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The Musicality of the Triune God in Selected Medieval Writings

Muzykalność Trójjedynego Boga w wybranych pismach średniowiecznych

Abstract: The ineffable mystery of the Holy Trinity has always represented a complex challenge for authors and theologians wishing to express meaningful truths about it through words. In the quest for a language which could be not entirely inappropriate and inadequate, musical terms have found their way in theological writings. This happened already in the Patristic era, when, for instance, terms such as *symphonia* and *harmonia* were employed, by both orthodox and heretical writers, in their discussions about the Trinity. When the lexicon for a proper orthodox discussion of Trinitarian subjects was finally established and became commonly employed in theological and spiritual writings, musical or musically related terms were set aside in favour of the theologically sanctioned vocabulary; yet, in the Middle Ages, some remnants of these early practices survived. Not only so; in fact, they gave life to a whole new stream of theological and spiritual literature, which, in turn, was deeply intertwined with the mystical experiences of holy men and women who claimed to have experienced the Trinitarian mystery in visions or in contemplation, and who related about the "musicality" of their experiences of the Triune God. Spiritual poetry, in turn, frequently employed musical metaphors or analogies for expressing something of God's Trinitarian nature, thus strengthening a shared narrative and the role of music in it. Paying homage to Joseph Ratzinger / Benedict XVI's masterful theology of music, to his experience as a musician and to the depth of his understanding of how music and theology intertwine, this article discusses some themes connecting music and the Trinity, as found in the spiritual theology of medieval authors.

Keywords: music, Trinity, harmony, *harmonia*, symphony, *symphonia*, medieval writings

Abstrakt: Próby wyrażenia niewysłowionej tajemnicy Trójcy Świętej były zawsze wyzwaniem dla autorów i teologów pragnących ująć istotne prawdy o Bogu

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za pomocą słów. W poszukiwaniu odpowiedniego i adekwatnego języka w pismach teologicznych odwoływano się do terminów muzycznych. Terminy takie jak *symfonia* i *harmonia* były używane już w epoce patrystycznej zarówno przez ortodoksyjnych, jak i heretyckich pisarzy w dyskusjach na temat Trójcy Świętej. Po ostatecznym ustaleniu i upowszechnieniu się właściwego słownictwa dla ortodoksyjnej dyskusji na tematy trynitarne terminy muzyczne lub związane z muzyką zostały odłożone na bok na rzecz teologicznie usankcjonowanych. W średniowieczu jednak przetrwały pewne pozostałości tych wczesnych praktyk i dały życie całemu nowemu nurtowi literatury teologicznej i duchowej, która z kolei była głęboko spleciona z mistycznymi doświadczeniami świętych mężczyzn i kobiet, twierdzących, że doświadczyli tajemnicy trynitarnej w wizjach lub kontemplacji i opowiadających o przeżyciach muzycznych w doświadczaniu Trójjedynego Boga. Z kolei poezja duchowa często wykorzystywała muzyczne metafory lub analogie, aby wyrazić różne aspekty trynitarnej natury Boga, wzmacniając w ten sposób przekaz i rolę muzyki w nim. Oddając hołd mistrzowskiej teologii muzyki Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI, jego doświadczeniu jako muzyka i głębi jego zrozumienia, w jaki sposób muzyka i teologia przeplatają się, niniejszy artykuł omawia wybrane tematy łączące muzykę i Trójcę Świętą, zawarte w duchowej teologii średniowiecznych autorów.

Słowa kluczowe: muzyka, Trójca Święta, harmonia, symfonia, pisma średniowieczne

Introduction

The ineffable mystery of the Holy Trinity has always represented a complex challenge for authors and theologians wishing to express meaningful truths about it through words. In quest of a language which could be more appropriate and adequate, musical terms have found their way into theological writings. This happened already in the Patristic Period, when, for instance, terms such as *symphonia* and *harmonia* were employed by both orthodox and heretical writers in their discussions about the Trinity.

When the lexicon for a proper orthodox discussion of Trinitarian subjects had finally been established and began to be commonly employed in theological and spiritual writings, musical or musically related terms were set aside in favour of the theologically sanctioned vocabulary; yet, in the Middle Ages, some remnants of these early practices survived. Even more: they gave life to a whole new stream of theological and spiritual literature, which, in turn, was deeply intertwined with the mystical experiences of holy men and women who claimed to have experienced the Trinitarian mystery in visions or in contemplation, and who related about the "musicality" of their experiences of the Triune God. Spiritual poetry, in turn, frequently employed musical

metaphors or analogies for expressing something of God's Trinitarian nature, thus strengthening a shared narrative and the role of music in it.

Paying homage to Joseph Ratzinger's/Benedict XVI's masterful theology of music, to his experience as a musician and to the depth of his understanding of how music and theology intertwine, this article discusses themes connecting music and the Trinity, as found in the theology of medieval authors.

The Trinity as supreme harmony and concord

As briefly hinted above, in the Patristic Period the term *symphonia* was at times used to indicate the unity of the divine Persons; however, its employment in this context was deemed controversial by many, which led to its abandonment. Still more problematic is the use of *harmonia*, where the difference is even more clearly emphasised, representing, as it does, a *concordia discors*, which can hardly be predicated about the Holy Trinity. If, therefore, *harmonia* was only sparsely utilised in the Trinitarian discourse of the Patristic Period, some of these controversial terms could be recovered at a later date after which the orthodox formulations of the Trinitarian dogma have been used for many centuries. The solid foundations of the Trinitarian doctrine made it possible to make use of once controversial expressions without risking heresy.

A particular viewpoint is that expressed by Richard of St Victor (d. 1173), an Augustinian monk and one of the greatest Christian thinkers of his time. He developed a mature, robust, and deeply spiritual Trinitarian theology in his *De Trinitate*. In Book III, he perceptively argues for the "necessity" that the divine hypostases be no more and no less than three. He maintains that the reciprocal love of two persons (not necessarily divine) needs a third person in order to become *co-love* (*condilectio*). Only insofar as two persons love a third person together, does "co-love" arise. Different from love of the self, and also from mere mutual love, "co-love" is the very principle of the Trinity's unity-in-diversity. Here, Richard employs the (Latin) word *concordia* repeatedly to indicate this shared, participative love.[1] The same words, and others deriving from it, are employed in III.20 to indicate the "concord" and "concordance" of the love between the divine Persons.[2]

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1 Cf. Richard of St Victor, *De Trinitate* [*On the Trinity*], III.19, [in:] *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1844 (hereafter: PL), vol. 196, col. 927; critical edition Richard of St Victor, *Richard de Saint-Victor: De Trinitate*, ed. J. Ribaillier, Paris 1958, p. 154.

2 Cf. Richard of St Victor, *De Trinitate*, op. cit., III.20, PL 196, 927–928; Richard of St Victor, *Richard de Saint-Victor...*, op. cit., pp. 154–155.

Whilst *concordia* (of love) seems the most appropriate term to convey the idea of the union among the divine Persons, Richard does not eschew the use of *harmonia* when discussing the unity that can be *achieved* in the created world. In IV.25, he argues that the angels' nature can be considered as intermediate between divinity and humankind. In this capacity, angelic nature connects the opposing qualities of the divine Triunity and of human plurality, "as if by a sort of proportional criterion, and joins into one single harmony the dissonance of those contrasting [natures]."[3] Here Richard's language is explicitly musical, inasmuch as harmony is the product of opposing qualities. Richard is too skilled a theologian to posit a harmony of *opposites* within the Trinity. Thus, in V.2 and V.14 he argues for the supreme beauty of the Trinity's unity-in-difference while carefully employing only *concordia* and its derivates. Still, the musical resonance is not entirely lost: in fact, *concordia* in itself is a highly musical term.[4] Furthermore, the combination of Richard's aesthetical theology of the Trinity with the musical appreciation of harmony suggests the presence of a musical concept behind his description of the Trinity's beauty. Therefore, what was problematic in the idea of a concord of *wills* among the divine Persons is entirely acceptable when concord regards *love*. A concord of *wills* implies a view of the hypostases as distinct individuals; whereas a concord of *love* regards the relationality of hypostases.

3 Richard of St Victor, *De Trinitate*, op. cit., IV.25, PL 196, 947; Richard of St Victor, *Richard de Saint-Victor…*, op. cit., p. 190. "Ecce quomodo angelica proprietas velut proportionali quadam ratione contrariorum dissidentiam sua interpositione connectit, et alternantium dissonantiam in unam harmoniam componit." As translated by Ruben Angelici in Richard of St Victor, *On the Trinity*, transl. R. Angelici, Eugene OR 2011, p. 166.

