

## FRANCESCO GIORGI AND THE HARMONY OF THE WORLD

### PART TWO

#### SLIDE 1

#### INTRODUCTION

In Part One I looked at eight themes (or TONES) in Francisco's Giorgi's De Harmonia Mundi that have been discussed in recent research. I explained that I think it's useful to define the key ideas of the book before trying to look for possible influences on Shakespeare, and elsewhere in England.

As far as I can see these key themes are:

#### SLIDE 2

- 1 **Unity** known in **Harmony – the Cosmos**.
- 
- 2 Harmony in all Creation – Music as the language of Creation.
- 
- 3 The importance of **Imagination**.
- 
- 4 the optimistic view of the soul's ability to become attuned to God.

#### SLIDE 3

These form what I am imagining as a Cloud of Ideas – which might have a life of their own – representing an integrated philosophy which might go against the grain of some new religious attitudes in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Also – and this stands out to me –

I see the Book and this Philosophy as deeply Franciscan and rooted in medieval theology, particularly that of St Bonaventure and St Francis himself.

The interest in newly discovered Platonic sources and Jewish mysticism are completely consistent with this Franciscan spirit.

Giorgi sees that every kind of thing, every level of Creation, sings the same song – has the same music within it. This is the same song as the angels sing. In his three worlds the material or corruptible world, the celestial world and the angelic world are like three musical octaves.

He writes that the hope and end of creation is that the three octaves will be in harmony. Earthly things will be exactly in tune with the angels' songs.

In other words, there is the same MUSIC – the same LANGUAGE - in every level of being.

#### SLIDE 4

#### CABALA

Cabala is not an esoteric add-on or an eccentric quirk – but a fundamental part of Giorgi's *De Harmonia Mundi*.

Cabala is a mystical system founded on the idea of the Language of Creation – the language with which God created the world – and, in this tradition, this is the language of Adam – Hebrew.

#### SLIDE 5

There are two dimensions to this primeval language – the ten Sephiroth, the qualities of God which communicate God's Unity to all levels of Creation – and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. These are the materials from which everything is made.

It is important to point out that the Sephiroth also embrace the qualities which we are familiar with from the planetary spheres. The idea of the Harmonious Cosmos lies at the very roots of the ancient Hebrew religion – in the structure of the Temple, the Holy of Hollies – the great seven branched candlestick – and the root of these fundamental qualities is Harmony.

The musical tones associated with the planets, and the modes centred on them, were commonly accepted. They are given by Gafori in his famous chart of tones, muses and planets.

#### SLIDE 6

Giorgi does not list these modes (which were common knowledge) but he does give the associations of the Sephiroth with the planets - and with the higher world of orders of Angels and names of God. These are the correspondences which are generally accepted in cabalist tradition.

For example –

Malkuth (Kingdom) is the elemental or material world (we mustn't think of Earth as the centre of the Cosmos but the entire material Creation)

Tiphereth (Beauty) is also the Sun, the order of Principalities.

(See GODWIN 1993 p. 410)

But in Giorgi's Franciscan world this means that Mary, Queen of the Heavens, is Queen of the Spheres, the angels, *and* the sephiroth.

...she contains the virtue of all the heavens and of the angels who preside over them, she is rightly called "exalted above all the companies of angels."

(GIORGI 1578 p. 327)

Jewish kabbalah has ancient roots, but it developed in Europe, principally in Spain, in the middle-ages. In part, at least, it developed as a way of thinking about God's relationship with Creation - embedded in Creation - when the new Aristotelian philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, was making God more abstract, more detached - and philosophers began to objectify Nature – as a thing “out there” to be studied, rather than something in which we participated – that lived within us.

By the Renaissance a Christian view of Cabala was growing in intimate relationship with the Jewish tradition. It was a common language.

### SLIDE 7

The attraction of cabala would be irresistible to a Franciscan who knew the works of Bonaventure and the Platonic Franciscan tradition of seeing God in Creation.

Towards the end of his meditations on *The Tree of Life* Bonaventure sees all creation and scripture as a book:

Oh, if only I could find this book whose origin is eternal, whose essence is incorruptible, whose knowledge is life, whose script is indelible, whose study is desirable, whose teaching is easy, whose knowledge is sweet, whose depth is inscrutable, whose words are ineffable, yet all are a single Word.

(BOAVENTURE1978)

Every word of scripture – which includes Creation - is alive with meaning because every word and ever thing is an expression of The Word, which is God. The contemporary Franciscan Ilia Delio, in her Franciscan View of Creation, points out that these works of God which express the Word are not all physical – they include trees, stones, clouds and STORIES.

In his last work, *Hexaemeron*, Bonaventure spoke about how we can read this book – how we can read the world.

### SLIDE 8

There are four kinds of Wisdom which we learn through this reading – and all are that one Word.

