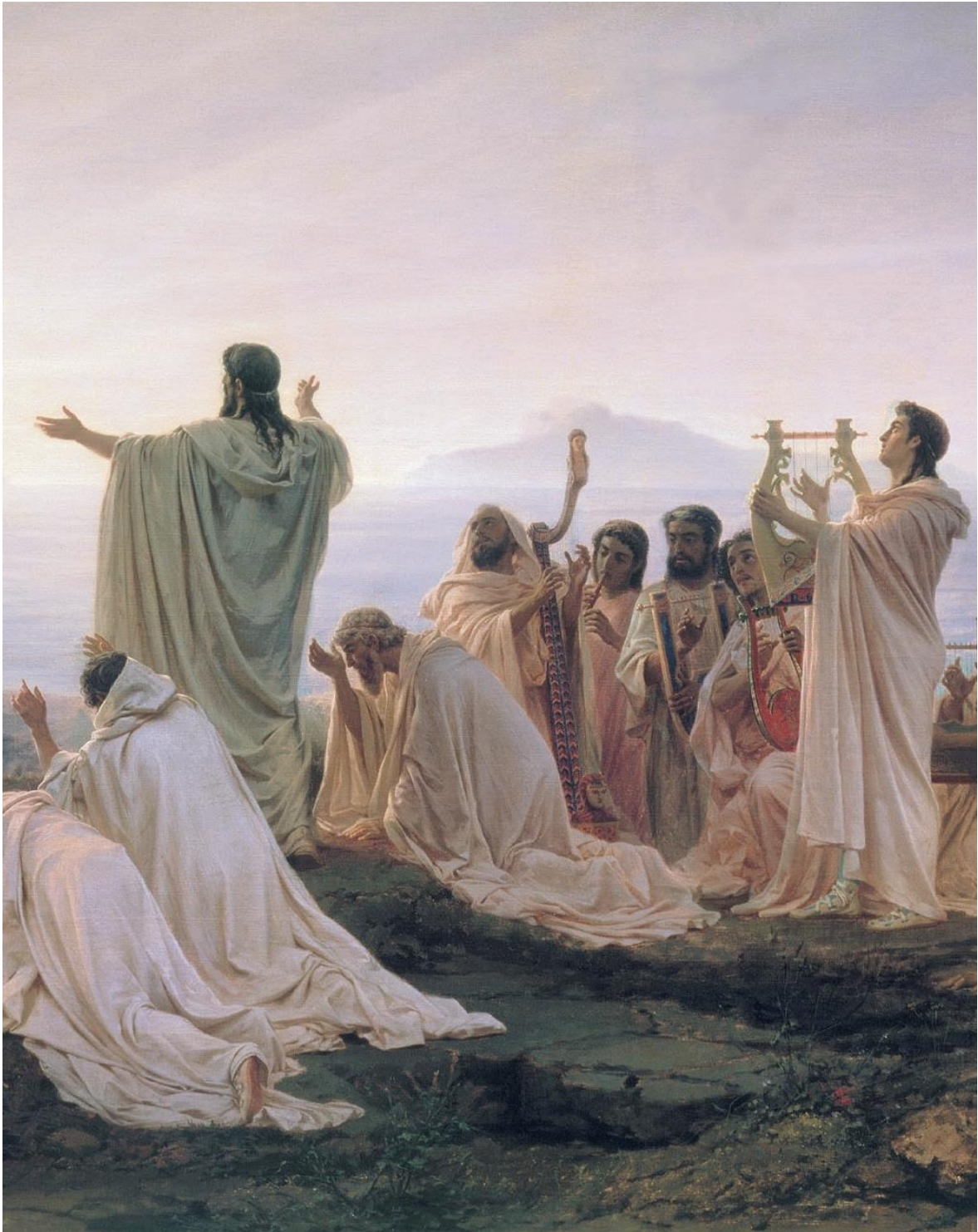


Orpheus' Hymn to Apollo

Translated and annotated by Thomas Taylor in 1792



Απόλλωνος, θυμίαμα μάνναν

Ἐλθέ, μάκαρ Παιάν, Τιτυοκτόνε, Φοῖβε Λυκωρεῦ,
Μεμφῖτ', ἀγλαότιμε, ἰήιε, ὀλβιοδῶτα,
χρυσολύρη, σπερμεΐε, ἀρότριε, Πύθειε, Τιτάν.
Γρύνειε, Σμινθεῦ, Πυθοκτόνε, Δελφικέ, μάντι,
ἄγριε, φωσφόρε δαῖμον, ἐράσμιε, κύδιμε κοῦρε·
Μουσαγέτα, χαροποιέ, ἐκηβόλε, τοξοβέλεμνε,
Βάγχιε καὶ Διδυμεῦ, ἐκάεργε, Λοξία, ἀγνέ·

Δήλι' ἄναξ, πανδερκὲς ἔχων φαεσίμβροτον ὄμμα,
χρυσοκόμα, καθαρὰς φήμας χρησμούς τ' ἀναφαίνων·
κλυθί μευ εὐχομένου λαῶν ὑπερ εὐφροني θυμῶι.
τόνδε σὺ γὰρ λεύσσεις τὸν ἀπείριτον αἰθέρα πάντα,
γαῖαν τ' ὀλβιόμοιρον ὑπερθέν τε καὶ δι' ἀμολγοῦ
νυκτὸς ἐν ἡσυχίαισιν ὑπ' ἀστεροόμματος ὄρφνης
ρίζας νέρθε δέδορκας, ἔχεις δέ τε πείρατα κόσμου
παντός· σοὶ δ' ἀρχή τε τελευταίη τ' ἐστὶ μέλουσα,
παντοθαλής· σὺ δὲ πάντα πόλον κιθάρη πολυκρέκτωι
ἀρμόζεις, ὅτε μὲν νεάτης ἐπὶ τέρματα βαίνων,
ἄλλοτε δ' αὖθ' ὑπάτην, ποτὲ Δώριον εἰς διάκοσμον
πάντα πόλον κιννάς κρίνεις βιοθρέμμονα φύλα,
ἀρμονίηι κεράσας τὴν παγκόσμιον ἀνδράσι μοῖραν·
μίξας χειμῶνος θέρεός τ' ἴσον ἀμφοτέροισιν,
εἰς ὑπάταις χειμῶνα, θέρος νεάταις διακρίνας,
Δώριον εἰς ἔαρος πολυηράτου ὦριον ἄνθος

ἔνθεν ἐπωνυμίην σε βροτοὶ κλήζουσιν ἄνακτα
Πᾶνα, θεὸν δικέρωτ', ἀνέμων συρίγμαθ' ἰέντα·
οὔνεκα παντὸς ἔχεις κόσμου σφραγίδα τυπῶτιν.
κλυθὶ μάκαρ, σώζων μύστας ἱκετηρίδι φωνῆι.

To Apollo, fumigation from manna*

Blest Pæan, come, propitious to my pray'r,
Illustrious pow'r, whom Memphian tribes revere,
Slayer of Tityus, and the God of health,
Lycorian Phœbus, fruitful source of wealth.
Spermatic, golden-lyr'd, the field from thee
Receives it's constant, rich fertility.
