

THE IMAGE OF THE HARP AND TRECENTO RECEPTION OF PLATO'S *PHAEDO*

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Until recently, "Platonism" as a concept had been fairly well-established: in all likelihood nothing new would come out of looking carefully into the early translations of Plato's dialogues. Generally, it was thought that all of the dialogues -- with the exception of Plato's *Timaeus*, available in Chalcidius' partial translation and extensive commentary, and, for example, also in the subsequent twelfth-century commentary by William of Conches -- were translated from Greek into Latin and hence were influential only in the course of the fifteenth century, particularly due to the efforts of the Florentine humanist, Marsilio Ficino.¹

Raymond Klibansky, in particular, has shown this view to be false. He is convinced that, contrary to the nineteenth-century opinion that nothing much could be learned concerning the dissemination and influence of Platonic texts, we are just at the threshold of a new, more precise and complete understanding, both of the continuity of the tradition of specifically Platonic concepts and of the sudden currents of their discovery, apprehension, and renewal.² Assimilation into areas of endeavour other than philosophical discourse follows, then, the discovery of single Platonic concepts.

Catchwords and categories often give us the impression that we know a good deal more about a given subject than we actually do. The jargon of any discipline can be quickly and superficially apprehended. It is easy to traffic in expressions which have never been clearly defined. Such, as Klibansky has also pointed out, is the case for terms such as Platonism and

Neoplatonism which are sometimes used in a context devoid of precise significance.³ The purpose of this study is to identify a specific concept in one particular dialogue by Plato, translated at a certain time and place by an identified person, and to show specific examples of the influence generated by both the concept and its method of expression. That the concept found such resonance shows a sharp break with the mediaeval past, particularly in Trecento Italy.

Plato's dialogues each work over a single unified subject. This characteristic would appear to have made them ideal for self-contained studies which would have been appropriate to the university curriculum. This did not happen for two reasons. First, the dialogue form breaks up the intensity and organization of the argument, making the entire treatise less suitable to systematic study and less amenable to pedagogical purpose.⁴ Secondly, important motives are subtly woven into the fabric of one perceptible, dominant theme. This theme may not be the main point of Plato's argument, but may serve as a covering, an integument, to disguise the most profound significance of the dialogue.⁵ The primary subject matter of the *Timaeus* is creation. The topic of the *Phaedo* is the immortality of the soul. The dialogue occurs in the highly-charged and potentially dramatic atmosphere of Socrates' last meeting with his disciple-friends before his death. The two dialogues are related because their overt purpose is to discuss nature: the cause, manifestations, and continuity of life. Because of the obvious importance of this subject matter, both were translated from Greek into Latin, and they both generated several commentaries. The *Timaeus* was partially translated from Greek into Latin by Chalcidius, probably in the early fourth century. His commentary far exceeds the portion of Plato's dialogue which he translated. Chalcidius' Latin translation and his commentary formed the largest intact body of Plato's writings accessible to readers, copyists, and scholars in the Middle Ages, until the fifteenth century when Marsilio Ficino retranslated the *Timaeus* from Greek into Latin. Petrarch, for example, knew the *Timaeus* only from Chalcidius; his copy survives, with its copious marginal notes showing just how extensive and eager his study of the *Timaeus* was.⁶

The only other two works available in Latin before the extensive period of fifteenth-century translation projects, and intense interaction with Plato's dialogues, were the *Phaedo* and the *Meno*, both translated by Henricus Aristippus, a Sicilian working at the Norman-Sicilian court. We know a good deal about these translations. The *Phaedo*, according to Henricus' biographer, Hugh the Falconer, was translated in 1156.⁷ Henricus' Greek text, as well as his Latin translation, remained in his employer Manfred's library, which

became part of the collection of manuscripts eventually forming the nucleus of the present Vatican Library.⁸ By the beginning of the fourteenth century, the library of the Sorbonne also held a copy of his translation.⁹ Thus by the early years of the fourteenth century, the Latin *Phaedo* was known, accessible, and read. Furthermore, Petrarch owned and obviously had read a copy of the Aristippus Latin *Phaedo*.¹⁰

What difference did this make? Can we trace specific ways in which a particular conceptualization in the *Phaedo* was understood? How was the dialogue received, and what was done with it?

Apparently the theme, the setting, and the method of the *Phaedo* came as a revelation to the closely-knit intellectual world of the early fourteenth century.¹¹ The soul is the main subject of this dialogue.¹² Socrates discusses with his disciples, each of whom represents a different historical-philosophical viewpoint (as Simmias, for example, brings up "Pythagorean" arguments¹³), whether or not a philosopher may reasonably greet death without fear. Socrates says, yes, indeed. Therefore the occasion of a last meeting among philosophers should not be a tragic event, rather, one filled with the clarity and profundity of truthfulness and tranquil communion. He asks accordingly that his wife be sent away, for she instigates an emotionally-charged pathetic element into the mental climate of the gathering.¹⁴ Socrates' main argument, that one should meet death with cheerfulness and confidence, follows: The spiritual world of pure ideas exists apart from specific, concrete, material disclosures of these ideas, as the concept of beauty itself exists apart from and more completely as a concept without a specific manifestation which is qualitatively beautiful.¹⁵ In fact a concept is limited by material expression.¹⁶ A true philosopher shows by deed and word that he lives for the spirit, not for the body; that the spiritual world of pure ideas is his priority. As pure concepts exist apart from their material expression, so the spiritual element, the soul, exists apart from the body.¹⁷ With confidence that his soul, as the most significant element of his being, will not face annihilation but rather release from the body into ultimate realization,¹⁸ the philosopher may meet death with joy. Socrates, at the end of the dialogue, proves his point by the nature of his own death which closes the dialogue.