Uniform Wisdom – this is the wisdom that is unchanging, the law of God embedded in all things.

Multiform Wisdom – this is what we read in scripture- which has many meanings. We can read what the words say (which is not the same as taking it literally!), we can read them symbolically, as hidden signs of Christ, in many ways. And every reading is different.

This (multiform) wisdom results from many mysteries of Scripture, just as many mirrors produce a multiplication of rays of light and fires.

(BONAVENTURE 2018)

Omniform Wisdom – is the wisdom from reading all Creation as scripture – in these many ways.

Nulliform Wisdom – is the pure wisdom we learn from God when all else falls away.

It is easy to see, I think, why a Franciscan, inspired by this tradition of seeing everything as divine language, would be irresistibly drawn to cabala. Cabala would affirm the divine meaning within every part of Creation.

In cabala every word is a mirror producing “a multiplication of rays of light and fires.”

## SLIDE 9

Giulio Busi says of Giorgi:

After Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, who was the founder of the Christian kabbalah, Zorzi can claim the second place, that is to say that he is certainly the Italian 16th century author who left the most comprehensive and well documented presentation of Jewish symbolism.

...

Thanks to his belief in the essential harmony of human cultures, Zorzi was able to transform the Jewish heritage into an essential component of his inner spirituality.

(BUSI 1997 p. 98)

Giorgi refers to the origin of cabala in the Book of Formation, or *Sepher Yetzirah*:

Or rather they are taught by divine Oracles, such as we may conjecture of the great Patriarch Abraham through the book of Formation which is said to have been received

from him; in which by the letters and characters of the names of things in the Hebrew tongue, and by the permutations and mixtures of these by the numbers they denote, their points and accents, he demonstrates precisely their proper essences and conformities by an admirable artifice, more one of contemplation than of explanation. (GODWIN 1993 pp. 192-3)

Busi's article looks at Giorgi's sources. The listing of cabalistic texts in *De Harmonia Mundi* is based on a bibliography given by Johann Reuchlin (1455-1517). Reuchlin had been involved in arguments about the conversion of the Jews and whether their sacred books should be suppressed. The study of these texts led to the development of Christian cabala.

#### SLIDE 10

It was Johann Reuchlin who had been the first to make use of the familiar design of the cabalistic Tree of Life, which shows the relationships of the Sephiroth. This familiar diagram first appeared in print in 1516 and it was not the later 16<sup>th</sup> century that it developed to include twenty-two paths, representing the Hebrew alphabet.

A Christian interest in cabala might be part of a desire to convert the Jews, or, as in the case of Giorgi, come from a belief that cabala was a common heritage, could prove the truth of Christianity and lead to new understanding and revelation.

Though the bibliography in *De Harmonia Mundi* is based on Reuchlin, Giorgi's work shows that he had access to other cabalistic sources which he probably obtained from the Jewish scholars of Venice. Some of these treasures were kept in library at San Francesco della Vigna.

#### SLIDE 11

In *De Harmonia Mundi* Giorgi shows he is an active cabalist, searching for deeper meaning in words through the sacred Hebrew alphabet.

Busi gives an example of Giorgi's cabalistic interpretation of a word 'aravit, "sunset", which Giorgi opens up, through consideration of the letters, to refer to God "that rides on pleasure and plain." As Busi writes:

...Zorzi creates a deeper way into the text, the relationship between joy and heavenly fields evokes, in Zorzi's imagination, a scene of enchanting poetical intensity...

Busi calls this a "mystical geography."

Here is Giorgi's own passage – an example of Giorgi's mystical use of cabala and poetic imagination:

And if we want to climb still higher, knowing it is up to the super-mundane plain, we will find that while there are super-celestial waters that continually praise the Eternal, the waters I say, and the fire divine, as we have touched above, likewise there are in the Archetype fields, from which spring all things joyous, polished, sweet, pleasant, and delectable things. And among the oldest Theologians this region is called the super-mundane noon, of which one sings in the Canticles:

Teach me where you are  
Where at noon you sleep in peace.  
Come, o South Wind, my light noon-day wind  
And your breath sings in my orchard  
Then will flow its embalmed liqueurs  
And the sweet and fragrant odours.

(GIORGI 1578 p. 240)

Busi suggests that this example is inspired by an early medieval Jewish text the *Seder rabba di-bereshit*.

(BUSI 1997 pp 109-111)

## SLIDE 12

Inspired by his use of cabala, Giorgi developed a three-layered view of the Human Soul which pervades *De Harmoni Mundi* and his other works, reflecting his view of the worlds – heavenly, cosmic and material. Giorgi writes:

Plotinus distinguishes three levels in the man: the highest the lowest and the middle. The highest is the divine level, the lowest is the one called by Paul the “animal man”, the middle is the soul or spirit which connects both. The Jews unanimously call them nefesh, ruach, neshamah.