Titanic, Grunian,¹ Smynthian, thee I sing,
Python-destroying,² hallow'd, Delphian king:
Rural, light-bearer, and the Muse's head,
Noble and lovely, arm'd with arrows dread:
Far-darting, Bacchian, two-fold, and divine,
Pow'r far diffused, and course oblique is thine.
O, Delian king, whose light-producing eye
Views all within, and all beneath the sky:
Whose locks are gold, whose oracles are sure,
Who, omens good reveal'st, and precepts pure:
Hear me entreating for the human kind,
Hear, and be present with benignant mind;
For thou survey'st this boundless Æther all,
And ev'ry part of this terrestrial ball.
Abundant, blessed; and thy piercing sight,
Extends beneath the gloomy, silent night;
Beyond the darkness, starry-ey'd,³ profound,
The stable roots, deep fix'd by thee are found.
The world's wide bounds, all-flourishing are thine,
Thyself all the source and end divine:
'Tis thine all Nature's music to inspire,
With various-sounding, harmonising lyre;⁴
Now the last string thou tun'st to sweet accord,⁵
Divinely warbling now the highest chord;
Th' immortal golden lyre, now touch'd by thee,
Responsive yields a Dorian melody.
All Nature's tribes to thee their diff'rence owe,
And changing seasons from thy music flow:
Hence, mix'd by thee in equal parts, advance
Summer and Winter in alternate dance;
This claims the highest, that the lowest string,
The Dorian measure tunes the lovely spring.
Hence by mankind, Pan-royal, two-horn'd nam'd,
Emitting whistling winds thro' Syrinx fam'd;⁶
Since to thy care, the figur'd seal's consign'd,⁷
Which stamps the world with forms of ev'ry kind.
Hear me, blest pow'r, and in these rites rejoice,
And save thy mystics with a suppliant voice.