It is a compelling subject matter, an absorbing theme of universal importance. The situation is charged with profound tension,¹⁹ the argumentation bears no trace of sophistry. The gravity of this theme provides a motive -- largely overlooked -- with a clearly defined symbol. In a passage concerning

the substance of the soul, Plato makes a unique statement about a relationship:²⁰

In this, said he, one might use the same argument about harmony and a lyre with its strings. One might say that the harmony is invisible and incorporeal, and very beautiful, and divine in the well attuned lyre, but the lyre itself and its strings are bodies, and corporeal and composite and earthy and akin to that which is mortal. Now if someone shatters the lyre or cuts and breaks the strings, what if he should maintain by the same argument you employed, that the harmony could not have perished and must still exist? For there would be no possibility that the lyre and its strings, which are of mortal nature, still exist after the strings are broken, and the harmony, which is related and akin to the divine and the immortal, perish before that which is mortal. He would say that the harmony must still exist somewhere, and that the wood and the strings must rot away before anything could happen to it. And I fancy, Socrates, that it must have occurred to your own mind that we believe the soul to be something after this fashion; that our body is strung and held together by heat, cold, moisture, dryness, and the like, and the soul is a mixture and a harmony of these same elements, when they are well and properly mixed. Now if the soul is a harmony, it is clear that when the body is too much relaxed or is too tightly strung by diseases or other ills, the soul must of necessity perish, no matter how divine it is, like other harmonies in sounds and in all the works of artists, and the remains of each body will endure a long time until they are burnt or decayed. Now what shall we say to this argument, if anyone claims that the soul, being a mixture of the elements of the body, is the first to perish in what is called death?²¹

Plato continues later:

For the doctrine that the soul is a kind of harmony has always had (and has now) a wonderful hold upon me, and your mention of it reminded me that I had myself believed in it before.²²

He then quotes Socrates:

And Socrates said, you must, my Theban friend, think differently, if you persist in your opinion that a *harmony is a compound and that*

the soul is a harmony made up of the elements that are strung like harpstrings in the body. For surely you will not accept your own statement that a composite harmony existed before those things from which it had to be composed, will you?

Certainly not, Socrates.

Then do you see, said he, that this is just what you say when you assert that the soul exists before it enters into the form and body of a man, and that it is composed of things that do not yet exist? For harmony is not what your comparison assumes it to be. The lyre and the strings and the sounds come into being in a tuneless condition, and the harmony is the last of all to be composed and first to perish. So how can you bring this theory into harmony with the other?²³

Three factors here are brought together into an overlapping conceptual arrangement, which is more than merely a "connection." These three factors are 1) Harmony=attunement (or right adjustment), 2) soul, and 3) harp. Because the lyre has become a commonplace for "music in general"²⁴ it is difficult to understand the impact this clear and simple symbol had when first suggested. *Lyra* in the *Phaedo* and only in this dialogue signifies "right adjustment" or the fitting together of two or more things, as the particular strings on the harp are attuned and adjusted to each other. This adjustment enables a player to produce a succession of tones which are separated from each other by precise intervals. The soul is an attunement in the *Phaedo*, with strings secured by just the proper degree of tension. To a degree of simplicity which seems obvious, Plato meshes the incorporeal invisible concept of soul attunement with a clear image -- the harp. The attunement is invisible, immaterial, beautiful, divine, and pure, whereas the harp is material, composite, earthy, and perishable. Attunement exists before entering the instrument just as the soul exists before its incorporation into the human frame.

This relationship: *armonia*, *arpa*, *alma*, or attunement, harp, soul does not have a tradition in the Middle Ages. It would not have been known to the mediaeval readers of Plato's *Timaeus*. The *Timaeus* presents harmony differently:

(Plato is speaking of the creator in his use of *he*)

Division of the World-Soul into harmonic intervals. And having made a unity of the three, again he divided this whole into as

many parts as was fitting, each part being a blend of Sameness, Difference, and Existence. And he began the division in this way. First he took one portion (1) from the whole, and next a portion (2) double of this; the third (3) half as much again as the second, and three times the first; the fourth (4) double of the second; the fifth (9) three times the third; the sixth (8) eight times the first; and the seventh (27) twenty-seven times the first. Next he went on to fill up both the double and the triple intervals, cutting off yet more parts from the original mixture and placing them between the terms, so that within each interval there were two means, the one (harmonic) exceeding the one extreme and being exceeded by the other by the same fraction of the extremes, the other (arithmetic) exceeding the one extreme by the same number whereby it was exceeded by the other. These links gave rise to intervals of $3/2$ and $4/3$ and $9/8$ within the original intervals.²⁵

When Plato refers to and describes the *soul*, he does so in this manner:

The Composition of human souls. Having said this, he turned once more to the same mixing bowl wherein he had mixed and blended the soul of the universe, and poured into it what was left of the former ingredients, blending them this time in somewhat the same way, only no longer so pure as before, but second or third in degree of purity

Accordingly, the intervals of the double and the triple, three of each sort, and the connecting means of the ratios, $3/2$ and $4/3$ and $9/8$, since they could not be completely dissolved save by him who bound them together, were twisted by them in all manner of ways, and all possible infractions and deformations of the circles were caused; so that they barely held together, and though they moved, their motion was unregulated, now reversed, now sidelong, now inverted The same and similar effects are produced with great intensity in the soul's revolutions; and when they meet with something outside that falls under the Same or the Different, they speak of it as the same as this or different from that contrary to the true facts, and show themselves mistaken and foolish.²⁶

Harmony is related to intervals with the visual analogy of the circle in the *Timaeus*. The inner circles of the mind can be brought into arrangement

by the aural faculty through orderly musical progression, and by means of rhythm.²⁷ Interlocking circles imply relationship, but the relationship is neither self-sufficient nor immediately apparent. In fact, none of the ideas presented above in the *Timæus* lends itself to expression by means of a single complete image. Images of any sort, therefore, are scarce in music theoretical treatises in the Middle Ages, but circles as illustrations are common (See Example I).²⁸

