

IX Renaissance and Humanism

EARLIER CHAPTERS have described how, in the vision of celestial music, the angels took over as performers and how the place for celestial concert became more and more restricted to the highest heaven, as well as how greatly the vision of paradise was influenced by Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Ultimately, the angels replaced the Muses as movers of the spheres and the Elders of the Revelation and the faithful of the Psalms as musicians. With the coming of the new art of instrumental music, the angels changed more and more from dancers and singers to instrumentalists.

However, the former forces of celestial music did not completely disappear. They continued to be represented, especially in the illustrations of theoretical books, and, eventually, under the influence of the Renaissance and Humanism, these forces came again to the fore. The trend was manifested in many different ways. A typical example are Ripa's books,¹ in which a number of allegorical figures and emblems are given for one and the same idea, and the artist has the liberty of choice. Cartari, on the other hand, gave to his two figures of Zeus emblems from different ideologies, a lyra-viol as the symbol of the ruler of the music of the spheres, and thunderbolts (Fig. 93).² There is a particularly good document for the fusion of the angels with the figures of the *parthenoi* and Muses, the *putti* and *eroti*, in the decoration of the Malatesta chapel at Rimini (1447-56).³ Here the musician angels look like Muses, and the Muses like angels. The third chapel of Saint Francis at Rimini is decorated with the figures of the Muses (eight) and the liberal arts (seven), grouped in parallel with the figures of the seven spheres, as follows:

¹ Ces. Ripa, *Iconologia* (1613) and *Nova Iconologia* (1618).

² V. Cartari, *Imagini delli dei de gli antichi* (1571); T. Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (1953), Pl. 148, Fig. 92; A. Gilbert, *The Symbolic Persons in the Masques of Ben Jonson* (1948).

³ C. Ricci, *Il tempio Malatestino* (1925); for the relation to San Bernardino di Siena at Perugia, see Ricci, p. 309; A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, p. 453.

Thalia	lowest sphere (earth)	
Clio	Luna	Grammar
Calliope	Mercury	Dialectic
Terpsichore	Venus	Rhetoric
Melpomene	Sol	Music
Erato	Mars	Geometry
Polyhymnia	Saturn	Astronomy
Urania	Fixed stars	Arithmetic

There are also music-making *putti* in one of the other chapels. Agostino di Duccio, one of the creators of the Rimini sculpture, was familiar with the traditional representation of musician angels. They appear on the façade and the portal which he made for Saint Bernardino at Perugia.⁴ Here, eight angels with wings, playing on musical instruments, surround the saint who, in a mandorla, seems to be flying up to heaven. The frame of the mandorla is formed by little flames, the symbol of the seraphim. If one compares Agostino di Duccio's figures of standing angels from the portal (Fig. 94) with his

⁴ P. Schubring, *Die italienische Plastik des Quattrocento (Handbuch der Kunstwissenschaft, 1912)*; San Bernardino di Siena, 1380-1444, Franciscan orator and saint.



FIG. 93. Zeus in his two aspects; sixteenth-century woodcut from Vincenzo Cartari, *Imagini delli dei degli antichi*. INSTRUMENTS: lyra-viol

FIG. 94. Agostino di Duccio, detail from the portal of the Church of Saints Andrea and Bernardino, Perugia. INSTRUMENTS: triangle, nakers



FIG. 95. The Muse Clio, from a relief by Agostino di Duccio for the Tempio Malatestiano at Rimini. INSTRUMENTS: busine



figure of Clio from Rimini (Fig. 95), they look very much alike, except that Clio has no wings.

The parallel of the Muses and the spheres is the old one from Capella's *De Nuptiis*. The group of the liberal arts is set in correspondence because of the obvious identity of the number seven for the spheres and the sum of quadrivium and trivium. There is a similar relationship in the famous woodcut (Fig. 96) from Gafori's *Practica Musica* (later incorporated into his *Teatrum instrumentorum*).⁵ Here the following elements correspond: the planets, the spheres, the Muses, and the sounds and intervals of the scale. It is a table that goes back to the era when the orders of the angels were not included in the cosmic structure. The chief symbols in the table—the segments, the figures in the medallions, the *tituli*—represent the pagan tradition traced in earlier chapters. The segments of the spheres are identified with the ruling deities and turned by the Muses; the names of the tones and intervals indicate the distances of the orbits of the planets; all this is familiar from the earlier sources. The additional signs and figures—Apollo, the three Fates, the serpent, and the elements (around the earth)—show a fusion of ideas that goes back to Plato's vision with Christian symbols. Apollo is shown here as Pythicos, as Helios, and as Musagetes. As Helios he is identified with the sun and the light. As Pythicos he has vanquished the serpent and puts his feet on it as a sign of victory, just as Christ or the Virgin step on the monster representing Satan or on the mouth of hell. The three-faced head of the serpent is an old symbol for the three aspects of time: past, present, and future. The three Fates were identified with the three phases of time, and we remember that the three Fates in Plato turned the spindle around which the spheres rotated. Beside the seated Apollo, there are three figures with the names of the Fates.

