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Music and magic: from the teaching of Évrart de Conty

Preface

Évrart de Conty (c. 1330 – c. 1405) was a physician and member of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Paris, where he lectured for fifty years (1353–1403). From 1363 he served as physician to the future king Charles V, in whose service he continued throughout Charles's reign (1364–1380). De Conty is the author of three interrelated works of encyclopaedic character: 1) *Livre des problèmes* – a translation of, and commentary to, the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata*, 2) a rhymed allegorical poem entitled *Les Eschez amoureux* and 3) a gloss for *Les Eschez amoureux*, entitled *Le Livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés*.

For the literary context of *Le Livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés*, we need to look back to the first quarter of the 13th century, which produced the greatest achievement of medieval French literature – Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose* (Romance of the Rose). The *Romance* was immensely popular, as confirmed not only by the number of surviving handwritten copies, but also by its rhymed imitation composed by Évrart de Conty between 1370 and 1380, to which researchers gave the title of *Les Eschez amoureux*. Just as in the *Romance of the Rose*, the author of *Les Eschez* recounts an adventure from his youth. When he was still lying in bed one morning, the Goddess Nature appeared to him and encouraged him to embark on the path of mental cognition, as superior to the sensual one. The narrator sets out on his way and on a green path he meets four mythological figures: Mercury and the three goddesses who took part in the Judgement of Paris: Athena, Hera and Venus. Mercury asks the narrator for his opinion about that famous scene: was Paris right to award the prize of beauty to

Venus? He answers in the affirmative and finds himself alone with Venus, who thanks him for his choice and advises him to go to the Garden of Delights. On his way, in an evergreen wood, the young man meets Diana, and just as in the *Romance of the Rose* on the wall surrounding the garden he observes paintings representing personified human vices. At the entrance to the garden he meets a company of dancers in a procession and Déduit (Diversion or Pleasure) playing chess with a beautiful maiden. The God of Love encourages him to play a game of chess on a symbolic chessboard, every field of which represents one quality, disposition or deed related to love. The narrator accepts the challenge but is checkmated. The God of Love then explains to the young man the principles of the art of love, and the narrator pays homage to him. Subsequently Athena appears in front of the narrator, expounds on the primacy of reason over the senses and persuades him that he should live in accordance with reason. At this point, the narrative abruptly ends.

Les Eschez amoureux – as a rhymed didactic poem – was meant as a guide for the erotic, ethical and intellectual initiation of young aristocrats. It was most probably read/performed in conjunction with a teacher's commentary, perhaps even in dialogue with the disciple, and with the movement of figures on the chessboard demonstrated in real game time. This attractive teaching aid, combining elements of a game, speech and writing, was to inspire curiosity in the young man, interested both in love and in the laws governing the universe. In comparison with Gilles de Rome's ascetic *De regimine principium* (c. 1277) and the other fashionable 'mirrors' of that age, *Les Eschez* offered a refreshing alternative. Its allegorical convention made it possible to project the contents of an otherwise unpalatable treatise into the period's favourite ludic context – namely, that of the game of chess. It is, therefore, a work in which amorous narrative and encyclopaedic knowledge are combined with an astonishing didactic invention which depends on a multimedia interaction of text, gesture and oral instruction. The text itself was only one of the components of this allegorical construct in which a certain scope of knowledge is presented by means of 'reminder' keywords evoking particular symbolic associations. As the poetic text itself did not explain the meaning of these keywords, they needed to be elucidated by a teacher. Interpretations of the poem were compiled by Évrart de Conty into an extensive and comprehensive gloss, which not only sheds light on mysterious and difficult issues, but also, as the author himself claims, translates all the necessary instruction for the young aristocrats into a language 'accessible to reason' – namely, that of French prose.[1]

[1] Françoise Guichard-Tesson and Bruno Roy, 'Introduction', in: Évrart de Conty, *Le Livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés*, eds. Françoise Guichard-Tesson and Bruno Roy, Montréal 1993, pp. VII–LXX.

The author's commentary covers only four out of the five parts of *Les Eschez amoureux*: the narrator's meetings on the way to the garden of love (fols. 133v–163v), the garden itself (fols. 163v–222r), the chessboard and the game of chess (fol. 222r to the end). The account is interspersed with numerous digressions, the longest of which concerns ancient mythology. Évrart presents the characteristics of the seven planetary gods and of many other figures appearing in medieval mythographic writings (fols. 25v–133v), the four protagonists of the Judgement of Paris – the key episode of the rhymed poem – as well as including an extensive and skilful introduction to cosmological topics (fols. 25v8–103r28). Presentation of Apollo and the Nine Muses is used here as a pretext for an introduction to the liberal arts (fols. 39v32–92v10).

