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TRA *LYRA* E *AULOS*

TRADIZIONI MUSICALI E GENERI POETICI

A CURA DI LUIGI BRAVI, LIANA LOMIENTO,
ANGELO MERIANI, GIOVANNA PACE



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LYRA AND AULOS IN THE NEOPLATONIC ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION OF MYTHS

SEBASTIAN F. MORO TORNESE

ABSTRACT

This article studies different Neoplatonic views on the opposition and complementarity between *lyra* and *aulos* in the context of the allegorical interpretation of myths. The symbolism of the musical instruments is related to the contrast between the Apollonian, anagogic music (a music that liberates the soul from attachment to the passions) and another kind of music (connected to Marsyas) which is tied to the world of generation and the phenomenal illusions of the particular self. This imitative music is attached to the sensible world and oriented towards competitiveness and the achievement of egotistic results, proper to the dualism of “mine” and “yours”. However, the Neoplatonists present also a more positive interpretation of the music of Marsyas and the Phrygian harmonies in the context of Dionysian mysticism. This kind of music and its dynamic character serves as a catalyst for turning the soul towards divine inspiration.

KEYWORDS: Neoplatonism, music, allegory, symbolism, Apollonian and Dionysian.

I PROPOSE to study different Neoplatonic views on the opposition between *lyra* and *aulos* in the context of the allegorical interpretation of myths. The symbolism of the musical instruments is related to the contrast between the Apollonian anagogic music (a music that liberates the soul from attachment to the passions) and another kind of music (connected to Marsyas) which is tied to the world of generation (*genesis*) and the phenomenal illusions of the particular self or ‘ego’. This imitative music is attached to the sensible world and oriented towards competitiveness and the achievement of egotistic results, proper to the dualism of ‘mine’ and ‘yours’.¹

¹ Olympiodorus characterizes the world of becoming and the opposition between mine and yours in the context of the level of virtues which correspond

However, music is able to go beyond imitation¹ and offers a 'space' beyond oppositions and shows at the same time a coordination or complementariness between Marsyas and Apollo, and at a higher level, between the Dionysian and the Apollonian.

Proclus says that the most divine part of ourselves, «the intellect in us is Dionysian and a true statue of Dionysus.» (*in Cra.*,¹³³, p. 77, 24). However, this inner essence is torn apart by falsehood and our passions, which depend on the world of becoming. In the Orphic myth, the Titans distracted Dionysus with a mirror and toys, tore him into seven pieces and devoured him.² Zeus struck the Titans with his thunderbolt and all human beings were created from their ashes (which contained the Dionysian element as well). Athena rescued the heart of Dionysus, carrying him back to his original home, to his father Zeus, where the god was reintegrated. In other version, Apollo collected the pieces and carried them

to the life within a world where greatest separation takes place: «Finally, the soul lives by ethical and physical virtues, symbolized by the reign of Dionysus; hence he is torn to pieces, because these virtues do not imply each other; and the Titans chew his flesh, mastication standing for the extreme division, because Dionysus is the patron of this world, where extreme division prevails because of 'mine' and 'thine'. In the Titans who tear him to pieces, the *ti* ('something') denotes the particular, for the universal form is broken up in genesis, and Dionysus is the monad of the Titans.» (*Olymp.*, *in Phd.*, 1,5,7; trans. by Leendert Gerrit Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo: Olympiodorus*, Westbury, Prometheus Trust, 2009², p. 44). Olympiodorus and other Neoplatonists arranged virtues according to different levels; the highest are the theurgic, followed by contemplative and purificatory virtues, while lower levels include: political (civic or constitutional) virtues and the two more derived degrees of virtue mentioned here, which correspond to a world more removed from Unity.

¹ Cf. Procl., *in R.*, 1, 60, 6-13. For Proclus, an art based on *mimesis* (imitation, representation) is a kind of art that stays attached to the world of manifestation; music «prefers to snatch itself out (*anharpazein*) of copies in order to ascend towards the divine models of harmony and rhythm for all in this world». However, even *mimesis* can lead to the archetypes, if it is accompanied by a proper 'allegorical' interpretation, because visible realities 'imitate' their invisible models, and the soul can ascend from the veils towards the interior causes of manifestation (Cf. Procl., *Inst.*, 209 and *in Ti.*, II, 246, 4-9).

² Cf. O. KERN, *Orphicorum Fragmenta*, Berlin, Weidmann, 1922, p. 210. See Rene van den Berg's explanation of Proclus' *Hymn to Athena*, in ROBERT VAN DEN BERG, *Proclus' Hymns: Essays, Translations, Commentary*, Leiden, Brill, 2001, p. 288. Cf. Procl., *in Ti.*, 2, 197, 15-30; II, 28, 1; cf., also *in Prm.*, 808; *in Ti.*, II, 145, 18 ff. See also, FRITZ GRAF, SARAH ILES JOHNSTON, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets*, London-New York, Routledge, 2007, p. 78.

to Delphi. For Proclus (*in Ti.*, II, 197, 15-30), this symbolizes the harmonization of the seven portions in the cosmic musical scale of the World-Soul, depicted in the *Timaean*.