(BUSI 1997p. 112)

Giorgi explores the deeper meanings of each term according to cabala, looking at the individual letters. The word *ruach* is formed of the letters *resh*, *waw* and *chet*. The letter *Waw*, he writes,

...is the letter of the divine principle, which represents the number six. This number was used by the divine spirit in giving order to the whole structure of the world.

(This refers to the six days of Creation.)

The letter *chet*

...is the letter of life...since life is called chai.

The third letter is *resh*,

...which means two hundred and alludes to matter or the physical world.

Thus, the single word, *ruach*, also contains within it the form of the whole tri-partite soul – and the central letter, Giorgi explains, also represents the Sephiroth Tiphereth, which is the spiritual sun which stands at the centre of the cosmos and illuminates the soul.

These examples, of the mystical geography of the soul, show how cabala, a creative meditation on the Hebrew letters, can guide the Imagination to a new understanding – while, at the same time, revealing the Unity (the single Word) that lies within all the things, words and stories of Creation.

### SLIDE 13

#### IMAGINATION

D. P Walker, in asking whether Giorgi's book was actually magical, writes that that the analogies Giorgi makes between kinds of things and levels of being are not real – not “operative” in magical terms - but this tapestry of interconnections would make perfect sense to a cabalist – and to the 21<sup>st</sup> century mind – if seen in terms of Imagination.

(WALKER 1958)

This world of poetic correspondence does not require a literal belief in spirits or supernatural forces. This harmonious Cosmos is known through our senses, memory and imagination – because we have the same harmonies in our souls - when we are fully attuned.

This does not, though, preclude the use of operative magic. There might not have been a clear distinction between operative magic and the work of imagination in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### SLIDE 14

This might seem a rather modern, psychological, way of thinking, but this central role of Imagination can be found in Giorgi's predecessor, Bonaventure.

Bonaventure's meditations on the *Tree of Life*, a series of brief paragraphs telling the gospel story, invite us to imagine the scenes in such a way that we share in real experience. This is the intention. The meditations draw us into the truth that is embedded within us because our soul is a microcosm and because Christ the Word is within all of us.

Well before Giorgi's time the church, understandably, suppressed this idea of direct experience of God through Imagination.

(KARNES 2011)

There is a very close relationship between Bonaventure's use of Imagination and the place of Imagination in the Islamic world in the middle-ages - the work of Avicenna, for example, which has been made known in the west through the work of Henry Corbin and his commentator Tom Cheetham.

#### SLIDE 15

That this role of Imagination was understood in the Renaissance is shown by Giorgi's contemporary Giulio Camillo in his *L'Idea Del Teatro (The Idea of the Theatre)* (1530). Camillo lived in Venice in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and moved in the same intellectual circles as Giorgi.

The origins of the Renaissance esoteric use of Imagination in Bonaventure and the Franciscan tradition has been examined by Egil Asprem.

(ASPREM 2016)

Camillo's debt to Giorgi is shown by his development, in his own writing, of Giorgi's idea of the cabalistic tri-partite soul.

*De Harmonia Mundi*, writes Busi, is "a systematic inventory of symbols".

It could be described as an encyclopaedia of the imaginal world, whereas the theatre is a schematic guide to the geography of the Imagination. Busi writes:

#### SLIDE 16

The theatre described by Giulio Camillo is at the same time the realm of the human mind and a real theatre of supra-mundane representation. (BUSI 1997 p. 115)

This Theatre was made famous in Frances Yates book *The Art of Memory* (YATES 1966) - but Camillo's theatre is not simply a device to aid memory. – It is a means of knowing divine truths.

This theatre (Camillo constructed it as a three-dimensional model) arranges levels of reality, represented by mythical images, in steps, arranged according to the planets. The Theatre is a model of the mind and the universe. The object of this diagram of the world is to encourage us to discover the truth that lies beyond and unities everything. Camillo writes that each

...image...will signify for us intelligible things that cannot fall under the senses, but that we can only imagine or intend illuminated by the acting intellect.

This is what is happening in Giorgi's universe and in Bonaventure's meditations. We apprehend through imagination, or "the acting intellect"

### SLIDE 17

To put it very simply (and I hope reasonably correctly)

There is a language within all things which is formed by Harmony and leads us towards Unity.

We experience this language through the varied Images in this changing world, in Imagination.

We might, if we wish, think of the spiritual power of these things, words and images, in terms of angelic influences, or the Word within them, but the working of magic can also be thought of in terms of Imagination – and equally real. The work of Imagination is divine – and magical.

