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Gretchen L. Finney

Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Apr., 1947), 153-186.

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2081 (pdf)
FINNEY, G.L.
1947.

ECSTASY AND MUSIC IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

BY GRETCHEN L. FINNEY

Of all the ideas about music which the seventeenth century inherited from the classics, none was so persistent, none revealed itself in so many guises as the belief that music has power to elevate and refine the soul to ecstasy or rapture. The conception was woven into the poetry of Shakespeare, Milton, and many lesser men. But the idea was not only a poetic one; it was a basic factor in seventeenth-century arguments over the use of instrumental music in church. The poet might be inspired by song to write:

The ravish'd soul . . .
. . . in heav'nly extasy
Transcends the stars.¹

The divine echoed him in:

Grave mixture of Tune with Ditty rocks the very soule, carries it into extasies, and for a time seemes to cleave and sunder it from the body.²

The old idea that music could separate soul from body felt the impact of science as of Puritan rationalism, and gradually lost much of its original force; yet it persisted throughout the seventeenth century not only as a fanciful figure of speech, but also as a provocative theory which, if not always believed strictly, was at least given serious consideration.

I

The term "ekstasis" means a state in which the soul exceeds itself. To the neo-Platonist philosophers it stood for a union of the self with the One, and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries "ecstasy" was frequently used to mean literally a separation of soul from body:

Though the union between the Body and the Soul be so strict, as to serve for a model to all other unions . . . yet is it not so strong but that sometimes it admits of a dissolution, which the Philosophers conceiv'd possible, both those parts continuing entire. This separation is call'd an *Ecstasy*,

¹ Phineas Fletcher, "To Mr. Jo. Tomkins" in Alexander Chalmers, *The Works of the English Poets*, VI, 157-58.

² Humphrey Sydenham, *The Wel-Tuned Cymball* (London, 1637), 22-23.

wherein the *Platonists*, who first brought it into *Vogue*, plac'd the *Summum Bonum*.³

"Rapture" was often, synonymously, a carrying away of the mind. "Ravishment" likewise meant a spiritual transportation.

That the soul could and did upon occasion leave the body, was believed from ancient times up through the seventeenth century. It was a part of neo-Platonic philosophy. In the Middle Ages, St. Thomas Aquinas was forced to argue with those who insisted that when Paul "was rapt to the third heaven," his soul was "wholly separated from the body." He interpreted Paul's statement (II Cor. 12: 3): "And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth)."⁴ James I in the sixteenth century suggested as an explanation of the remote activities of witches the possibility "that their bodies lying stil as in an extasy, their spirits wil be ravished out of their bodies, & caried to such places."⁵ For the assurance that music had a part in the accomplishment of certain ecstasies and raptures there was broad authority, as we shall see.

During the seventeenth century such terms as "ecstasy" and "rapture" underwent a gradual transformation. It is impossible to say exactly when the change took place, when belief in the power of music actually to induce rapture ceased. The old phrases continued for generations, but what had once been true became mere figure of speech. Undoubtedly various usages overlapped in time, and we often find both the literal and the figurative meanings in a single writer. Milton was speaking literally when he said in *Comus*:

. . . I have oft heard
My mother *Circe* with the Sirens three,
.
Who as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,
And lap it in Elysium, . . .⁶

But when he wrote:

³ *Another Collection of Philosophical Conferences of the French Virtuosi*, tr. G. Havers and J. Davies (London, 1665), Conf. CCXII, 380.

⁴ *The "Summa Theologica,"* Part II, Second Part, Q. CLXXV, "Of Rapture," tr. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London, 1922), 68-78.

⁵ James I, *Daemonologie, In Forme of a Dialogue*, ed. G. B. Harrison (London, 1924), 39. The book was printed first in Edinburgh in 1597.

⁶ Lines 251-56. All references to Milton are to *The Student's Milton*, revised edition, ed. F. A. Patterson (New York, 1934).

Can any mortal mixture of Earths mould
Breath such Divine inchanting ravishment?⁷

“ravishment” was no more than metaphor, as to Shakespeare in *The First Part of King Henry IV*:

for thy tongue
Makes Welsh as sweet as ditties highly penn’d,
Sung by a fair queen in a summer’s bower,
With ravishing division, to her lute.⁸

However, when Benedick asked sceptically:

Now, divine air! now is his soul ravished!
Is it not strange that sheeps’ guts should hale
Souls out of men’s bodies?⁹

he showed genuine interest in a contemporary question.

This study, however, is concerned not with etymology but with the history of an idea. Although a conception such as this was uniquely adapted to metaphorical expression, it retained for centuries a real vitality which it has not even yet completely lost. Robert Burton was seriously considering probability, when he said that music

. . . is so powerful a thing that it ravisheth the soul, . . . corporal tunes pacify our incorporeal soul . . . carries it beyond itself, helps, elevates, extends it. Scaliger . . . gives a reason of these effects, . . .¹⁰

And when Richard Hooker, in a discussion on the use of music with psalms, argued that

. . . there is also that carrieth as it were into ecstasies, filling the mind with an heavenly joy and for the time in a manner severing it from the body¹¹

he suggested a possibility that had an important influence on the thought of the entire century.

We must turn back to the past to see how classical ideas, persisting through the centuries, had come to pervade so variously seventeenth-century expression.

II

The seventeenth-century conception which attributed to music

⁷ Lines 243–44.

⁸ III, 1, 208–11.

⁹ *Much Ado About Nothing*, II, 3, 60–62.

¹⁰ *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part 2, Sec. 2, Mem. 6, Subs. 3. This passage in Burton is a free paraphrase of Cassiodorus. See note 80.

¹¹ *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book V, Sec. XXXVIII.

power to elevate the soul drew from many sources. These sources were not always interpreted in their original intention: metaphorical became literal; abstract, specific. "Harmony" and "proportion," originally used in a general sense, were applied directly to sensuously perceived music. Little if any attempt was made to distinguish between kinds of ecstasy. Various and often contrarious were the contributions of the past to seventeenth-century statement.

Chiefly it drew upon the theory attributed to Pythagoras of a universal harmony or proportion of which sensuously perceived music is but one manifestation. Spheres and planets are ordered harmoniously according to numerical ratio, and in their turning make that music of the spheres which Pythagoras is reputed to have heard. Further, there is analogy between macrocosm and microcosm: the souls and bodies of men function also according to harmonical law. The notes of the scale are similarly related.¹² The music of the spheres, the harmony of astronomical relationships and motions, the numerical order of mathematics, the just governing of people, the perfection of love, the balance of elements in man's body, the peace of his soul, the balance of reason, the consonance of musical sound—all proportion, all number—are manifestations of the same divine force. Astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, law, all are harmonious, all musical. In the words of the somewhat perverse Stephen Gosson in the sixteenth century:

Pythagoras bequeathes them a Clookebagge, and condemnes them for fooles, that judge Musicke by sounde and eare. If you will bee good scholars, and profite well in the Arte of Musicke, shutte your Fidels in their cases, and looke up to heaven: the order of the Spheres, the vnfallible motion of the Planets, the iuste course of the yeere, and varietie of seasons, the concorde of the Elementes and their qualyties, Fyre, Water, Ayre, Earth, Heate, Colde, Moysture and Drought concurring together to the constitution of earthly bodies and sustenance of euery creature.

The politike Lawes in well gouerned commonwealthes, . . . the love of the King and his subiectes, the Father and his childe, the Lord and his Slaue, the Maister and his Man, . . . this is right Musicke, this perfecte harmony.¹³

¹² Aristotle sums up the system in his *Metaphysics*, 985^a 1-4 (Loeb ed., p. 33):

"and since they saw further that the properties and ratios of the musical scales are based on numbers, and since it seemed clear that all other things have their whole nature modelled upon numbers, and that numbers are the ultimate things in the whole physical universe, they assumed the elements of numbers to be the elements of everything, and the whole universe to be a proportion or number."

John Dowland prefaces his *Second Book of Aires* with the defense that music "is the Noblest of all Sciences: for the whole frame of Nature, is nothing but Harmonie, as wel in soules as bodies."¹⁴

Because audible music is similar to that harmony by which all things are governed, music can lead to the Divine. The soul of man is naturally sympathetic to music and can be put in tune by it. By regularization of its motion it can be harmonized with the body and can give physical health. By purification it can be freed from the body and elevated to its original sublimity. The neo-Pythagorean philosophers relate that Pythagoras had definite tunes and rhythms for these purposes.¹⁵

Emphasis upon the importance of numerical relationships led easily into the realm of magic, in which certain numbers had mysterious power which might work through music. Other elements of magic came also from primitive religious practices, specifically from the use of music to excite the worshiper or the priest to an ecstatic state in which he was thought to be at one with the god or to have prophetic vision. This practical use of music also contributed much to seventeenth-century opinion. Such an experience was commonly associated with the early Thracian and Phrygian religious rites, and with the cults of Cybele or Dionysus, which had entered Greece from the orient. In these the participant was inspired by the aid of musical sound and of dance to a religious frenzy in which he was possessed by the god or carried beyond himself.¹⁶ The Greek mysteries absorbed much of this ecstatic ritual. The aulos, a reed pipe, was considered most efficacious for this purpose, especially when playing the melodies of Olympus which were in the Phrygian mode, although cymbals and drums were also used.¹⁷

¹³ *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579), English Reprints (London, 1868), 26. Cf. *Comus* (475-77):

How charming is divine Philosophy!
Not harsh, and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is *Apollo's* lute.