The *soul* as an *attunement*, a relationship and a symbol, had no precedent before the translation of the *Phaedo*. The concept is new: all the various impulses, experiences, needs, and tendencies are under the constraining discipline and strength of tension, directed by and at the service of an integrated will. Although the *cithara* had a long tradition of allegorical significance throughout the Middle Ages,²⁹ there is a sharp distinction between the allegorical meaning attached to the *cithara* and the harp as a symbol for the soul, for one is a verbal figure of speech and the other a visual image. The language employed, the method used, and the conclusion drawn are all different. The *cithara* referred to the "heart" as the seat of the affections. A thought process, often quite complex, and a verbal articulation of the explanation were required to make this connection.³⁰

The harp is different. It is a clear and complete image, an independent significance. Both the symbol: harp-soul-harmony, and the idea of the symbol as a self-sufficient picture are new in the Trecento, and both are found in the *Phaedo* of Plato.³¹ Petrarch owned a copy of Aristippus' Latin translation of the *Phaedo*. Although he does not directly quote Plato, he knew the *Phaedo*, especially as seen in his most intimate, posthumously-published work, the dialogue of Petrarch's soul with Augustine.³² In this work, Petrarch deals with the nature of the soul, the deceit of material things and of sensorily apprehended reality, the power of the pictorial image, and the need for a clear and unified impression. For example, in the section *The Soul and the Bondage of the Body*, Augustine says:

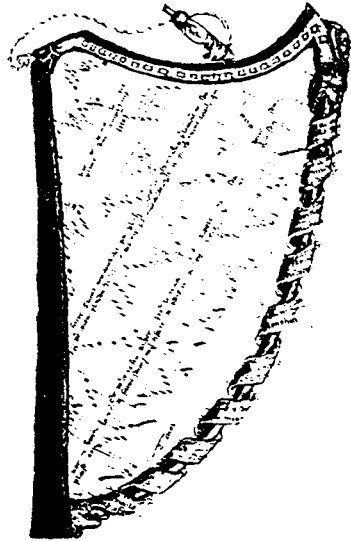
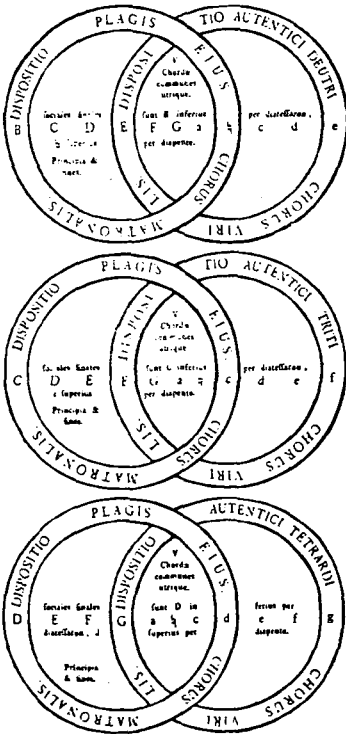
(Augustine) How many men are there who have extinguished all their passions, or, not to speak of extinguishing, tell me how many are there who have subdued their spirit to the control of Reason, and will dare to say, "I have no more in common with my body: all that seemed so pleasing to me is become poor in my sight. I aspire now to joys of nobler nature?"

(Petrarch) Such men are rare indeed. And now I understand what those difficulties are with which you threatened me.

EXAMPLES

I -- taken from *Musica Aribonis Scholastici*. ex cod. Admontensi saec. XII.
 Reprinted in Martin Gerbert, *Scriptores ecclesiastici de musica sacra potissimum* (repr. Hildesheim 1963, 3 volumes) II, 205.

II -- *La harpe de melodie* by Jacob de Senleches, from a music theory treatise,
 Chicago, Newberry Library, MS. 54.1, f. 1r. Reproduced by permission of the
 Newberry Library.



(Augustine) When all these passions are extinguished, then, and not until then will desire be full and free. For when the soul is uplifted on one side to heaven by its own nobility, and on the other dragged down to earth by the weight of the flesh and the seductions of the world, so that it both desires to rise and also to sink at the one and the same time, then, drawn contrary ways, you find you arrive nowhither.³³

Concerning the *pictorial image*, Augustine again initiates the dialogue:

. . . the languid head and panting breast, the hoarse murmur and sorrowful sigh, the evil smell of the whole body, the horror of seeing the face utterly unlike itself -- all these things will come to mind and so to speak, be ready to one's hand, if one recalls what one has seen in any close observation of some death-bed where it has fallen to our lot to attend.

*For things seen cling closer to our remembrance than things heard.*³⁴

And finally Augustine is made to speak over the topic of the *clear impression*:

. . . of a truth the countless forms and images of things visible, that one by one are brought into the soul by the senses of the body, gather there in the inner center of the mass, and the soul, not being akin to these or capable of learning them, they weigh it down and overwhelm it with their contrariety. Hence that plague of too many impressions tears apart and wounds the thinking faculty of the soul, and with its fatal, distracting complexity bars the way of clear meditation, whereby it would mount up to the threshold of the one chief good.³⁵

Although Petrarch mentions Plato often, he does not quote him directly because Plato is not easy to quote. His style does not favour the pithy epigram and the pungent poetical phrase. Petrarch is not alone in his failure to quote Plato. Rather than in succinct quotations, Plato's influence is discerned in the subject chosen, the tenor of an argument, in the dialogue form of the work, and in the cast of a problem -- all of which seem so obvious once presented. Plato's influence is not-specific.