Annotations

*Manna is Theosophia, the divine bread of wisdom.

White Stone [is] the sign of initiation mentioned in St. John's *Revelation*. It had the word *prize* engraved on it, and was the symbol of that word given to the neophyte who, in his initiation, had successfully passed through all the trials in the MYSTERIES. It was the potent white cornelian [or carnelian] of the mediæval Rosicrucians, who took it from the Gnostics.

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the *hidden* manna (the occult knowledge which descends as *divine* wisdom from heaven), and will give him a *white stone*; and in the stone a new name written (the "mystery name" of the *inner* man or the EGO of the new Initiate), which no man knoweth saving him that receiveth it. (*Revelation* ii, 17)¹

As said in the *Commentaries*:

Fruits and grain, unknown to Earth to that day, were brought by the "Lords of Wisdom" for the benefit of those they ruled — front other lokas [spheres]. . . .

*Wheat has never been found in the wild state: it is not a product of the earth. All the other cereals have been traced to their primogenital forms in various species of wild grasses, but wheat has hitherto defied the efforts of botanists to trace it to its origin.*²

① Grunian, to thee I sing

Grynæus, according to Strabo, lib. 13, is a town of Myrinæus, and is likewise a temple of Apollo, and a most ancient oracle and temple, sumptuously built of white stone.

② Python-destroying king

Says Olympiodorus in MS. *Comment. in Phædon*:

Typhon, Echidna, and Python being the progeny of Tartarus and Earth, which is conjoined with Heaven, form, as it were, a certain Chaldaic triad, which is the inspective guardian of the whole of a disordered fabrication [*i.e.* of the fabrication of the last of things].

Οτι Ταρταρου και Γης της συζυγουσης τω Ουρανω, ο Τυφων, η Εχιδνα, ο Πυθων, οιον Χαλδαικη τις τρια εφοπος της ατακτους πασης δημιουργιας.

And in another part of the same Commentary he says that . . .

¹ *Theosophical Glossary*, art. White Stone

² Cf. *Secret Doctrine*, II pp. 373-74. Full text under the title "Wheat is not a product of the earth," in our Down to Earth Series. — ED. PHIL.

Typhon is the cause of the all-various subterranean winds and waters, and of the violent motion of the other elements. But Echidna is a cause revenging and punishing rational and irrational souls; and hence the upper parts of her are those of a virgin, but the lower those of a serpent. And *Python* is the guardian of the whole of prophetic production. Though it will be better to say, that he is the cause of the disorder and obstruction pertaining to things of this kind. Hence, also, Apollo destroyed Python, in consequence of the latter being adverse [to the prophetic energy of the former].

Ο μιν Τυφών της παντοίας των υπογείων πνευματων και υδατων, και των άλλων στοιχειων βιαιου κινήσεως αιτιος· η δε Εχιδνα τιμωρος αιτια και κολαστικη λογικων τε και αλογων ψυχων· διο τα μιν ανω παρθενος· τα δε κατω εστιν οφεωδης· ο δε Πυθων φρουρος της μαντικης ολης αναδοσεως· αμεινον δε της περι ταυτα αταξιας τε και αντιφραξεως αυτον λεγειν· διο και Απολλων αυτον αναρει εντατιουμενον.