4 As Spitzer has pointed out, it has a double etymology: "Due to a particular coincidence not extant in Greek, there was in Latin a radical *cord-* susceptible to two interpretations: it could be connected not only with *cor*, *cordis*, 'heart' (which was the original meaning), but also with *chorda*, 'string', the Latin loan word from *chordé*; thus *concordia* could suggest either 'an agreement of hearts, peace, order' (*con-cord-ia*) or 'a harmony of strings, World Harmony' (**con-chord-ia*)." Cf. also L. Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony: Prolegomena to an Interpretation of the Word 'Stimmung'. Part II*, "Traditio" 3 (1945), pp. 307–364, 322. See for instance: Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*: "Chordas autem dictas a corde, quia sicut pulsus est cordis in pectore, ita pulsus chordae in cithara." Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, I.3, c. 22, n. 7, PL 82, 167.

The contemplation of divine music

If these concepts are only faintly hinted at in Richard's work, a much more explicit stance is taken by James of Spain[5] (c. 1267–1332). His *Speculum musicae* is a complex and complete treatment of musical theory, understood in theological terms.

Commenting on the Boethian tripartition of music as *mundana, humana*, and *instrumentalis*,[6] Jacobus affirms that one further kind of music should be added to these, i.e. the one "which may be called celestial or divine." This type of music regards "transcendent things pertaining to metaphysical or divine knowledge."[7] James seems to allude, therefore, to a musical reality which is part of God's self-revelation to the creatures.

He grounds his argument for "divine music" on three pillars. Firstly, he maintains that the proportions of music cannot regard just sensible music (otherwise the other two Boethian kinds of music would not exist). These proportions establish harmony, and, according to Isidore of Seville, "nothing [exists] without music."[8] Therefore, James argues, music "expands even to transcendent and divine things, for if God has indeed made all things in number, weight and measure, then all things which have proceeded from the primal origin of things are formed by reasons of numbers."[9] If *musica mundana* results

5 I follow Bent who convincingly demonstrates that the author hitherto known as Jacobus Leodiensis, or Jacques de Liège, should in fact be identified as James of Spain. Cf. M. Bent, *Magister Jacobus de Ispania, author of the Speculum musicae*, Farnham 2015.

6 Cf. James of Spain (Jacobus Leodiensis), *Speculum musicae* [*The Mirror of Music*], I.10. "Potest autem et alia musicae species, ut videtur, his adiungi, quae coelestis vel divina dici potest. Haec res intuetur a motu et sensibili materia separatas et secundum esse et secundum intellectum, res scilicet transcendentes ad metaphysicam vel divinam scientiam pertinentes." Jacobus Leodiensis, *Jacobi Leodiensis Speculum musicae*, ed. R. Bragard, Rome 1955, p. 37. As translated by Joscelyn Godwin in *The Harmony of the Spheres: A Sourcebook of the Pythagorean Tradition in Music*, Vermont 1993, p. 130.

7 James of Spain, *Speculum musicae*, op. cit., I.8. "Nam musica coelestis vel divina sub metaphysica reponitur"; Jacobus Leodiensis, *Jacobi Leodiensis...*, op. cit., p. 29.

8 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, op. cit., I.3, c. 17, n. 1, PL 82, p. 163Q. "Itaque sine musica nulla disciplina potest esse perfecta; nihil enim est sine illa. Nam et ipse mundus quadam harmonia sonorum fertur esse compositum, et caelum ipsum sub harmoniae modulatione revolvitur." Isidore of Seville, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi: Etymologiarum sive Originum, vol. 1, Libros I-X*, ed. W.M. Lindsay, Oxford 1911, p. 148.

9 James of Spain, *Speculum musicae*, op. cit., I.11. "Item, secundum Isodorum, musica extendit se ad omnia, quia nihil [est] sine illa. Ergo ad res dilatat se transcendentes et divinas, siquidem Deus omnia fecit in numero, pondere et mensura, quia omnia, quae a primaria rerum origine processerunt, ratione numerorum formata sunt." Jacobus Leodiensis, *Jacobi*

from the movement of the spheres, this movement has its origins in the First Mover. For James, there must be some proportion between the mover and the moved, even though he maintains the ontological difference between Creator and creation. So, he argues, "In any species of music [...] it will be appropriate to examine the proportion, order, and concord of the separate movers with each other, with the first mover of all, and with the things which they move." Boethius' discussion of *musica mundana*, thus, should have been extended "to the mover of the celestial spheres." James then wonders:

> What is wrong, therefore, if we extend harmonic modulation as generally accepted not only to corporeal, natural, and substantially numbered things, but also to metaphysical things, amongst which when numbered and compared a certain appearance of connection, order, concord, or proportion is perceived?[10]

After a rather specious second argument on the etymology of music, James' third point concerns the offering of divine praises.

> A certain type of music has been provided for wayfarers in this transitory world by which God may be praised in this Church Militant, both in himself and in his Saints; and in order to further this, the ministers of the Church receive temporal gifts. Shall the Church Triumphant of that other, incorruptible world lack a type suitable for the citizens of that Church, who receive such priceless gifts? Certainly not! In that celestial Church, therefore, there will be a place for music by which God may be praised incessantly by those citizens. […] And this type of music is

Leodiensis..., op. cit., p. 38. As translated by J. Godwin in *The Harmony of the Spheres...*, op. cit., p. 131.

10 James of Spain, *Speculum musicae*, op. cit., I.11. "Insuper, si proportio sive coaptatio animae humanae ad corpus suum, quod movet, ut movens coniunctum, quaedam dicitur harmonica modulatio, quare non poterit coaptatio illa vel proportio, quae est inter motores illos separatos ad orbes, quos movent, harmonica vocari modulatio? Ad aliquam igitur musicae speciem pertinebit inspicere proportionem, ordinem, concordiam, quam habent motores illi separati inter se, et ad motorem omnino primum et ad sua mobilia. Et forsitan, si Boethius de musica mundana prosecutus in speciali fuisset, ipsum ad motorem orbium coelestium extendisset. Haec enim fuit Aristoteli via, per motum in cognitionem devenire substantiarum separatarum. Quid igitur inconveniens, si harmonicam modulationem generaliter sumptam extendamus, non solum ad res corporales, naturales et substantiales numeratas, sed etiam ad metaphysicales, inter quas invicem numeratas et collatas attenditur quaedam habitudo cuiusdam connexionis, ordinis, concordiae vel proportionis, ut contineatur non solum sub duabus partibus philosophiae theoricae, sed sub tribus, ut est prius dictum?" Jacobus Leodiensis, *Jacobi Leodiensis...*, op. cit., p. 38. As translated by J. Godwin in *The Harmony of the Spheres...*, op. cit., p. 131.

> as much more excellent and perfect than the others as it is more perfect in its object, and as the citizens singing it are in a higher state: a beatific one.[11]

Just as praise and love for God are more perfect in heaven than on earth, similarly the music through whom God is praised on earth must be paralleled and perfected by the sung worship in heaven. The protagonists of "divine" or "celestial" music are the blessed souls and the angels, i.e. spiritual beings (whilst *musica mundana* concerns physical elements, i.e. planets). The "heavenliness" of this music derives therefore from its being inherent to the blessed spirits' status:

> [T]his celestial type of music is named after those citizens of heaven not so much because it is objective toward them, but because it is subjective with them. For they have this music in perfection, they who no longer contemplate God in a glass darkly through any exterior representation, but behold him directly, face to face. And since they find in God whatsoever they desire, and know no evil at all nor covet any earthly thing in the least, how could they cease from the praises of God in whom is their consolation, whole and entire?[12]

In other words, James seems to suggest that the heavenly music of praise constitutes the spontaneous reaction of the blessed spirits to the contemplation of God. On the other hand, this contemplation seems to include also something akin to a music "of God," as Jacobus affirms shortly after:

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11 James of Spain, *Speculum musicae*, op. cit., I.11. "Provisum est viatoribus mundi huius transitorii de quadam musicae specie, qua, in Ecclesia hac Militante, Deus in se et in Sanctis suis collaudetur, et, ut amplius hoc faciant, Ecclesiae ministri distributiones recipiunt temporales. Privabiturne mundi alterius incorruptibilis illa Triumphalis Ecclesia quadam musicae specie competente illius Ecclesiae civibus, qui inappreciabiles adeo recipiunt distributiones? Minime. In Ecclesia igitur illa coelesti, musica locum suum tenet, qua Deus a civibus illis incessanter collaudatur, ut tactum est supra. Et haec musicae species tanto ceteris excellentior est atque perfectior, quanto de obiecto est perfectiore, et quanto cives illi hac vocantes in statu sunt altiore, in statu scilicet beatifico." Jacobus Leodiensis, *Jacobi Leodiensis...*, op. cit., p. 39. As translated by J. Godwin in *The Harmony of the Spheres...*, op. cit., p. 132.