¹⁴ Prefatory letter "To The Right Honorable the Lady Lucie Comtesse of Bedford," *Second Book of Aires*, 1600. Reprinted in *The English School of Lutenist Song Writers*, ed. E. H. Fellowes (London, 1922).

¹⁵ Iamblichus and Porphyry each in his *Life of Pythagoras*. See *Pythagoras Source-book and Library*, ed. Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie (Platonist Press, 1920), especially Iamblichus, chap. XV, p. 29, and chap. XXV, pp. 53-54.

¹⁶ See Erwin Rohde, *Psyche* (London, 1925), especially 361 ff. and 286 ff.

¹⁷ See Plato's *Symposium*, 215B; Aristotle's *Politics* VIII.7.1342^a, etc., on use of the aulos. Porphyry in his *Epistle to the Egyptian Anebo* (ed. cit., note 50), names cymbals and drums.

Elevation might result either through inspiration of reasoning power or through possession, which also involved loss of soul as the god entered.¹⁸ "The Priests of Cybele," wrote a seventeenth-century churchman, in defense of organ music, "advanc'd their *Enthusiasm* by the use of *Cymbals*: so did the *Bacchae* in the Rites of *Bacchus*, who for the time were transported besides themselves, They brought themselves to that Condition among other means, by the use also of *Instrumental Musick*."¹⁹

Explanation of seventeenth-century credulity lies undoubtedly in accounts of similar experience in the Old Testament. Elisha, too, had been inspired by the playing of minstrels. When Elisha reluctantly consented to prophesy, he said, "But now bring me a minstrel." The account continues: "And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him."²⁰ Samuel said to Saul:

And it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psalter, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy.²¹

Scripture added to classical account the validity necessary for sincere believers in the word of God.

Stories of the Thracian Orpheus had also a large element of magic. The music of Orpheus was less an inspiration to prophesy than a magical charm which soothed both man and nature.²² This enchantment was usually not described as ecstasy, rather the reverse, for in Orpheus' attempt to rescue Eurydice, he infused a living soul into the dead. The power of Orpheus lay in his knowledge of the secrets of numbers.²³ "The mysticall doctrine of Numbers . . . flowed all from the Institutions of *Orpheus*."²⁴ But in

¹⁸ Rohde, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfulness of Instrumental Musick in Holy Offices*, by Henry Dodwell, M.A. To which is prefixed, a Preface in Vindication of Mr. Newte's Sermon, concerning the Lawfulness and Use of Organs in the Christian Church, &c. From the Exceptions of an Anonymous Letter to a Friend in the Country, concerning the Use of Instrumental Musicke in the Worship of God, &c. (2nd ed., London, 1700), 35.

²⁰ II Kings 3: 15.

²¹ I Sam. 10: 5.

²² W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion* (London, 1935), especially 39 ff.

²³ *Ibid.*, 219-20.

²⁴ Henry Reynolds, "Mythomystes," in *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. J. E. Spingarn (Oxford, 1908), I, 153.

popular tradition his power over the birds and the forests, like Arion's over the dolphins or Amphion's over the stones which built the walls of Thebes, lay less in his knowledge than in some magical and mysterious quality of musical sound, an idea which colored the conception of music throughout the entire seventeenth century. There are countless references to Orpheus in the classics, in medieval literature, and in the Renaissance, references both to his singing and to his "learning and wisdom," which was compared to that of "*Virgil, Hesiod, Pindarus, and Homer.*"²⁵ Milton's thought turned frequently to the story which he could treat in many moods. Orpheus is only an idyllic image in "L'Allegro": "*Orpheus self . . . [in] golden slumber on a bed/Of heapt Elysian flowres.*" In "Lycidas" he is a deeper symbol of the death of youth. In *Paradise Lost* he becomes a tragic parallel of Milton's own persecution:

But drive farr off the barbarous dissonance
Of *Bacchus* and his Revellers, the Race
Of that wilde Rout that tore the *Thracian* Bard
In *Rhodope*, where Woods and Rocks had Eares
To rapture, till the savage clamor dround
Both Harp and Voice; nor could the Muse defend
Her Son.²⁶

To the eighteenth-century poets Orpheus furnished merely a decorative figure of speech; he had ceased to be a prophet. But in the seventeenth century he was still evidence that "in the Harmony of Sounds, there is some great and hidden Mystery."²⁷ It is little wonder that the element of magic was read into the ecstatic experience.

Here again, Christians found parallel in the musical skill of David, that "*Israelitish Orpheus, or Judean Arion, the excellent Musitian, curious Lyrique, and sweet singer of Israel.*"²⁸ David inspired men by his Psalms, but he also possessed power over evil spirits:

And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

²⁶ VII, 32-38.

²⁷ John Playford, "Of Musick in General and of its *Divine and Civil Uses*," prefatory to *An Introduction to the Skill of Musick* (London, 1687). The first edition appeared in 1654 without a preface.

²⁸ W[illiam] S[latyer], *The Psalmes of David in 4 Languages and in 4 Parts Set to Ye Tunes of our Church By W.S.* ([London], 1643), "To the Reader."

Let our lord now command thy servants, . . . to seek out a man, *who is* a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. . . .

And it came to pass, when the *evil* spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.²⁹

The spirit David's music drew from Saul was evil—but it was still a spirit.

Different as were these conceptions of music as external stimulus to prophecy, or as charm, or as a force against evil spirits, from the metaphysical one of Pythagoras, they all merged in contributing essential elements both to classical and to seventeenth-century discussions of the power of music to refine the soul.

All contributed to the Greek "Doctrine of Ethos," which gave to music an unparalleled function in the molding of character.³⁰ Music was considered essential in the educating of Greek youth and in the governing of states, the famous example being Plato's recommendation of it for his ideal republic and his explanation of the effect upon character of musical modes.³¹ In general music was thought to affect the mind in three ways. It could stimulate to action; it could strengthen (or conversely undermine) the will; or (it is the third function which is the concern of this study) it could excite the listener to the point where he was beyond himself, to a state of ecstasy.³²

Plato, although he allowed Phrygian music in his republic for its military value, banned the aulos, the instrument used in religious rites for inspiring enthusiasm.³³ In the *Symposium*, however,

²⁹ I Sam. 16: 15, 16, 23.

³⁰ See Hermann Abert, *Die Lehre vom Ethos in der griechischen Musik* (Leipzig, 1899).

³¹ *The Republic* III.

³² Abert, *op. cit.* It is the intention of this paper to avoid all discussion both of classical and of seventeenth-century opinion of the effect of music on dispositions, manners, and morals, subjects rich enough in themselves to provide independent study. Plato's description of modes, Aristotle's theory in the *Politics* (Bk. VIII) of music as imitation, Polybius' account (*Histories*, IV) of the effect of music on the dispositions of the Arcadians, Plutarch's statements of the moral value of music (*Morals*: "Concerning Music"), all had a great influence on seventeenth-century thought about music. These theories, too, were concerned with the effect of music on the soul, but matters of conduct are quite different from the experience of rapture.

³³ *The Republic* III.399D. References are to the Jowett translation.

Alcibiades says that the melodies of Olympos when played upon the aulos

have a power which no others have; they alone possess the soul and reveal the wants of those who have need of gods and mysteries, because they are divine.³⁴

"For all good poets, . . . compose their beautiful poems not as works of art, but because they are inspired and possessed. And as the Corybantian revellers when they dance are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets are not in their right mind when they are composing their beautiful strains: but when falling under the power of music and metre they are inspired and possessed; . . . but not when they are in their right minds."

There are, likewise, accounts of the composition of music in ecstasy. The concern of this study, however, is with music as an agent, not as a result, of ecstasy.

Plato reflects here current religious practices in which orgiastic music was an agent to ecstasy.

The Pythagorean explanation of cosmic harmony which is paralleled in the soul of man and in audible music finds echo also in Plato, in his theory of numerical relationships in the universe and in his theory of the material as a copy of the divine.³⁵ Sir Thomas Browne combined Pythagorean and Platonic theory in his famous passage:

Whosoever is harmonically composed delights in harmony; which makes me much distrust the symmetry of those heads which declaim against all Church-Musick. For my self, not only from my obedience, but my particular Genius, I do embrace it: for even that vulgar and Tavern-Musick, which makes one man merry, another mad, strikes in me a deep fit of devotion, and a profound contemplation of the First Composer. There is something in it of Divinity more than the ear discovers: it is an Hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole World, and creatures of God; such a melody to the ear, as the whole World, well understood, would afford the understanding. . . . I will not say, with Plato, the soul is an harmony, but harmonical, and hath its nearest sympathy unto Musick: . . .³⁶

The related idea in the *Symposium* and in the *Phaedrus* of the striving upward of the prisoned soul through contemplation of divine beauty as it is reflected in the earthly also enriched subsequent

³⁴ *Symposium*, 215B. In the *Ion* (533E-534A) the madness of the poet is compared to that of the Corybantic reveller, but there is no reason to suppose that the inspiring music spoken of here is melody of voice or instrument.

³⁵ As in the *Timaeus*.