③ Starry-eyed

The starry-eyed darkness, beyond which Apollo is here said to fix his roots, is the sphere of the fixed stars, the regions immediately beyond which consists of the ethereal worlds, which according to the Chaldeans are three. For they assert that there are seven corporeal worlds, one empyrean and the first;¹ after this, three ethereal, and then three material worlds, which last consist of the inerratic sphere, the seven planetary spheres, and the sublunary region.² But that, according to the Orphic theology, there is an ethereal world beyond the sphere of the fixed stars is evident from the following mystic particulars respecting the Oracle of Night, which are transmitted to us by Proclus in his admirable Commentary on the *Timæus*, p. 63e and p. 96a. Says he:

The artificer of the universe, prior to his whole fabrication, is said to have betaken himself to the Oracle of Night, to have been there filled with divine conceptions, to have received the principles of fabrication, and, if it be lawful so to speak, to have solved all his doubts. Night, too, calls upon the father Jupiter to undertake the fabrication of the universe; and Jupiter is said by the theologian [Orpheus] to have thus addressed Night:

*Μαία Θεων υπατη, Νυξ αμβροτε, πως ταδε φρασεις;
Πως δει μ' αθανατων αρχην κρατεροφρονα θεσθαι;
Πως δε μοι εν τι τα παντ' εσται, και χωρις εκαστον;*

O Nurse supreme of all the pow'rs divine,
Immortal Night! how with unconquer'd mind
Must I the source of the Immortals fix?
And how will ail things but as one subsist,
Yet each its nature separate preserve?

¹ [Unmanifested, or First Logos]

² [See "The Seven Worlds of Being" in our Secret Doctrine's First Proposition Series. — ED. PHIL.]

To which interrogations the Goddess thus replies:

Αἰθερι παντα περιξ αφαιω λαβε· τω δ' ενι μεσσω
Ουρανον, εν δε τε γαιαν απειριτον, εν δε θαλασσαν,
Εν δε τε τεπεια παντα, τα τ' ουρανοους εστεφανωτο.

All things receive enclos'd on ev'ry side,
In Ether's wide, ineffable embrace;
Then in the midst of Ether place the Heav'n,
In which let Earth of infinite extent,
The Sea, and Stars the crown of Heav'n be fixt.

We also learn from Psellus, that according to the Chaldeans there are two solar worlds; *one which is subservient* to the ethereal profundity; the other *zonaic*, being one of the seven spheres. And Proclus, in *Tim. p. 264d*, informs us that

. . . according to the most mystic assertions, the *wholeness* of the Sun is in the supermundane order. For there a solar world and a total light subsist, as the Oracles of the Chaldeans affirm.

Οι γε μουσικωτατοι των λογων, και την ολοτητα αυτου (solis) την εν τοις υπερκοσμοις παραδεδωκασιν· εκει γαρ ο ηλιακος κοσμος, και ολον το φως, ως αι τε Χαλδαιων φημι λεγουσι.

These ethereal worlds pertain to the supermundane order of Gods, in which the *wholeness* of the Sun subsists. But by the *wholeness* (ολοτης) Proclus means the sphere in which the visible orb of the Sun is fixed, and which is called a *wholeness*,¹ because it has a perpetual subsistence, and comprehends in itself ail the multitude of which it is the cause. Conformably to this, the Emperor Julian (in *Orat. v*) says:

The orb of the Sun revolves in the starless, much above the inerratic sphere. Hence he is not the middle of the planets, but of the three worlds [*i.e.* of the three ethereal worlds], according to the telestic hypothesis.

Ο δισκος επι της αναστροφου φερεται, πολυ της απλανους υψηλοτερας, και ουτω δε των μεν πλανωμενων ουκ εξει το μεσση, τριων δε των κοσμων κατα τας τελεστικας υποθεσεις.