12 James of Spain, *Speculum musicae*, I.12. "Adhuc ab illis coeli civibus haec musicae species coelestis nuncupatur, non tantum quia de illis est obiective, sed quia in eis est subiective; ipsi enim perfectissime hanc habent musicam, qui iam non in speculo et in aenigmate per aliquod extrinsecum repraesentatum Deum contemplantur, sed immediate facie ad faciem Deum intuentur, et cum in Deo inveniant quicquid desiderare queant, et nihil omnino mali sentiant, nihil terrenum penitus cupiunt, a Dei laudibus quomodo cessare possunt, in quo totum et plenum est eorum solatium?" Jacobus Leodiensis, *Jacobi Leodiensis...*, op. cit., p. 41. As translated by J. Godwin in *The Harmony of the Spheres...*, op. cit., p. 133.

> And no wonder, if they are seized up and hear what is not lawful for a man to utter, that they see what cannot be fully spoken of, namely the concord and the inseparable fellowship of the Divine Persons and their perfect union in one utterly simple essence, replete with every perfection, whereby the Son is in the Father and from the Father throughout all ages; the Father in the Son, not from the Son nor from any other; the Holy Spirit in both and from both through one inspiriting power. […] They see their order without [any Person] being prior or posterior, their equality and similitude. They see the ideal Forms and exemplars, and contemplate in that voluntary and eternal mirror, in that Book of Life, things which cannot be told us.[13]

James explicitly connects the music of the heavenly citizens with their contemplation of the Trinity, characterized by a perfect *concordia*. This sight is a source of perfect knowledge, whereby the order and proportion of all created beings shines forth. By observing the "ranking" of the angelic choirs and the orderly unfolding of creation in front of its Creator, the blessed spirits contemplate the perfection of music, i.e. of harmonic proportionality. In seeing "the order, connection, and concord among themselves and with God," they "find the most excellent harmonic modulation, so they also find the most perfect music."[14]

The contemplation of the Triune God therefore is something akin to the reading of a musical score, in which the proportions and harmonies of the created world are displayed and can be read (and sung):

> Therefore the best musicians are those who in their contemplation [*intuitive*] observe that eternal book. For in it there lies open and shines forth every

[13] James of Spain, *Speculum musicae*, I.12. "Et quid mirum, si rapti sunt, qui audiunt quae non licet homini loqui, vident quae non possunt ad plenum effari, divinarum scilicet personarum inter se concordiam et societatem inseparabilem et earumdem in essentia una simplicissima, et omnibus perfectionibus absolutis summam unionem, qualiter Filius est in Patre et a Patre per aeternam generationem, Pater in Filio, non a Filio nec ab alio aliquo, Spiritus Sanctus in utroque et ab utroque per vim unam spirativam? [...] Vident ordinem absque priore et posteriore, ipsarum aequalitatem et similitudinem. Formas vident ideales, exemplares, et alia nobis inenarrabilia in speculo illo contemplantur voluntario et aeterno, in vitae illo libro." Jacobus Leodiensis, *Jacobi Leodiensis...*, op. cit., p. 42; J. Godwin in *The Harmony of the Spheres...*, op. cit., p. 134.

[14] James of Spain, *Speculum musicae*, I.12. "Vident nec non ibi quorumcumque aliorum naturam specificam, illorum inter se et ad Deum ordinem, connexionem et concordiam. [...] In illis [...] sicut inveniunt excellentissimam modulationem harmonicam, sic et perfectissimam musicam." Jacobus Leodiensis, *Jacobi Leodiensis...*, op. cit., p. 43; J. Godwin in *The Harmony of the Spheres...*, op. cit., p. 134.

> proportion, every concord, every consonance, every melody; and whatever things are needed for music are written down there.[15]

Whilst this music is and remains a music of the heavenly court, it signifies the presence of God in his creatures. James rightfully points out that God inhabits the world in "potency, presence, and essence,"[16] and therefore, one might argue, is the true inspirer of this heavenly music.

This view is reinforced by a point made by James in Book VI, where he discusses the origins of musical notation. Pitches were indicated through the same letters which are also employed for transmitting a verbal thought; thus, using the letters, "the meaning and the words are introduced through the eyes, not through the ears," in order to "fix the concepts in memory."[17] Since Christ is the Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1.3; 21.6; 22.1[18]), James maintains that everything is encompassed by God, just as the entire alphabet, and the words it makes, are encompassed by Christ. And so, when one employs letters in order to transmit and preserve music, the "sweet song" can last "in memory and posterity."[19] In summary, James affirms that music, the most temporal of all arts, exists in God's eternity, as one of the most perfect forms in which he is praised forever by the immortal beings. Music is one of the forms through which their love for him is expressed. The knowledge which is necessary for making music, and for making music together (a knowledge embodied by mu-

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15 James of Spain, *Speculum musicae*, op. cit., I.12. "Unde optimi sunt musici, qui intuitive librum illum aeternum conspiciunt. Nam ibi patet et relucet omnis proportio, omnis concordia, omnis consonantia, omnis melodia, et, quaecumque ad musicam requiruntur, sunt ibi conscripta." Jacobus Leodiensis, *Jacobi Leodiensis...*, op. cit., p. 43. As translated by J. Godwin, *The Harmony of the Spheres...*, op. cit., p. 135. On the possibility of comparing the contemplation of God with the reading of a musical score, see: C. Bertoglio, *Musical Scores and the Eternal Present: Theology, Time, and Tolkien*, Eugene OR 2021.

16 James of Spain, *Speculum musicae*, op. cit., I.12; Jacobus Leodiensis, *Jacobi Leodiensis...*, op. cit., p. 45.

17 James of Spain, *Speculum musicae*, op. cit., VI.7. "Per ipsas enim absentium dicta nobis sine voce loquuntur, sensus et verba per oculos, non per aures, introducunt. Ad hoc enim usus repertus est litterarum, ut per ipsas firmentur in memoria conceptus hominum, necnon et facta diversarum rerum." Cf. Jacobus Leodiensis, *Jacobi Leodiensis...*, op. cit., p. 21 (translation mine).

18 Cf. James of Spain, *Speculum musicae*, op. cit., VI.7. "Sicque hae duae ceteras includunt ut per hoc ostendatur quod in Deo continentur omnia, a quo sunt omnia, ad quem ordinentur cuncta." Jacobus Leodiensis, *Jacobi Leodiensis...*, op. cit., p. 23 (translation mine).

19 James of Spain, *Speculum musicae*, op. cit., VI.8. "Melos quoque ipsum, scilicet dulcem cantum qui notulis illis signaretur in memoriam posteritatemque duraret." Jacobus Leodiensis, *Jacobi Leodiensis...*, op. cit., p. 24 (translation mine).

sical scores in our present and mortal experience) is replaced by the knowledge which the blessed spirits receive from their contemplation of God, in whom everything is simultaneously present and who is the source of all knowledge. By contemplating God, the blessed spirits also contemplate and know each other. This knowledge, springing from the vision of God, is what enables them to make music in harmony and beauty, and therefore glorifying God in love and perfection.

As will be seen later, James' perspective has many points in common with Dante's, but also corresponds to what several mystics and poets "saw" or imagined about heavenly music, inspired by the contemplation of the Triune God.

The Spirit attunes in harmony

This process of "reading" music in the contemplation of the Triune God is also found in Dante's *Commedia*, in particular when Dante's ancestor Cacciaguida (*Par.* 17:43-45) contemplates the unfolding of Time as a music, by virtue of his enjoyment of the beatific vision. Another image found in Dante's *Paradiso* is that of God as a musician who tunes and attunes the strings of the blessed spirits' heavenly lyre.[20] And this image can be juxtaposed to another passage from Richard of St Victor's works, in this case excerpted from his *Benjamin major*. Here Richard considers the variety and number of the human heart's passions. They are "tempered," or "tuned," by the action of the Holy Spirit, who creates a harmony out of their seeming disorder:

> We have already indicated above how manifold and diverse the affection of the human heart are. Yet the Spirit of the Lord daily combines [*contemperat*] them little by little in His elect and skilfully forms [*conformat*] them into one harmony and by the plucking instrument of His graces fits them together in a certain harmonious consonance like a learned harp player who stretches [*extendendo*] these and loosens [*relaxando*] those, until a certain melody, mellifluous and sweet beyond measure, resounds from them into the ears of the Lord Sabaoth

[20] See: *Par.* 15:4-6: "silenzio puose a quella dolce lira, / e fece quietar le sante corde / che la destra del cielo allenta e tira." English translation by Mandelbaum: "imposing silence on that gentle lyre, / brought quiet to the consecrated chords / that Heaven's right hand slackens and draws taut." Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, transl. A. Mandelbaum, introduction E. Montale, notes P. Armour, New York 1995, p. 448. Cf. Honorius of Autun, *Liber duodecim quaestionum* [*Twelve Questions*], II.2, PL 172, 1179, who attributes to the Spirit the unifying action of "tuning" the cithara in the diversity of its sounds and strings.