Le Livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés, written at the very beginning of the 15th century, before 1405, is a product of the literary reception of the *Romance of the Rose*, but its erudite character and intellectual dimensions exceed the scope of the famous prototype. Pierre-Yves Badel demonstrated that *Le Livre* is to a large extent an autonomous work, with abundant meanings and contents of its own, original also in relation to such medieval ideological and literary traditions as courtly love, ethics, cosmology and mythography.[2] *Le Livre* is a handbook systematically representing the intellectual and cultural legacy of the antiquity, reinterpreted in the spirit of Western rationalism for the needs of the European society at the turn of the 14th century.

Music is discussed in this book in the section dedicated to the liberal arts. The four chapters present a very general outline of the musical knowledge deemed necessary for a young aristocrat. The four topics discussed are: 1) sounds (*Les sons*), 2) the five consonances (*Les cinq consonances*), 3) the three kinds of music (*Les trois sortes de musique*) and 4) the universal character of music (*Universalité de la musique*). In this fourth chapter, Évrart included a section on magic (*Musique et magie*), and in particular – on the role of music and sound in magic rite, elaborating on their power as tools for the control of reality. It appears that the topic of 'the conjuring art' was for Évrart the quintessence of his sonic-numerical vision of man and the world, in which the microcosm was a reflection and a part of the macrocosm – not only conceptually, but also actually, through the live experience of emotions evoked by music.

The musical section of Évrart's extensive gloss, as well as the numerous remarks on music scattered in his text, have not become a subject of musicological studies to date. The only exception is the rather general article by Hermann Abert on music in

[2] Pierre-Yves Badel, *Le Roman de la Rose au XIV siècle. Étude de la réception de l'oeuvre*, Genève 1980, pp. 263–330.

the rhymed version of *Les Eschez amoureux*, published in 1904.[3] 2010 saw the appearance of a paper by the French philologist Amandine Mussou, meant as an analysis of the relation of music and medicine in the work of Évrart de Conty.[4] Admittedly, as an encyclopaedic guide for non-experts, *Les Eschez* does not analyse or solve the detailed questions of music, though it does present a complete and competent survey of its theoretical foundations. Instead, Évrart discusses music in the wide context of worldview, cosmology and myth, which places his presentation of the subject in the sphere of the history of ideas, philosophy and anthropology of science. The text below offers an attempt at a reconstruction of this more than six-hundred-year-old teaching on magic, presented against the background of the overall vision of the universe as contained in *Le Livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés*.

The world we live in[5]

It is a thing commonly known that the universe consists of two parts, one below, and one above. The lower part is called the world of elemental particles, since it contains the four elements which are the shared and universal building material of all things. We should know that these are: earth, water, air and fire. The hard earth lies in the middle of the whole universe, like a point in the middle of a circle. Water surrounds the earth, air surrounds earth and water, and fire encompasses air. The other part of the macrocosm comprises the heavens and stars, which Aristotle calls the fifth element, as it is different from the four elements. The heavens are neither light nor heavy, and they move round the earth in circles. They are immutable and stable; they are made of pure, transparent and luminous substance. They are very high above and so vast that in comparison with them, the earth resembles a point at the centre of a circle. The heavenly spheres possess such great power that they are the measure of all things in the elemental world.

Philosophers claim that this part of the macrocosm contains nine spheres: those of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn – the principal stars, which philosophers call planets. The eighth sphere is that of the 'fixed' stars, while the ninth encircles those other eight. The fixed stars cannot be numbered by the human mind and, though some of them may have great power, a much greater power comes from the planets, which are better visible to us. The most important of these is the Sun.

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[3] Hermann Abert, 'Die Musikästhetik der Échecs amoureux', *Romanische Forschungen* 15 (1904), pp. 884–925.

[4] Amandine Mussou, 'Le médecin et les sons: musique et magie dans *Le Livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés* d'Évrart de Conty', *Music and esotericism*, ed. Laurence Wuidar, Leiden 2010, pp. 33–43.

[5] Évrart de Conty, *Le Livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés*, eds. Françoise Guichard-Tesson and Bruno Roy, Montréal 1993, fols. 9r18–25v4.