Apollo, is cause of unity and leads multiplicity up to the One and his musical activity symbolizes the harmonization of the whole cosmos into a single unity. This harmonization is also represented with the chorus of the Muses established around the god.¹ Proclus explains that «All the Apollonian series depends on the demiurgic hegemony (direction/leadership) of Zeus» (*in Cra.*, 15, p. 5, 23-24 Pasq.). The coordination between the activity of Apollo and that of Zeus, as the demiurgic Intellect (cf. *in Cra.*, 174, p. 99, 30), entails that Apollo provides unification at a level which has suffered multiplication. Zeus corresponds to the paradigmatic aim towards which Apollo's concentrating and mediating/anagogic power is directed: this is manifested as music, medicine, prophecy, etc.²

Dionysus in turn, being another kind of Intellect, more immanent and specific, provides us with the particular intellect, symbolized with the gift of wine (Procl., *in Cra.*, 180).

Marsyas, as a Satyr or Silenus of the retinue of Dionysus, presents on one side, the externalizing aspect of multiplicity and generation (with its confusion/seduction/division), and on the other side, the direction towards the inner heart of Dionysus and his inspiration expressed by the immediacy of the power of sound.

¹ Proclus expands his depiction of Apollo's activity at *in Cra.*, 176, p. 101, 20: «From the supercelestial order above he sows all the cosmos with channels and the rays of light from Zeus; for his 'darts' symbolize his rays of light. That he is God of music demonstrates that Apollo is cause of all harmony, both invisible and visible, through his directive powers, by which with Mnemosyne and Zeus he engenders the Muses, and he cooperates in organizing the perceptible universe with his demiurgic powers, which the sons of the theurgists call 'hands', since indeed the activity of harmony is dependent upon the motion of the hands». (transl. by Brian Duvick, *Proclus. On Plato Cratylus*, London, Duckworth, 2007).

² Cf. Procl., *in Cra.*, 174, pp. 99, 8 ff. Pasq.: «The power of medicine eliminates the disparate aspect of illnesses, and bestows the gift of unitary health. For health is symmetry and accords with nature, whereas what is variegated is unnatural. And again, the power of prophecy, in revealing the simplicity of truth, destroys the variety of falsehood. And that of archery, as it destroys everything errant and beastly, and gives control to discipline and refinement, cleaves to unity and dissolves the disordered nature which is carried into multiplicity. And as for music, through rhythm and harmony it instils a bond, friendship, and unity in the universe, and everything opposite to these it removes» (transl. by Brian Duvick).

One version of the myth (Pl., *Euthd.*, 285c-d) says that Marsyas was converted into a "wineskin". This reference to Marsyas in the *Euthydemus* (cf. also *Smp.* 215a) can be interpreted in terms of the relationship between the 'inner' and the 'outer' man (cf. *R.*, 9, 589a).¹

When Marsyas is skinned, Apollo reveals the inner essence/space of the satyr, which becomes filled up with divine inspiration. This corresponds to Dante's interpretation of the myth in his invocation to Apollo at the beginning of the *Paradiso* (1,13-21).²

The allegorical interpretation explains the mythical figures as tendencies that compete within the human soul; one is a titanic descending tendency, which corresponds to 'extreme division' (at the lowest level of the Dionysian manifestation and identified with Dionysus' opponents; cf. Olymp., in *Phd.*, 1, 5, 10) and another is a tendency towards the Heavens, the anagogic power of Apollonian music. Marsyas, in his confusion, identifies himself with the negative tendency of egotism, but because he is a musician and loves music, he can be saved by this love, if he recognizes that the origin of music resides above/beyond the limited ego.

The context of the Apollonian maxim 'know thyself', which invites the soul to pursue a path of self-transformation towards the universal Self, together with the Platonic account of divine inspiration, gives us a clue to examine in depth the meaning of the myth.³ Accordingly, the cruelty of the punishment of Marsyas

¹ See MARY M. MCCABE, *Protean Socrates: Mythical Figures in the Euthydemus*, in *Ancient Philosophy of the Self*, edited by Paulina Remes, Juha Sihvola, New York, Springer, 2008, p. 109 ff. (especially pp. 111 and 114). On the notion of 'inner man' in Platonism see PAULINA REMES, *Inwardness and Infinity of Self: From Plotinus to Augustine*, in the same volume, p. 155 ff.

² The influence of this Platonic conception of 'inspiration' and 'enthusiastic music' can also be seen in Neoplatonic Renaissance philosophers and artists such as Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Raphael and Michelangelo. See ROBERT HOLLANDER, *Marsyas as figura Dantis: Paradiso 1.20* (<http://www.princeton.edu/~dante/ebds2/hollander042710.html>; accessed August/2014). Cf. EDGAR WIND, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1958, chapter *The Flaying of Marsyas*. Raphael situated his painting of the musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas on the side of the representation of inspired poetry in the *Stanza della Segnatura*.

³ Cf. Plu., *Mor.*, *De E apud Delphos*, 392A, where Plutarch interprets the 'E' carved on stone at the Temple of Apollo as meaning «Thou art», which is the reply to the question about self-knowledge proposed by the God. Instead of asserting the 'ego', the true answer is to identify oneself with the univer-

should be understood in terms of one of the aspects of Apollo, namely his destructive/transformative power, represented especially with the 'arrow' and the 'sunray' as having a *kathartic*/cosmogonic influence over the world. What is it that is destroyed? The false ego, its attachments and its illusions are destroyed, when the passionate ego-centric man is burned up and the 'inner man' is liberated from the skin of the external man.