The four elements surrounding *terra* in Gafori's table are perhaps the most novel addition; they reflect the outcome of the comparison of the macrocosmos and the microcosmos, of universe and man, an idea mentioned above with reference to the writings of Silvestris and Alanus. This theory was later elaborated by Johannes Kepler and Robert Fludd. Fludd, principally a physician, was interested in all kinds of speculative philosophy, and in his books he tried to construct

⁵ Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, pp. 271, 412; E. Panofsky, "Titian's Allegory of Prudence," *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (1955).

a scheme of the harmony of the cosmos.⁶ In his charts, the musical intervals and scales play the role of the *tertium comparationis* between the two kinds of cosmos and provide a link between the two poles of the universe, God and man. Fludd's books must have been quite popular, because a number of editions were published during his lifetime. Five of the many illustrations to Fludd's works seem worth discussing at some length.

The title page of *De templo musicae*, which may or may not have been chosen by Fludd himself, shows Apollo and the nine Muses. They are not framed in a structured cosmos. Apollo is seated under a laurel tree with a lyre in a form modeled after Roman prototypes, while four of the Muses hold musical instruments of Fludd's day; they are not playing. Apollo can be seen alone on one of the other plates illustrating the temple of music, but in a minor role, and neither the Muses nor Apollo appear in the other charts. This seems to reflect an ambiguity that also made itself felt in the poetry of the time.

The role of the Muses has been studied in detail by E. R. Curtius,⁷ who followed their history from the first centuries of our era up to the eighteenth century. He found them largely invoked as givers of inspiration, at the beginning of poems or at the beginning of the climactic parts of larger compositions. After the model of Homer, almost all epics began with their invocation, but as the Christian era advanced, Curtius found varying compliance with this. Strict believers like Aldhelm or Florus rejected their power and replaced them with figures from the orbit of the Christian faith; at the other extreme, some simply adopted the classic figure as it was. There were yet others who molded the Muses' character along the lines of allegories developed by Christian writers. There are writers who had a Muse inspire the poets of the Old Testament. Muses were mentioned in

⁶ R. Fludd, *Utriusque Cosmi Historia . . .* (Oppenheim, 1617); *Monochordi Mundi Symphonicum* (1622); Tractatus, No. 2 in *Utriusque Cosmi Historia*. See also his *De anima intellectualis scientia* (2nd edn., 1704).

⁷ E. R. Curtius, "Die Musen im Mittelalter," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, Vol. 59 (1939), pp. 129ff.; Vol. 63 (1943), pp. 256ff.; E. R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (1948), pp. 232ff., 241ff., 248ff.; sources for Curtius: Dante, *Inferno*, II, 7 and XXXII, 10; *Purgatorio*, I, 8 and XXIX, 37, 42; *Paradiso*, II, 9 and XII, 7. A. Krause, *Jorge Manrique*, Publ. of the University of California at Los Angeles in Language and Literature, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1937); H. G. Lotspeich, *Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Spenser*, Princeton Studies in English, Vol. 9 (1932).