Our own requirements demand explication which a historical setting and its surviving documents may or may not be prepared to give us, just as we often demand our own familiar cultural trappings in order to feel at ease in

a foreign environment. We may or may not have such requirements met. The historian requires an increased sensitivity to what is actually there. In his *Phaedo*, Plato deals in subject areas, methods, and myths, but not in concentrated poetic statements. However, the relationship *arpa-armonia-alma* found in this particular dialogue is too frequent and studied to be happenstance. The image with its meaning gives an indication of just how quickly an idea in the fourteenth century spread.³⁶ One example of this relationship among members of a circle of intellectuals and *litterati* who had contact with each other and with Petrarch occurs in a sonnet, a *dialogue* between the lute and the harp, owned by its author, Francesco di Vannozzo;

Il tuo fratel Francesco a te mi manda,
 dove ponendo tutta sua speranza
 m'ha tratto fuor del bel pays de Franza
 per farte saporar nova vivanda,
 pregando te che mai tu non m'abanda,
 ch'a farse de comun poco s'avanza;
arpa mi chiamo per antica usanza,
 che sopra ogni altro suon porto girlanda.

E giùrote per la dolce *armonia*
 ch'esce di me, quando voglio, s'è fatta,
 che tutta zente s'adormenta in via.
 Se tu quel ami, che m'ha qui ritratta,
 io ti farò sentir tal melodia,
 che l'*alma* tua sarà, sempre rifatta.
 Se'l non ti piace, di' ch'io mi disparta:
 rendime al messo e rendigli la carta.³⁷

Because these three -- harp, harmony, and soul -- separately are common enough, one is easily blinded to the fact that the only other place they occur together and within a dialogue in the fourteenth century is in Plato's *Phaedo*. In its recent translation into Latin, the *Phaedo* had become available to the Latin-reading educated public for the first time.

The "image" of attunement is a visual "quotation" from the *Phaedo*. It is a "picture for the mind," more immediate and direct than a verbal allegory. Moreover, the "purely visual embodiment of an idea"³⁸ is drawn from the same work, nowhere else so clearly expressed as in this dialogue:

Then do we agree to this also, that when knowledge comes in such a way, it is recollection? What I mean is this: If a man, when he has heard or seen or in any other way perceived a thing, knows not only that thing, but also has a perception of some other thing, the knowledge of which is not the same but different, are we not right in saying that he recollects the thing of which he has the perception?

What do you mean?

Let me give an example. Knowledge of a man is different from knowledge of a lyre.

Of course.

Well, you know that a lover when he sees a lyre or a cloak or anything else which his beloved is wont to use, perceives the lyre and in his mind receives an image of the boy to whom the lyre belongs, do you not? But this is recollection, just as when one sees Simmias, one often remembers Cebes, and I could cite countless such examples.

To be sure you could, said Simmias.

Now, said he, is that sort of thing a kind of recollection? Especially when it takes place with regard to things which have already been forgotten through time and inattention?

Certainly, he replied.

Well, then, said Socrates, *can a person on seeing a picture of a horse or of a lyre be reminded of a man, or on seeing a picture of Simmias be reminded of Cebes?*

Surely.

. . . All these examples show, then, that recollection is caused by like things and also by unlike things.³⁹

The trecento harp is the purely visual embodiment of an idea.⁴⁰ A treatise concerning the substance and the composition of *cantus* contains an illustration -- one of many such examples -- of the image of attunement. This illustration of a harp precedes the *Lucidarium in arte musicae planae* by Marchetto da Padua, written in the early years of the fourteenth century.⁴¹ Because the illustration was not apparently inserted later but rather is an integral part of the manuscript, I conclude that the harp with a song inserted within it should be considered as conceptually attached to the treatise it precedes⁴² (example II). The stated purpose of the Prologue is to improve the intellectual comprehension of both *musici* and *cantores*:

Lucidarium plane musice componere, seu opus quo universi musici et cantores scirent rationabiliter in plana musica quid cantarent, deberem iuxta meum modulum compilare. Infrascriptum opus composui adiuvente me Fratrem Syphante de Ferraria Ordinis Predicatorum, tam circa libri ordinem etiam ipsi libro necessarias suas philosophicas rationes, quod quidem Vestrae duxi Magnificentie presentandum ad laudem et gloriam Conditoris, Cui in celestibus Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus cantant quotidie yerarchie angelicae. *Explicit Epistola.*⁴³

The treatise begins with the discovery of music by Pythagoras, the essential characteristic of music being unity in multiplicity of tones, strings, and impulses:

De inventione musice. Qualiter Pythagoras adinvenit musicam memorat Macrobius libro secundo post principium. Cum, inquit, casu preteriret in publico, fabros ignitum ferrum ictibus malleantes audivit, atque in aures eius sonum sub certo reddentes ordine repente reciderunt, in quibus gravitati acumina consonabant, ut utrumque ad audientes sub statuta divisione remearet et ex variis impulsibus sibi consonantia nasceretur. Fecitque fabros mutare maleos, quibus mutatis diversitas sonorum ab hominibus recedens maleos sequebatur . . . quod Pythagorici cum carminibus soliti esse dicuntur et precepta quedam tradere occultius et mentem suam a cogitationum intentione cantu fidibusque ad tranquillitatem transducere.⁴⁴

There follows *De pulchritudine musice* and in chapter III, *De utilitate musicae*:

Isidorus: Sine musica nulla disciplina potest esse perfecta; nichil enim sine illa. Legitur quod David citharam percutiebat, Saul minus vexabatur a spiritu, et hoc erat ob dulcedinem musicalis soni.

(This passage is followed by *De iudicio musice, Quid sit musica*.)

Musica est ars spectabilis et suavis cuius sonus in coelo et in terra modulatur.⁴⁵

Composition is rational, but has affinity with the supra-reasonable, or with super-rational praise. Present connection with the past is valuable; the

writer begins with Pythagoras and with David and his allegorical *cithara*.⁴⁶ Melody has its basis in *musica plana*: the substance of melody is *cantus*. Monophony in a composer's musical background and training reached so far back into his childhood that it was intuitive.

The position of the illustration including a contemporaneous song before a treatise on *musica plana* is significant, but the illustration is also a "complete picture" containing a chain of concepts: harmony-attunement-harp-soul. It explicates pictorially the Old (Pythagorean relationships which are discussed first in the treatise) with the New (melody as soul-music: an image of what music is, that is, unity of multiple tones as the soul is a unity of multiple impulses).