The name of Apollo means the negation of multiplicity, A-pol-lon [*a* = not; *pollon* = many].¹ Apollo identified with the One, corresponds to a mystical silence and *hesychia* (inner peace), where duality and all oppositions are transcended. However, according to Proclus, Apollo's activity, is mainly manifested at a level in which Unity has already been broken or polarized. Therefore, he is a god of Music and Medicine, a god that produces the recovery of unity and harmonization within the realm of multiplicity. Then, this aspect of non-multiplicity means *concordia discors* or *coincidentia oppositorum*. Therefore the cohesive activity of Apollo is double: 1) firstly, it is the re-integration related to a middle/intermediary stage or to a centre of unification (concentration towards a *hégemonikon*, or cosmic leading potency, residing at the *Omphalos* = symbolized by the Sun, the musical note *mesê* as *hégemonikon* of the melody, and the Dorian scale as *hesychastic*); 2) secondly it supposes an 'anagogic' dimension, which corresponds to the vertical ascent of the soul through levels (the harmony of the spheres) and the axial unification of those multiple levels, thanks to the mediation of music. The lyre is Apollonian and represents the pure, dry, luminous regions of ether and a spiritual harmonization of duality. The inscription on the *Tempietto delle Muse* at the Palazzo Ducale in Urbino, mentions the Kithara as the instrument proper to the purest space of ether: «Whoever you are, be glad and pure for the Muses and skilled on the lyre, for purity alone is here».²

On the other hand, Marsyas' *aulos* represents human and cosmic

sal source of the Self. Cf. FREDERIC M. SCHROEDER, *The final metamorphosis, narrative voice in the prologue of Apuleius' Golden Ass*, in *Reading Ancient Texts: Aristotle and Neoplatonism*, edited by Suzannne Stern-Gillet, Kevin Corrigan, Leiden, Brill, 2007.

¹ Cf. Plot., 5, 5, 6; Plu., *Mor.*, *De E apud Delphos*, 393C, 394A, 388F (cf. also *De Iside et Osiride*, 381 and Clem. Al., *Strom.*, 1, 164.

² See JOSCELYN GODWIN, *The Pagan Dream of the Renaissance*, Grand Rapids, MI, Phanes Press, 2002, chapter V: *Private Microcosms*.

duality, because he plays a double-reed/double pipe instrument, which, according to Aristides Quintilianus (2, 18, 90, 10 ff.), corresponds to the element 'air' (or humid air) and the lowest humid and obscure regions of the universe.¹

Neoplatonists, following the Orphic and Pythagorean tradition, considered music as an essentially contemplative art and a vehicle for returning to the celestial levels of reality, which are hidden from the senses. In Platonism, there is also a contrast between the philosopher and the sophist. The philosopher makes an effort to integrate harmoniously the faculties of perception and action around the Intellect as intuitive and contemplative faculty. The Sophists, on the contrary, were engaged in a search for power within the visible world and at the same time claimed to be guides of souls, but for Plato, they were mere politicians using *psychagôgia*, which is a kind of incantation that offers false promises, – like that of the Sirens –, especially connected to a materialistic/utilitarian view of the world.

The *aulos* is in a sense the instrument of that theatrical and political *psychagôgia*, which aims to flatter the popular majority in hopes of gaining personal power, but not interested in real education or guidance. This corresponds to the sophistic manipulation of art, for the sake of the politicians' own private profit, by offering *panem et circenses*.

¹ Marsyas' *aulos*, represents duality and water as the element of generation, also identified with the horns of the Moon and the Zodiacal sign of Cancer, from where the soul descends into the world. Accordingly, the *aulos*, corresponds to the descending cosmic direction (the path of the Sun from Cancer to Capricorn). Capricorn corresponds to Kronos (or Saturn, representing the Intellect, for Plotinus) and the feast of the Saturnalia represents a new life for the soul and a hope of liberation in the ascending path of the Sun in the year. The Gate of Cancer, corresponds to the octopus as enemy of the dolphin (salvific animal sacred to Apollo, this symbolism can be seen in representations of Apollo's Tripod). The dolphin represents the direction towards the Gate of Capricorn, and the laps in the chariot-races were marked by dolphin-counters (and also egg lap counters symbolizing re-birth or Castor and Pollux) at the *Circus Maximus* in Rome, which represent spiritual victories over the obstacles in the interior path of the soul.

The Universe has two Gates (mentioned by Numenius, Porphyry, Proclus and Macrobius) and the lyre/kithara has two 'horns' and they are successfully unified by the mediation of harmony. Proclus (*Chr.*, 320a Bekker) also refers to different etymologies of the word 'dithyramb' and one of them is related to the cave where Dionysos was raised in Nysa, which had two doors (*di* = two and *thyra* = door).

The sophistic *auletic* appeals to the passions and in Platonism, corresponds to 'political' bewilderment. That perplexity is a reflection of a wider, macrocosmic confusion, and for that reason the music of the *aulos* symbolizes too, the cosmic 'illusion', proper to the *thorybos* (Pl., *Ti.*, 42c) that initially produced the passions of the soul, represented with the image of a tumultuous/clamorous 'sea', source of the materialistic approach to reality. For Proclus (*in R.*, 1, 17, 4 ff.), the image of the sea is connected to the clamorous and multiple way of life (*thorubódês kai poikilê zôê*), also depicted as representing the sophistic life of «multiple heads» (1, 17, 19), in opposition to a pure region of ether where the soul finds the inner contemplative peace of the philosophical life (1, 17, 22).¹ In this context, the sound of the *aulos* is depicted as tumultuous and noisy (noise, confusion = *thorybos*), in contrast to the sound of the lyre, which is an instrument related to the ether and conducive to inner peace.