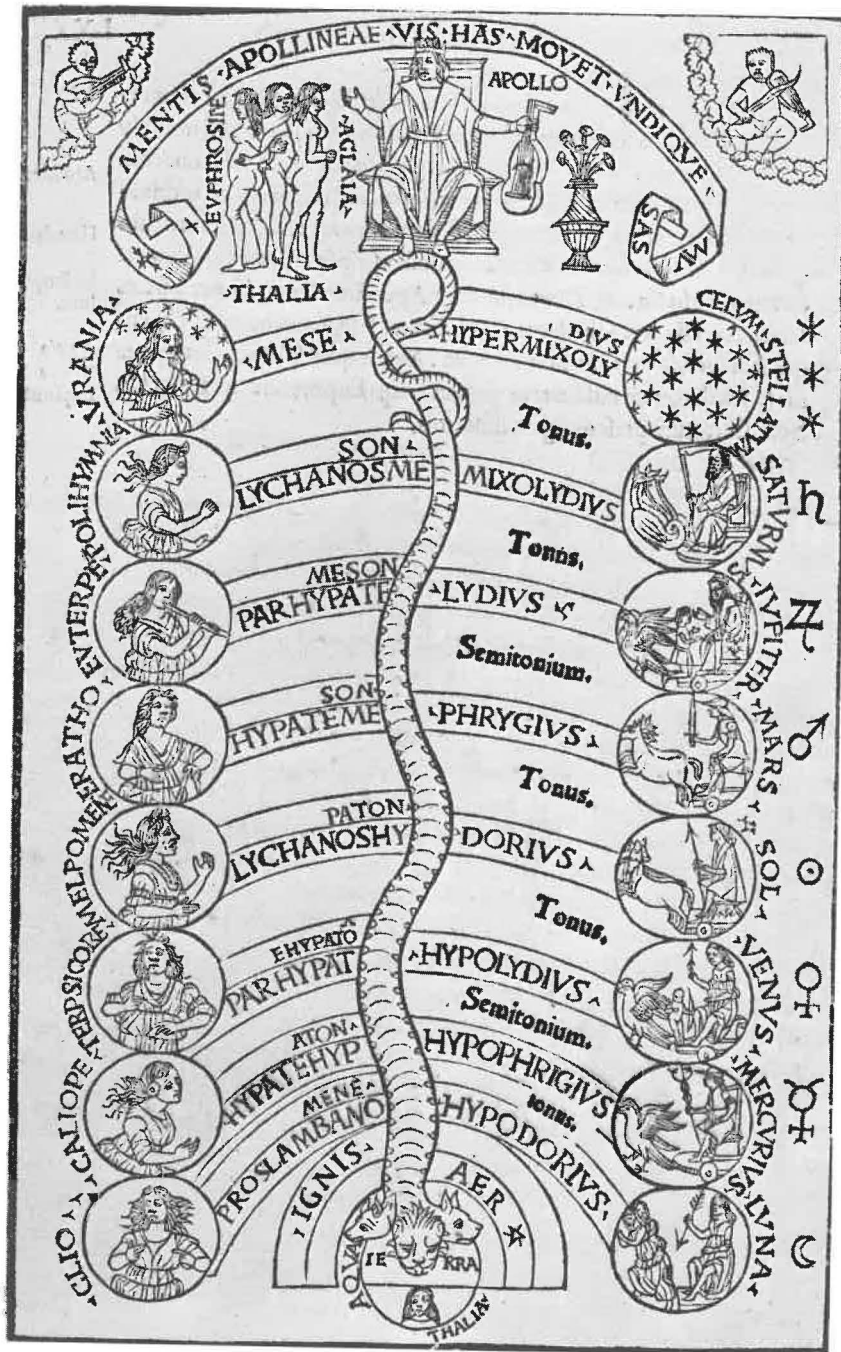


FIG. 96. A woodcut from Franchino Gafori, *Practica Musicae utriusque cantus* (1508). INSTRUMENTS: lute, bowed rebec, lute-type instrument, pipe

liturgical hymns, especially in the songs of southern France, where the form of the *sequentiae* developed and where our Western music ultimately originated. In his *Divine Comedy*, Dante invokes the inspiration of the Muses, but in his *Monarchia* and the treatise *De volgari eloquentia* he invokes the Lord and Christ. Even when a poet denies and rejects the power of the pagan Muses the conflict becomes apparent, as in the dirge on the death of his father by Jorge Manrique. (1440?-78), "where the worn topic of the rejection is revived in the words of a real poet":

I do not invoke the Muses
Like the masters, the poets, and the sages;
Their tales are schemes;
In their gardens grow poisonous plants.
I praise the One, my poem is devoted to Him alone
Who abased Himself to the world;
But the world did not recognize His light.

Tasso in his *Gerusalemme liberata* rejects the classic Muse and invokes the heavenly muse who dwells among the heavenly choirs. Spenser has three forms of invocation in his *Faerie Queene*, once the Muses in general, once Clio, as the force yielding knowledge, the daughter of Phoebus and Mnemosyne and at the same time the sacred child of Zeus—that is, as the classic goddess—and later he again asks the aid of the "Muses." Milton invokes a heavenly muse derived from the forces which inspired the Old Testament. He knows two kinds of muses, the classic and the Christian. But it is in Spenser that the form of invocation at the beginning is especially relevant. It is the Holy Virgin, "chief of nine," who is asked for help, and Spenser leaves it undecided whether he means the Holy Virgin as the leader of the nine orders of angels, in the role which Dante assigned her, or as the leader of the classic Muses. When the classic Muses are called upon, generally Urania is singled out as the mover of the cosmos, the role she has played since Capella's day. In Calderón, the fusion of the classic and the sacred Parnassus is completed. *Divinas letras* and *humanas letras*, the Bible and the wisdom of the classic authors, are united through the sacred numbers. In Calderón's *Sacro Parnaso*, Faith asks the Gentiles and the Jews to read from the Scriptures. The Jews answer with the verse of Psalm 68:25. "The singers went before, the players on instruments fol-

lowed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels." For Calderón these musician maidens and players of timbrels were identical with the Muses, and Christ was their leader, the *musagete*, *el verdadero Apolo*.⁸