Thus Giorgi, in his Franciscan book, is presenting a world that is completely consistent with his Franciscan predecessors – a world in which everything has meaning and value in itself – as a theophany. Harmony is inseparable from Unity – and the role of Imagination can also be seen to be part of his Franciscan heritage – though by 1525 this esoteric aspect of Franciscan spirituality was considered suspect by the church – and, in a very short time, the entire concept of the unified and harmonious Cosmos would be shattered by the new cosmology.

Now I can look again at Elizabethan England – to see whether there are any signs that *De Harmonia Mundi*, or, at least, the Cloud of Ideas the book embodies had been an influence an inspiration for its greatest writers.

### SLIDE 18

DEE

Doctor Dee certainly owned a copy of De Harmonia Mundi.

#### SLIDE 19

John Dee, a puzzling and complex character, was partly mathematician and scientist and partly magician. His most notorious activity was his communication, over decades, with angels. This was done by using traditional methods of divination, including stones and mirrors, and depended on a medium or scryer to read or speak the words. As Deborah E Harkness has explained Dee's motive was to restore the corrupted language of nature - to obtain from the angels the true Cabala, the original language of Adam - so that the corrupted world could be restored. She writes:

... the angel conversations confirmed Dee's belief that the natural world was analogous to a text, but the book of nature was not a reliable text. It was an imperfect, corrupt and decaying text that could not be read properly.

(HARKNESS 1999 p. 4)

#### SLIDE 20

As Egil Asprem (ASPREM 2012) makes clear, there is no reason to suppose that there was any fraud or deception involved in Dee's conversations with angels. He worked with several assistants, or scryers. The most well-known was Edward Kelley, who was later accused of duping Dee, but there is no evidence for this. Dee's purpose was completely rational - to save the world - and his method was rational in terms of the world as he saw it - which was the same world of angels, spiritual beings, celestial influences and changeable creation as Giorgi or anyone else had understood for hundreds of years.

If we think today, as I have suggested, in terms of a language of truth behind all the images and things of this world, which we can know through Imagination, we have no reason to question the idea that Dee might have received inspired communications. The problem for us is the medium of communication and the language. Like speaking in tongues, it needs interpretation.

What if Dee had heard the angels' messages as lute music?

(This is more than a joke - if we remember the story of St Francis and the angel musician which I mentioned in part one – and if we consider the role of lute music and viol consort music in Elizabethan and Jacobean England.)

Dee is a mystery.

#### SLIDE 21

But it seems to me that Dee was looking at this world too literally. As Harkness says, his work was in pursuit of natural philosophy. He is applying a scientific attitude to the angelic world.

Dee had learned about Cabala in his European travels. There is no reason to suppose he was influenced by Giorgi in particular - and there is this very significant aspect - that Dee believed the language of nature to be corrupted - even nature itself. This seems to be the attitude of a darker period - a Puritan idea of a fallen world - rather than a positive view of the world in which everything has harmony within it - even if we might not hear it.

The lower world in Giorgi's scheme is corruptible - or changeable and impermanent - rather than corrupted.

It was a darkening world. By the time Meric Casaubon published some of Dee's angelic documents, in 1659, it was easier to believe that he had been duped by demons than that we could speak with angels.

#### SLIDE 22

#### SHAKESPEARE

Now I can turn back to Shakespeare - not to *the Merchant of Venice* but to *The Tempest* –

#### SLIDE 23

Shakespeare's most magical play. The magician, Prospero, exiled with his daughter, Miranda, on the desert island, is a complex figure. He is self-centred. He was cast into exile because he was more interested in his magical books than in ruling Milan. He ruthlessly controls Ariel, the airy spirit, who, in turn, summons the tempest which brings the other players to the island.

There is a great deal of music in the play. Prospero puts on a masque for the lovers, Ferdinand and Miranda, but this masque is an artificial magical performance. The players are not deities - Ceres and Juno - they are spirits playing the parts of goddesses. It's beautiful but completely false - and Prospero interrupts the show - and the illusion (the baseless fabric of this vision) collapses.

#### SLIDE 24

In complete contrast, Caliban, who is only partly human - the monstrous son of the foul witch Sycorax - who had earlier been exiled to this island from Sicily - is, in spite of his uncontrollable passions, able to hear the true music of the island.

Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises,  
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments

Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices,  
That if I then had waked after long sleep  
Will make me sleep again; and then in dreaming  
The clouds methought would open and show riches  
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked  
I cried to dream again.

#### SLIDE 25

This imperfect, partly human creature, can delight in the music of an uncorrupted nature.

This seems to be in the spirit of Giorgi – though no direct connection can be made - and it appears to be a long way from Dee's corrupted nature and the darkening attitudes of some factions in early 17<sup>th</sup> century England.

And note - the language of nature – the true cabala - for Caliban - is Music!

