

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 hierarchal 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 contemplantion 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 contemplantion 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 emphasizes 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

7 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 ruminosity (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