Another interesting illustration from Fludd's books is the representation of his *Templum musicae*.⁹ This is a structure so laden with allegorical references that it is difficult to interpret all of them. On the left, there appears a kind of campanile crowned by a figure of Time, a winged figure with a scythe. Below there is a clock with the symbols of the musical rests and the letters of the tones, then, further down, Apollo Helios with a lyre, then yet lower a chart of the tones with the Greek Γ for the lowest sound, and, at the bottom, a lute. The center tower, crowned by a cupola, has an arch with ten spheres or *voussoirs*. Columns beside the windows are decorated with musical instruments: harp, cornett, and organ (left) and viol and two lutes (right). Six steps standing for the hexachord of tones (fa, sol, la, re, me, ut) lead to the windows; at the bottom, Pythagoras's experiment with the hammers may be seen through an arch. Within the latter scene, on the right, there is a kind of portico with six columns, inscribed with the signs of the clefs; on the wall behind, at the far left, are the tones of the musical system, starting at the bottom with the Γ ; farther to the right, at different heights corresponding to the clefs on the columns, are the syllables of the hexachords. The base on which the portico stands is a wall on which the rhythmical values of the notes are inscribed. The portico has a frieze with three arcades, with a set of seven organ pipes in each, reminiscent of the organ on the Ghent Altar with its twenty-one pipes. As suggested above, this number, which does not correspond to the usual form of organ used in the fifteenth century, and certainly not to that of the seventeenth, was probably a symbolic expression for the compass of three octaves, for the three kinds of music (*mundana, humana, instrumentalis*), and, finally, for the Trinity.¹⁰

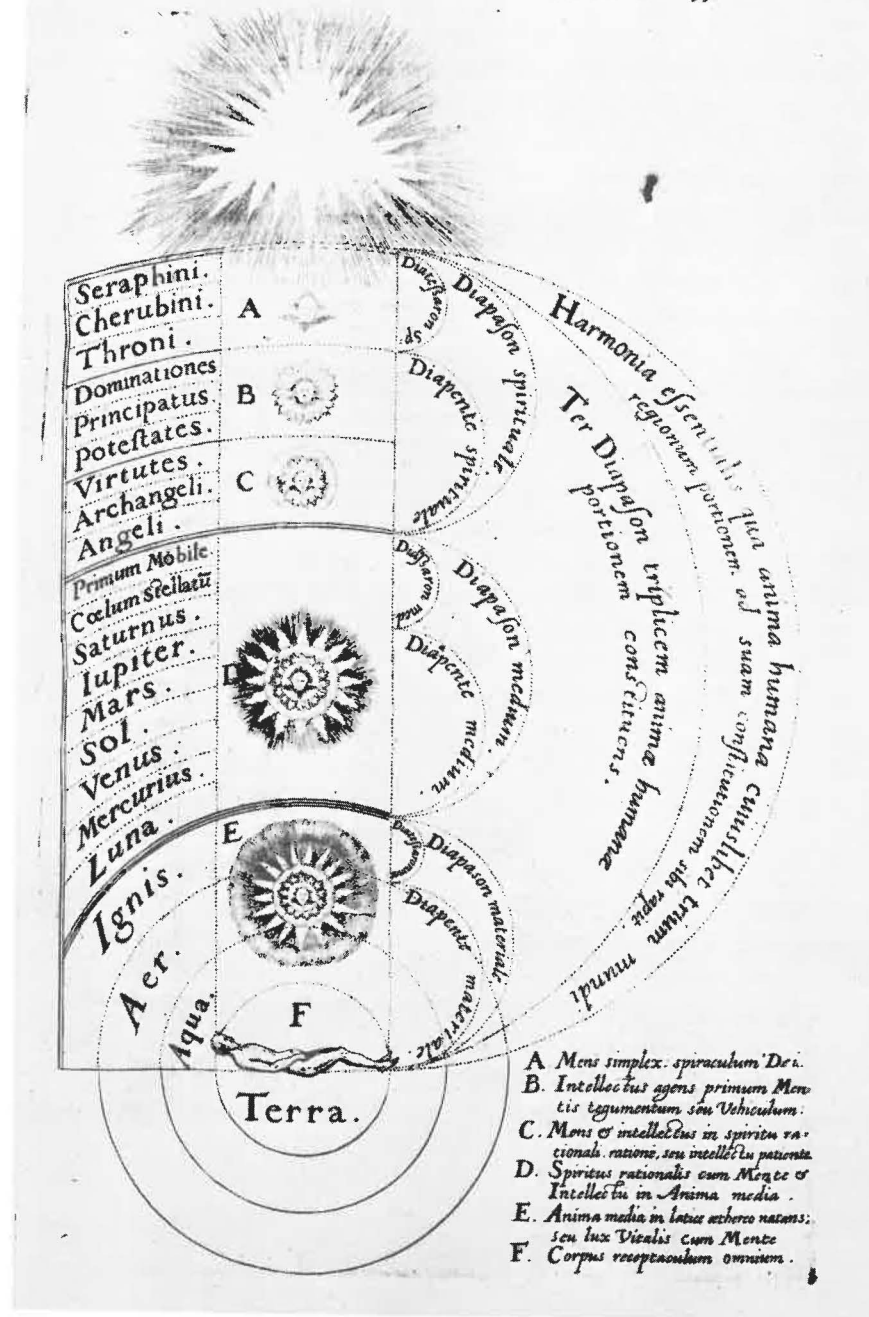
Three other charts illustrating Fludd's main text and theory are of even greater interest. The first is the chart of the "internal numbers and harmony of the human being" (Fig. 97). Around a circle repre-

⁸ Curtius, *Europäische Literatur*, p. 249.