It is as if (we do not know what this music actually was) Caliban can hear the Music of the Spheres sounding on earth – on this desert island.

#### SLIDE 26

Of course, in Shakespeare, not only Caliban has a Franciscan sense of Nature as theophany. The Duke in *As You Like it* (Act 2 Scene 1)

Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

The most famous speech on the Music of the Spheres is in the *Merchant of Venice* – a play set in Giorgi's city – and his multi-cultural world - where the cultural tensions try to find a Harmony – though we might question whether they actually succeed.

#### SLIDE 27

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

#### SLIDE 28

The Music of the Spheres itself is actually heard in *Pericles* (Act 5 Scene 1)

Most heavenly music!  
It nips me unto listening, and thick slumber  
Hangs upon mine eyes: let me rest.

And earlier in the play (Act 3 Scene 2) Cerimon brings Thaisa back to life through music played by very earthly instruments – but the music itself is magical:

The rough and woeful music that we have,  
Cause it to sound, beseech you.  
The viol once more: how thou stirr'st, thou block!  
The music there!—I pray you, give her air.  
Gentlemen.  
This queen will live: nature awakes...

And, of course, there is much more music in Shakespeare – and talk of the need to attune ourselves – as in Hamlet.

This is all in the spirit of Giorgi – but it cannot be evidence of the influence of Giorgi.

#### SLIDE 29

There is a more probable direct source for Shakespeare's Music of the Spheres in an anonymous book *The Praise of Musick*, published in 1586.

The authorship is disputed, but there seems to be no doubt that it is by John Case.

(CASE 1586)

#### SLIDE 30

John Case was an Oxford academic, who had been a chorister at New College and Christ Church. He had catholic sympathies. His published works were mostly Latin commentaries on Aristotle.

Frances Yates believed that the frontispiece of his *Lapis Philosophicus* (1599) was a symbolic illustration of the philosophy of melancholy.

#### SLIDE 31

This frontispiece includes an image of the celestial spheres, and these also appear in a design in honour of Queen Elizabeth in *Sphaera Civitatis* (1588):

#### SLIDE 32

Music was very important to Case. The anonymous *English Praise of Musicke* was followed by *Apologia Musices, tam vocalis quam instrumentalis et mixtae* in 1588.

Both of these argue for the value of music in worship, against the Puritan faction who disapproved of music. The same argument was still going on a hundred years later – as I have explained in my talk to the Fintry Trust about Saint Cecilia.

The *Praise of Musicke* includes all the familiar classical stories of the power of music.

Very extraordinarily, the catholic composer William Byrd wrote a madrigal in honour of Case to words by Thomas Watson - *A gratification unto Master John Case, for his learned book, lately made in the praise of Music* (1589)

The evidence of the influence of Case on Shakespeare seems convincing.

Case writes of Arion:

Arion seeing no way to escape his cruel enemies, took his Citterne in his hand, and to his instrument sang...even the sea, that rude and barbarous element, being before rough and tempestuous, seemed to allay his choler...

Compare this with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act 2 Scene 1)

Thou remember'st  
Since once I sat upon a promontory,  
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back  
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,  
That the rude sea grew civil at her song...

(SHAKESPEARE 2012)

Here is Case on the Music of the Spheres:

SLIDE 33

...looke upon the frame the workmanship of the whole world, whether there be not above an harmony between the spheares, beneath a simbolisme between the elements. Looke upon a man, whom the philosophers termed a little world, whether the parts accord not one to the other by consent and unity.

This could hardly be more Giorgian – almost an encapsulation of Giorgi. This is, apparently, the first appearance of the word “simbolisme” in English.

This could be an echo of Giorgi, who does not use (in French) the word symbolism, but does refer to things symbolising and being symbolic.

SLIDE 34

Case (if his is the author) gives the various qualities of the medieval or church modes and mentions that they agree with the seven planets. This is not from Giorgi, but it suggests, I think, that he was aware of Renaissance musical texts, and not only the classical sources.

(CASE 1586 Chapter IV)

And look at this:

For as the Platonicks and Pythagorians think al souls of men are, at the recordation of that celestial Musicke, whereof they were partakers in heaven, before they entered into their bodies so wonderfully delighted, that no man can be found so harde hearted which is not exceedingly allured with the sweetness thereof.

Isn't this what's happening with Caliban – who, incredibly, can hear this music sounding on the island – the

Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.

...

Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices,  
That if I then had waked after long sleep  
Will make me sleep again...

It is possible that Shakespeare learned some of the mythology of music from Case - but he goes much deeper into the workings of Harmony – in the working of Harmony in relationships, justice, in the drama itself – and into a music that is sounding in the world, not only beyond material things, in the heavens.

Shakespeare is, at the very least, in the spirit of Giorgi – the Ideas that Giorgi's book embodies.