The Sophists wanted to charm and bewilder their audiences by auditory means, like the Sirens. In Plato's *Symposium* (215b), Alcibiades says that Socrates, the Silenos, is an *aulêtês* like Marsyas, but instead of using a musical instrument, he enchants his audience with auletic words. Certainly for the Platonists, there is a great difference between Socrates and the Sophists, but they both used similar methods. For Proclus (*in Alc.*, 229-233), the difference resides in the fact that Socrates can be compared to a Hermetic guide who offers true education. Socratic (and Platonic) education is founded upon disinterested love (and a love for the inner man and essence of Alcibiades, cf. Procl., *in Alc.*, 25, 4; 37, 1; 108, 23; 157, 10 and 251, 12), while Sophistic flattery exploits the ambitions and self-conceit of the 'exterior' Alcibiades, for reasons of self-interest.

Proclus emphasizes the fact that inner Hermetic education and self-knowledge are connected to music and lyre playing (*in Alc.*, 195 ff.). He also says that Socrates' voice can be compared to the

¹ In this passage, Proclus is commenting on the place/time setting of the *Republic*: ascending from the Piraeus to Athens and between the Bendidea and the Panathenaea festivals. The former has a Thracian character (the Thracian Bendis) and is connected to the sea-port, while the latter represents for Proclus the life of the return towards the self and the Intellect, proper to Athena (contemplative life).

voice of the good genius that guides the soul of Alcibiades. Thus, in this case, the powerful auditory enchantment of the voice can be identified with divine inspiration, awakening noble aspirations and leading to self-transformation. The Sophists are like magicians or illusionists (*goétai*, cf. Pl., *Sph.*, 234c-235a) and their magic is connected to *mimesis*, because they are fake politicians and create false imitations of truth (cf. also *Plt.*, 303c).

Socrates is also a magician in this sense (*goês*), but he uses magic, not to create error and illusion in the soul, but in order to purify the soul of them and to put it in contact with the source of a higher 'magic' based upon the 'sympathy' of the whole cosmos, which resides in Love, the cosmic Magician. This was a central notion for Ficino, who followed Plato's depiction of Eros as «magician, wizard and sophist» (see *Smp.*, 203d and Ficino's commentary *ad loc.*). The world is a work of love and a work of art (*dèmiourgia* and *diacasmésis*). Nevertheless, its beautiful harmony would have the effect of a magical or sophistic 'illusion' if it were not seen in relation to its higher causes, as a creation of unifying Love (it is 'illusory' because as a work of art has a derived nature). Love is a sophist because his eloquent works of beauty 'persuade' us; however this kind of 'erotic magic' is a liberating one. The Socratic task is to use the same loving energy to look at the veil of illusions without being entangled in its 'relative' nature, by using the magic of speech and music (and loving attraction) to make a journey towards the 'absolute' and intangible source of harmony through the ladder of reality (whose connection and continuity is also created thanks to affinity and attractive sympathy). The Sophists are false guides in that task because they want to stay entangled within the world of illusions, in their egotistic chase of power and aggressive pursuit of control over others and over the world.

Conversely, for the Platonists, the Muses, are goddesses who really guide the souls in their 'sea journey'. They defeated the Sirens in a musical contest, and crowned their heads with the Sirens' feathers (see Procl., *in R.*, 2, 238, 21-239, 14). For this reason, the Muses are able to transfer an 'anagogic' power to the living energy present within the manifested world, represented with the 'feathers' and the 'wings', by re-directing the sensible manifestation towards the Apollonian spiritual centre of reality (because the

Sirens also correspond to 'musical notes or strings' and audible sound).¹

For the uneducated soul, an art that exploits and excites the emotions with *poikilia*, using polychordic and polyharmonious instruments (cf. Pl., *R.*, 399d) and modulating scales (an art for arts' sake and employed for *psychagógia*) does not play a positive role within the educative and therapeutic path of the philosophical life.² The rejection of the *aulos* by the goddess Athena means for the Neoplatonists that it is not suited for philosophy, especially in its educative and therapeutic stages.

This view portrays Marsyas' music and the *aulos* in a negative way and indicates the reasons for the rejection of the *aulos* in the context of Platonic education.³

Proclus and Olympiodorus, in their commentaries on the *Alcibiades I* (cf. Procl., in *Alc.*, 197, 17 ff. and Olymp., in *Alc.*, 65, 20 ff., especially 66, 9-10), justify the rejection of the *aulos* in the context of an educational programme understood as a preparation of the irrational part of the soul, especially with the assistance of music, in order to make it again receptive to reason. The Neoplatonists follow Aristotle in saying that the *aulos* prevents the employment

¹ For the connection between Sirens and musical notes see MARTIN L. WEST, *Ancient Greek Music*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 224 and note 38, p. 234.

² There is a negative sense of *poikilia* ('variety') manifested in a multiplicity of perceptible qualities separated from a unifying principle. At the same time, for the Neoplatonists, *poikilia* and sensible qualities are in fact connected to their Intelligible paradigms (or Forms); for example, in Plotinus (6, 1, 6, 3-8), *poikilia* corresponds also to the «richness and diversity of a world which is none the less all one, held together in the unity of life» (A. HILARY ARMSTRONG, *Plotinus on the Origin and Place of Beauty in Thought about the World*, in *Neoplatonism and Contemporary Thought: Part Two*, edited by R. Baine Harris, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2002, p. 220). The Intelligible unity of life is manifested also at the level of the Dionysian immanent life, co-ordinated with the mediating and anagogic Apollonian spiritual power, which re-connects everything with the transcendent principle of Unity around the 'heart' of the dismembered Dionysus. For this reason the denial of multiplicity does not mean rejection of the manifested world and the beauty of its multiple qualities, because those qualities depend on the overflow of the richness and *Poikilia* of Intelligible life and its source in the First Principle as well.