⁹ Facsimile in J. Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky* (1961), plate following p. 242.

¹⁰ Grossman, *Die einleitenden Kapitel des Speculum Musicae von Johannes de Muris* (1924), pp. 23 and 52.

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senting the earth, in which a man is lying on his back (*corpus receptaculum omnium*), are three circles representing the other elements. Above the circle of fire there is erected, on the left, a scale of the spheres, with the *coelum stellatum* and the *primum mobile* at the top and, above, the nine orders of angels, topped by the “seraphini” (a word which points to an Italian source). On the right are half-circles with the different musical intervals; the whole combined gives the compass of the triple octave, “harmonia essentialis qua anima humana cuiuslibet trium mundi regionum portionem ad suam constitutionem sibi rapit” (the essential harmony comprising the three regions of the cosmos of which the human soul grasps one part corresponding to her constitution). The three octaves are the spiritual, the medial, and the material, corresponding to the realms of the angel orders, the spheres of the planets, and the elements. In the middle, in a column resting on the human form, are the orders of angels in rosettes formed by rays of light and clouds, and, at the very top, a triangle of light for the Trinity. Such rosette emblems were typical for the Rosicrucian sect. As noted earlier, the chart corresponds exactly to the one found in the manuscript of hymns from the twelfth century, except for this middle column and for minor differences of form—notably that the names of the tones and the intervals were given in classic Greek terminology in the earlier work.

The second chart from the same treatise contains the same elements, but the outer form is somewhat changed (Fig. 98). Everything is arranged around a musical instrument called the monochord, then in use for measuring the musical intervals. On the string are the names of the tones, and since the whole chart must be read from right to left, the lowest sounds appear on top. In a row on the left, the intervals are indicated; then, in the next row, the numbers of the sound waves, and then the larger intervals. To the right of the instrument, there are the names and signs of the elements and the spheres, this time to be read from the bottom up, starting with *omega* and the earth. Above the earth are the four elements, then the spheres, with the sun in the middle, and, on top, two sections for the orders of angels “corresponding to the fifth and the fourth.” At the very top stands the *alpha* or *aleph*, the Lord, “the *monas* from whom everything proceeds and to whom everything returns.”

The third chart, *Meteoro graphicum* (Fig. 99), demonstrates the relation of the stars and the weather to human moods and emotions. It contains no musical terms or symbols; however, in the top row

FIG. 97. Diagram from Robert Fludd, *Historia utriusque cosmi* (1617)

there are five angels on either side of the emblem of the Lord, each standing on a sphere. The inscriptions read *primum mobile*, the sphere of the fixed stars, then Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, Moon, and the Elements. On the upper spheres, above the heads of the figures, are inscribed the names of the orders of the angels, with *animae* for the tenth figure. Each angel is standing beside a palm tree, and the trees are inscribed in Latin and Hebrew with the names of the Virtues. Of the three charts, the first is the most traditional; in the others the spheres and their music are related to human temperaments and moods.

Fludd's treatises provide a comprehensive elaboration of the theory of the music of the spheres. The cosmos, music, and the orders of angels are set into relation with each other and with the spiritual forces in man. The figures of the pagan orbit are not included in his scheme. In Gafori's chart, on the other hand, the relation of the spheres, music, and the Muses was set forth without including the order of angels.

For a final summary of the theoretical handling of the music of the spheres, it is apt to refer to one last book from the second half of the seventeenth century, a work which provides a survey of all the problems, even though it discusses them without elaborating a clear structure. This is the *Museum Historico-legale Bipartitum*, by Carlo Pellegrini, published in Rome in 1665.¹¹ The cosmic aspect is treated in its first part, and in the second, the relation of the orders of angels to the spheres. Pellegrini's book is a veritable encyclopedia for our topic; in it all the laws for the music of the spheres discussed above are set forth, as well as theories on the origin of the music, a survey of the different kinds of music, *mundana*, *humana*, *instrumentalis*, and also *harmonica* and *organica*. Pellegrini discusses the music of paradise, the role of the angels in moving the spheres and performing heavenly music. He does not elaborate in the precise way that Fludd did, nor does he give exact charts. He quotes freely from a great variety of sources, from the classics as well as from authors of the early centuries of our era. Of greatest interest is his list of heavenly musicians: the sirens, the angels, and the Muses; and it should also be noted that he identifies the song of the Muses and the song of

¹¹ Carlo Pellegrini, *Museum Historico-legale Bipartitum*. In *cujus primo libro sub praestantia Musices involucre diversae disciplinae praelibantur*. In *Altero vero quaedam de Angelis, Caelis, Planetis, Anima et Elementis* (Rome, 1665).