³⁶ *Religio Medici*, Part II, sec. 9, *Works*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1928), I, 88. Socrates decided in the *Phaedo* that "we can never be right in saying that the soul is a harmony."

thought about music. Plato did not specifically name musical sound as a means of ascent. Moreover he denied the possibility of complete ecstasy during life. Only the philosopher who could rise above the senses could approach this ideal state; only death could complete it.³⁷ In Plotinus, however, the idea was broadened to include music and is interpreted as culminating in ecstasy, and as restated by Renaissance Platonists it contributed important elements to seventeenth-century ideas of music. The Elizabethan musician found in the *Symposium* a direct comment on his art, as is evidenced in Thomas Morley's *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music*, for Morley offers as a possible definition of music that given by Plato "in his *Banquet*": "*Musicke* (saith he) *is a science of love matters occupied in harmonie and rhythmos.*"³⁸

Aristotle continued the tradition of the ethical value of music, adding the theory that "Rhythm and melody supply imitations" of the affections—sobriety, sadness, or enthusiasm—which bring about a change in the soul of the listener:

Rhythm and melody supply imitations of . . . qualities of character, which hardly fall short of the actual affections, as we know from our own experience, for in listening to such strains our souls undergo a change . . . even in mere melodies there is an imitation of character, for the musical modes differ essentially from one another, Some of them make men sad and grave, like the so-called Mixolydian, others enfeeble the mind, . . . another, again produces a moderate and settled temper, which appears to be the peculiar effect of the Dorian; the Phrygian inspires enthusiasm.³⁹

As interpreted by Richard Hooker:

In harmony the very image and character even of virtue and vice is perceived. . . . And that there is such a difference of one kind from another we need no proof but our own experience, inasmuch as we are at the hearing of some more inclined unto sorrow and heaviness; of some, more mollified and softened in mind; . . . there is that draweth to a marvellous grave and sober mediocrity, there is also that carrieth as it were into ecstasies, filling the mind with an heavenly joy and for the time in a manner severing it from the body.⁴⁰

Both the practical use of music for ecstatic prophecy and the metaphysical explanation of the function of music appear in Cicero. This kind of inspired prophecy Cicero defined as "natural" div-

³⁷ *Phaedo*, 65B–67C.

³⁸ Reprinted, London, 1771, from the 1597 ed., p. 223.

³⁹ *Politics* 1340^{a-b} Jowett tr.

⁴⁰ *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, *loc. cit.*

ination, in which the diviner does not proceed by "reason" or "deduction" but "under the influence of mental excitement" induced by external and unknown influences,⁴¹ among which he included music:

Those then, whose souls, spurning their bodies, take wings and fly abroad—inflamed and aroused by a sort of passion—these men, I say, certainly see the things which they foretell in their prophecies. Such souls do not cling to the body and are kindled by different influences. For example some are aroused by certain vocal tones, as by Phrygian songs.⁴²

On the other hand, one finds in the *Dream of Scipio* the conception of a cosmic harmony in which the soul of man shares and which is imitated by instruments:

For man . . . has been given a soul out of those eternal fires which you call stars and planets, which, being . . . animated by divine intelligences, circle about . . . with marvellous speed . . . such mighty motions cannot be carried on so swiftly in silence; and Nature has provided that one extreme shall produce low tones while the other gives forth high. . . . Learned men, by imitating this harmony on stringed instruments and in song, have gained for themselves a return to this region, as others have . . . by devoting their brilliant intellects to divine pursuits during their earthly lives.⁴³

A sixteenth-century writer commenting "upon *Cicero* his dreame of *Scipio*" thought that the music of his own time was much more likely to "set wide open the gates of hell."⁴⁴

The Hellenic philosophies of music were perpetuated in the Christian era both by the Greeks themselves and by the neo-Pythagorean and neo-Platonic philosophers of Egypt. Of the Greek writers in the first centuries of the Christian era, Plutarch, through his discussion in the *Morals* of the ethical value of music, had perhaps the most profound influence on the seventeenth century. The sublimating powers of music, however, were more fully elaborated by Aristides Quintilianus in a work not primarily concerned with morals but with musical styles and notations. Aristides' *De Musica* contains, we are told by his seventeenth-century editor, all of the ideas of the ancients.⁴⁵ After explaining that music aids in attaining divine afflatus, that music captures the soul by

⁴¹ *De Divinatione* I.xviii.34, Loeb ed., p. 263.

⁴² *Ibid* I.1.114, p. 347.

⁴³ *The Republic* VI.xiii and xviii, Loeb ed., p. 267 and 271-72.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Morley, *op. cit.*, 205.

⁴⁵ Marcus Meibom, *Antiquae Musicae Auctores Septem* (Amsterdam, 1652).

means of the ears and that music naturally moves the soul, he continues with various explanations of this power. Among them is the Pythagorean one that the soul when it is imprisoned in the body forgets the purity of its source; as it is drawn down by the impurities of the body it loses its ability to free itself from the body to travel through the realms to which it rightly belongs. Music, because it has affinity with the divine, can lift the soul and restore its powers.⁴⁶

It was in part, perhaps largely, through the philosophers of Alexandria, however, that the Greek conception of cosmic harmony was transmitted to Christian writers,⁴⁷ who, in turn, applied it to Christian cosmography.

Iamblichus and Porphyry, the third-century biographers of Pythagoras, elaborated on the Pythagorean principles of harmony—on the music of the universe, and on the use of melody to cure both mental and physical perturbations, to control the soul, to induce calm and prophetic sleep.⁴⁸ Sleep was itself considered a kind of ecstasy. The soul has a “two-fold life,” wrote Iamblichus, “one being in conjunction with body, but the other being separate from all body,” and this separation may be accomplished in sleep, in “dianoetic energies” or by pure intellect.⁴⁹ These writers combined the metaphysical concept of music with its practical use in religion. Iamblichus, for instance, answering Porphyry’s recommendation of specific instruments to induce ecstasy,⁵⁰ argued for the divine nature of music above the value of any one instrument or melody, and explained the possession of the god as union with divine harmony:

We must rather, therefore, say, that . . . there is . . . an alliance in these sounds and melodies to the proper orders and powers of the several Gods, to the motions in the universe itself, and to the harmonious sounds which proceed from the motions. Conformably, therefore, to such like adaptations of melodies to the Gods, the Gods themselves become present. For there is not anything which intercepts; . . . A perfect possession, likewise, immediately takes place, and a plenitude of more excellent essence and power. . . . the soul before she gave herself to body, was an auditor of divine har-

⁴⁶ *De Musica*, Lib. II.

⁴⁷ See Théodore Gérold, *Les Pères de L’Église et la Musique* (Paris, 1931), 57.

⁴⁸ See biographies in *Pythagoras Source-book and Library*, ed. cit.

⁴⁹ *Iamblichus on the Mysteries, of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*, ed. Thomas Taylor (London, 1821), 118.

⁵⁰ *The Epistle of Porphyry to the Egyptian Anebo*, prefixed to *Iamblichus on the Mysteries*, p. 5.

mony; and . . . hence, when she proceeded into body and heard melodies of such a kind as especially preserve the divine vestigie of harmony, she embraced these, from them recollected divine harmony, and tends and is allied to it, and as much as possible participates of it.⁵¹

He again linked intellectual and orgiastic when he wrote that Pythagoras adapted the intellect

through mathematical disciplines to receive something divinely beneficial, so as neither to fear a separation from the body, nor . . . to be converted to those passions which fasten and even nail the soul to the body.⁵²

Plotinus also explained how "melodies and rhythms" could elevate the soul. The theory as he developed it is close to that of Plato as it had been propounded in the *Symposium*. Plotinus, however, gave to actual melodies and rhythms, as Plato had not, a function in this ascent. And there was with the neo-Pythagoreans and neo-Platonists, as there had not been in Plato, an explicit belief in complete ecstasy during life, albeit, in Plotinus an ecstasy quite different from prophetic rapture. According to the *Enneads*, the aim of man must be to raise his soul to the "Primal-Principle" by contemplation of the inner essence of that Principle. The first step in that ascent is seen in the Musician, who through love of the beauty in "melodies and rhythms" progresses from love of form to love of ideal form, form apart from matter.⁵³ "And harmonies unheard in sound create the harmonies we hear and wake the soul to the consciousness of beauty, showing it the one essence in another kind: for the measures of our sensible music are not arbitrary but are determined by the Principle whose labour is to dominate Matter and bring pattern into being."⁵⁴ This striving toward an understanding of the ideal is a "straining upwards of all your Soul," a "longing to break away from the body."⁵⁵ The Lover and the Philosopher mark the next progressive steps in the struggle, until finally the soul, "resting, rapt, in the vision and possession of so lofty a loveliness," rises above earthly cares and becomes one with the "Supernals."⁵⁶ "The Soul thus cleansed is all Idea and Reason, wholly free of body. . . ."⁵⁷

⁵¹ *Iamblichus on the Mysteries*, 132-34.

⁵² *Life of Pythagoras*, *op. cit.*, 162.

⁵³ First Ennead, third tractate, sec. 1, in *Plotinus: The Ethical Treatises*, tr. Stephen MacKenna (London, 1917), I.51 ff.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, I.6.3, 81-82.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, sec. 5, 83.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, sec. 7, p. 86.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, sec. 6, p. 85.