Few people, at any time, actually read philosophical treatises. Concepts do not filter into opinions as intact quotations, but rather through clear strong ideas or a symbol of an idea.⁴⁷ The suddenness, simultaneous appearance, and frequency of this harp symbol indicate its novelty and emphasis.

Translations of two powerful Platonic treatises by the same renowned person produced waves from two clear subjects: from the *Meno*, the duality of vice and virtue, and from the *Phaedo*, the soul as an attunement symbolized by the harp. The significance of vice-virtue is seen by the many treatises dealing with just this subject matter and their dates,⁴⁸ and the attunement motive by the renewed appearance of the harp in so many pictorial contexts. The sudden emergence of the harp image within a new group of accompanying concepts indicates a new Platonic concept in the Italian trecento.

Of course, not all harps are Platonic harps. Harps also sometimes signify primarily musical functions. We are, however, dealing with an intellectual circle of acquaintances. These trecento *litterati* knew one another and were interested in Plato's writings. For them the availability of a dialogue of Plato in a language they could understand, namely Latin, had great significance. Later, in the Ficino-Lorenzo correspondence, we catch this fever for Platonic dialogues, unpolluted by second-hand fabricated quotations or by lengthy commentary,⁴⁹ but the fever is also present in the Trecento. Examples given here originated under circumstances and within a relatively small circle of people who could have been or can be proven to have been aware of the *Phaedo* and for whom this symbol would have had significance. Very quickly the symbol became convention.⁵⁰ But the Trecento harp itself, so thoroughly documented by Howard Mayer Brown, shows the emergence of what Gombrich and others call the "symbolic image."⁵¹ There are plenty of images in the Middle Ages, but they are not symbolic.

TABLE 1

<i>Cithara</i> (allegory-mediaeval)	<i>Harp</i> (symbol)
I allegorical interpretation	I symbolic interpretation
II based on <i>text</i> *	II non-textual
III persuasion through <i>reason</i>	III persuasion through <i>vision</i>
IV allegorical <i>mode</i>	IV symbolic <i>system</i> or <i>vocabulary</i>
V contemplation releases meaning reflection gives sign	V sign provokes reflection

* text="word" of God interpreted by Holy Spirit; cf. Robert M. Durling, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems* (Cambridge 1976) 26, who describes fundamental change in view of text, i.e., mistrust of reception and receiver of text.

They are word-pictures, allegorically apprehended. The *cithara* is significant and comparable in obvious ways to the harp symbol, but a comparison of signifiatory qualities as they would have been received in the period of most concentrated exposure yields an entirely different result (Table I).

I have isolated a relationship to show a direct influence of one specific dialogue on an intellectual milieu. The *Phaedo* of Plato was the second dialogue to be translated, done in Italy, by a Sicilian, directly from the Greek text. There was a manuscript of this translation in the library of the Sorbonne by the beginning of the fourteenth century. Petrarch owned a copy; he studied the *Phaedo* avidly. The *Phaedo* is the only dialogue which brings together a concept with a clear and simple image: harp=attunement of the soul=harmony. We know that this connection was made verbally in poetry. The sharply-defined outlines of this image combined with conceptual substance is unlike the so-called "indirect" tradition, that is, writings which re-formulated so-called Platonic ideas. Both the subject and its method of presentation influenced the circle of *litterati* whose extant works give us our picture of the Trecento.

How can we explain the power of Platonic concepts as they made an impression on an intellectual community and spread in the fourteenth century? It is because Plato observes so clearly and describes so succinctly what we can discern for ourselves. His revelation becomes our own. He articulates what we, in the context of sensory experience, perceive.

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NOTES

¹ Cf. the recent publication of Chalcidius' translation of and commentary on the *Timæus*, ed. J.H. Waszink, in the *Plato latinus* series, Vol. IV, ed. R. Klibansky (London 1975); and the *Guillaume de Conches, Glosae super Platonem*, ed. E. Jeauneau (Paris 1965), as well as the discussion of the Ficino circle in M.J.B. Allen, *Marsilio Ficino: The Philebus Commentary (A Critical Edition and Translation)* (Berkeley-Los Angeles 1975).

² See R. Klibansky's concise discussion and summary of the literature in *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages: Outlines of a Corpus platonicum medii aevi* (London 1939, with new prefaces and supplement, rpt. Munich 1981). The crux of the problem concerns just how many primary witnesses to the texts of Plato there are and how they are related to each other and to the secondary manuscripts. Although an exhaustive list of manuscripts is presented in *The Plato Manuscripts: A New Index* (prepared by the Plato Microfilm Project of the Yale University Library under the direction of Robert S. Brumbaugh and Redon Wells [New Haven 1968]), its specific usefulness for tracing the influence of a particular dialogue is hampered by the facts that 1) the manuscripts are not dated, and that 2) no designations or descriptions of the manuscripts are given, so that it is impossible to know whether the manuscript includes a Greek source or a Latin translation of the Greek, and who possibly was the translator.

³ See Klibansky (at n. 2) 13: Aristotelianism can be more easily identified than specifically Platonic influences.

⁴ There is a rash of "dialogues" in the Trecento. One important example is Petrarch's "Secret," a dialogue between himself (or his soul) with Augustine (cf. *Petrarch's Secret or the Soul's Conflict with Passion: Three Dialogues between Himself and S. Augustine* [trans. W.H. Draper, London 1911, rpt. 1975]), another is Machaut's *Dit de la harpe* (cf. Karl Young, "The *Dit de la harpe* of Guillaume de Machaut," *Essays in Honor of Albert Feuillerat* [New Haven 1943] 1-20).

⁵ For the multiplicity of motives in Plato's dialogues, see the introduction, p. IX ff. in R.D. Archer-Hind's edition of the *Phaedo* (2nd ed., rpt. of the 1894 ed., New York 1973).

⁶ See Klibansky (at n. 2) 68-70: Petrarch's copy of the Chalcidius translation of the *Timaeus* appears in MS. Paris, Bibl. nat. fonds lat. 6280.