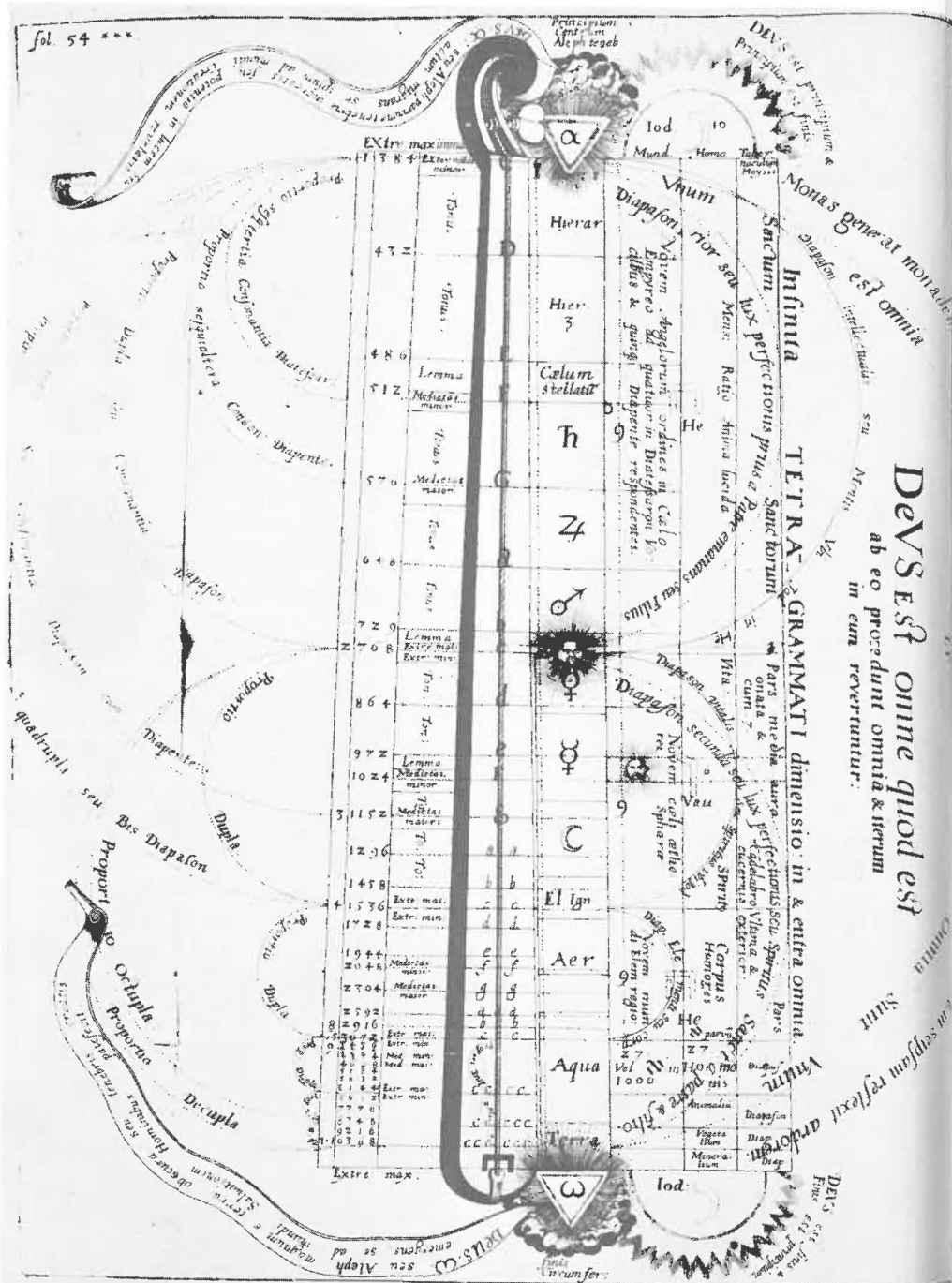


FIG. 98. Diagram from Robert Fludd, *Historia utriusque cosmi* (1617)