There had been, even in the pre-Christian era, philosophies developing which had in them the germs for reaction against the conception of music as an inducement to ecstasy. Christian writers were not the first to question or deny its power. Philodemus the sophist (first century B.C.), argued that music has no influence on the movements of the soul, that only words and action have moral value.⁵⁸ Cicero said in *De Finibus* that he aligned himself with Epicurus in his decision that "music and geometry, arithmetic and astronomy" are "merely childish amusement."⁵⁹ Philo of Alexandria, contemporary with Cicero, compared a striving toward God to Corybantic frenzy, but it was "love of wisdom" not external stimulus which accomplished ecstasy.⁶⁰ Union with God is achieved in silence.⁶¹ He said also that when the senses proffer to Reason the pleasures of "harmonious sounds . . . Reason is forthwith ensnared and becomes a subject instead of a ruler."⁶²

III

Both attitudes toward music appear in the writings of the church fathers. As is to be expected, the attitude of rationalism and asceticism predominated, a tradition which carried on with some fluctuation in emphasis until it provided Calvin with a musical creed which was in turn taken by the seventeenth-century Puritan. The early Christian disapproved in principle of all pagan religious practices.⁶³ The mysteries were utterly condemned,⁶⁴ and with almost no exception, the musical instruments associated with them. Justin Martyr, in a passage dear to the Puritan centuries later,

⁵⁸ Quoted by Gérold, *op. cit.*, 56-57.

⁵⁹ I.xxi.72, Loeb ed., p. 75. Certain Elizabethans saw both in Epicurus and in the philosophy of the Stoics a minimizing of musical values. "Musicke . . . hath a certaine divine influence into the souls of men," wrote John Case, "whereby our cogitations and thoughts (say Epicurus what he will) are brought into a celestially acknowledging of their natures. . . ." (*The Praise of Musicke* [Oxford, 1586], chap. III, p. 40). The oft-quoted young man in Morley's *Introduction to Practical Music*, who is forced by social pressure to study music, admits that he is "so farre changed, as of a Stoick I would willingly make a Pythagorian" (*ed. cit.*, p. 2). Cf. also *The Taming of the Shrew* (I, i, 30 and 36): "Let's be no stoics nor no stocks, I pray; . . . Music and poesy use to quicken you."

⁶⁰ *On the Creation*, xxiii.70, Loeb ed., I, 55.

⁶¹ *Allegorical Interpretations* III.xiii.41, Loeb ed., I, 329.

⁶² *On the Creation*, lix.165, *ed. cit.*, 131.

⁶³ See Gérold, *op. cit.*, 91-92.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Clement of Alexandria, *The Exhortation to the Greeks*, II, Loeb ed., 27 ff.

differentiated between Christian and pagan worship on the basis of the infidel's use of inanimate instruments.⁶⁵ We leave the aulos, said Clement of Alexandria, to those inclined to idolatry. "We must be on our guard against whatever pleasure titillates eye and ear."⁶⁶ Clement also left to the pagans reverence for the musical legends of the early Greeks: Amphion, Arion, Orpheus "under cover of music . . . outraged human life, being influenced by daemons, through some artful sorcery, to compass man's ruin."⁶⁷

Singing of psalms and of similar divine songs the early Christian writer accepted, granting the value of music to make the soul more receptive to the word, or to sweeten religion for the young in faith. St. Basil, in his Homilies on the Psalms,⁶⁸ St. Chrysostom, in the exposition on Psalm XLI,⁶⁹ defended it thus. This defence was on the whole for music accompanied by words, however, and not for instrumental music. The church leader feared the enticements of musical sound and often checked his recommendations of it with a warning of its dangers. Music by its melody tempts the ears and by its sweetness relaxes Christian vigor, wrote St. Cyprian.⁷⁰ It is the word of God, not instruments, that has power over the soul, stated Justin,⁷¹ and Jerome echoed him.⁷² The instruments of the Old Testament were most frequently interpreted as allegory or symbol: "'Praise Him on the Psaltery'; for the tongue is the psaltery of the Lord. 'And praise Him on the lyre.' By the lyre is meant the mouth struck by the Spirit, as it were by a plectrum."⁷³

Christian writers were united in condemning the orgiastic music of the pagan mysteries; yet there is contemporary record that ecstatic qualities of primitive worship persisted. In certain unorthodox Christian cults, for example, singing of psalms was accompanied by rhythmic movement and by hand-clapping.⁷⁴ A

⁶⁵ *Quaestiones et Responsiones ad Orthodoxos*, Resp. to Quaest. CVII, *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J. P. Migne, IV, 762.

⁶⁶ *The Instructor*, II.4, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Roberts and Donaldson (Buffalo, 1885), II, 248.

⁶⁷ *The Exhortation to the Greeks*, I, ed. cit., 9.

⁶⁸ *Homilia in Psalmum*, *Pat. Graeca*, XVII, 675.

⁶⁹ *Pat. Graeca*, XXIX, 157.

⁷⁰ *De zelo et livore*, *Patrologia Latina*, ed. Migne, IV, 664-65.

⁷¹ *Loc. cit.*, note 65.

⁷² Commentary on Eph. III.5.19. Quoted by Gérolde, *op. cit.*, 111.

⁷³ *The Instructor*, loc. cit.

⁷⁴ Theodoret, *Haereticarum Fabularum*, IV, *Pat. Graeca*, XLIII, 202.

modern scholar points out evidence in texts of ancient hymns which shows to what an extent music and song were considered as efficacious agents to provoke ecstasy, to bring the worshiper into direct contact with God.⁷⁵

No precedent of this sort could, however, provide authority for the seventeenth-century churchman who was put to it to defend the use of instrumental music in church. Authority for the divine nature of musical sound would have to be found, and moreover could be found, in the orthodox tradition. The concept of cosmic harmony found its way into Christian writings and with it an irrepressible belief in the power of its sensible manifestation. Many a Christian writer explained the creation of the world in Pythagorean terms. Clement wrote that God by heavenly song—the Word of God—has “composed the entire creation into melodious order, and tuned into concert the discord of the elements, that the whole universe might be in harmony with it. . . . By the power of the Holy Spirit He arranged in harmonious order this great world, yes, and the little world of man, too, body and soul together; . . .”⁷⁶ St. Gregory of Nyssa described the universe as based on musical proportion and, like Clement, found parallel in the little world of man.⁷⁷ With this universal harmony sensibly perceived music was allied. St. Gregory, explaining why even the melody and modulations of the words of the psalms can influence us, gave as a reason the natural affinity of man, the little world, with the harmonical disposition of the universe; and he continued, somewhat ambiguously, to say that the universe produces harmonious melody which the soul hears when, leaving the corporeal means furnished by the senses, it raises itself to celestial regions.⁷⁸

St. Chrysostom stated definitely, in the exposition on Psalm 41, that melody alone gives to the singer a great joy, and he then continued with a passage easily adaptable by broad interpretation to musical sound even apart from words, that nothing is so effective

⁷⁵ Gérold, *op. cit.*, 194 ff.

⁷⁶ *Exhortation to the Greeks*, I, *ed. cit.*, 11–13.

⁷⁷ *In Psalmorum Inscriptiones*, Cap. III, *Pat. Graeca*, XXIV, 250. The Christian could draw upon Hebrew belief as well as Greek, for God had demanded of Job: “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job. 38: 4, 6, 7.)

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

as modulated melody and divine song to awaken the soul, strengthen its wings, free it from the shackles of the world, and deliver it from those of the body.⁷⁹ Discoursing on Psalm 134, he said that psalm singing can purify the soul, lift the cogitations on high and transport the soul.⁸⁰

Even St. Augustine's fear of the reduction of musical sound furnished, by its very indecision, an argument for the defenders of instrumental music. St. Augustine was writing of psalm singing, of airs together with the words "by virtue of which they receive life," and he confessed himself "to have grievously offended" when he was "more moved with the voice than with the ditty," but he did point out, nevertheless, that there is a mysterious association of our souls with the sound of the voice:

I perceive withal, how that the several affections of our spirit, have their proper moods answerable to their variety in the voice and singing, and by some secret association therewith they be stirred up.⁸¹

St. Augustine's *De Musica* is itself an indication of his devotion to music, and in it he suggests the Plotinian idea of the ascent of the soul through contemplation of earthly beauty: "the mind is raised from the consideration of unchangeable numbers in inferior things to unchangeable numbers in unchangeable truth itself."⁸²

Theodoret in the fifth oration of *De Providentia* interpolated the comment that it is the function of music to please the ear, and by its mastery to change the affections of the soul.⁸³ St. Proclus made clear his opinion that melody alone can calm the passions and that psalms when they are sung elevate the soul to heaven.⁸⁴

In the Middle Ages the Greek "Doctrine of Ethos" was again asserted by Boethius, and by the statesman and monk, Cassiodorus; their musical theories, technical and ethical, dominated musical thought for many centuries. Boethius' *De Institutione Musica* was the text for the study of music up to the seventeenth century. His crystallization of classical metaphysics into his analysis of the three kinds of music—*musica mundana*, which is the harmony of the macrocosm; *musica humana*, which joins soul to body and which

⁷⁹ *Loc. cit.*, 156.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 388.