Martianus and Macrobius claim that the Sun was placed among the planets in order to perfect the harmony of the spheres. The Sun contributes to this harmony in the same way as the main string contributes to the harmony of a musical instrument.

It should be explained that all the parts of the macrocosm mainly serve humans. The Sun provides light and heat, brings about changes of seasons and the coming of the night, so that the body may sleep and rest. It also makes trees, plants and flowers grow and bear fruit. In short, the Sun brings man all these advantages, and many others, which are secrets known to the wise philosophers. The Moon also serves people by illuminating the night, which frequently brings man much profit and pleasure. The Moon provides moisture and some natural coolness. The world is truly a hospitable place for man, though Pythagoras may have been right when he said that man is superior to all bodily creatures, and that his true home is not on the earth, but in the heavens. The ancients were so delighted with man that they could not find the right name for his perfection and dignity. They called him the microcosm, since they saw the entire universe reflected in him.

Aristotle argued that there is no animal or plant, no river in the world and no sign in heavens, nor any other thing, that could not be found in man. Other philosophers called man a microcosm for the sake of his constitution, which resembles the macrocosm. Just as in the macrocosm things are organised in certain ways, and entirely subordinated to the authority of God, so are the limbs and parts of the human body entirely dependent on the heart, which regulates all life. Just as the macrocosm comprises a material and a spiritual part, so the microcosm is made up of the sensual, mortal body and the immortal soul. Still others call man a microcosm because he is similar to the macrocosm in his actions. Just as the angels or intelligences control the revolutions of the heavenly bodies and the events in the world below, so does the human soul steer the energies and achieve many things through the agency of the body, and can create many wonders in the material world. Our souls, akin to pure intelligence, can also conjure and frequently work many miracles in nature.

Reason and natural common sense tell us that there is only one God who rules the world and on whom everything depends, as Aristotle demonstrates at the end of his *Metaphysics*. It seems incomprehensible to the rational man how the great and wise ancient poet-philosophers could believe that the various deities they wrote about were true gods. In earlier times it had been in their habit to give the names of gods and goddesses to creatures or things that were in any way similar to the one God, either in their lifespan, or in powers and authority, or in the manner of acting. They therefore called planets, stars and constellations gods and goddesses since they are immortal beings which exert highly effective influence on the lower world. They referred to

the Sun as the god of knowledge; to the Moon – as the god of hunting, or sometimes of birth; to Mars – as the god of battle, Venus – as the goddess of love. They also saw gods in the angels and intelligences that govern the heavens, and in the stars, and in all kinds of spirits, wherever they are: in the heavens or on earth, or in the air. They called them gods because they are immortal and rational, and these qualities are god-like. People also made gods out of human virtues, feelings and passions, because they often reign in our hearts and control us, and sovereignty and authority are to a certain degree sanctified things. And they treated the elements as gods for the sake of their indestructible nature and power in the world of life and death. They made gods of the spirits of woodland, rivers and streams, giving them various names depending on their nature and qualities.

On the threefold nature of music[6]

Music is the seventh of the liberal arts and the last of the four ways (*quadrivium*). It deals with the differences and ratios between sounds. Sound is generated by vibrating air and both low and high sounds are proportional just as the frequency of air vibrations in one sound is proportional to that in another. The ancients were right when they claimed that the study of music deals with numbers in relation to sounds and with sounds in relation of numbers. Sounds depend on numbers. It is obvious that harmony cannot form between numbers that are identical or very close to one another. It is therefore commonly accepted that sounds or voices must be different and not equal. Harmony means two things: firstly, diversity and inequality of sounds, and secondly, that these different and unequal sounds fit together and are pleasant to the ear. Boethius writes that harmony is a mixture of high and low sounds pleasant to the ear, whereas dissonance appears when simultaneously produced sounds are unpleasant to the ear.