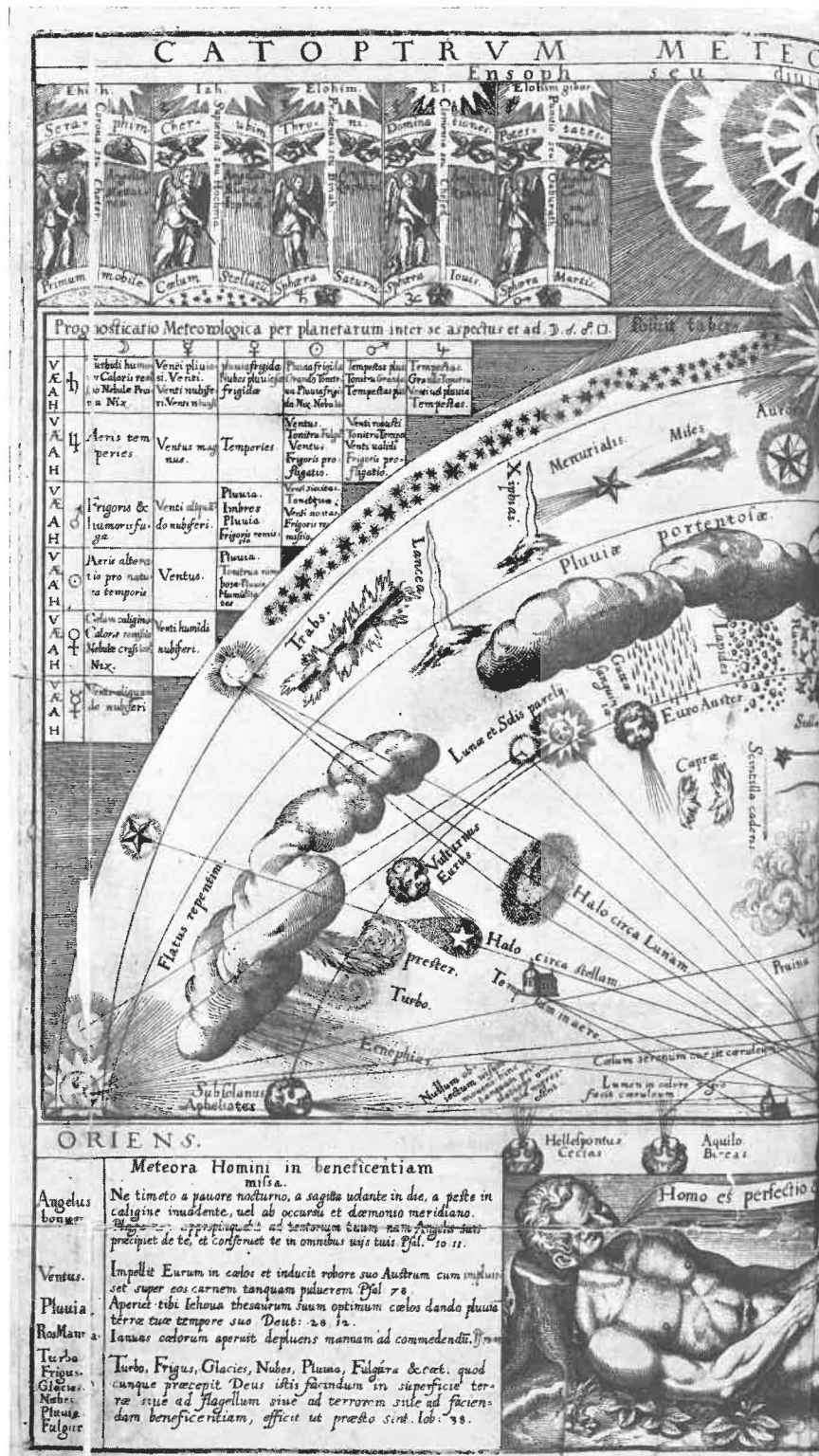
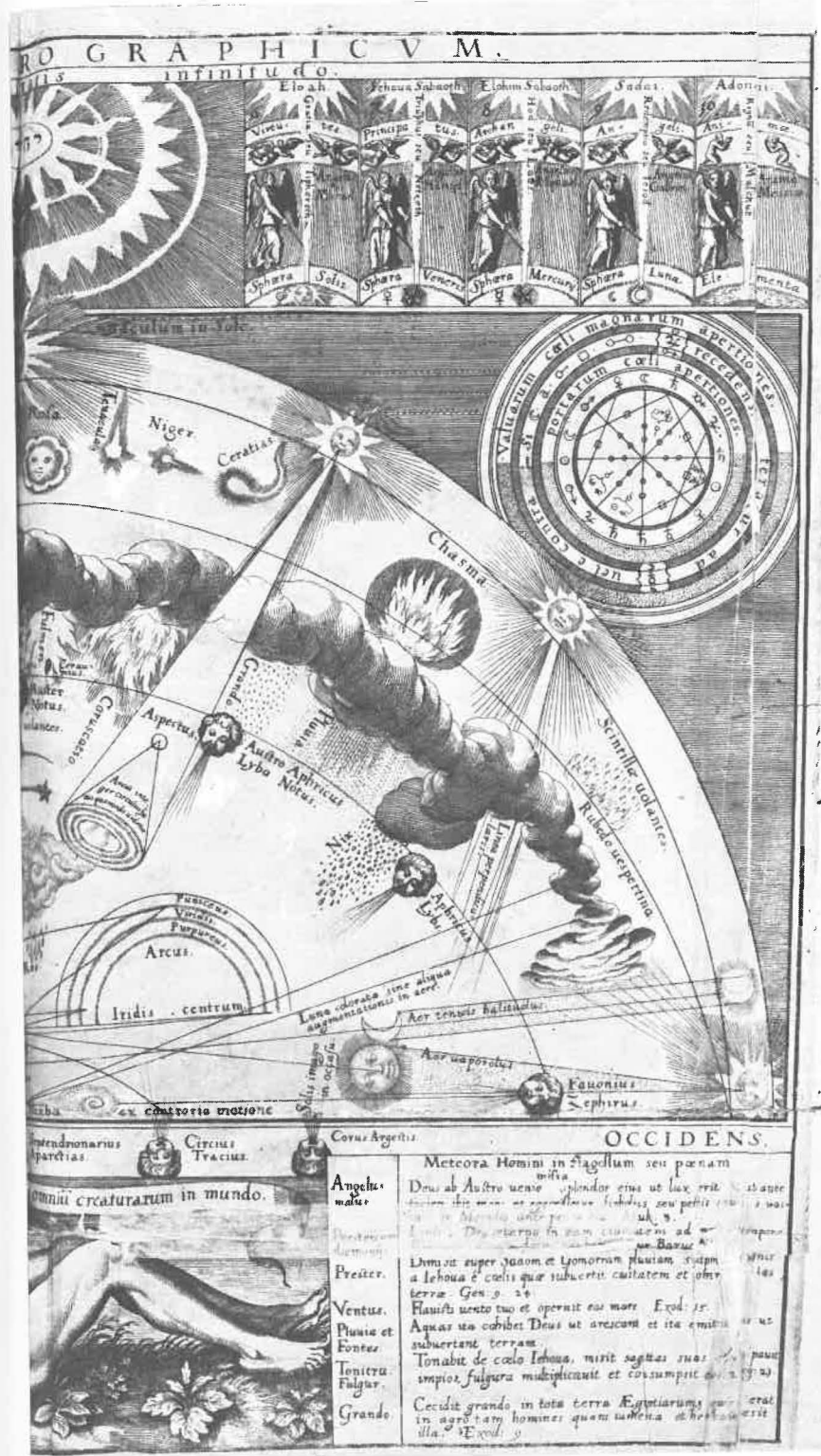