⁸¹ *Confessions* X.xxxiii, Loeb Classical Library, II, pp. 165-69.

⁸² Tr. by R. Catesby Taliaferro for The Classics of the St. John's Program (Annapolis, 1939), 148.

⁸³ *Pat. Graeca*, XLIII, 300.

⁸⁴ *Oratio De Incarnatione Domini*, Orat. II, *Pat. Graeca*, XXXV, 349.

joins rational and irrational soul; and *musica instrumentalis*, that which we hear by sensory experience—was for centuries the basis of musical analysis. Boethius was in fact more interested in scientific analysis than in the pleasures of musical sound. Cassiodorus wrote more warmly of the effect of music on the soul and appears to have furnished more authority for seventeenth-century enthusiasts. Robert Burton paraphrased and elaborated a passage in Cassiodorus' *Variarum*⁸⁵ when he wrote of music:

In a word, it is so powerful a thing that it ravisheth the soul, *regina sensuum*, the queen of the senses, by sweet pleasure (which is a happy cure), and corporeal tunes pacify our incorporeal soul; *sine ore loquens, dominatum in animam exercet* [speaking without a mouth it exercises domination over the soul], and carries it beyond itself, helps, elevates, extends it.⁸⁶

Going on to the ethos of modes, Cassiodorus explained that the Phrygian excites desire to frenzy; the hyper-Phrygian or iasian arouses the intellect and leads thoughts to heaven.⁸⁷ In the section on music in *De Artibus*,⁸⁸ he argued a parallel between music and morals, an idea repeated by Zarlino centuries later,⁸⁹ and popularized by Shakespeare:

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils.⁹⁰

Belief in the power of musical sound was undoubtedly outweighed by a more ascetic view. But the concept of a universal harmony to which the soul of man could be drawn by melody persisted.⁹¹ The Church Father, by his denial of the pleasures of the

⁸⁵ Liber II, *Pat. Lat.*, LXIX, 571.

⁸⁶ *Anatomy of Melancholy*, see note 10. Cassiodorus probably meant that music, and not the soul, is queen of the senses.

⁸⁷ *Variarum*, *loc. cit.*

⁸⁸ *De Artibus ac Disciplinis Liberalium Litterarum*, V, 586, *Pat. Lat.* LXX, 1209.

⁸⁹ See note 94 below.

⁹⁰ *The Merchant of Venice*, IV, v, 83–85. A contrast which Cassiodorus makes between the singing of the sirens and that of David (*Variarum*, *loc. cit.*, 572) suggests the similar contrast in *Comus* between the sirens and the Lady.

⁹¹ St. Chrodegang, in the eighth century, claimed also that melody leads the soul to remembrance of heavenly things, not alone by the sublimity of the words but by the sweetness of the sound (*Regula Canonicorum*, Cap. L, "De cantoribus," *Pat. Lat.* LXXXIX, 1079). It is reported that Denis the Carthusian, in the late Middle Ages, "was instantly transported [by the melody of the organ of the church of Saint John at Bois-le-Duc] into a prolonged ecstasy." Pierre d'Ailly is quoted as saying that "the power of harmony . . . is such that it withdraws the soul from other passions and

flesh, provided authority for the Puritan, but he gave authority also to the seventeenth-century divine who believed with Richard Hooker that musical harmony may be such that "it carrieth as it were into ecstasies."⁹²

IV

In the Renaissance, both philosopher and music scholar gave new life to the Hellenic theories of the power of music not only to govern the passions but to carry the soul to union with God. Tinctoris (1445–1511), in his *Tractatus de Musica*, stated on the authority of the Bible and of Aristotle that music can cause ecstasy, and elevate the mind.⁹³ Zarlino, a generation later, restated, among other classical theories, the Pythagorean one of a musically composed macrocosm to which the souls of men, being similarly composed, are drawn.⁹⁴ The world is created on the principle of numbers, which have, he agreed with the Pythagoreans, he knew not what of divinity.⁹⁵ Whatever is good is musical.⁹⁶ Music can lead men to a contemplation of heaven.⁹⁷ Yet, in spite of his enthusiasm, Zarlino put limits on the power of sound divorced from accompanying speech. The most notable effects do not come from mere harmony, he insisted, but from harmony combined with verse. Harmony alone gives merely pleasure; harmony joined with number (which is determined by the rhythm of the verse) suddenly has a great power to move the soul; but join speech to these two and it is impossible to say what force they have.⁹⁸ The Renaissance musician was after all primarily interested in a study of music itself, in the underlying principles of musical science. We cannot judge music alone by the senses, Zarlino affirmed; we must judge it ultimately by reason.⁹⁹ However, by asserting that music has power over the soul, perhaps even more by insisting that "modern"

from cares, nay, from itself" (See J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (London, 1924), 246–47).

⁹² Note 11 above.

⁹³ In final treatise, "Complexus Effectuum Musices," *Scriptorum de Musica Medii Aevi*, nova series, IV, ed. E. de Coussemaker (Paris, 1864), 197.

⁹⁴ *L'Istitutioni harmoniche* (1558) I, chap. 2, *De tutte l'opere del R. M. Gioseffo Zarlino* (Venetia, 1589), I, 7.

⁹⁵ I, xii, 27–28.

⁹⁶ I, iv, 12.

⁹⁷ I, ii, 9.

⁹⁸ I, vii, 87.

⁹⁹ IV, xxxvi, 447.

music had lost nothing of the force anciently attributed to it,¹⁰⁰ he gave the authority of a music scholar to the metaphysical ideas of the past as they had been expressed both by the Greek philosophers and by the Church Fathers.

The Renaissance Platonist philosophers before Zarlino had also an influence on later acceptance of the conception of ecstasy. Indeed, it was "the Platonists," a seventeenth-century writer tells us, "who first brought it [ecstasy] into Vogue. Their most obvious contribution was to the theory of Platonic love, the idea drawn from the *Symposium* and from Plotinus that the soul could, through contemplation of visual beauty, free itself from the body to become one with the divine. But these theories surely influenced the attitude toward auditory beauty as well. It is important, too, that belief in complete ecstasy should have been expressed by so eminent a philosopher as Ficino, and that an explanation of that rapture should have been made in terms of Renaissance physiology by Ficino and by his followers, notably by Castiglione.

Although the Elizabethan conceptions of the soul and its functions differed in details from that of Ficino a century earlier, the basic ideas were similar.¹⁰¹ Both centuries tended to accept the Platonic conception which defined the soul "as a 'substance', that is, as an entity existing in itself."¹⁰² It is everywhere in the body, the importance of its various faculties being determined by the dignity of its various functions: the vegetative or nutritive soul the lowest, the sensitive soul with its sense impressions next, reason or understanding at the top.¹⁰³ Fancy is intermediary to sense and reason, inclining sometimes toward one, again toward the other:

. . . But know that in the Soule
Are many lesser Faculties that serve
Reason as chief; among these Fansie next
Her office holds; of all external things,
Which the five watchful Senses represent,
She forms Imaginations, Aerie shapes,

¹⁰⁰ I, ix, 92.

¹⁰¹ For a discussion of Elizabethan psychology, see Ruth Leila Anderson, *Elizabethan Psychology and Shakespeare's Plays*, University of Iowa Studies, III, No. 4 (1927), especially chap. I and pp. 133-34. For Ficino's conception of the soul I have used largely Paul O. Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* (New York, 1943).

¹⁰² Kristeller, *op. cit.*, 325.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 368-73, and Anderson, *op. cit.*

Which Reason joyning or disjoyning, frames
 All what we affirm or what deny, and call
 Our knowledge or opinion; . . .¹⁰⁴

There are, then, different faculties of the soul (or different souls), the lower closely connected with the body, the higher more easily separated from it. The soul is connected with the body by the spirits, "a most subtile vapour, . . . expressed from the blood, and the instrument of the soul, to perform all his actions." They are carried by the blood to all parts of the body and are "a common tie or medium between the body and the soul."¹⁰⁵ It is they that carry impressions from sense organs (by various steps) to the reason. A knowledge of the operation of the spirits is essential to an understanding both of Renaissance medicine and aesthetics.

But the soul is not irretrievably bound to the body. Ficino thought that the intelligence could work independently of it,¹⁰⁶ and that the soul could even entirely leave the body. He observed that "When the Soul withdraws entirely from the body, in its highest rapture, it takes with it all lower forces also,"¹⁰⁷ and again that this separation "is like a secretion of the corporeal elements mingled with consciousness."¹⁰⁸ But "bodies are most eagerly attached to their souls, and are separated from them with the greatest reluctance,"¹⁰⁹ and complete separation could be rarely attained: only

¹⁰⁴ *Paradise Lost*, Bk. V, 100-108.

¹⁰⁵ Burton, *op. cit.*, Part I, Sec. I, Mem. 2, Subs. 2.

¹⁰⁶ "The soul carries out man's most important function, intelligence, without any bodily instrument. Through the intelligence men understand incorporeal things." *Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's "Symposium,"* trans. Sears Reynolds Jayne, *The University of Missouri Studies*, XIX, No. 1 (1944), Fourth speech, chap. III, 157.