> as if from the playing of many harpers upon their harps (cf. Rev. 14:2). But if so marvelous a harmony and so manifold a consonance arises from one heart [*corde*] in so great a plurality of so many affections, what, I ask, or how much will be that consonant concord [*consona concordia*] and concordant consonance [*concorsque consonantia*] of supercelestial souls in so great a multitude of so many thousands of angels and so many holy souls exulting and praising Him who lives without end?[21]

Richard sees both the microcosm of the human being and the macrocosm of creation's praise as musical instruments tuned and attuned by the Holy Spirit. This theme was already abundantly found in the Patristic period (most notably developed by Clement of Alexandria), and it is skilfully rehearsed here by Richard of St Victor. The medieval writer, indeed, had at his disposal the convenient alliterations between *cor/cordis*, the heart, and *chorda*, the string, resulting in a "consonant concord" and "concordant consonance." The Spirit's action is what unifies and harmonises the discordant passions of the heart, channelling them toward the love of God, and the disharmony of human society, turning it into the mystical Body of Christ. Arguably, this *consona concordia concorsque consonantia* may be seen not only as the fruit of an action of the divine hypostases, but also as mirroring the *condilectio* which, as we have seen, characterises the very Being of the Godhead.

The idea of the human being as a "concert" whose harmony is due to the action of the Triune God, and has the purpose of praising him, is found also in Honorius of Autun (c. 1080–c. 1140). He rehearsed a rather usual subject,[22] i.e. that the three main types of music correspond to the main faculties of the

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[21] Richard of St Victor, *Benjamin major*, III.24, PL 196, 134: "Hos utique ille Domini Spiritus quotidie in electis suis paulatim contemperat et in unam harmoniam conformat, et gratiae suae plectro quasi citharoedo doctissimus hos extendendo, illos relaxando ad concordem quamdam consonantiam coaptat, donec reboet ex his in auribus Domini Sabaoth melodia quaedam melliflua et supra modum dulcis, tanquam citharoedorum multorum citharizantium in citharis suis. Sed si tam mira harmonia et tam multiplex consonantia surgit de corde uno in tanta pluralitate tam multiplicium affectionum, quae, quaeso, vel quanta erit illa supercoelestium animorum consona concordia, concorsque consonantia in tanta multitudine tot millium angelorum, tot animarum sanctarum exsultantium et laudantium viventem in saecula saeculorum." English translation by G.A. Zinn [in:] Richard of St Victor, *The Twelve Patriarchs; The Mystical Ark; Book Three of The Trinity*, transl. G.A. Zinn, preface by J. Châtillon, New York 1979, pp. 257–258.

[22] See for instance: Augustine, *De musica* IV.14.24, PL 32, 1141; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, op. cit., I.3, c. 19, n. 1, PL 82, 164; Rabanus Maurus, *De origine rerum*, PL 111, 496; Odo, *De musica*, PL 133, 793, etc. See also: Rupert of Deutz below in this article.

human being. Music can be vocal (*voce*), or played on wind instruments (*flatu*), or on "touched" instruments (*pulsu*), such as the cithara. These three genres represent, in his view, the human being's mind, spirit, and body, and these are called to "concelebrate" the praises of the Trinity.[23] Thus the three kinds of music mirror the three components of the human organism, and this threeness, in turn, mirrors the mystery of the Triune God it is called to celebrate.

If God can be said to be the player or tuner of the heavenly cithara (or lyre, or harp), artistic creativity and inspiration allow human beings to participate in this divine music. This theme is found in the writings of Herbert Bosham (c. 1120–1194), who wrote the *Liber melorum* (1186), i.e. a biography of St Thomas à Becket. In his book, Bosham constantly likens his poetical and literary activity to that of a cithara player. Even though the Trinitarian dimension is not equally pervasive, it is still clearly observable. For instance, the book's three chapters become three "melodies," each pouring forth from a harmony (*consonantia*) and he explicitly invokes the Trinity as the primary source of his poetical inspiration.[24]

A heavenly concert honouring the Trinity

Similar to Richard of St Victor, Pope Innocent III (c. 1160–1216) depicted a grandiose vision of the heavenly liturgy. In a treatise he wrote on the sacrifice of the Mass, the Pope maintained that the intelligent beings created by the Triune God participate jointly in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, both in Time and outside Time. Innocent describes how the earthly and heavenly choirs are united by their shared praise of the Trinity:

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[23] Cf. Honorius of Autun, *Expositio totius psalterii* [*An Exposition of the entire Psalter*], Psalm 150.6, PL 172, 307CD: "Notandum quod musica fit tribus modis, voce, flatu, pulsu. Voce per fauces et arterias canentis hominis; flatu per tibias; pulsu per citharas. Quae tria genera in istis nuptiis resonant; vox in choro, flatus in tuba, pulsus in cithara: quae mentem, spiritum, corpus significant, quae Trinitatem semper laudibus concelebrant."

[24] Cf. Herbert of Bosham, *Liber melorum*. "Verum domina mea et creatrix mihi praedulcis et praeclara unitas, da mihi qualicunque citharoedo puero tuo de te in hac cithara tua sic audire vocis sonum, ut et sensus vel aliquem tribuas intellectum: tunc erit et mihi, qui prout ipsa dicere dignaris de te ipsa et per te pulso nunc citharam, melius hic dulcior, imo vere dulcissimus sono vocis vel aliquo sensus intellectu concordante et matri meae Ecclesiae, si forte et ipsi aliquo tempore audire placuerit, auditui suo melus hic et gratior erit et praedulcior." Herbert Bosham, *Herberti de Boseham Opera quae extant omnia*, ed. I.A. Giles, vol. 2, Oxford 1846, p. 121.

> *Dignum et justum est…* This proclamation of the sacred confession, thus rightly concludes the church, that with angels and humans sings this hymn with devoted heart: *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus*; that praise combines the hymns of angels and men. The voice of the angels commends the mystery of the Trinity and unity in God; the voice of men personifies the sacrament of divinity and humanity in Christ. […] A vestige of the uncreated Trinity shines in all creatures, whether spiritually in an angel, or corporeally in the world, or spiritually and corporeally in men. […] For the omnipotent God made two rational creatures, the angel and the human, which insist on divine praise, and he gave grace to their actions, while they concelebrate, joining as superior and inferior strings in the celestial cithara.[25]

The triple invocation found in Isaiah's vision (6:3) and in Revelation (4:8) has always been interpreted as a praise to the Trinity by Christian exegetes. In Innocent's view, Scripture bears witness to how this hymn sounds in the eternal heavenly liturgy; by adopting it in the rite of the Mass, the earthly Church participates in this atemporal song. Innocent assigns to the heavenly host the representation of God's Triunity, whilst humankind responds by praising the hypostatic union of Christ's two natures. (Here we can discern a veiled echo of the "vision" of Ignatius of Antioch, allegedly originating the Church's antiphonal chant[26]). By pointing out how "vestiges" of the Trinity are found in

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[25] Pope Innocent III, *De sacrificio Missae* [*De sacro altari mysterio*], PL 217, 835–838. "*Dignum et justum* est… Hoc sacrae confessionis praeconium, ita recte concludit Ecclesia, ut cum angelis et hominibus decantet hunc devoti pectoris hymnum: *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus*; oratio ista, vel hymnus partim angelorum, partim hominum verba compectitur. […] Vox angelorum Trinitatis et unitatis in Deo commendat arcanum; vox hominum divinitatis et humanitatis in Christo personat sacramentum. […] Quoddam enim increatae Trinitatis vestigium relucet in omnibus creaturis tam in angelo quam in homine et in mundo… Quaelibet autem trinitas, sive spiritualis in angelo, sive corporalis in mundo, sive spiritualis et corporalis in homine similitudinem quamdam divinae Trinitatis ostendit, ipsius tamen similitudinis non perficit veritatem. […] Duas enim omnipotens Deus rationalibus condidit creaturas, angelicam et humanam, quae laudibus divinis insisterent, et ei gratiarum actiones redderent, quas dum pari voto concelebrant, tanquam superiores et inferiores chordae in coelesti cithara sociantur." Innocent III, *Il sacrosanto mistero dell'altare (De sacro altaris mysterio)*, ed. and transl. S. Fioramonti, M. Sodi, Rome 2002, p. 198. Translation adapted from that by A.E. Gillette, *Depicting the Sound of Silence: Angel-Musicians in Trecento Sacred Art*, PhD thesis, Temple University, 2016, p. 13. The idea of a "symphony" of earthly and heavenly beings, united in their eucharistic singing of God's praise, particularly during the performance of Mass, is deeply felt in the Orthodox Church, and affirmed in the Cherubic hymn during Divine Liturgy.