From all this, therefore, it is evident why Apollo in this hymn is said to fix his roots beyond the starry-eyed darkness; for this signifies that Gods are inserted by him in the ethereal worlds; *roots* being indicative of *summits* (ακροτητες) and such, according to the Orphic and Chaldaic theologians, are the Gods. Hence Proclus (in *MS. Comment. in Parmenid.*) beautifully observes,

As trees by their summits are firmly established in the earth, and all that pertains to them is through this earthly; after the same manner divine natures are by their summits *rooted in The One*, and each of them is a unity and one, through an unconfused union with *The One Itself*.

καθαπερ γαρ τα δενδρα ταις εαυτων κορυφαις ενιδρυνται τη γη, και εστι γηινα κατα ται' εκεινας, του αυτου τροπον και τα θεια, ταις εαυτων ακροτησι ενερριζωται τω ενι, και εκαστου αυτων ενας εστι και εν, δια την προς το εν ασυγχυτου ενωσι.

¹ [See "Chaos to sense, latent deity to reason" in our Secret Doctrine's First Proposition Series. — ED. PHIL.]

4 Harmonising lyre

Gesner¹ well observes, in his notes on this hymn, that the comparison and conjunction of the musical and astronomical elements are most ancient; being derived from Orpheus and Pythagoras to Plato. The lyre of Apollo, however, is not only indicative of the harmony of the universe, of which this divinity is the source, but particularly adumbrates according to the Orphic and Pythagoric doctrine, the celestial harmony, or the melody caused by the revolutions of the celestial spheres. This harmony of the spheres is admirably unfolded by Simplicius in his Commentary on the second book of Aristotle's *Treatise on the Heavens*, as follows:

The Pythagoreans said, that an harmonic sound is produced from the motion of the celestial bodies; and they scientifically collected this from the analogy of their intervals; since not only the ratios of the intervals of the sun and moon, and Venus and Mercury, but also of the other stars, were discovered by them.

Simplicius² adds,

Perhaps the objection of Aristotle to this assertion of the Pythagoreans may be solved as follows, according to the philosophy of those men: all things are not commensurate with each other, nor is everything sensible commensurate to everything, even in the sublunary region. This is evident from dogs, who scent animals at a great distance, and which are not smelt by men. How much more, therefore, in things which are separated by so great an interval as those which are incorruptible from the corruptible, and celestial from terrestrial natures, is it true to say that the sound of divine bodies is not audible by terrestrial ears? But if any one, like Pythagoras, who is reported to have heard this harmony, should have his terrestrial body exempt from him, and his luminous and celestial vehicle, and the senses which it contains, purified, either through a good allotment, or through probity of life, or through a perfection arising from sacred operations, such a one will perceive things invisible to others, and will hear things inaudible by others. With respect to divine and immaterial bodies, however, if any sound is produced by them, it is neither percussive nor destructive, but it excites the powers and energies of sublunary sounds, and perfects the sense which is coordinate with them. It has also a certain analogy to the sound which concurs with the motion of terrestrial bodies. But the sound which is with us, in consequence of the sonoric nature of the air, is a certain energy of the motion of their impassive sound. If then, air is not passive there, it is evident that neither will the sound which is there be passive. Pythagoras, however, seems to have said that he heard the celestial harmony, as understanding the harmonic proportions in numbers, of the heavenly bodies, and that which is audible in them. Someone, however, may very properly doubt why the stars are

¹ [Conrad Gessner, also known as Konrad Gesner, 1516–65, Swiss naturalist, bibliographer, botanist, physician, and classical linguist.]