¹⁰⁷ Kristeller, *op. cit.*, 368.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 217. Dr. Kristeller writes (*Ibid.*, 216): "This separation of the Soul, which is by no means a mere metaphor, is conceived in its highest degree as a ravishment or rapture (*abstractio*) out of the body." Ficino distinguished between the actual leaving of the body by the soul and an inner rapture, or *vacatio*, in which the soul separates itself from the body by withdrawing into itself within the body, a state which can be induced by sleep or solitude (*loc. cit.*). This kind of rapture was described by Dante as being caused also by music when he said in the *Convivio* that music draws to itself the spirits of the body, which are mainly vapors of the heart, so that they almost cease to operate, so completely a whole is the soul when it listens, and the powers of the body are drawn to the sensible spirits which receive the sound. (*Convivio*, II.xiii.24, *Le Opere di Dante, testo critico della Società Dantesca Italiana* [Firenze, 1921], 196.)

¹⁰⁹ *Commentary on Plato's "Symposium,"* Third speech, chap. I, 148.

the philosopher, through the highest contemplation, could achieve this end.¹¹⁰ There are, however, various degrees of elevation, as the soul refines itself through contemplation of the earthly manifestations of God.¹¹¹

The soul comes to know God directly through intellect, but the objects of the senses are a first step in the ascent toward God, for, as Plotinus taught, the divine beauty is diffused through earthly objects, and through a love of the beauty of individual things the soul rises to a love of and union with God.¹¹² Ficino was primarily concerned with the beauty of the body and the inspiration of love, but he described three kinds of beauty—the harmony of the soul, of lines and color, and of tones,¹¹³—the eye and ear having a direct contact with the soul not shared by the other senses.¹¹⁴

For music in particular Ficino used Plato's authority for the opinion that music is a copy of divine harmony:

And Plato thought the harmony composed with voices and musical instruments to be a copy of the celestial harmony and to resemble divine beauty.¹¹⁵

From this copy, then, the soul is led to a consideration of divine harmony:

¹¹⁰ Socrates said in the *Phaedrus*, wrote Ficino, that the mind of the philosopher alone can acquire wings, in the acquiring of which the soul separates itself from the body. ("Si disputa del furore divino," in *Divine lettere del Gran Marsilio Ficino tradotte in lingua Toscana per M. Felice Figliucci Senese* [Ferrari, 1546], I, verso p. 9.) See also Kristeller, *op. cit.*, 332.

¹¹¹ See Kristeller, *op. cit.*, 222: Ficino says in his *Praise of Philosophy* that "The divine Plato thinks that . . . the Soul . . . leaves it [the body] first through some effort of meditation . . . when philosophy, . . . purifies and revives . . . the Soul. . . Then, elevating it from the lowest place through physical instruments, it leads the Soul . . . up to heaven. Afterwards, by mathematical steps, it gradually makes the ascent to the highest spheres of the heaven possible."

¹¹² *Commentary on Plato's "Symposium."* Second speech, chap. V, 140.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, First speech, chap. IV, 130.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Fifth speech, chap. II, 166. The ear admits also the harmony of poetic verse and of philosophical thought, and one must be careful not to take too literally Ficino's references to the harmony of sound. He definitely places poetry above music as a way to the divine when he writes that some imitate this heavenly music vainly with numbers and harmonies of various instruments, but that poetry expresses more effectively the most divine feelings. ("Del furore divino," *ed. cit.*, verso 11 and 12.) He says again that medicine is a remedy for the body; music tempers the spirits; but that it is theology that purges the soul (*Divine lettere*, I, verso 41). This comment is repeated by Zarlino, *op. cit.* I, iv, 13.

¹¹⁵ "Del furore divino," *loc. cit.*, 10.

. . . through these images it is exhorted and excited to consider the divine music with a more ardent and intimate sense of the mind.¹¹⁶

Ficino says:

I frequently dedicate myself to . . . strings and songs after the study of theology or medicine, in order to neglect the other pleasures of the senses, . . . and to elevate the mind as much as possible to sublime things and God.¹¹⁷

In conclusion, music reaches the highest part of the soul:

Since song and sound come from the thought of the mind, from the impulse of the imagination, and from the passion of the heart . . . it easily moves the imagination, affects the heart, and penetrates the innermost sanctuary of the mind.¹¹⁸

Although Ficino did not state that music could in itself create ecstasy, he did, by applying philosophical theory to actual experience, contribute ideas that were significant in the seventeenth century, especially in discussions of church music. The belief that earthly music was a copy of divine, that it could touch the highest part of the soul, and that it could therefore lift the soul to a contemplation of God, brought up to date arguments which were the chief defense of instrumental music in church.

V

None of the foregoing theories completely explains the origin of what seems to us a bizarre figure of speech in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poetry, a physiological image of the soul leaving or being drawn from the body through the ear:

Strange violence! thus pleasingly to teare
The soul forth of the body by the eare.¹¹⁹

Sometimes the ear was pierced by sound and the soul drawn forth to join the universal harmony:

With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' eare
And draw her home with music.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, verso 11. This translation and those which immediately follow are from Kristeller, *op. cit.*, 307-8.

¹¹⁷ "Si ragiona de la Musica," *Divine lettere*, I, 75.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, verso 74.

¹¹⁹ William Strode, "On Alma's Voice," *The Poetical Works of William Strode*, ed. Bertram Dobell (London, 1907), 132.

¹²⁰ *The Merchant of Venice*, V, 1, 67-68.

This idea had early become a figure of speech, yet it was ultimately derived from the theories of music we have been discussing.

The image may result in part from a too literal translation of the old idea that music captures the soul by the eyes and ears. It may derive from Plato's statement in the *Timaeus* that when sensations rush overpoweringly upon the soul they "drag after them the whole vessel of the soul."¹²¹ But this physiological description of the effect of music is more adequately explained by comparison with similar descriptions of the effect upon the soul of visual beauty, especially with those in *The Courtier* of Castiglione. Castiglione's terminology and imagery illuminate many later references to music, for the worshiper both of visual and of auditory beauty described its effect in similar physiological terms—entrance through the sense organ of an impression which affects the heart or soul, and which literally draws the soul from the body.

Castiglione based his view on the idea, described in Ficino's *Commentary*, of emanating spirits (or vapor of blood) which pierce the eye of the lover and infect his blood.¹²² We read in Castiglione:

For those lively spirites that issue out at the eyes, bicause they are engendred nigh the hart, entring in like case into the eyes that they are levelled at, like a shaft to the pricke, naturallye perce to the hart, . . . infect the bloode about the hart, where they are come to, and warme it: and make it like unto themselves, and apt to receive the imprintinge of the image which they have caried with them.¹²³

According to Castiglione, the heart may be pierced also through the ear and the soul fed by music:

Let him . . . injoye . . . all the other pleasant fournitours of beawty: especially with hearinge the sweetenesse of her voice, the tunableness of her woordes, the melodie of her singinge and playinge on instrumentes (in case the woman beloved be a musitien) and so shall he with most deintie foode

¹²¹ 44A.

¹²² Seventh speech, chap. LV, 222–23, and chap. V, 224. These ideas, as Dr. Kristeller says (*op. cit.*, 287), were "foreshadowed . . . by the old Provençal and Tuscan lyric," but were developed by Ficino "into a more precise system." Cf. the first canzone of Dante's *Vita Nuova*, *ed. cit.*, 22–23:

De li occhi suoi, come ch'ella li mova,
escono spirti d'amore inflammati,
che feron li occhi a qual che allor la guati
e passan sì ch'l cor ciascun ritrova.

¹²³ *The Book of the Courtier from the Italian of Count Baldassare Castiglione: done into English by Sir Thomas Hoby anno 1561* (London, 1900), Bk. III, 278.

feede the soule through the meanes of these two senses, which have little bodelye substance in them, and be the ministers of reason,¹²⁴

The idea was developed still further to include an emanation of spirits from the eye of the lover. There is thus an exchange of spirits described later by Donne as a twisting of "eye-beams." The eye having been pierced by the spirits of the loved one, her beauty . . . settinge his hart on fire, quickeneth and melteth certein vertues in a traunce and congeled in the soule, the which nourished with the heat of love, flow about and go bubbling nigh the hart, and thrust out through the eyes those spirites, whiche be most fyne vapoures made of the purest and cleerest parte of the bloode, which receive the image of beawtie, and decke it with a thousande sundrye furnitures.¹²⁵

This exchange of spirits, the messengers of the soul, is only preliminary to a mingling of souls, as later in Donne, for in kissing the soul leaves the body through the mouth:

. . . although the mouthe be a percell of the bodye, yet is it an issue for the wordes, that be the enterpreters of the soule, and for the inwarde breth, whiche is also called the soule: and therefore [the lover] hath a delite to joigne hys mouth with the womans beloved with a kysse: . . . bicause he feeleth that, that bonde is the openynge of an entrey to the soules, whiche drawen with a coveting the one of the other, power them selves by tourn, the one into the others bodye, and be so mingled together, that ech of them hath two soules, and one alone so framed of them both ruleth (in a manner) two bodyes. Wherupon a kisse may be said to be rather a cooplinge together of the soule, then of the bodye, bicause it hath suche force in her, that it draweth her unto it, and (as it were) seperateth her from the bodye.¹²⁶

The ultimate end of this rapture, is, of course, a Platonic union of the soul with heavenly beauty. In the words of Bembo:

Thus the soule kindled in the most holye fire of true heavenlye love, fleeth to cooople her selfe with the nature of Aungelles, and not onlye cleane forsaketh sense, but hath no more neede of the discourse of reason. . . . Accept oure soules, . . . that after they be cleane sundred from the body, thei may be copled with an everlastinge and most sweet bonde to the heavenly beawty.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 353.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 356.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, 355-56.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 360 and 362. This same ecstatic experience was described by Pico della Mirandola in *A Platonick Discourse Upon Love*. Henry Reynolds quoted Pico in his *Mythomystes* (*loc. cit.*, 151): ". . . and they are but a few, who, separating

Here is the explanation of the metaphysical conception of the ascent of the soul in terms of physical experience—the sense organ pierced by an emanation of spirits (themselves messengers of the soul) which release other spirits sent out by the soul to meet those of the beloved. Finally the soul itself, drawn from the body, mounts to become one with divine beauty.