[26] Cf. Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* [*Ecclesiastical History*], VI.8, [in:] *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1864, vol. 67, 688–692. See also I.8-20.

all intelligent creatures, Innocent seems to suggest that some kind of music is found also in the Triune God. This is stated more explicitly when Innocent, similar to Richard of St Victor, hints that both the angels and the human beings are "strings" of the heavenly cithara, played by God himself.

The harmony of Christ's two natures

For Innocent, the special task of humankind was to praise the hypostatic union of Christ's two natures in the concert of creation. A special focus on Christ's incarnation is found in the homilies of Amadeus of Lausanne (c. 1110–1159), abbot of the Cistercian abbey of Hautecombe and bishop of Lausanne. Writing at a time of personal and ecclesial crisis, Amadeus found rest and consolation in the contemplation of the Virgin Mary. His homilies take the form of mystical contemplations, almost of "visions," full of imagery, colours, and beauty. Even though the declared protagonist of his sermons is the Mother of God, his deeply Trinitarian thought comes constantly to the fore, to the point that his arguments are frequently organised by groups of three elements.[27] The fourth Homily is dedicated to the mystery of Christ's incarnation and birth and begins by considering the hypostatic union of Christ's two natures. Boldly defining him "a giant of two natures," Amadeus affirms that Christ

> rejoiced to sing with tuneful voice and sweet airs to the lyre of our body and on the organ made of our flesh to send forth dulcet sounds to re-echo as it were with ineffable harmony [*ineffabili concordia*], so that he raised up stones, moved trees, drew wild beasts, led forth on high men delivered from their flesh. For by the sweetness of his wonderful song he raised up from stones sons of Abraham and the trees of the wood, that is the hearts of the Gentiles, he moved to faith. […] Well did David, whose songs echo to the ends of the earth, fulfil the role of singer, for from his stock was that greater precentor to be born.[28]

[27] See: Waddell in Bernard of Clairvaux and Amadeus of Lausanne, *Magnificat: Homilies in Praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, transl. M.-B. Saïd, G. Perigo, introduction by C. Waddell, Kalamazoo 1979, p. xiv.

[28] Amadeus of Lausanne, *Homilia IV. De Partu Virgines, seu Christi Nativitate*, PL 118, 1319–1320: "Exsultavit itaque gigas geminae substantiae, modulatis vocibus ex tinnulis suavissimis in cithara corporis decantare, et in carnis organo compacto dulcissimos sonos edere, et ineffabili concordia resonare; ut lapides suscitaret, ligna commoveret, feras traheret, homines abstractos a carne educeret in sublime. Nam suavitate mirificae cantilenae suscitavit de lapidibus filios Abrahae, et ligna silvarum, id est corda fluxa carnis voluptate

Christ as the new Orpheus is a theme frequently found in the Church Fathers, together with the related subject of Christ as the choir-leader, the *praecentor*. Here, however, what is notable in Amadeus' view is the close connection between the musical harmony realised by the incarnate Son of God and the economic action of the three divine hypostases in the process of Christ's incarnation. (In fact, in the preceding Homily Amadeus demonstrated how it is possible to affirm that Jesus Christ comes from each one of the three divine hypostases[29]). The Trinitarian perspective is therefore firmly held by Amadeus and becomes the source of the divine music made by Christ on his human body.

Bonaventure and Trinitarian creativity

The idea briefly hinted at in the short mention of Bosham's treatise is much more fully developed by St Bonaventure (c. 1217–1274), the great Franciscan theologian and Doctor of the Church. This is of course not the place for summarising, even succinctly, the Trinitarian theology of Bonaventure; here, I will merely sketch a cursory view of how it may relate with musical subjects.[30]

For Bonaventure, as for Aquinas, the fecundity of the intra-Trinitarian divine processions is the foundation of the Triune God's creative activity: the Trinity's life *ad intra* is the first cause of every operation *ad extra*. In Hayes' words, "The necessary prior condition for the production of the world, therefore, is the eternal production of another who is fully equal with God."[31] The ultimate source of the divine procession is in the divine Person of the Father. And even though the divine processions happen eternally, and outside Time,

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resoluta corruit. [...] Bene autem David, cujus voces resonant in extrema terrae, cantoris officio perfunctus est, quia de semine ejus magnus iste praecentor erat nasciturus." Amadeus of Lausanne, *Amédée de Lausanne, Huit homélies mariales*, ed. J. Deshusses, Paris 1960, p. 110. As translated by G. Perigo in Bernard of Clairvaux and Amadeus of Lausanne, *Magnificat: Homilies...*, op. cit., p. 87.

29 See: Waddell in Bernard of Clairvaux and Amadeus of Lausanne, *Magnificat: Homilies...*, op. cit., p. xx.

30 For this purpose, I will draw from the research by P.J. Casarella, *Carmen Dei: Music and Creation in Three Theologians*, "Theology Today" 62 (2006), pp. 484–500, and A. Andemicael, *The Music of God: Toward an Aesthetic Trinitarian Theology*, unpublished paper read at the Forum on Music and Christian Scholarship of the Society for Christian Scholarship in Music, Yale University (New Haven CT), 2013 (courtesy of the author). I wish here to thank Awet Andemicael for kindly sharing her unpublished work with me.

31 Z. Hayes, *Bonaventure's Trinitarian Theology*, [in:] *A Companion to Bonaventure*, eds. J.M. Hammond, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, J. Goff, Leiden 2014, pp. 189–246: here 242.

they are the prerequisite for every temporal creative activity. In Casarella's words, "The boundlessness and eternal going forth of the Son from the Father wholly transcends our understanding, but the creative expression of the triune God is still intelligible through temporally unfolding forms."[32] Thus, the observable (and hearable!) reality of the created world not only is a *consequence* of God's intra-Trinitarian processions, but is also a form of *revelation* through which something of his hiddenness becomes accessible to human senses and intellect. Temporal creation leads to the atemporal reality of the Creator. Of course, the Trinitarian processions are not only eternal and atemporal, but also simultaneous: in Casarella's words, "the simultaneity of producing, product, and means is absolute." However, the eternity of Trinitarian creativity is "*not* severed altogether from temporal reality."[33] If the "boundlessness and eternal going-forth of the Son from the Father wholly transcends our understanding," nonetheless "the dynamic self-expression of the triune God is still intelligible through analogous temporally unfolding forms."[34]

Indeed, music is the form of art most closely associated with temporality. Thus, borrowing from Augustine,[35] Bonaventure affirms that the history of the universe may be understood as a beautiful song:

> And so the whole course of this world is shown by Scripture to run in a most orderly fashion from beginning to end, like an artfully composed melody. In it, one can contemplate, by means of the succession of events, the diversity, multiplicity, and symmetry, the order, rectitude, and excellence, of the many judgments that proceed from the divine wisdom governing the universe. Just as no one can appreciate the loveliness of a song unless one's perspective embraces it as a whole, so none of us can see the beauty of the order and governance of the world without an integral view of its course. But since no mortal lives long enough to see all this with bodily eyes, nor can any individual foretell the future, the Holy Spirit has provided us with the book of Sacred Scripture, whose length corresponds to God's governance of the universe.[36]

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[32] P.J. Casarella, *Carmen Dei*..., op. cit., 484–500: 491.

[33] P.J. Casarella, *Carmen Dei*..., op. cit., 484–500: 490. See: Bonaventure, *2 Sent*., d. 12, a. 1, q. 2 (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera omnia, In secundum librum sententiarum*, ed. Fathers of the Collegium a S. Bonaventura, Quaracchi 1885, pp. 314–316).

[34] P.J. Casarella, *Carmen Dei*..., op. cit., 484–500: 491.