⁷ Hugo Falcandus, *Liber de regno Siciliae*, ed. G.B. Siragusa (Roma 1893); cf. F.H. Fobes, "Medieval Versions of Aristotle's Meteorology," *Classical Philology* 10 (1915) 298 n.3. For an introduction to Henricus' life and work, see Charles H. Haskins, Chapter IV: The Sicilian Translators of the Twelfth Century, pp. 155-93 in *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science* (New York 1927, rpt. 1960). There is a thorough summary of the literature concerning Aristippus' translation in the preface to Victor Kordeuter's edition of the *Meno* (recognovit et praefatione instruxit Carlotta Lubowsky, London, 1940 from the *Plato latinus* series, Vol. I, ed. R. Klibansky).

⁸ See Haskins (at n. 7) 165.

⁹ See Klibansky (at n. 2) 27 ff. The manuscript was given to the library by Gérard d'Abbeville; it is now MS. Paris, Bibl. nat. fonds lat. 16581 (Delisle catalogue, ii, 148).

¹⁰ MS. Paris, Bibl. nat. fonds lat. 6567A; cf. A. Hiller, "Petrarch's Greek Codex of Plato," *Classical Philology* 59 (1964) 270 ff. for Petrarch's attempts and subsequent failures to read Plato in the original language.

¹¹ Anneliese Maier argues for the rapid dissemination -- by people themselves -- of ideas in the Trecento, in spite of the obvious difficulties in information transferral, such as a lack of publishers or an organized book-trade, in her article "Internationale Beziehungen an spätmittelalterlichen Universitäten" collected in a volume of her essays on the fourteenth century, *Ausgehendes Mittelalter, gesammelte Aufsätze zur Geistesgeschichte des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Rome 1967) II, 317-34, using as her specific example Volterra Salutati's search for the Aristippus translation of Plato's *Phaedo* (p. 320).

¹² Understandably the literature is extensive. See Richard D. McKirahan, Jr., *Plato and Socrates: A Comprehensive Bibliography, 1958-1973*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 78 (New York 1978) 206-17.

¹³ See the Archer-Hind ed. of the *Phaedo* (at n. 5), introduction, pp. xii, xxii, xlv; and especially the *Phaedo* 73A-E: "But Cebes," said Simmias, "what were the proofs of this? . . .", a high point of the dialogue to which we shall return.

¹⁴ *Phaedo* 60A-B.

¹⁵ Especially *Phaedo* 100C.

¹⁶ Especially *Phaedo* 83C-E (Fowler tr. p. 291): "The evil is that the soul of every man, when it is greatly pleased or pained by anything, is compelled to believe that the object which caused the emotion is very distinct and very true; but it is not . . . that the soul fancies the things are true which the body says are true."

¹⁷ Especially *Phaedo* 84B, cf. Archer-Hind's remark in his ed. and commentary (at n. 5) 60: Plato means that the pure soul is exempt from fear, since the soul has lived apart from the body in as far as this is possible, and has felt its own independent power.

¹⁸ *Phaedo* 79D (Fowler tr. p. 277): "But when the soul inquires alone by itself, it departs into the realm of the pure, the everlasting, the immortal

and the changeless, and being akin to these it dwells always with them whenever it is by itself and is not hindered, and it has rest from its wanderings and remains always the same and unchanging with the changeless, since it is in communion therewith. And this state of the soul is called wisdom. Is it not so?" Plato is not very precise in describing exactly what transpires after death (in contrast to the *Timæus*, in which new bodily forms are taken up). The New Testament is also no more specific than that the soul is "with Christ," although Christ himself furnishes a clearer imaginative prospect when he speaks of the "mansions" and a "place" beyond death (cf. John 14).

¹⁹ Several have noticed and commented on the dramatic character of this dialogue; see especially R. Dorter, "The Dramatic Aspect of Plato's *Phaedo*," *Dialogue* 8 (1970) 564-80.

²⁰ This clear and well-defined relationship occurs neither in the other dialogues nor in the indirect tradition of loosely "Platonic" themes and concepts. Klibansky discusses this indirect tradition (at n. 2) 22; it includes 1) references to Plato in Cicero's writings; 2) passages in Seneca's letters, especially those on the ideas (58, 65); 3) Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*; 4) Valerius Maximus' collection of memorable facts and sayings; 5) Apuleius, *De dogmate platonis*, *De Deo socrates*; and 6) remarks in Macrobius *Saturnalia*, Commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*, but these are truly indirect and refer primarily to Plato himself, not to his philosophy.

²¹ *Phaedo* 35E-86D, Fowler tr. p. 297 f; cf. Archer-Hind (at n. 5) p. 63f: "All the terms that have been applied to soul and body may be transferred to harmony and the lyre." I am grateful to Dr. Jay Shanor who discussed this passage with me and pointed out that the Greek text disagrees in emphasis from the English translation on two counts: 86A "Now if someone shatters the lyre . . ." the proper rendering would be "bursts," and 86C " . . . when the body is too much relaxed or is too tightly strung by diseases or other ills, the soul must of necessity perish" the sense here should be past, that is, the soul *has* of necessity *perished*, implying that harmony and soul are dependent on one another for mutual existence. This is more than a "relationship"; rather, both must be present for the soul to exist.

²² *Phaedo* 88D-E, Fowler tr. p. 307.

²³ *Phaedo* 92A-C, Fowler tr. pp. 316-19. The concept of "elements strung like harpstrings" is present in Machaut, *Dit de la harpe*, in which the strings of the harp are the virtues of the lady.

²⁴ Cf. E.H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance II* (London 1972) 126. Despite his sensitivity to symbol, Gombrich, in his interpretation of the Rubens 1637 painting, *The Horrors of War* in the Palazzo Pitti, responded conventionally in his statement: "On the ground lies a woman with a broken lute, signifying harmony, which is incompatible with the discord of war"; the broken lute, if one considers the passage in *Phaedo* quoted above, signifies the dissolution of the soul= harmony.