SLIDE 35

But the Harmony of the Spheres is just one aspect of the Platonic in Shakespeare.

John Vyvyan, in a classic trilogy of books, and Jill Line (LINE 2004) amongst others, have written about the wider Platonic themes in Shakespeare, especially in his early Italianate comedies. This Platonic influence seems to come originally from Ficino – but not necessarily directly. Ficino's commentary on Plato's Symposium, on Love, was imitated by other popular writers, such as Castiglione. Ficino writes about the influences of the planets in his commentary. (FARNDELL 2016 p. 86)

Shakespeare is, whether intentionally or not, more Giorgian than it might first appear.

### SLIDE 36

Frances Yates, we might remember, also suggests that there are cabalistic influences in *The Merchant of Venice*, and other writers have elaborated this idea – but as the sephiroth represent fundamental qualities of God which effect humanity it might be that such correspondencies could be found in any effective drama – and yet – if Giorgi was known in Shakespeare's circle why should this not be true?

### SLIDE 37

But there is another mysterious dimension to look at.

John Case's book shows us that these ideas, of the Music of the Spheres and the power of music, were connected to attitudes which were opposed to the prevailing puritanism of the time – even dangerously so. The church music that Case supported was not revived under Elizabeth – apart from in her private chapels, which preserved the English choral tradition. Elsewhere puritanism prevailed.

A high regard for the value of music might be seen as a sign of catholic sympathies.

There have long been suggestions that Shakespeare might have been a catholic, but the evidence is elusive – and yet...

### SLIDE 38

#### THE FRANCISCAN CLOUD

There is the mystery of Shakespeare and the Franciscans.

### SLIDE 39

The Franciscans had been at the centre of English intellectual life before the Reformation – John Dee owned books from a Franciscan library - but by Shakespeare's time monks and friars were mocked or were demonised.

Christopher Marlowe had written in *Doctor Faustus*:

I charge thee to return and change thy shape, Thou art too ugly to attend on me. Go, and return an old Franciscan friar; That holy shape becomes a devil best. (1.3.25-28)

Foxe's Book of Martyrs mentions:

...the spiteful malice of these spider-friars, in sucking all things to poison, and in forging that which is not true. (FOXES p. 107)

By 1611 the stock character of the wicked friar had become an overused cliché. George Chapman wrote in *May-Day*:

Out upon't, that disguise is worn threadbare upon every stage, and so much villainy committed under that habit that 'tis grown as suspicious as the vilest.

#### SLIDE 40

In startling contrast, Shakespeare has at least ten characters who are good Franciscans. In fact, all the religious characters in Shakespeare, apart from the various bishops and archbishops in the histories, are Franciscans. This seems more than coincidence.

(COLSTON 2014)

In one of Shakespeare's earliest plays, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, a Friar Laurence and a Friar Patrick are mentioned.

'Tis true, for Friar Laurence met them both  
As he in penance wander'd through the forest.  
Him he knew well; and guess'd that it was she,  
But, being mask'd, he was not sure of it.  
Besides, she did intend confession  
At Patrick's cell this even, and there she was not." (5.2.38)

Confession to a priest was strongly disapproved of as a catholic enormity, in Elizabethan England, but Shakespeare refers to it elsewhere, and in every case Shakespeare's friars are good men, though also very human. *Romeo and Juliet* has Friar Laurence and *Much Ado About Nothing* has a Friar Francis, both good men with a role in the denouement of the story, not stock villains.

Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* is the most familiar Franciscan in Shakespeare. Colston points out the subtle considerations of divine grace in Laurence's speeches – which are distinctly catholic – and there are echoes of the Franciscan belief in the goodness in all Creation, even things that might seem to have negative value.

O, mickle is the powerful grace that lies  
In plants, herbs, stones, and their true qualities;  
For naught so vile that on the earth doth live  
But to the earth some special good doth give;  
Nor aught so good but, strained from that fair use,  
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse.  
Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,  
And vice sometime by action dignified. (2.2.15-20)

## SLIDE 41

*Measure for Measure* has an extraordinary Franciscan presence. The Duke lives in the disguise of a friar, under the guidance of Friar Peter, leaving Angelo in charge of Vienna. The play is all about vice, punishment and moral decisions. The central female character is Isabella, specifically a “votress of St Clare” (the female wing of the Franciscan movement) with a Sister Francisca as a colleague.

## SLIDE 42

Shakespeare’s positive presentation of Franciscans is not explained by his sources. He was writing 60 and 70 years, two or more generations, after the expulsion of the orders from England. Where did his attitude come from? It’s a bottomless question.