³ See Pl., *R.*, 399d-e, [Pl.], *Alc.* 1, 106e and Plu., *Alc.*, 2, 5-7, where Alcibiades, as a schoolboy, chooses the *lyra* and rejects the *aulos*; Arist., *Pol.*, 8, 1341a-1342b, and Aristides Quintilianus' negative account of the *aulos*, in 2, 17-19. The episode concerning Alcibiades' education is also mentioned in [Pl.], *Alc.* 1, 106e, where *kittharizēin* is preferred over *aulein*.

of *logos* (both speech and other manifestations of reason).¹ Proclus (*in Alc.*, 198, 1) says that the *aulos*, with its moving power (*kinētikos*) and its tumultuous quality (*thorubodēs*), is not suitable for education and its aim of awakening the *logos* and leading the soul from agitation to harmony and tranquility (*hēsychia*).

Aristotle criticizes Plato for making Socrates say that he accepts the Phrygian scale but rejects the *aulos*, when both have the same power over the soul. However, Proclus tries to reconcile Plato and Aristotle and concludes that Socrates/Plato accepted the Phrygian mode in the context of *kathartik*/ritual music (such as the dithyramb) and in the divine mysteries.² Even though the *aulos* is *kinētikos* – and therefore not suitable for an agitated soul that needs education –, that same dynamic power is suitable if the educated person has become, for instance, a cold rationalist (identifying *logos* – or *dianoia* – with the highest faculty and understanding science as the only access to reality, accompanied by an externalized and utilitarian world-view), which is another form of egotism (more civilized). In this case, the *aulos* and the Phrygian scale are recommendable as enthusiastic remedies, used to stimulate the soul's discursive reason (*dianoia*) towards divine reality (Procl., *in Alc.*, 198, 5-6).

Proclus follows Plato's more positive view of Marsyas (the *aulos* and Phrygian scale) in the *Symposium*, 215c, which reappears in the [Platonic] *Minos*, 318b. According to Proclus, Plato is not a rationalist philosopher and for that reason he does not reject the Phrygian mode. The whole search/love for knowledge (*philosophia*) involves a wider search/love for the transcendence of the Good or the Absolute, which inspires «those who are in need of the gods» ([Pl.], *Min.*, 318b7). The passage in the *Minos* imitates the *Symposium*, 215c5, where Alcibiades depicts the already mentioned ecstatic effect of Socrates' speech, comparing Socrates' voice with Marsyas' *aulos*. Plato uses the word *katechesthai* which means divine possession in the context of *enthousiasmos* (Arist., *Pol.*, 8, 1340a11 and 1342a7; cf. Procl., *in R.*, 1, 61, 25).

True inner peace is Apollonian, but it is also Dionysian, because

¹ Cf. Olymp., *in Phd.*, 64b3-4 (3, 10, 1).

² On Proclus' reconciliation of Plato's and Aristotle's views on music see ANNE D. R. SHEPPARD, *Studies on the 5th and 6th Essays of Proclus' Commentary on the Republic*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980 («Hypomnemata», 61), p. 113 ff.

inspiration reaches the whole being of the soul with its immanent life, making it necessary to reconnect all the derived multiplicity again with its transcendent/spiritual principles. Inspiration, as Beethoven expressed in the *Ninth Symphony* (with the words of Schiller's *Ode to Joy*), is related to the intoxication of a spark of divine fire (*Feuertrunken*), which being re-kindled, energizes the whole soul in its ascent to the divine source «above the canopy of stars». This particular harmonization of the Apollonian and the Dionysian is an Orphic theme, of which Plato and the Neoplatonists were very much aware.

As we have seen, the immediacy of the sound of the *aulos* produces (like Socrates' voice) an inspiration that in a sense transcends reason. The *aulos* is a Barbarian/foreign, instrument, and when one listens to a foreign language one might hear the sound but fail to perceive its *logos*. This on the one hand, entails a danger: the danger of what Plato calls the 'barbarian mud' in which the eye of the soul is plunged (using an Orphic metaphor), which needs the anagogic power (*dialektikê methodos*) of Apollonian self-knowledge, philosophy and music, with the assistance of the hermetic sciences (liberal arts) that rekindle and nourish the *logos* of the soul (cf. Pl., *R.*, 533c-d). But on the other hand, there is another danger; that of idolizing the relative and the self-divinization of human 'reason', closed to the Apollonian transcendence and the Absolute.

As Iamblichus claims, the *nomina barbara* or ritual names of the gods and utterances (*voces mysticae*), have a qualitative energy, which depends on the vibratory nature of sound, and which is lost if one translates them.¹ From this point of view, even Greek philosophy is a 'noise of discourses', which can only achieve rational demonstrations. On the other hand, sacred, theurgic sounds (*phônai*) accomplish an active transformation, which is deeper than rationality (cf. *Corp. Herm.*, 16, 2, 2). Iamblichus, as a Neo-Pythagorean, tries to harmonize the Apollonian and the Dionysian, according to which, science, reason and knowledge have also a spiritual/artistic counterpart. He rejects both the rationalism of Aristotelianism and the sophistic abuse of reason (used to achieve the sophist's own egotistic aims).