²⁵ *Timaeus* 35B-C (F.M. Cornford, *Plato's Timaeus* [English tr., New York 1959] 25). Cf. Chalcidius' translation and commentary on the *Timaeus* (ed. J.H. Waszink, vol. IV in the series *Plato latinus* [London 1975]) 27, commentary p. 89. Chalcidius, rarely quoting Plato, adds a long exposition, beginning *De modulatione sive harmonia*.

²⁶ *Timaeus* 41D-42, Cornford tr. p. 37; *Timaeus* 43D-44, Cornford tr. p. 39 f. This is the first mention of harmonic movement occurring in the soul. Cf. Chalcidius, p. 36 f. and commentary p. 95 "*De numeris*. Ita symphonia musicae symphoniae numerorum concinere invenitur." Chalcidius does not mention the soul at all, and, again, rarely relates his remarks to Plato's text.

²⁷ *Timaeus* 46E-47E, Cornford tr. p. 44 f: "Enough then, of the secondary causes that have contributed to give the eyes the power they now possess; we must next speak of their highest function for our benefit, for the sake of which the god has given them to us. Sight, then, in my judgment is the cause of the highest benefits to us in that no word of our present discourse about the universe could ever have been spoken had we never seen stars, sun, and sky . . . the god invented and gave us vision in order that we might observe the circuits of intelligence in the heaven and profit by them for the revolutions of our own thought, which are akin to them, though ours be troubled and they are unperturbed; and that, by learning to know them and acquiring the power to compute them rightly according to nature, we might reproduce the perfectly unerring revolutions of the god and reduce to settled order the wandering motions in ourselves. Of sound and hearing the same account may be given . . . all that part of Music is given for the sake of harmony, whose motions are akin to the revolutions of the soul within us . . . Rhythm also was a succor bestowed upon us by the same hands to the same intent, because in the most part of us our condition is lacking in measure and poor in grace." Cf Chalcidius, p. 44 f., commentary p. 248 f. (the

section *De visu*: the author uses the theme of *sight* as a point of departure into the attributes of *material* and *colour* as a "mode" of material).

²⁸ A sharp division in "music theoretical illustration" can, I believe, be made between those treatises, by far the vast majority, which include circles to show relationship and those which employ images. What relationships do circles indicate? They give connections between *totus* and *pars*; cf. *Timaeus* 31B-32C, Cornford tr. 21 f.

²⁹ *Cithara*, though used often in other Platonic dialogues, never occurs in the *Phaedo*, rather *lyra* is consistent.

³⁰ See especially Rhabanus Maurus, *Allegoriae in universam sacram scripturam* (PL 112.897).

³¹ A symbol, but the actual expression comes much later; see Gombrich (at n. 24) 123, cf. 228, n. 4, referring to the *Bibliothecae Alexandrinae Icones Symbolicae P.D. Christofori Giardi Cler. Reg. S. Pauli Elogiis illustratae, Illustrissimo Ioanni Baptistae Trotto Praesidi et Reg. Consiliario dicatae* (Milan 1626 and 1628) and p. 216, n. 146; F. Licetus, *Hieroglyphica* (Patavii 1653) 287, "Quem admodum ergo biformis natura Centauri Sagittarii symbolum est humanae vitae . . ." (my italics).

³² Note that the *Secretum* is in dialogue form, as is the *Phaedo*, and the tension between participants builds the structure and dramatic quality of the form.

³³ *Secretum*, Draper tr. p. 25; cf. p. 41 f.

³⁴ *Secretum*, Draper tr. p. 32 f.

³⁵ *Secretum*, Draper tr. p. 43.

³⁶ See Klibansky (at n. 2) 27 f.: The *Phaedo*, and to a lesser extent the *Meno* were read by Roger Bacon; from 1271 on there was certainly a manuscript of the *Phaedo* in the library of the Sorbonne; it was quoted around the turn of the fourteenth century by the Paduan judge, Jeremiah da Montagnone, by the Franciscan John of Wales at Oxford, and by Henry Bate of Malines; later by the Dominican Bertold of Moosburg and by Richard de Bury, chancellor of Edward III (1327-77). Excerpts of the *Phaedo* appear in countless collections of *exempla* and sayings. Petrarch and Salutati knew it well, as well as the encyclopaedist Domenico di Bandino in Florence, and in 1412 there was a copy in Amplonius' collection in Erfurt.

³⁷ See Howard Mayer Brown, "The trecento harp" in *Studies in the Performance of Late Mediaeval Music*, ed. Stanley Boorman (Cambridge 1983) 35 f.

for a synopsis of what is known concerning Francesco and an edition of this poem, with the following translation:

"Your brother Francesco sent me to you;
 placing all his hopes [in me],
 he has brought me out from the beautiful country of France
 in order to make you savour a new delight,
 begging you that you never neglect me
 so that I become a common thing for those with little talent;
 I am called *harp* by ancient usage,
 that takes the prize above all other sounds.
 And I swear to you by the sweet *harmony*
 that comes from me, when I wish,
 that everyone will fall asleep because of me.
 If you love him who brought me here,
 I shall make you hear such melody
 that your *soul* will constantly be renewed.
 And if that doesn't please you, say that I should go away;
 give me back to the courier, and give [your friend] the receipt.

The same form and material can be found in Machaut's *Dit de la harpe*. I am not suggesting that all harps in all pictures and poems demonstrate Plato's influence. There is the fact of the instrument, that it existed and was actually played, and it is known that Petrarch played, for example, the lyre (see the introduction by Theodore E. Mommsen to *Petrarch, Sonnets and Songs* [New York 1960] xxx).

³⁸ See Gombrich (at n. 24) 135: "Before the fourteenth century, in fact, the predominance of the word in medieval allegory is unchallenged. The inscribed diagram and the labelled figure were considered more effective than the purely visual embodiment of an idea. It was only towards the end of the Middle Ages that the potentialities of these elaborate illustrations were fully re-discovered and that still in a literary context."