Some writers have looked for signs that Shakespeare knew Italy, and have found detailed knowledge of Franciscan sites in the Merchant of Venice – and yet in other plays geography is recklessly disregarded. An example of an accurate Italian location, in *All’s Well That Ends Well*, is also a Franciscan echo. (I am grateful to Julia Cleave for this reference,)

In Act 3 Scene 5 Helena, disguised as a pilgrim, stands

At the Saint Francis here beside the port.

The ‘port’ is the Borgo Ognissanti on the north bank of the Arno, opposite the church of San Jacopo. The “Saint Francis” is the lodging for San Jacopo/Santiago pilgrims which still exists – where the palmers lodge, a Franciscan monastery just a few steps away, off the Piazza Ognissanti.

The themes of Harmony and a positive view of the Book of Nature are aspects of the Cloud of Ideas which Giorgi’s book embodies. They are, themselves, Franciscan themes. If we add to these the extraordinary Franciscan presence in Shakespeare’s plays the case for an influence, in some way, directly or indirectly, of Francesco Giorgi on Shakespeare becomes much more intriguing.

And this is without bringing in the more intangible theme of cabala.

## SLIDE 43

### REFLECTIONS

Whether or not there is a real and direct transmission from Giorgi to Shakespeare I find myself seeing this as the continuation of a tradition that was otherwise lost – not just in the Protestant countries but in the Roman church.

## SLIDE 44

The most distinctive point of this Cloud of Ideas is the relationship of this harmony with Nature. This sets it aside from increasingly dualistic Puritanism - and also counter-reformation Catholicism. Everything in Creation (including trees, flowers, stones and stories) communicates the same meaning – the same Music.

I've tried to define four themes in a Cloud of Ideas – that might help if I were I were searching for the influence of Giorgi in later generations:

- 1 **Unity** known in **Harmony – the Cosmos.**
- 
- 2 Harmony in all Creation – Music as the language of Creation.
- 
- 3 The importance of **Imagination.**
- 
- 4 the optimistic view of the soul's ability to become attuned to God.

All these themes are present in earlier Franciscan theology, most clearly in Bonaventure.

#### SLIDE 45

Could it be that, possibly by chance, the true inheritors of this Franciscan Cosmic Tradition are these artists, writers and composers – and that Giorgi's book had some part to play in the transmission of this Cloud of Ideas?

Shakespeare is infinitely complex. Is this simply an illusion?

Perhaps – and yet –

Shakespeare, Spenser– and others following them – DO transmit this tradition – whatever part Giorgi did or did not play – and this tradition continues in a religious setting which might seem opposed to it – it is above or beyond catholic or puritan.

To me this is the distinctive Franciscan spirit (though not solely attached to the Franciscans) – flowing out of the conflicted culture of the 16<sup>th</sup> century into a new world, alive in new souls.

I am sure some people find all this talk of planets, syrens, stones, colours very hard to relate to. We don't live in that old cosmos. We live in a very different universe.

How can any of this be relevant?

This is just my personal point of view – it probably only means anything if you have my peculiar niche interests in music and philosophy –

#### SLIDE 46

The 21<sup>st</sup> century Franciscan theologians have rediscovered the medieval tradition and see it as very relevant. I see a key issue in our separation from Nature – and God (whatever we mean by that,) Even if we are concerned for the environment we can still see Nature as an Object. How do we recover that sense of participation – which used to be explained by the idea that we were microcosms of the whole – and could be in tune with it?

In this vast new universe, with God no longer in an imagined heaven, we can still think in terms of everything being an expression of the Word – everything coming from a common source, sharing being and unity – AND everything being drawn by Love to Unity.

But that's only one dimension of the old vision, shared by Francis, Bonaventure and Giorgi.

#### SLIDE 47

Harmony, and that language of Music in Nature is still true, It doesn't depend on an imaginary cosmos of planetary spheres.

We might say that there are still colours, tones – that are Unity breaking into Nature like a Rainbow. We know these as Images, Words, Feelings.

These are the archetypal qualities in everything that weave together to make stories – music.

Through Imagination we combine ideas into new works seeking new Unity. Everything is woven of these colours and harmonies, seeking Unity. If we are in tune with the world everything we do can be a form of theurgy, working with God.

The work of Imagination, working with Shakespeare's words, Images or Music, is a form of Cabala.

#### SLIDE 48

If we can reawaken Imagination and reclaim the stories, images, clouds and dances – we can join the dance of the Great Poetic Mystery that I dreamed of over forty years ago.

In another talk I will look at the signs of this same Cloud of Ideas – musical, cosmic Platonism, in the following century – in certain of the Cambridge Platonists, especially Peter Sterry - (who certainly did have access to *De Harmonia Mundi*) – and in music itself.