[35] Cf. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* [*The City of God*] 11.18, [in:] Augustine of Hippo, *De Civitate Dei Libri XI-XXII*, eds. B. Dombart, A. Kalb, Wiesbaden 1993, p. 485.

[36] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, Prologue, 2.4; Bonaventure, *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera omnia, Opuscula varia theologica*, ed. the Fathers of the Collegium a S. Bonaventura,

Similarly, elsewhere he describes the universe as a "beautiful song" (*pulcherrimum carmen*) organised on the basis of excellent consonances (*optimas consonantias*) and of an orderly compositional structure. In this beautiful song is revealed the omnipotence of the Father (*summa potentia, creans ex nihilo*), the wisdom of the Son (*sapientia*) and the grace of the Spirit (*summa bonitas*[37]). The temporality of creation is therefore seen as the logical, intelligible, and beautiful unfolding in time of a properly composed song.

At the same time, Bonaventure establishes degrees of beauty: the world's beauty is inferior to that of the Church, which, in turn, is but a pale reflection of the beauty of the Trinity.[38] God is the "Exemplar" of both the natural and of the supernatural order, and both bear the imprint of his beauty.[39] This is articulated in Trinitarian terms, with the Father being the *origo* ("origin") of all beauty, the Son the *imago* ("image"), and the Spirit the *compago* ("bond"). The incarnate Son is also the one and only mediator between humankind and the Godhead. However, Bonaventure also acknowledges that music, in its rational nature made of numbers ruled by the divine Wisdom, can similarly act as a ladder leading us to God. Of course, this function of music is subordinated

Quaracchi 1891 (hereafter: Bonaventure 1891), p. 204. "Sic igitur totus ille mundus ordinatissimo decursu a Scriptura Sacra describitur procedere a principio usque ad finem, ad modum cujusdam pulcherrimi carminis ordinati, ubi potest quis speculari, secundum decursum temporis, varietatem, et multiplicitatem, et aequitatem, et ordinem, rectitudinem et pulchritudinem multorum divinorum judiciorum, procedentium a sapientia Dei gubernante mundum. Unde sicut nullus potest videre pulchritudinem carminis, nisi aspectus ejus feratur super totum versum; sic nullus videt pulchritudinem ordinationis et regiminis universi, nisi eam totam speculetur. Et quia nullus homo tam longaevus est, quod totam possit videre oculis carnis suae, nec futura potest per se praevidere; providit nobis Spiritus sanctus librum Scripturae sacrae, cujus longitudo commetitur se decursui regiminis universi." As translated by D.V. Monti [in:] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, with introduction, translation, and notes by D.V. Monti, Saint Bonaventure NY 2005, pp. 10–11.

37 Cf. Bonaventure, *I Sent*., d. 44, a. 1, q. 3 co; Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera omnia, In primum librum sententiarum I*, ed. the Fathers of the Collegium a S. Bonaventura, Quaracchi 1882, p. 786b: "Optime ordinatae sunt res in finem, salvo ordine universi, quia universum est tamquam pulcherrimum *carmen*, quod *decurrit* secundum optimas *consonantias*, aliis partibus succedentibus aliis, quousque res perfecte ordinentur in finem. Unde sicut in productione rerum manifestatur potentia, sed in comparatione sive in ordine ad non-ens ostenditur summa potentia, creans ex nihilo: sic ordo rerum in universo in se ostendit sapientiam, et ordo ad finem bontitatem, sed in comparatione unius ad alterum ostenditur summa sapientia et summa bonitas, quia nihil potest hunc ordinem deordinare."

38 Cf. Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, 3.3 (Bonaventure 1891, p. 222).

39 Cf. Bonaventure, *De Reductione artium ad theologiam* [*On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*], 4 (Bonaventure 1891, p. 320).

to its being an instrument of the Logos; still, it constitutes a unique trait of music within the economy of creation.[40] In Andemicael's perceptive analysis,

> Bonaventure's epistemology implicitly points to the analogy of Christ as the music of God: just as objects generate intelligible music so that they may be knowable, God eternally generates the Son so that the unintelligible God would be sensible to the world. And just as this intelligible music unites with the various human sense organs so that their properties may be known to individuals, so Christ unites himself with individuals of rational natures, so that God the Father would be known to each soul.[41]

The very mystery of the Trinity is seen in musical terms by Bonaventure, since in the depths of the Godhead threeness and oneness are not in contradiction, but rather constitute a "wonderful concord and harmony" (*miram concordiam et harmoniam*[42]). Conversely, the human beings' creative activity is a form of participation in the mystery of the Trinity's life. If the divine processions, as has been said, are the foundation of all creation, and of all creativity, and if God is the Exemplar of all beauty, then it follows that music-making can rightfully be seen as a form of *imitatio Dei*.[43]

Rupert of Deutz

If St Bonaventure is rightly considered as one of the greatest theologians of the Middle Ages, but also as one of the pillars of Western mysticism, a similar combination of intellectual speculation and mystical contemplation is also found in the person and writings of Rupert of Deutz (1075–1129). A Benedictine monk, Rupert became the abbot of Deutz near Cologne, and is the author of numerous works where theological thought and prayerful perspectives intertwine. Here

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40 Cf. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, II.10 (Bonaventure 1891, p. 320); see also I.3 (p. 297), IV.2 (p. 306) and VII.1 (p. 312) for Bonaventure's application of the image of the ladder to Christ.

41 A. Andemicael, *The Music of God*..., op. cit.

42 Bonaventure, *Quaestiones disputatae de mysterio Trinitatis*, q. 2, a. 2 (Bonaventure 1891, p. 65).

43 This has been maintained by Spargo and by McKenna. See: E.J.M. Spargo, *The Category of the Aesthetic in the Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure*, Saint Bonaventure NY 1953, pp. 108–129; T.J. McKenna, *Bonaventure's Aesthetics: The Delight of the Soul in Its Ascent to God*, London 2020.

I will first discuss some excerpts from his theological oeuvre, and then briefly mention some of his mystical writings, which will introduce the following section of this Chapter, focusing on mystical experiences *stricto sensu*.

Similar to Bonaventure, Rupert develops a theology of the arts rooted in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. His Trinitarian treatise (written between 1112 and 1116) attempts to demonstrate that human arts embody the economic action of the Trinity.[44] The treatise is articulated into three parts, each focusing particularly on one of the three divine Persons: the Book of Genesis is interpreted in the light of the Father's activity, the other historical books of the Old Testament and the Gospels are seen as bearing witness to the Son, and the eschatological vision is read as driven by the power of the Spirit. In this last section of the treatise the human arts and sciences are discussed in Trinitarian terms. As concerns music, after outlining the origins of this art on the basis of Scripture (with the usual references to Jubal etc.), Rupert points out that music is a gift of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of helping us to grasp the divine teachings.[45] Interestingly, moreover, Rupert derives the proportions on which musical harmony is grounded from a Biblical passage. He notices that Abraham's "bargaining" with God on behalf of the inhabitants of Sodom reproduces the ratios of the main musical intervals. In Genesis 18:22-32, Abraham progressively decreases the number of righteous people by virtue of whom the city of Sodom will be spared from God's wrath. These numbers are 50, 45, 40, 30, 20, and 10. Rupert observes that their ratios correspond to the principal intervals of the Pythagorean scale: 9:8 (i.e. 45:40) identifies the Pythagorean tone, 4:3 (i.e. 40:30) corresponds to the interval of fourth, 30:20 (i.e. 3:2) to the fifth, 20:10 (2:1) to the octave, the most perfect of all intervals. Rupert argues that the numeric series proposed by Abraham is not casual, since, through it, the patriarch was teaching his descendants to sing God's mercy and justice. Thus the presence of musical intervals in Abraham's speech testifies to the divine (and, given the context of Rupert's discussion, Trinitarian) origins of music.[46]

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44 See: R. Copeland, I. Sluiter, *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language and Literary Theory, AD 300-1475*, Oxford 2012, pp. 40, 373, 390.

45 Cf. Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum de operibus S. Trinitatis libri XLII* [*Forty-Two Books of Commentaries on the Works of the Holy Trinity*], VII.16, PL 167, 1779. "Verum ad famulatum sapientiae, ad adjutorium sive cooperationem coelestis doctrinae, per praecipuum prophetarum David, hanc Spiritus sanctus introduxit."