¹ See Iamb., *Myst.*, 7, 5, 257-259, *Orac. Chald.*, 150 and GREGORY SHAW, *Theurgy and the Soul, the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, pp. 181-182.

Neoplatonic philosophy is an application of accurate thought, combined at the same time with an intuitive openness toward the 'mysteric' dimension of reality. In this context, the Neoplatonists value the *aulos* and the dythiramb, if one orientates their energy towards Apollonian ideals. There is an interior aspect of ignorance and confusion, which is barbarian in a negative sense = the barbarian warriors whose hearts are softened and pacified when they listen to the civilizing music of Orpheus' Lyra:

«his playing and singing won over the Greeks, changed the hearts of barbarians and tamed wild beasts» (Ps. Callisth., 1, 42, 6, 7 = Kern, test.144).¹

But ignorance can be civilized too, as when Plato connects the pursuit of strength and power with mere brute force (even manifested in a more subtle way, as persuasion), proper to the sophistic/civilized way of life, which is based on the active pursuit of political power. In *Grg.*, 506b (cf. 489e), Plato compares Calicles, the Sophist, with Zethus and Socrates, the philosopher, with Amphion. Calicles believes in the *natural* right of the stronger to seek power and pleasure for themselves, while Socrates proposes the Apollonian/philosophical path of self-examination. The comparison is based on the contrast between the twin legendary brothers: the practical herdsman Zethus (active/strong athlete) against his musical brother Amphion (contemplative/poet), whose music at the end is stronger than the brute force of Zethus, because the walls of the city/culture and civilization depend on the Lyre of Amphion's and its Cosmic model (seven strings/seven gates of Thebes/the number 7 devoted to Apollo, seven planets, etc.).

The Neoplatonists presented a marriage between philosophical method and the glimpse of inspiring wisdom that awakens the interior life, which combines the immediacy of primordial sound (essentially connected to the nature of the soul) and a re-directing process (in a cyclical turn or *epistrophê*, both anagogic/ascending and concentrating) that orientates the soul towards the source of divine sound and *Logos* present in the depths of its heart.

In this scheme, the Apollonian is intermediary, both understood as middle between the extremes and also as centre (within the

¹ Quoted by WILLIAM KEITH CHAMBERS GUTHRIE, *Orpheus and Greek Religion: a study of the Orphic Movement*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 40.

circle of manifestation): the *omphalos* of peace and cohesion represented in the cardinal centre of the musical *melos* (the Dorian/*hesychastic* mode and the *mesé* string or note as *hégemonikon* of the melody).

The warmth of the 'heart' of Dionysian *enthousiasmos* and inspiration, present within the soul, needs, at the same time, the re-awakening and re-orientation provided by the mediation of Apollo's art. For Proclus, the 'hands' of Apollo symbolize the mediation of skill, art and harmony (*in Cra.*, 176, p. 101, 25).¹ Accordingly, the divine Lyra is a guiding/salvific companion that opens the way of return for the soul symbolized by Orpheus (returning not from the underworld to this world, but from this world to the celestial/divine origin of the soul = Euridice). There is a scholium on Virgil's *Aeneid*, in connection to Orpheus' attempt to recover Euridice from the underworld that contains the following reference to the lyre and the kithara:

But some say that Orpheus' lyre had seven strings corresponding to the seven circles of heaven. Varro says there was an Orphic book about summoning the soul, called the *Lyre*. It is said that souls need the cithara in order to ascend (transl. Martin L. West).²

The Lyre is like the arrow of Apollo, the solar ray that pierces

¹ This symbolism could be compared to that of the 'solar' spider (the *lycosa tarantula*, or wolf spider). In general the web of the spider and its centre connected to the vibrations of the whole web, symbolizes the solar rays and cosmic sympathy.

² Cf. MARTIN L. WEST, *The Orphic Poems*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983, p. 30 and FRANCISCO MOLINA MORENO, *Non-musical notes on the Orphic 'Lyra' (OF 417)*, in *Tracing Orpheus. Studies of Orphic Fragments in honour of Alberto Bernabé*, edited by Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui *et alii*, Berlin-Boston, de Gruyter, 2011, pp. 147-151. Molina Moreno interprets literally the myth of Orpheus, as if it meant that Orpheus' aim was only to help Euridice with his lyre-playing in her return to the earth (as the place of the living). However, if the myth has any sense at all, it should be interpreted allegorically, as the Neoplatonists did, representing the ascent of the soul (soul = Euridice, cf. Boeth., *Cons. Phil.*, 3, 12), not to the surface of the earth, but to the higher, celestial levels of being above the visible heaven. The rationalist interpretation presented by the modern scholarly study of myth concludes that that kind of interpretation can only be «Pythagorean and Platonic» but not Orphic (denying any allegorical/metaphysical meaning to the Orphic myths). Nevertheless, the Pythagoreans and Plato could be transmitting the genuine interpretation of the Orphic mysteries, and scholars cannot establish the contrary, because of the unwritten character of these mystic doctrines.

the soul's confusion and humid obscurity and attaches it again to the chord or string that makes possible the way out from the Labyrinth (Ariadne's thread). The Apollonian mediation is also represented by means of animal symbolism: we can see that the constellations of the Lyra, the Swan, the Arrow and the Dolphin, all belong to the same region in the sky, near the Milky Way (the Summer Triangle).

