bat, co - gni - ta syl - vis.
 ra per - son - a - bat, co - gni - ta syl - vis.

Appendices 2.3, 2.4. Sapphic Odes set by M. Pesenti (from Petrucci Book I, 1504) and F. Gaffurius (from *De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum opus* 1518, verse 7 only)

Passio sacra

Francisci de Dana Veneti dicti Varotter

Petrucchi, Lamentationum liber primus fol.48v-50r
(Bologna, Biblioteca del Conservatorio)

Altus
Tenor
Bassus

Pas - si - o sa - cra

no - stri re - dempto - ris Mun -

- da nos ma - nans ri - vu - lus

cru - o - ris. le - su sal -

va - tor ve - ni - am pec - ca - ti Tri -

This system contains the first line of a musical score. It features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and three piano accompaniment staves (right hand, left hand, and bass). The lyrics are: "va - tor ve - ni - am pec - ca - ti Tri -".

- bu - e no - bis no -

This system contains the second line of the musical score. It features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and three piano accompaniment staves. The lyrics are: "- bu - e no - bis no -".

- bis Qui a te cre - a - ti

This system contains the third line of the musical score. It features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and three piano accompaniment staves. The lyrics are: "- bis Qui a te cre - a - ti".

San - gui - ne tu - o su - mus re - dem -

This system contains the fourth line of the musical score. It features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and three piano accompaniment staves. The lyrics are: "San - gui - ne tu - o su - mus re - dem -".

- pti In - fer - ni pri - us le - gi - bus de - ten - ti.

This system contains the fifth line of the musical score. It features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and three piano accompaniment staves. The lyrics are: "- pti In - fer - ni pri - us le - gi - bus de - ten - ti."

A - (men) A - men

This system contains the sixth and final line of the musical score. It features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and three piano accompaniment staves. The lyrics are: "A - (men) A - men".

Ave, panis angelorum

(Gaspar?)

A - ve, pa - nis an - ge - lo - rum, De - i - ta - tisque lux san -

Ave, panis angelorum.

Ave, panis angelorum.

Ave, panis angelorum.

cto - rum. Tu es no - stra glo - ri - a, vir - tus et eu - ca - ri - sti -

a, Ca - ro, ci - bus, sa - cra - men - tum.

Quo non est ma - ius in - ven - tum.

Appendix 2.6. Lauda: Ave panis angelorum

La voce di David

Se mai per maraveglia

Alza del ufo

Al chiaro ciel pensate o ci

cigien te Aqu el uero si gnor di paradi

Volgeti giochi in qua che ue presente
 Non quella forma (ahime) no quel colore
 Che contemplon giochi di lamente
 Piangeti il graue vniuersal dolore
 Piangeti la spora morte el crudo affanno
 Se spirito di ieta ti punge il core
 Per liberarci dal antico inganno
 Pende come vcceti al duro legno)

E per saluarci dal perpetuo danno
 Dolce caro soauo altero pegno
 Se perder la propria uita: offerir il sangue
 Per cui sol di uederlo non fu degno
 Ecco che hor tu dimostra il volto exangue
 Le chiome la cresta: el capo basso
 Come rosa dimessa in terra langua
 Qual huom e' a' orria di pianger lasso

Pensando a tal suplitio & a tal morte
 Se ben hauesse il cor dun duro fatto
 Gia le ferrate e in expugnabil porte
 De infernal reame ha rotte & preso
 Per far il mondo piu costante & forte
 Et aspetarci con le braccia stese

Appendix 2.7. Capitolo: Se mai per maraveglia

Hui dice e non lamare Meglio fare d'occh' tuoi moed q' Que
 la q' ch'io la amo & amara
 & amara Mente che
 dara el mi us e gla mia an
 Lassa dir che son parole Cui porta gla mai campare
 Che ga l'are non se pole Senza spatio e senza chore

Tenor
 Cui dice
Bassus
 Cui dice

Appendix 2.8. Chui dicese (Petrucci Book VI, 1505)

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