² [Σιμπλικίος of Cilicia, c. 490–560, disciple of Ammonius Hermiæ and Damascius, and one of the last Neo-Platonists. He was among the pagan philosophers persecuted by Justinian in the early 6th century, and was forced for a time to seek refuge in the Persian court, before being allowed back into the empire. He wrote extensively on the works of Aristotle. Although his writings are all commentaries on Aristotle and other authors, rather than original compositions, his intelligent and prodigious learning makes him the last great philosopher of pagan antiquity. His works have preserved much information about earlier philosophers which would have otherwise been lost.]

seen by our visive sense, but the sound of them is not heard by our ears? To this we reply, that neither do we see the stars themselves; for we do not see their magnitudes, or their figures, or their surpassing beauty. Neither do we see the motion through which the sound is produced; but we see, as it were, such an illumination of them as that of the light of the sun about the earth, the sun himself not being seen by us. Perhaps too, neither will it be wonderful, that the visive sense, as being more immaterial, subsisting rather according to energy than according to passion, and very much transcending the other senses, should be thought worthy to receive the splendour and illumination of the celestial bodies, but that the other senses should not be adapted for this purpose.

5 The last string thou tunest to sweet accord

The following quotations from Nicomachus (*Harm. lib. i, p. 6*)¹ illustrates the meaning of the hypate and nete, or the highest and lowest string, in the lyre of Apollo. Says he:

From the motion of Saturn the most remote of the planets, the appellation of the gravest sound, hypate, is derived; but from the lunar motion, which is the lowest of ail, the most acute sound is called nete, or the lowest.

But Gesner observes, that a more ancient, and as it were archetypal, appellation is derived from the ancient triangular lyre,² a copy of which was found among the pictures lately dug out of the ruins of Herculaneum; in which the highest chord next to the chin of the musician is the longest, and consequently (says he) the sound is the most grave. Gesner proceeds in observing, that three seasons of the year are so compared together in a musical ratio, that hypate signifies the Winter, nete the Summer, and the Dorian measure represents the intermediate seasons, Spring and Autumn. Now the reason why the Dorian melody is assigned to the Spring, is because that measure wholly consists in temperament and moderation, as we learn from Plutarch in his Treatise *De Musica*. Hence it is with great propriety attributed to the Spring, considered as placed between Winter and Summer; and gratefully tempering the fervent heat of the one, and the intense cold of the other.

¹ [Νικόμαχος of Gerasa, 60–120, important mathematician and neo-Pythagorean of the ancient world, best known for his works *Introduction to Arithmetic* and *Manual of Harmonics in Greek*. See translation of the former in our Hellenic and Hellenistic Papers. — ED. PHIL.]

² [Cf. The Epigoneion, a 40-string string instrument:

“This instrument was invented, or at least introduced into Hellas, by Epigonus, a Greek musician of Ambracia, who was admitted to a citizenship at Sicyone. The Epigoneion had 40 strings (Pollux, *Onomasticon*, Lib. iv, cap. 9, sect. 2). It was probably a harp or psaltery, since in an instrument of so many strings some must have been of different lengths, for tension and thickness only could hardly have produced forty different sounds; strings of varying lengths require a frame, like that of the harp or of the Egyptian Kithara (see Fig. 165); or, in the case of the psaltery, a harp-shaped arrangement of the bridges.

Juba, or Jobas, the learned king of Mauritania, who flourished in A.D. 63, declares that Epigonus brought the instrument from Alexandria, and played upon it with the fingers of both hands, not using it only as an accompaniment to the voice, but introducing chromatic passages, and a chorus of other stringed instruments, probably citharas, to accompany the voice. Epigonus was also a skilled citharista, and played it with his bare hands without plectrum (Athen. iv., p. 183d, and xiv, p. 638a).”

Kathleen Schlesinger, *The Instruments of the Modern Orchestra & Early Records of the Precursors of the Violin Family*. Vol. 2 of 2, “Archaeological Records. Researches into the Remote Origin of the Violin Family: a Bibliography of Music and Archaeology, English and Foreign.” London: William Reeves, 1910; p. 315.]