FIG. 99. Diagram from Robert Fludd, *Philosophia sacra et vere Christiana seu*



Meteorologia Cosmica (1622)

the angels. Here, then, the circle of history is closed and the two branches of heavenly music are joined. From this time forward when the music of the spheres is mentioned, be it by Milton, Shakespeare, or Goethe, ideas are only repeated.¹²

¹² F. Erckmann, "Sphaerenmusik," *Zeitschrift der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, Vol. 9 (1908), p. 417; L. Curtius, "Musik der Sphaeren," *Deutsches Archaeologisches Institut, Römische Abt., Mitteilungen*, 50 (1935-36); Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, p. 417; Th. Reinach, "La musique des sphères," *Revue des études grecques*, XIII (1900), 432ff.; Ch. Tolnay, "The Music of the Universe," *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, VI (1943).

X Two Offshoots of the Idea of the Music of the Spheres

TWO OTHER FIELDS where the influence of the idea of the music of the spheres was strong and remained palpable well into the nineteenth century are musical drama, or opera, and the illustrations for music books, especially their title pages. This does not, it should be noted, apply to medieval drama, in which, despite the frequent inclusion of angel choirs or a solo sung by an angel, I have yet to find a reference to cosmic structure or the music of the spheres. From the seventeenth century onward, music of the spheres was represented, not so much as a whole structure, but in the aspect of the planets as rulers of the spheres. The early music dramas and ballets were designed for performance at court, usually for a special occasion, such as a royal birthday or wedding.¹ It was a popular notion that the planets ruled man's fate and character, and, therefore, the planets were regularly called upon to shower their benefices upon the individual or the couple in question.

One of the most complete and elaborate examples available is the ballet *Von der Zusammenkunft und Wirkung der sieben Planeten* (*The Meeting and Influence of the Seven Planets*), performed in Dresden in 1678 in honor of the visit of the brothers of John George II of Saxony.² A splendid report of this fête was published, along with engravings of different scenes. Each planet arrived on a machine; each time, the scene represented a different landscape, and each planet came with a different entourage. They sang or spoke, introducing themselves and recounting what good they intended to do for Saxony; then their companions performed a ballet. The cast included a whole army of allegorical figures. The seven planets were accompanied by Nimrod when they appeared together; the Muses, too, were included, as were the Virtues. No clear plan is apparent,

¹ A. Solerti, *Musica, Ballo e Drammatica alla Corte Medicea* (1905); A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, pp. 261, 394.

² R. Haas, *Die Musik des Barocks* (*Handb. d. Musikwissenschaft*), p. 177; S. T. Staden, *Seelewig und der VII Tugenden, Planeten, Töne oder Stimmen Aufzug*, 1657.