46 See: Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum de operibus...*, op. cit., VII.16, PL 167, 1779–1890. "...Cantans Domino misericordiam et judicium, non ignorans numerum ipsum, in quo vis musicae consistit, quem et Pythagoras apud Graecos postea reperisse fertur ex malleorum sonitu. Nec mirum, cum et longe ante David, mira et venerabili ratione, Abraham et misericordiam et judicium Domino cantaverit, non voce organica, neque instrumentis,

This exegesis, as has been said, is very original and highly unusual among the writings of the Christian authors. More traditionally, in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Rupert develops the Scriptural subject of the song and dance of the divine Wisdom. Comparing the multiplicity of human music with the uniqueness of the divine Wisdom, Rupert asks: "What are we if not great musicians of God, his instruments? With harps and stringed instruments, which are truly our hearts and bodies, we are commanded to praise the Lord."[47] As Fernicola puts it, here Rupert rehearses a "grandiose cosmic vision." If the entire world resonates with God's praise, and the intelligent creatures (i.e. angels and humans) are the sounding strings, Christ is the

> major string,[48] the most harmonic one, whereby the entire song receives its key. This cosmic symphony arises therefore from the entire universe: it is a universal harmony, an immense chorus orchestrated by Christ, whereby everything glorifies the Creator in the unison. Thus the cosmic vision and the Christological perspective merge in a wonderful unity.[49]

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sed tantum proportionabilibus numeris, in quibus vis musicae consistit. [...] Nunquid casu Abraham taliter numeros diminuebat, et non potius filios suos misericordiam et judicium Domino cantare docebat. Sic namque divisit, sic diminuit proportionabiliter, ut nullam earum proportionum, quae musicos reddunt sonos omitteret. [...] Cum itaque nulla proportionum musicarum in istis desit numeris, non est arbitrandum quod homo tantus, praesertim cum Deo loquens; casu sine ratione, et quomodo in buccam venerunt, ita eos decerpserit."

47 Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum de operibus...*, op. cit., PL 169, 211–212. "Nam quid sumus nos nisi magni musici Dei quaedam instrumenta? Unde et in citharis et in organis quae profecto corda et corpora nostra sunt, Dominum laudare jubemur. Ipse quoque Dominus noster, musicum Dei Patris maxime instrumentum est: cui dicit idem Pater, dum secundum corpus in sepulcro jacet: 'Exsurge, gloria mea; exsurge psalterium et cithara'." As translated by J. Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages: Language Theory, Mythology, and Fiction*, Ithaca NY 1985, p. 84.

48 On this, see Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum de operibus...*, op. cit., PL 169, 226. "Quod si te altior enuntiatio delectat et in hoc tanquam coelesti modulamine juvat magis acutas quam graves audire chordas, ecce altiorem quidem [i.e. Jesus], sed modi ejusdem chordam hic praecentor veritatis eodem digito percutit."

49 "Determinato così l'angolo visuale, Ruperto elabora una visione cosmica grandiosa. L'universo è una cetra dalle corde armonizzate, che esegue un poema musicale a gloria del Creatore, il cosmo materiale ne è la cassa armonica, uomini ed angeli sono le corde tese su cui vibra il canto di lode. Cristo rappresenta la corda maggiore, la più armonica, da cui tutto il poema riceve la sua tonalità. Da tutto l'universo si eleva, dunque, questa sinfonia cosmica; si tratta di un'armonia universale, un coro immenso orchestrato da Cristo, tutto glorifica in un'unica voce il Creatore. Visione cosmica e prospettiva cristologica si fondono in mirabile unità." G. Fernicola, *Teologia ed esegesi nei commenti biblici di Ruperto di Deutz*,

Indeed, diversity and unity do not conflict with each other in music; rather, every string has its own part to perform. This is grounded in Rupert's view of Christ as the "musical instrument" of the Father.[50] The psaltery and cithara which are called to arise in Psalm 56 are symbols of Christ's resurrection in his body after his passion and death.[51] The Word of God, therefore, is the life and light of the world, just as the nature of music is life in the musician's soul.[52] Thus, as Rupert wrote elsewhere, the true citharas of God are the hearts of the faithful, inhabited by the heavenly music, i.e. the Word of Truth, and on which the strings of God's commandments are stretched.[53]

Rupert thus identifies God's Word with, so to speak, God's "music." This identification is stated even more explicitly in *De divinis officiis*. Here, commenting on the meaning of the word "alleluia," Rupert cites once more the psalms where psaltery and cithara are called to "arise." In the Vulgate version cited by Rupert, this call is addressed first to "*gloria mea*" ("my glory"), and then to the musical instruments. This allows him to identify the glory of God with his Son, who arose from the dead. Christ is the "perfect praise and eternal music," as well as the highest Wisdom, born from the heart of the Father, an "eternal musician." The divine Son took flesh, assuming "the cithara of our humanity;" curiously, Rupert combines his reading with an interpretation of Mt 11:16-19 and Lk 7:31-35. In this passage, Jesus complains that his generation failed to welcome the teaching of John the Baptist and of himself, just as children may refuse to dance to a joyful tune or to cry to a sad music. Implicitly, therefore, Jesus is comparing his Gospel to a dance music. Those children who did not dance, however, are given new life through his resurrection: thus, Christ became our "alleluia," and our "new song." As a choirmaster, he taught us a sweet praise:

PhD thesis, University of Salerno and Westfälische Wilhelms–Universität Münster, 2009, pp. 213–214 (translation mine).

50 Cf. Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum de operibus...*, op. cit., PL 169, 211–212.

51 The same concept is developed in Rupert's *De victoria Verbi Dei* [*On the Victory of God's Word*], XII.28, PL 169, 1484–1485. Here, however, he distinguishes between the cithara (i.e. Christ's mortal body) and the psaltery (his resurrected, immortal body).

52 Cf. Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum de operibus...*, op. cit., PL 169, 212. "Igitur, quemadmodum natura musicae in anima musici vita est, quam instrumento ars imitata est, sic totius mundi compositio, qui, ut jam dictum est, divinæ laudis instrumentum est priusquam fieret, in hoc Verbo vita erat, de qua et subditur 'Et vita erat lux hominum'."

53 Cf. Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum de operibus...*, op. cit., IX.15, PL 169, 1008. "Profecto citharae Dei non manu factae sunt, qualibus homo fidiculas arte dimensas superextendit, sed citharae pectorum fidelium, in quibus per fidem musica coelestis, id est verbum inhabitat veritatis, ubi chordae sunt extentae praeceptorum Dei."

the Church, his mystical Bride, is in turn an instrument of his divine wisdom.[54] Also in his treatise on the Trinity, Rupert suggests that the cithara is the Body of the incarnate Logos, in which the "music of God the Father sounded for thirty-three years." This cithara was crushed in Christ's passion and lay in the sepulchre, but then arose again joining in its praise the confessors and singers of the Father's glory.[55]

Again in *De divinis officiis*, Rupert identifies the cithara's strings with the eight Beatitudes, which, as in a musical scale, reach the perfect interval of an octave on the eighth note. Here, once more, the cithara becomes a symbol for the Logos' assumed humanity. On this, God, the eternal musician, plays the song of the eternal joy, on the integrity of the eight strings contained within the octave of the Beatitudes. This song draws the "docile disciples" to the dance, i.e. to good works. Rupert's symbolism becomes even more elaborate: the first seven strings are likened to the seven gifts of the Spirit. At the same time, the eighth beatitude fittingly corresponds to the octave (the "diapason"), since the same promise is granted to both the "poor in spirit" (first beatitude, paralleling the scale's first degree) and to the "persecuted" (eighth beatitude, i.e. the "octave"[56]). The same principle is developed by Rupert in his Commentary to the

[54] Cf. Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum de operibus…*, op. cit., IV.5, PL 170, 90: "Quam ergo Dei laudem significat alleluia? Illam utique, illam cui dicit Deus Pater in Psalmo: 'Exsurge, gloria mea, exsurge, psalterium et cithara'. Gloria Patris, Dei Filius, perfecta laus et sempiterna musica, utpote summa sapientia, quae de corde nata ejusdem Patris aeterni musici, citharam nostrae humanitatis assumpsit, quam et confractam ab invidis et stultis pueris, qui ad cantum ejus saltare debuerant, rursus per gloriam resurrectionis reformavit, et inviolabile: psalterium fecit illa, inquam, gloria haec cithara, sive psalterium, alleluia nostrum est. Quidquid enim supernae jucunditatis auditoribus suis exhibuit, quorum beati oculi qui viderunt, et aures quae audierunt; quidquid, inquam, de coelestibus gaudiis ore suo Dominus Jesus Christus praecinuit, alleluia est, canticum novum est, laus suavis est. […] Non solum autem ipse gloriosus Ecclesiae sponsus, novus homo Christus, hoc nomine praedicatur, sed et sponsa ejus nova, sancta Ecclesia (quia corpus ejus est), quia et ipsa musicae illi organum est, id est, divinae sapientiae, cujus in homine Christo tota plenitudo corporaliter inhabitat, eodem nomine jure praedicari potest."