6 Emitting whistling winds through Syrinx famed

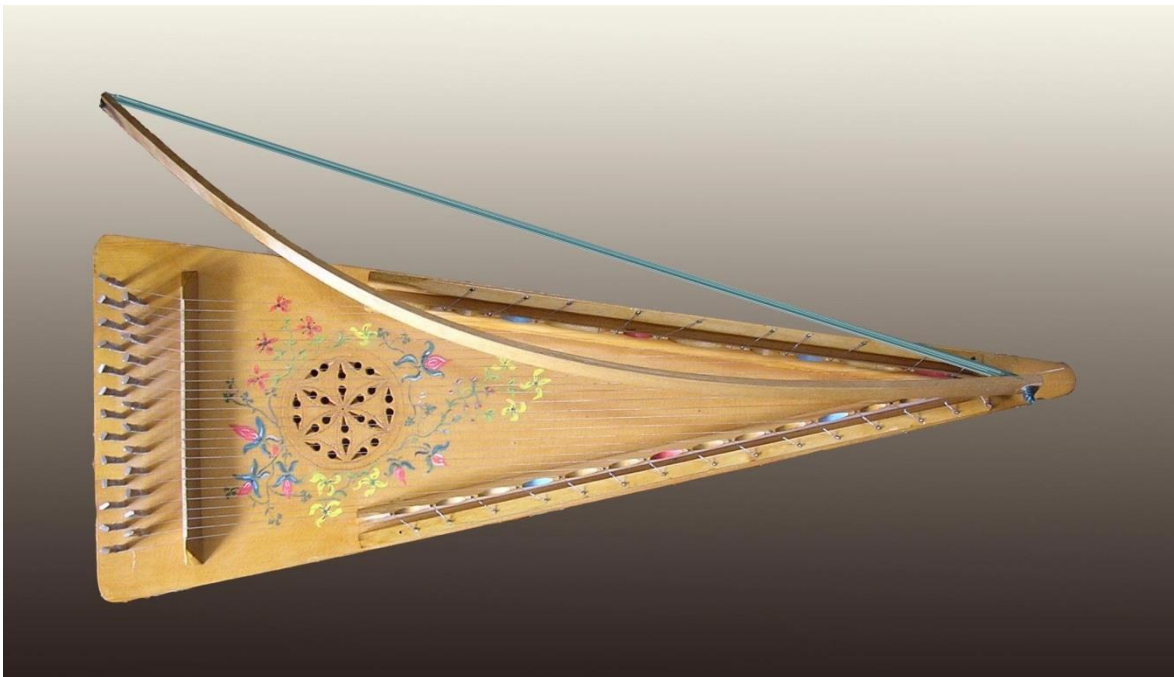
According to the Pythagoric and Platonic theology, which is perfectly conformable to that of Orpheus, Apollo is in the supermundane what Jupiter is in the intellectual order. For as the former illuminates mundane natures with supermundane light, so the latter illuminates the supermundane order with intellectual light. Indeed, there is such a wonderful agreement between these two divinities, that the Cyprian priests, as we are informed by the Emperor Julian, in his most excellent *Oration to the Sovereign Sun*, raised common altars to Jupiter and the Sun. Hence we cannot wonder that the same thing is here asserted of Apollo which Orpheus elsewhere asserts of Jupiter. For Johan. Diaco. in *Hesiod. Theog.*¹ quotes the following lines from Orpheus:

*Ζεὺς δὲ τε παντῶν ἐστὶ θεὸς, παντῶν τε κερᾶσθης,
Πνεύμασι συρίζων, φωναῖσι τε ἀερομικτοῖς.*

Jupiter is the God of all, and the mingler of all things,
Emitting shrill sounds from winds and air-mingled voices.

7 The figured seal's consigned

In the preceding note we have mentioned the profound union which subsists between Apollo and Jupiter. As Jupiter, therefore, considered as the Demiurgus, comprehends in himself the archetypal ideas of all sensible forms, and what these forms are *intellectually* in the Demiurgus they are according to a *supermundane* characteristic in Apollo; hence the latter divinity, as well as the former, may be said to possess the figured seal, of which every visible species is nothing more than an impression.



Modern example of a 25-string psalterion (57 x 21 cm) made by Jean Charles Monzani in 1987

¹ [Johannes Diaconus, *Allegories on Hesiod's Theogony*]