## GIORGI PART TWO

### SOURCES AND NOTES

ASPREM 2012

Egil Asprem, *Arguing with Angels, Enochian Magic and Modern Occulture*, SUNY, 2012

ASPREM 2016

Egil Asprem, *The scholastic imagination, 'Heterodoxology: Exploring the Heterodox in Science, Religion, and Politics'*, 2016. <https://heterodoxology.com/2016/02/24/the-scholastic-imagination/>

BONAVENTURE 1978

Bonaventure, ed. Ewert Cousins, *The Soul's Journey Into God / The Tree of Life / The Life of St. Francis (The Classics of Western Spirituality)*, Paulist Press, 1978

BONAVENTURE 2018

Bonaventure, *Collations on the Hexaemeron*, Franciscan Institute, 2018, p101)

BUSI 1997

Giulio Busi, *Francesco Zorzi. A Methodical Dreamer*, in *The Christian Kabbalah. Jewish Mystical Books and their Christian Interpreters*, edited by J. Dan, Cambridge (Ma.), Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 97-125.

CASE 1586

Text, with detailed introduction, available at:

<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/music3/>

A transcription in modern spelling edited by is here:

<http://www.ancientgroove.co.uk/books/index.html>

COLSTON 2014

<https://www.hprweb.com/2014/07/shakespeare-and-the-franciscan-order/>

DELIO 2003

Ilia Delio, *A Franciscan View of Creation*, Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003

DUREAU 2011

Yona Dureau, *Francesco Giorgio's De Harmonia Mundi*, The Edwin Mellen Press, 2011

GODWIN 1992

Joscelyn Godwin, *The Harmony of the Spheres*, Thames and Hudson, 1992

HARKNESS 1999

Deborah E. Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations with Angels: Cabala, Alchemy, and the End of Nature*, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

KARNES 2011

Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages*, University of Chicago Press, 2011

LINE 2004

Jill Line, *Shakespeare and the Fire of Love*, Shephard-Walwyn, 2004

SHAKESPEARE 2012

<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/did-music-matter-shakespeares-time/>

VYVYAN

John Vyvyan,

*Shakespeare and Platonic Beauty*, Hassell Street Press, 2021

*Shakespeare and the Rose of Love*, Hassell Street Press, 2021

*The Shakespearean Ethic*, Shephard-Walwyn, 2011

WALKER 1958

D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, Daniel Pickering, 1958

YATES 1966

Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966

YATES 1979

Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in Elizabethan England*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979

## NOTES

### SPENSER

Frances Yates, in her 1979 *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, also suggests that the poet Edmund Spenser was inspired by Giorgi. Again, there is no direct evidence for this. Spenser is certainly a Platonist. His *Faerie Queene* is a vast and vivid tapestry of symbols and his *Four Hymnes* give a thoroughly Platonic view of Creation – but Spenser might have had other sources – though he uses the name “Sapience” for Wisdom, which is, as French words, appears 226 times in the French translation of *De Harmonia Mundi*. Another slight problem is that Spenser is strongly anti-catholic, most obviously in the first book of the *Faerie Queene*, with its grotesque monster representing the Pope.

And yet...

Spenser’s Platonic imagination leads him far above his intended religious and political messages.

In the final canto of Book VI and the incomplete Book VII suddenly bring the poet himself into the fantasy (as Colin Clout) and fixes the debate about Nature his own real Irish landscape, the Hill of Arlo.

### MUSICAL MODES ACCORDING TO JOHN CASE’S PRAISE OF MUSICK

...or Plutarck in his treatise of musick recordeth that *Modi Musici* were also distinguished by the names of nations: such were principally these foure, *Modus Dorius*, *Modus Phrygius*, *Modus Lydius*, and *Modus Myxolydius*. Hereunto were added as collaterall other three *Hypodorius*, *Hypolydius*, and *Hypophrygius*: making seuen in number, aunswerable to the 7. planet: whereunto Ptolomaeus addeth an 8. which is called *Hypermyxolydius*, sharpest of them al and attributed to the firmament.

These seuerall distinctions of notes in musicke do not so farre dissent in name and appellation, as they do neerely accord in effects and operation. For *Modus Dorius*, (*SUN*) being a graue and staied part of musicke, aunswereth to that which I called chast and

temperate. *Modus Lydius (JUPITER)* vsed in comedies, in former times, being more lighter and wanton than Dorius, answereth to that which I termed amarous and delightsome. *Modus Phrygius (MARS)* distracting the mind variably, also called Bacchicus for his great force and violence aunswereth to that which I called warlik, And *Myxolydius (SATURN)* most vsed in tragedies expressing in melodie those lamentable affections which are in tragedies represented, aunswereth to that which before I named Melancholike and dolefull. As for those other, *Hypodorius (MOON)*, *Hypolydius (VENUS)*, *Hypophrygius (MERCURY)*, and *Hypermyxolydius (STARS)*, there is no doubt, but that they being collaterall and assistants to these, moue such like affection as their principall.