Reflections of various aspects of this idea are common in poetry of Platonic love in Italy, in France, and in England.¹²⁸ In Spenser the heart leaves the body through eyes and ears:

. . . every deed and word that he did say
Was like enchantment, that through both the eares
And both the eyes did steale the hart away.¹²⁹

Marlowe's Faustus, kissing Helen, cries: "Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies!"¹³⁰ Donne's *Ecstasy* follows the pattern of love in *The Courtier*, for the spirits going from the eyes are identified with the soul which they closely resemble, and by means of the spirits the soul is freed from its prison:

themselves wholly from the care of the body, seeme thence oftentimes extaticke, and as it were quite ravisht. . . ." Reynolds (p. 150) used Plato as authority for the belief that by contemplation of celestial or intellectual love, "wise Spirits . . . feelee . . . elevations, raptures, and mentall alienations, wherein the soule remaines for a time quite seperated as it were from the body." Reynolds did not include music in his praise, and described the magic of Orpheus as that of a poet, not a musician.

¹²⁸ It appears in "Canzone I" in *Le Rime* of Pietro Bembo (Torino, 1932), 177. He described his soul which

Passò per gli occhi dentro a poco a poco
Nel dolce loco, ove 'l vostro si stava.

It is reflected in the lines quoted below from a sonnet of Du Bellay (No. 2 of the "XIII sonnetz de l'honneste amour," *Poésies Françaises et Latines de Joachim du Bellay*, ed. E. Courbet [Paris, 1918], II, 62), in which the spirit pierces eye and soul:

C'est cet esprit, rare present des cieux,
Dont la beauté de cent graces pourvëue
Perce mon ame, et mon coeur, et mes yeux,
Par les rayons de so poignante vëue.

Again (sonnet No. 7, *op. cit.*, 64), the light of the eyes of his beloved, which has become fixed in his heart, frees the spirit from the body:

La poinete d'or justement descochée,
Au seul endroiet de mon coeur s'est fichée,
Qui rend l'esprit du corps victorieux.

¹²⁹ *The Faerie Queene*, Bk. VI, Canto ii, st. 3, *The Complete Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser*, Student's Cambridge edition, p. 590.

¹³⁰ Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, V, iii, 89.

Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread
 Our eyes, upon one double string;

. . .
 Our souls, (which to advance their state,
 Were gone out,) hung 'twixt her, and me.

. . .
 So soul into the soul may flow,
 Though it to body first repair.
 As our blood labours to beget
 Spirits, as like souls as it can,
 Because such fingers need to knit
 That subtle knot, which makes us man:
 So must pure lovers' souls descend
 T'affections, and to faculties,
 Which sense may reach and apprehend,
 Else a great Prince in prison lies.

From the time of Plato, as we have seen, there had been a close association between love and music. It is obvious in Plotinus, again in the Italian Platonists. To the Elizabethans, music was the "food of love."¹³¹ In *Cymbeline*, Cloton tried to win the love of Imogen with music: "I am advised to give her music o' mornings; they say it will penetrate."¹³² Ravenscroft, in *A Briefe Discourse*, wrote: I have heard it said that Love teaches a man Musick, who ne're before knew what pertayned thereto: And the Philosophers three Principall Causes of Musick, 1. Doulour, 2. Joy, 3. Enthusiasme or ravishing of the Spirit, are all found by him within Loves Territories.¹³³

It is not surprising that musical experience, which was thought of as resembling that of love, should have been described with a similar terminology and conception, as a drawing of the soul through the ear, presumably to become one with universal harmony. Ronsard described in "Le Souci" the soul being drawn through the ear:

. . . ta vois
 Dont tu flechis les peuples & les Rois,
 Comme estant seul de France la merveille
 Pour attirer une ame par l'oreille: . . .¹³⁴

¹³¹ *Twelfth Night*, I, i, l.

¹³² II, iii, 12-14.

¹³³ Thomas Ravenscroft, *A Briefe Discourse of the true (but neglected) use of Charact'ring the Degrees by their Perfection, Imperfection, and Diminution in Measurable Musicke*. . . etc. (London, 1614). Quoted in Morrison Comegys Boyd, *Elizabethan Music and Musical Criticism* (Philadelphia, 1940), 35.

¹³⁴ In "Le Premier Livre des Poemes," dedicated to Mary Stuart, *Oeuvres*

Du Bartas, substituting “emblem” for “tirer,” used the same figure of speech:

. . . comme quatre ou cinq tons
 Qui diversement joints font cent genres de sons
 Qui, par le charme doux de leur douce merveille,
 Emblent aux escoutans les ames par l'oreille.¹³⁵

The passage was translated by Sylvester:

As six sweet Notes, curiously varied
 In skilful Musick, make a hundred kindes
 Of Heav'nly sounds, that ravish hardest mindes;
 And with Division (of a Choice device)
 The Hearers soules out at their ears intice.¹³⁶

Complètes, ed. Paul Laumonier (Paris, 1914–19), V, 101. In *Le Cinquiesme Livre des Odes*, a poem “A Madame Marguerite” (*op. cit.*, II, 379), expresses the same idea:

Avecque ta voix nompareille
 Leur tires l'ame par l'oreille
 D'un vertueux enchantement.

Du Bellay, in the same decade, used identical terminology (“Au Prince de Melphe,” *Pause X*, *op. cit.*, II, 95):

Là d'une Musique fournie
 Nous orrons la douce harmonie,
 Dont les discords melodieux
 De mille douceurs nompareilles
 Tirant l'ame par les oreilles,
 Nous feront compaignons des dieux.

¹³⁵ *Première Semaine*, “Le Second Jour,” 251–54, *The Works of Guillaume de Salluste Sieur Du Bartas*, ed. Holmes, Lyons, and Linker (Chapel Hill, 1938), II, 231–32.

¹³⁶ *Du Bartas, his Divine weekes and workes*. . . tr. Josuah Sylvester (London, 1621). Du Bartas also described prophetic rapture aided by music, in which the prophet's soul was rapt (“The Tropheis. The I. Book Of The Fourth Day of the *Second Week*,” Sylvester, *op. cit.*, 421:

So, at the sound of the sweet-warbling brasse,
 The Prophet raptng his soule's soule apace,
 Refines himself, and in his phantasie
 Graves deep the seal of sacred Prophecie.

Again, divine soul was infused (“The Columnes. The IIII. Part of The Second Day Of The II. Week,” p. 302):

O! what is it that *Musick* cannot doo!
 Sith th'all-inspiring Spirit it conquers too:
 And makes the same down from th' Emphyreall Pole
 Descend to Earth into a Prophets soule;
 With divine accents tuning rarely right
 Unto the raptng Spirit the rapted Spright.

Against this background, Benedick's comment seems refreshing rather than bizarre: "Is it not strange that sheeps' guts should hale souls out of men's bodies?" There is more reason in Sir Toby's boistrous proposal in *Twelfth Night*: "Shall we rouse the night-owl in a catch that will draw three souls out of one weaver?"¹³⁷ And one feels anew the charm of the lines in *The Merchant of Venice*, for Shakespeare has transformed oddity into the eternal magic of poetry:

With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear
And draw her home with music.

The conception is entirely literal in Chapman's translation of the *Odyssey*, in a typically Renaissance description, not in Homer, of the "rapturing tunes" of the sirens:

This they gave accent in the sweetest strain
That ever open'd an enamour'd vein.
When my constrain'd heart needs would have mine ear
Yet more delighted, force way forth, and hear.¹³⁸

Thomas Crashaw emphasized the Platonic ideal in an interpolation in his translation of Strada:

thus do they vary,
Each string his note, as if they meant to carry
Their master's blest soul (snatcht out at his ears
By a strong ecstasy) through all the spheres
Of music's heaven; and seat it there on high
In th' empyreum of pure harmony.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ II, iii, 60–61. Ruth Leila Anderson (*op. cit.*, 9), suggests that the reference here is to the three souls described in Elizabethan treatises: the vegetative, sensible, and rational.

¹³⁸ Bk. XII, 284–87.