The dolphin, summoned by Arion's kithara, saves him from the sea of *genesis* and gives him the opportunity of spiritual re-birth. The hyperborean swans carry the Muses in Martianus Capella's depiction of the Harmony of the Spheres. These swan-chariots can also be seen in the frontispiece of *Practica Musicae* by Franchino Gaffurio, where Apollo appears with his lyre and the serpent Python (= monochord/string) at his feet.¹

The dolphin sacred to Apollo is the enemy of the sea-monster (octopus or dragon).² The dolphin is also related to Delphi and the inner peace proper to the Apollonian *omphalos*, and the direction towards the metaphysical centre of reality. On the contrary, the descending path of the Sun (from the zodiacal Gate at Cancer) represents the gradual attachment/seduction of the soul following a descending tendency, towards the periphery of manifestation and the watery realm of *genesis*, which corresponds to the serpent Python.³ However, the Serpent can represent also the continuity of reality and the substantial aspect of the vibration that maintains the different levels joined together (for that reason it is conquered and subordinated to Apollo, the principle of Universal Harmony).

The winding neck of the swan has the same symbolic meaning, and consequently the swan represents the serpentine vibration

¹ This representation is studied by JAMES HAAR, *The Frontispiece of Gaffuri's Practica Musicae (1496)*, «Renaissance Quarterly», xxvii, 1, 1974, pp. 7-22 and EDGAR WIND, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, cit., pp. 46-47, 50, 112-113. We know that Gaffuri had read the *Timaeus* and Ficino's *Commentary* on this dialogue. Cf. GARY TOMLINSON, *Music in Renaissance Magic*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 89.

² The *aulos* is connected to the moon, the watery regions and Cancer is the astrological house of the Moon; while the lyre is connected to the dolphin (Capricorn), the swan, and to the path of the souls in the Milky Way.

³ In different cultures, such as Hinduism, the positive aspect of the female serpent, representing the energy of Life or the Śakti is more clearly stated. See ALAIN DANÉLOU, *The Myths and Gods of India*, Rochester, Inner Traditions, 1991, p. 253. The Greek view presents a dualistic conception where the serpent almost always appears as a negative principle or dragon.

that connects different separated levels, and in its close connection with the harp or the lyre, the swan becomes a ship or a vehicle. Both the swan and the swimming dolphin are animals that represent the salvific power of the Hyperborean Apollo.

The lyre and the harp are instruments connected to aquatic birds (the swan, intermediary but unaffected, sliding serenely on the surface of the waters) between the two worlds. The swan-lyre represents the Universal Logos/Pneuma and also the Luminous Ether, manifested at an intermediary-subtle world, between gross material manifestation and spiritual higher levels.

The music of the Apollonian lyre is therefore a vehicle that carries the soul, like a ship in the water, a swimming or flying swan¹ or like the dolphin that saves Arion (Hdt., 1, 23, 24), who asks the help of the dolphin playing the *Orthios Nomos*, and sings like a swan (Plu., *Mor.*, *Sept.Sap.Conv.*, 161B-162B) at the stern of the ship.² The dolphin saves Arion from the watery level of

¹ Cf. the swan-boat of Wagner's *Lobengrin* or the swan-boat of Galadriel (and Eärendil) in Tolkien's *Lord of Rings*. Musical instruments can include animal symbolism in their forms or represent a vehicle or vessel, like the lyres of Ur, for example. Although I am not aware of any Greek or Roman instrument designed with the shape of a vehicle, it is relevant to notice that lyres and harps sometimes carry representations of birds, especially Apolline swans (see e.g. the Cycladic statuette at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, n. 47.100.1). Apollo's or Venus' chariot pulled by swans can be connected to this symbolism. Cf. Mart. Cap., *De Nupt.*, 1, 27-29, pp. 19-20 Dick, where swans carry the Muses to their place in the planetary scale of the harmony of the spheres.

² All these aspects correspond to a music dedicated to Apollo; as Proclus says, the *nomos* is a calm and orderly composition proper to the Apollonian manner. Procl., *Chr.*, 320b12-30 (Bekker) quoted in THOMAS J. MATHIESEN, *Apollo's Lyre, Greek Music and Music Theory in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska Press, 1999, p. 62 (cf. p. 65 on the *orthios nomos*). It is interesting to notice that Arion, is credited to be the inventor of the Dithyramb, especially designed as a choral, cyclic, dance-song (Procl., *Chr.*, 320a25-33 and 320b12-15 and 21-23). Cf. THOMAS J. MATHIESEN, *Apollo's Lyre, Greek Music and Music Theory in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, cit., pp. 74-75. Plato alludes to the story of Arion in *R.*, 453d, where Socrates says: «Then we, too, must swim and try to escape out of the sea of argument in the hope that either some dolphin will take us on its back or some other desperate rescue» (transl. Paul Shorey, *Plato. The Republic*, with an English translation by P. S., London, 1, Heinemann-Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1946, («The Loeb Classical Library»)). The «sea of argument» is proper to the Sophists' way of arguing, more interested in charming the soul with egotistic arguments that in finding the common truth (cf. Pl., *Prt.*, 338a).

existence and the troubles derived from his pursuit of material wealth (making money with his art and attachment to goods = *kehrēmata*). He arrives at Taenarum (a place connected with the myth of Orpheus) and is reborn and saved from the tumult/noise (*thorybos*) of the sea of manifestation (cycle of generation) and the reality which become separated from its ordering/harmonizing causes.

As we have seen, Marsyas can represent the confusion of the divided and material world, whose ego is inflated with the humid air of vanity. But one can use that same continuous energy of the music of Marsyas and the immediacy of sound (proper to the *aulos*) and subordinate it to the lyre and the divine models of harmony, who belong to the Intellect and the Intelligible world, where Apollo and the Muses create their celestial music.