[55] Cf. Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum de operibus…*, op. cit., IV.5, PL 167, 1222. "[Ps. CVII] habet autem in titulo: 'Canticum psalmi ipsi David'. Cui enim, nisi ipsi David, id est, Christo, attribuendae sunt voces hujus psalmi? Nam Pater illi dicit in sepulcro jacenti: 'Exsurge, gloria mea, exsurge, psalterium et cithara'. […] Sic denique factum est. Cithara illa, id est corpus per quod resonuerat, per triginta et tres annos, illa Dei Patris musica, cithara, inquam, musici Dei, per montem quassa, in sepulcro jacebat. Sed mane resumpta est incolumis, 'diluculo' surrexit, et ecce confitetur, id est confessores et laudum cantores facit Patri in omnibus populis."

[56] Cf. Rupert of Deutz, *De divinis officiis* [*On the Divine Offices*], VIII.5, PL 170, 218–219: "Verumtamen, quoniam non adeo geometricas traditiones, sed potius aeterni musici Dei

Gospel of Matthew, where Rupert defines the divine Wisdom as a "glorious, sonorous, and sweet cithara, in which the music of the Father was and is entirely inherent." Here again he compares the eight Beatitudes to the seven tones of the scale and to the octave where the first is repeated.[57]

In still another passage, Rupert suggests the idea that music, in a manner of speaking, "attracts" the Holy Spirit into the hearts of the faithful. He argues that Christ, in his human nature, was the only man on whom the Spirit descended "and remained" (cf. John 1:32-33). Other human beings should invoke the gift of the Spirit by means of song, accompanied by the mystical psaltery; in this way, the grace of the Holy Spirit is poured forth, and reawakened, in the souls of the believers.[58]

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cantiones in Scriptura sacra cognoscere operae pretium est, qui et citharam se habere indicat, cui dicit in Psalmo: 'Exsurge, gloria mea, exsurge, psalterium et cithara (Psal. LVI)', cantilenam ejusdem citharae, imo citharam ipsam, in his octo beatitudinum sententiis tanquam octo chordis, quae integram reddunt diapason, consideremus. Et hoc placeat vel maxime musicis, quia, cum (sicut tradunt musicae artis scriptores) citharas antiquitus octo per diapason chordis fieri mos fuerit, musicus coelestis Deus, hanc illis in cithara sua, id est in ea quam assumpsit humanitate, de carnis nostrae sylva similitudinem repraesentat, dum aeternae laetitiae cantilenam per integram diapason, id est per octo beatitudinum (Matth. XI) chordas modulans, scitos pueros ad saltandum, id est dociles discipulos ad bene operandum excitat. Illud quippe fidei nostrae notissimum est, quia citharae huic de septem vocum discriminibus nihil deest. Quid enim sunt septem spiritus Dei, quibus Dominicus bono, requietionis locus unicus est, nisi septem vocum spiritualium discrimina, quibus omnis ejusdem Domini nostri contexitur doctrina? Illud quoque praetereundum non est, quod, sicut vocum non nisi septem sunt discrimina, et idcirco in diapason octava semper eadem est, quae et prima, sic secundum Spiritus sancti septem munera, dum nobis cithara haec, octo chordis, id est octo beatitudinibus coelestem diapason personat, octava beatitudo eadem est, quae et prima, 'quoniam ipsorum est regnum coelorum'."

57 Cf. Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum de operibus...*, op. cit., II.88-89, PL 168, 1389: "Hoc primum cecinit canticum beatitudinis cithara gloriosa, cithara sonora et dulcis, cui tota erat et est insita musica Patris, universa sapientia Dei. Octo chordis antiquitus citharae fiebant, et quae per primam, eadem vox resonabat per octavam, secundum musicae naturalem vim, quia tantum septem sunt discrimina vocum et octava vox eadem quae prima est, quod cantatoribus peritis, id est musicis, non incognitum est, et quod non minime delectat in ista beatitudinum cantilena, quae prima, eadem octava sententia est: *quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum*."

58 Cf. Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum de operibus...*, op. cit., V.23, PL 167, 1260–1261. "Primo ut sciamus, quia non semper spiritus aderat prophetis praeter unum prophetam, magnum prophetarum Dominum, cui nunquam spiritus defuit, cujus hoc proprium signum fuit: 'Super quem videris Spiritum descendentem, et manentem super eum, hic est, qui baptizat in Spiritu sancto'. Qui enim dicit, 'nunc adducite mihi psalten', claret quia non habet propheticam gratiam in se manentem, cujus invocans adventum per cantum psaltae se praeparat in occursum. Deinde ex hoc discimus quantum cum divinae laudis

Summarising, then, Rupert considers the Trinity as the source of all human arts, including music (whose ratios and proportions were given, in his view, by God to Abraham). He repeatedly interprets the cithara as a symbol for the human body, and especially for the Body of Christ (intended both as his human flesh and as his mystical Body). He speaks of the "Father's music" on several occasions and considers Christ as the "New Song." He further likens the cithara's strings to the Beatitudes and to the gifts of the Spirit and suggests that the Spirit is "called" into the hearts of the believers through the practice of sacred music.

It comes as no (great) surprise, therefore, that the interconnection between music and Trinity became, for Rupert, not only a matter of theological reflection, but also of a properly mystical experience. In ca. 1100 (i.e. several years prior to Rupert's *De Trinitate*), he had two consecutive visions, the first having an intense musical dimension, and the second describing an apparition of the Trinity. As Bœspflug points out, it is likely that Rupert's vision is the first, in Western Christianity, in which the Triune God appeared "visibly" to a mystic.[59] In the first of the two visions we are currently discussing, Rupert was lying in his bed, and felt an intense desire to worship the Trinity. He was under the impression that he got up and ran to the monastery's church in haste; however, he found that the church had been turned into the heavenly court. In two different points of the church, two groups of people were singing two Psalms: one was the penitential Psalm 50 (*Miserere mei Domine*), and the other invoked God as light (*Dominus illuminatio mea*, Ps. 27). Rupert's bliss was not untroubled, though; in a corner of the church, he saw a devil ready to assault him. On the following day, Rupert had once more the impression that he was going to the abbey's church for matins. There, he saw three men, two of whom looked very old, and one was a youth of princely demeanour. One of the two elderly figures kissed Rupert's hand, and Jesus (the handsome young man) defended him from the attacks of the devils. Rupert admits that he did not immediately recognise the three men as the three divine Persons; still, their

sermone musicae dulcedinis sonus ad invocandum prosit Spiritum sanctum. 'Cum, inquit, caneret psaltes, facta est super eum manus Domini'. Movet enim intus musica vi quadam et potentia naturali spiritum hominis, et tum decenter convenit cum verbo vel sensu divinae laudis, concutit penetralia cordis, et illam quam accepit homo resuscitat in eo gratiam Spiritus Dei. Quod optime expertus est, et experiens primus psaltes inclytus dicit: 'Os meum aperui, et attraxi spiritum'."

[59] Cf. F. Bœspflug, *La vision de la Trinité de Norbert de Xanten et de Rupert de Deutz*, "Revue des Sciences Religieuses" 71/2 (1997), pp. 205–229: 216.

words and gestures encouraged him in his activity as a writer of spiritual and theological texts.[60]

Conclusions

Throughout this survey, we observed how musical concepts and ideas were creatively, skilfully and precisely employed by medieval authors and theologians in order to convey ideas, concepts and thoughts relating to the Trinitarian mystery. These could regard dogmatic and systematic aspects, perspectives on liturgy, spiritual exegeses of the Bible, discussions about theological aesthetics and the relationship between the Triune God's creative activity and human creativity expressing itself in the beauty of music. While this brief sample only represents the tip of a gigantic iceberg, that of spiritual and mystical theology where traces of "musical" views of the Trinity can be found, still it offers a meaningful view on the fecundity of the mutual relationships between a theological reflection on music and a "musical" perspective on the Trinity. In the medieval context, where symbolic theology was widely practised and analogy was generously employed in order to convey important spiritual insights, music provided Christian authors with formidable resources whose rich meaningfulness greatly helped theology in her quest for a language in which the unfathomable mystery of God's nature could be fathomed.

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[60] For Rupert's description of his vision, see: Rupert of Deutz, *De gloria et honore filii hominis super Mattheum XII (On the glory and honour of the Son of Man, on Matthew 12)*, PL 168, 1591–1592.

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