¹³⁹ "Musick's Duel," in *The Delights of the Muses*, Chalmers, *op. cit.*, VI, 572–73. Faminus Strada's story of the poet and the nightingale is in lib. ii. Prolus. 6. Acad. 2 of his *Prolusiones Academicæ*. James Howell wrote a letter on April 1, 1637, "To my Noble Lady, the Lady M.A.," who had played and sung for him a hymn, which, he said, "so enchanted me then that my soul was ready to come out at my ears. . . ." *Epistolæ Ho-Eliaenæ: The Familiar Letters of James Howell* (Boston and New York, 1907), III, 106. Thomas Stanley wrote in "Celia Singing" (*Poems of Thomas Stanley* [London, 1814], 17):

The Music of this heavenly sphere
Would steal each soul out at the ear.
And into plants and stones infuse
A life that Cherubims would chose.

Burton adds this image to a paraphrase of Aristaenetus (Epistle V, Book II), an image found neither in the original Greek nor in the Latin translation of 1610. See *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part III, Sec. II, Mem. 2, Subs. 4.

Thus, Pythagorean and Platonic metaphysical ideas about music were explained physiologically in terminology similar to that of Renaissance explanations of love. Discussions of Platonic love inclined to keep more closely to an emphasis upon the reflection of heavenly beauty in the earthly and upon the ascent of the soul through contemplation of that beauty. The musical experience was more immediate: Phoebus touched the "trembling ears" and the soul was at once released. In the poetic references to music there is, on the whole, less emphasis than in the love-figure upon the union of the soul with universal harmony, although that union is sometimes stressed and frequently implied. Finally, in the musical figure there is less frequently the suggestion that the power of music derives from the divinity of its archetype, and more often the implication that it comes from some quality in sound itself. The conception of the power of music after all went back not only to the theories of Plato, but also to the long tradition of music as inducing prophetic rapture and to the stories of the magical effect of the music of Orpheus and David.

VI

Not all Renaissance poetry described the ascent of the soul in terms so minutely physiological as those quoted above. Some imagery shows a more truly Platonic heritage, especially that in the early poems of Milton. However, the references in Milton to music and ecstasy are so intricately interwoven with other ideas of music, both classical and contemporary, that it is difficult to untwist the strands. Nor is it easy to define Milton's own opinion, so often does he write of angelic rather than of man-made music and so often of song, "Aires,/Married to immortal verse," rather than of pure sound. *Paradise Lost*, perhaps even *Comus*, suggests a change of attitude.

A Christianized Pythagorean conception of a universal harmony with which our souls were originally in tune underlies both "On the Morning of Christs Nativity" and "At a Solemn Musick." In both poems is the suggestion that by rapture our souls might be made like the one "Pythagoras had, . . . and then all things would return immediately as it were to that golden age":¹⁴⁰

When such musick sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,

¹⁴⁰ *Prolusion II*, "On the Music of the Spheres," *ed. cit.*, p. 1102.

As never was by mortall finger strook,
 Divinely-warbled voice
 Answering the stringed noise,
 As all their souls in blisfull rapture took.¹⁴¹

It was "fancy," however, not reason that was "rapt":

. . . if such holy Song
 Enwrap our fancy long,
 Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold.¹⁴²

The basic idea in "At A Solemn Musick" is the same, but here the inspiration came from real music. Milton avoided the words "rapture" and "soul," however, and wrote, as before, merely of "high-rai's'd phantasie":

Blest pair of *Sirens*, pledges of Heav'ns joy,
 Sphear-born harmonious Sisters, Voice, and Vers,
 Wed your divine sounds, and mixt power employ
 Dead things with inbreath'd sense able to pierce,
 And to our high-rai's'd phantasie present,
 That undisturbed Song of pure concent.¹⁴³

The reference in "L'Allegro" is more literal and recalls that in *The Merchant of Venice* quoted above, in which the ear is pierced and the soul drawn toward the music. But Milton fuses the classical conception with an exquisite description of the vocal music of his own day. Then he returns to his first idea with the suggestion that music can free even the "hidden soul" of harmony itself, and he concludes with the Orpheus image:

Lap me in soft *Lydian* Aires,
 Married to immortal verse
 Such as the meeting soul may pierce
 In notes, with many a winding bout
 Of lincked sweetnes long drawn out,
 With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,
 The melting voice through mazes running;
 Untwisting all the chains that ty
 The hidden soul of harmony
 That *Orpheus* self may heave his head
 From golden slumber on a bed
 Of heapt *Elysian* flowres, and hear

¹⁴¹ "The Hymn," IX.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, XIV.

¹⁴³ 1-6.

Such streins as would have won the ear
 Of *Pluto*, to have quite set free
 His half regain'd *Eurydice*.¹⁴⁴

The reference in "Il Penseroso" is likewise more literal. Here it is church music which, through the ear, elevates the soul and is, in the words of a later writer, "an Inlet . . . to Divine Visions."¹⁴⁵

There let the pealing Organ blow,
 To the full voic'd Quire below,
 In Service high, and Anthems cleer,
 As may with sweetnes, through mine ear,
 Dissolve me into extasies,
 And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes.¹⁴⁶

In *Comus* there is, if not a distrust of the possible effect of music, a discrimination in judgment, which appears again in *Paradise Lost* when the "charming Symphonies" in the tents of the wicked "attach'd the heart of *Adam*":

To whom thus *Michael*. Judge not what is best
 By pleasure, though to Nature seeming meet,
 Created, as those art, to nobler end.¹⁴⁷

In *Comus* there is, as has been seen, an illusive shift from what seems to be a purely metaphorical use of the word "ravishment" to describe the singing of the Lady to a somewhat more literal allusion to the release of the soul in the description of Circe and the Sirens. And there follows a contrast of the two experiences which implies that while the latter dulls perception, the former has rational appeal.

Can any mortal mixture of Earths mould
 Breath such Divine enchanting ravishment?
 Sure something holy lodges in that brest,
 And with these raptures moves the vocal air
 To testifie his hidd'n residence:

. . .

. . . I have oft heard
 My mother *Circe* with the Sirens three,
 Amidst the flowry-kirtl'd *Naiades*
 Culling their Potent hearbs, and balefull drugs,

¹⁴⁴ 136-50.

¹⁴⁵ Charles Hickman, *Sermon on St. Caccilia's Day 1695*.

¹⁴⁶ 161-66.

¹⁴⁷ XI, 595-605.

Who as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,
And lap it in Elysium, . . .

. . .

Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
And in sweet madnes rob'd it of it self,
But such a sacred, and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss
I never heard till now. . . .¹⁴⁸

It is difficult in the early poems to distinguish opinion from poetic figure. There is no doubt of Milton's belief, however, when he wrote *The Christian Doctrine*, for he then stated positively that there is no evidence "that the soul exists separate from the body."¹⁴⁹

In the late poems, "ravishment" and "rapture" seem usually to be used metaphorically, as when the angels

. . . with Praeamble sweet
Of charming symphonie . . . introduce
Thir sacred Song, and waken raptures high.¹⁵⁰

And it seems possible that Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, consciously expressed an attitude different from that of his early poems. While the shepherds watched at the nativity,

Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringed noice,
. . . all their souls in blisfull rapture high.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ 243-63. The state of mind induced by the sirens who seduced by their song so that men forgot all else was sometimes interpreted as an ecstasy. The effect was similar to that of wine: "Musicke . . . like . . . wine taken to excess, intoxicates them, and transports them out of themselves: which hurtful effect gave just cause to the fable of the Syrenes, who allur'd Pilots by their melodious voices, to split against the Rocks." (*Another Collection of Philosophical Conferences*, ed. cit., Conf. CLXXVI, p. 274.) The use of "extasy" in line 622 of *Comus* might be either figurative or literal:

He lov'd me well, and oft would beg me sing,
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to extasie.

Lines 559-61 describe the infusion of soul by music as suggested by the Orpheus and Eurydice story:

. . . I was all eare,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death, . . .

¹⁴⁹ Ed. cit., p. 979.

¹⁵⁰ *Paradise Lost*, III, 367-69.

Likewise when the fallen angels sang,

With notes Angelical to many a Harp
Thir own Heroic deeds and hapless fall

. . . the harmony
(What could it less when Spirits immortal sing?)
Suspended Hell, and took with ravishment
The thronging audience.¹⁵¹

But Milton made it clear in the latter work that it was not the soul but sense that was charmed by "harmony":

For Eloquence the Soul, Song charms the Sense.¹⁵²

Although we find in *Paradise Lost* the Platonic love doctrine and read that

love refines
The thoughts, and heart enlarges, hath her seat
In Reason, and is judicious, is the scale
By which to heav'nly Love thou maist ascend.¹⁵³

Milton made no similar claim for music. In fact he found

Harmonie to behold in wedded pair
More grateful then harmonious sound to the eare.¹⁵⁴

In the early poems, however, we find often the conception of ecstasy, which in the hands of the second-rate artist had been poetically sterile, infused with subtlety, richness, and variety.

The references in seventeenth-century poetry to the power of music are thus illuminated by a study of the history of the ideas which bred them. But the idea that music could refine the soul to ecstasy was not only a subject which appealed to the metaphysician or the poet. It came to be, as has been said, a basic factor in the serious, even heated, arguments over the use of instrumental music in church.¹⁵⁵ As a controversial issue in so serious a difference, it became something more than a classical survival. It was a vital part of seventeenth-century thought.

Smith College.

¹⁵¹ II, 548-55.

¹⁵² II, 556.

¹⁵³ VIII, 589-92.

¹⁵⁴ VIII, 605-6.

¹⁵⁵ This controversy is the subject of an article that will appear in the next issue of this Journal.