Apollonian and Hermetic arts or disciplines (including lyre-playing, connected to both gods: Apollo and Hermes) are the vehicles for inspiration and the corresponding transformation of the person. The visual and sonorous symbols and images of art, which correspond to the intermediary faculty of imagination (*phantasia*) are not mere imitations, or should not be, if they intend to free the soul from the illusory aspect of those images and copies. Consequently, the allegorical interpretation of art has the aim of stirring within the soul the aspiration to look for a deeper meaning hidden in the various visible-audible manifestations, now understood according to their *enigmatic* value. Imitation maintains the human soul within the boundaries of the perceptible world, while the inspired art of Apollo and the Muses is depicted in the following terms by Proclus:

The higher kind of life corresponds to this [higher] kind of music and Plato separates it from poetics, because poetics is proper to imitation, and this kind of music cannot follow an imitative life staying at this level with copies; but music prefers to snatch itself out (*anharpazein*) of copies in order to ascend towards the divine models of harmony and rhythm for all in this world (*in R.*, 1, 60, 6-13).¹

Other kinds of music are also imitative, such as the auletic Pythian Nomos. In order to ascend from copies to the divine models,

¹ My translation following *Proclus. Commentaire sur la République*, traduction et notes par André Marie Jean Festugière, 1, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1970 («Bibliothèque des textes philosophiques»), p. 77.

the soul must follow an educative and therapeutic programme, in which the music of the kithara and the lyra dedicated to Apollo and Hermes have a predominant role. As we have seen, in Proclus' *Commentary on the First Alcibiades*, Hermes plays the role of the good genius and guide of souls. Socrates also plays this role and helps Alcibiades to find the real inner man, the true self, in contrast to the terrestrial man. In this context, Socrates, who himself looks like Marsyas (as Alcibiades says in the *Symposium*), is the one who reveals the illusory character of the sophistic life and the political pursuit of external materialistic values, as a false path for the soul of Alcibiades. In this light, Socrates, represents the 'protreptic' value of Platonic philosophy and music, expressed in his concern that Alcibiades should turn towards the inner spiritual values instead of political ambition. In Plato's *Symposium*, two mythological characters represent the value of the interior life: Silenus and Marsyas (Marsyas is depicted sometimes as a Satyr, sometimes as a Silenus). Alcibiades compared Socrates to a Silenus who has an interior full of beautiful images of Hermes and other gods. This corresponds to the more positive interpretation of the myth of the opposition between Marsyas and Apollo. As we have argued earlier in the text, Marsyas represents the possibility of emptying oneself from all vanities and becoming a clear receptacle of divine inspiration and celestial light, represented with wine (Plato's *Euthydemus*) or with the clear waters of the river into which Marsyas was transformed in other versions of the myth, while abandoning the exterior self (the skin).

The wine represents Dionysian life, inspiration and enthusiasm. But since Marsyas is defeated by Apollo, the Dionysian aspect is put into coordination with the Apollonian, which is the transcendent source of inspiration for the poet.

In his *Commentary on the Alcibiades*, after stating that the soul is like a musical instrument, the lyre invented by Hermes, Proclus goes on to explain what he calls the Hermetic (Hermaic) disciplines, which comprise gymnastics, music, and the mathematical sciences and dialectics as the last stage of the educative process:

The mathematical sciences and dialectics awake and elevate our reason; for the eye of the soul, which is asleep and obstructed, because of many other occupations, under the influence of them is re-ignited and returns towards itself and to self-knowledge. With these sciences our *logos* is

nourished and through them ascends towards the Intellect, as Socrates says here. (Procl., in *Alc.*, 195-196).¹

Apollonian music in coordination with philosophy represents the crowning stage of music, art and science in the Neoplatonic view of education:

We say that philosophy is the highest *mousiké*, as if you wanted to call that music that is most uplifting with love (*erôtikôtatê*) the 'science of love' (*erôtikê*). This music harmonizes not a lyre, but the soul itself, with the most beautiful of all harmonies (*La.*, 188d3), through which the soul is able to put in order (*kosmein*) all human things and celebrate the divine in a perfect way, imitating the Musagetes, who on one side celebrates his Father with intellectual hymns and on the other keeps the whole world together (*synechei*) with indissoluble bonds, 'moving together' all things, as Socrates says in the *Cratylus* (405c6).²

The mind, disciplined with the Liberal Arts, does not stay attached to the surface of the visible images and sounds, but tries to find a meaning behind them (*hyponoia*). This can be particularly noticed in the design of the *Palazzo Ducale* in Urbino and especially of the Studiolo of Duke Federico da Montefeltro (which can be compared also to the twin Studiolo in the palace of Gubbio). These spaces, together with the *Tempietto* of the Muses represent the Renaissance ideal of integral education based on the Liberal Arts and Platonic Philosophy, with its intellectual richness and its openness to inspiration.

¹ My translation based on *Proclus. Sur le premier Alcibiade de Platon*, texte établi et traduit par Alain-Philippe Segonds, Paris, Les belles lettres, 1985-1986.

² The most beautiful of harmonies mentioned here corresponds to the Dorian mode, the mode of the *hesychia* of the soul who has found the centre or Apollonian *omphalos* of reality. Proclus (in *Ti.*, 2, 234, 1) also says that the World of the Soul is according to Plato's *Timaeus* tuned to the Dorian scale and its peculiar nature and power is represented with the interval between the *paramesê* and *mesê* of the cosmic scale.

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