³⁹ *Phaedo*, 73C-74, Fowler tr. p. 255 ff. Plato travels through ascending degrees of abstraction: to see a belonging of the beloved and to be *reminded* of his personality, to see a *picture* of a lyre, then to *imagine* a *concept* such as equality, deriving this abstraction from a knowledge of equal things.

⁴⁰ Cf. Howard Mayer Brown, "The Corpus of Trecento Pictures with Musical Subject Matter" in *Imago musicae, International Yearbook for Music Iconography*

I (1984) Pt. I, 189-243.

⁴¹ Oliver Strunk, "On the Date of Marchetto de Padova" in *Essays on Music in the Western World* (New York 1974) 39 f. places the writing of the *Lucidarium* in the early years of the Trecento, c. 1318. For this manuscript, see also Kurt von Fischer, "Eine wiederaufgefundene Theoretikerhandschrift des spätem 14. Jahrhunderts (Chicago, Newberry Library, MS. 54.1-olim Codex cuiusdam ignoti bibliophili Vindobonensis)," *Schweizer Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft I* (1972) 23 ff.

⁴² The illustration and the rest of the manuscript form a contiguous whole, as Tilman Seebass, in a recent article, points out. See "The visualization of music through pictorial imagery and notation in late mediaeval France" in *Studies in the Performance of Late Medieval Music* (at n. 37) 28 f. The illustration is well-known, but its consideration in isolation, as, for example, a dust-cover for a book, has made it a curiosity rather than a statement within a significatory context.

⁴³ See Jan Herlinger, *The "Lucidarium" of Marchetto of Padua: A Critical Edition, Translation and Commentary* (Chicago 1984) 70 f., who translates the passage: "In humble imitation of his doctrine, since Your Excellency . . . ordered me, the least of musicians, to compose a *Lucidarium* on plain-chant, or a work by means of which all musicians and singers might rationally understand what they sing in plainchant, I ought to compile it to the best of my ability. I composed the following work aided by Brother Syphans of Ferrara of the Order of Preachers in organizing the book and in the philosophical arguments necessary to it. Herewith I present it to Your Eminence for the praise and glory of the Creator, to Whom the angelic hierarchies sing Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus in the heavens every day," cf. *GS III*, 65.

⁴⁴ Herlinger (at n. 43) 72 f., cf. *GS III*, 65 f. Pythagoras noticed consonant relationships between high and low tones. See also the *Timaeus* 46E-47E, quoted above for the idea of *cantus* tending toward and generating tranquillity -- a repose in multiplicity -- from diverse impulses.

⁴⁵ Herlinger (at n. 43) 78 f., cf. *GS III*, 66 f; to summarize the passage: According to Isidore of Seville, knowledge is incomplete without music; without her nothing can be completely mastered. David plucked the *cithara*, thereby Saul was less agitated in spirit. This phenomenon was achieved by the sweetness of musical sound. Music is both eminent and delightful; its sound is measured out with regularity in heaven and earth. (*Spectabilis* also has the connotation of *visibility*; again see the *Timaeus* 46E for the connection

between sight and sound.)

46 The allusion to David and his *cithara* would have been very familiar. Cf. Guido of Arezzo, *Micrologus*, Chapter XIV, ed. Joh. Smits van Waesberghe, in series *Corpus scriptorum de musica* 4 (Rome 1955) 161: "Item et David Saul daemonium cithara mitigabat et daemonicam feritatem huius artis potenti vi ac suavitate frangebatur. Quae tamen vis solum divinae sapientiae ad plenum patet, nos vero quae in aenigmate ab inde percepimus. Sed quia de artis virtute vix pauca libavimus, quibus ad bene modulandum rebus opus sit videamus."

47 See Gombrich (at n. 24) 179, 235, n. 125: (in the context of the influence of Platonic catchwords on the Florentine Academy) "We still know too little about the way in which philosophical ideas percolate, the way in which they are first distilled into slogans which in turn direct the attitude of men towards certain values and standards. It is in this way, so it seems, that the philosopher influences the actions of his contemporaries by a process, almost of remote control."

48 Cf. the immense group of treatises concerning the Virtues and Vices in: *Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, 1100-1500 A.D. Including a Section of Incipits of Works on the Pater Noster*, ed. Morton W. Bloomfield et al. (Cambridge, Mass. 1979) 3 f.: "Treatments of vices and virtues are particularly abundant in the written matter of the later Middle Ages. We find more works on vices and virtues in this period partly because we find more of everything in written form. The use of writing increased in the later Middle Ages. Scribal 'workshops' were set up to turn out codices fast. Technology helped to make materials more abundant and reading more common. Paper was introduced into Europe in the thirteenth century and spectacles invented then. And of course there has been less time for loss and destruction. *These general circumstances do not explain everything about the rise of ethical concerns in the Middle Ages.*" (italics mine)

49 See Michael J.B. Allen's introduction to his translation of the *Philebus* commentary.

50 I would not be so naive as to suggest that harps in pictures never signify that they were also under diverse circumstances, in fact, played. I agree with the main thesis of Howard Mayer Brown's extensively documented paper, *The trecento harp*, namely that the harp in the Italian Trecento is a musical force in a social milieu. I am arguing, however, for levels of interpretation, that the harp has extra-musical significance and that there

is a break just in the Trecento with a mediaeval allegorical tradition.

⁵¹ The term, symbol, is apparently not used before Giarda (see note 31 above) and the early seventeenth century. Most treatments of *symbol* in reference works, as the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (ed. Alex Preminger [Princeton 1974] 833 ff.) do not treat the historical use of the term. *Simbolum* as it is used in the Middle Ages, the frequent designation for the *Credo*, signifies a group of particulars together, as a catch of similar fish, and is an appropriate reference to the creed, since each disciple presumably contributed one tenet.