According to ancient philosophers, musical proportion can be found not only in sounds and harmonies, but in all of nature. Boethius claims that the ancients distinguished three kinds of music: music of the world (*la musique mondaine*), music of man (*la musique humaine*) and instrumental music (*la musique instrumental*). Music of the world exists in the great universe and between its parts, in particular: in the heavens, the stars and the four elements. The ancients, and in particular Plato, believed that the world can only be so magnificent, diverse and full of contrasts, and at the same time – harmoniously composed, because it is organised in accordance with musical proportions. This is why all the things in the heavens, all their movements, dimensions

[6] Ibid., fols. 60v32–67v21.

and mutual distances from each other and from the Earth are measured with musical measure. Plato tells us that God is very good, very beautiful, truly perfect, and He created a very good and very beautiful world. The Scripture testifies to the fact that God disposed all things by measure and number and weight.[7]

Some philosophers claim that the heavenly spheres, built in agreement with musical proportions, resound with sweet tones as they revolve rapidly. Plato is said to have heard this melody of the heavens which Macrobius describes. Plato says that a blessed soul sits on every heavenly sphere and sings melodiously for the gods. Other poets claim that this heavenly music is performed by the nine muses who sing as they turn and seem to dance round Apollo, or else – that the nine heavenly spheres remain in very regular, so to speak – musical motion around the Sun, which is their chief master organising their melody and pleasant harmony. Ancient philosophers such as Pythagoras and many others claimed that music had been born in the heavens, and that the source and origin of all music and earthly melody is the music of the spheres. This proposition seems correct and quite sensible as long as it is properly understood. We cannot accept or prove with rational arguments that the movement of the heavenly spheres produces sounds. On no account should the music of the heavens be understood literally as an actual harmony perceived by the senses, and this is not how Pythagoras, Plato and other eminent philosophers conceived this idea. What they most likely had in mind was the proper organisation of the heavenly spheres, stars and their movement in accordance with musical measure, which to the mind constitutes a melody far more pleasant than any real melody. Thus, the sweet sound and melody (of the spheres) are not real and sensual, but intellectual, and can only be comprehended by reason.

The music of man is contained in the tissues and composition of the human body. According to Avicenna, the human body is the noblest and best balanced structure in nature. Ancient philosophers claimed that the four elements are harmonised in man in accordance with musical measure, which is present not only in the body, but also in the union of the body and the soul. About the soul itself they said that its rational and sensual parts are arranged in accordance with musical numbers. Plato believed that the human soul is made up of numbers and moved by numbers. Naturally, this view should not be taken literally, as it would be contrary to reason. Aristotle himself opposed this idea, since in reality the human soul is an indivisible spiritual whole in which numbers have no place. It is very likely that when Plato spoke of the mathematical composition of the soul, what he meant was that just as musical numbers make up a harmony and a melody pleasant to the ear, so the human soul and the body created for that soul

[7] Book of Wisdom 11, 19–20.

in the measure and proportion determined by nature are harmonised with each other and resemble the natural harmony.

Instrumental music (*la musique instrumental*) is the actual music that exists in our songs and sounds performed by voices and music instruments, such as the vielle, the psaltery and the harp, the organ, the bagpipe, the flute, the trumpet, drums, the dulcimer and many others, which can be divided into three categories.[8] Instrumental music also manifests itself in metre and rhythm. We should know that musical numbers and proportions, on which harmonies depend, can be found not only in the melodies and songs of our voice undefined by any specific meaning, but also in the words that form an utterance determined by letters.

How music influences people[9]

Ancient philosophers observed that musical number and proportion can be found in many things, and concluded that nature must have had important reasons for using those numbers. It is therefore highly probable that musical proportion is also present in beautiful colours, smells and tastes, and in all things of that kind, because all the most beautiful things have been made in accordance with musical measure, which tells us how to mix high and low sounds so as to form pleasant harmonies. Music delights our physical and sensual nature, and, as Aristotle claims, it pleases the human soul. Macrobius claims that music is liked by everyone, regardless of age or character – though in fact there are some people who dislike music. Probably their strange nature does not care for joy and pleasure, so that even the most beautiful song or speech will not move their hard hearts. Lack of interest in music may also sometimes be the result of immense sorrow, which can quite annihilate the power of music and harmony. This is why Ovid tells us that we should not beg a woman who has just lost her child to overcome her sorrow. Music can comfort her only after she has shed her share of tears and shaken off despair at least partly.

This is because music enhances the joy or sorrow that we have in our hearts. Music can prove an excellent remedy for ordinary sensible sadness, if despair has not taken full control of the mind. According to Aristotle, music helps sad and desperate people, but also those who are joyful and merry. Some sounds inspire sloth and sluggishness, others gently put us to sleep, and still others exhilarate the hearts of the audience with their sweetness, helping them cast all cares aside, if only they do not listen to those

[8] '[...] vieles, psalterions et harpes, orgues, muses, fleutes, tymbres, tabours, cymbales et moult d'autres manieres de instrumens [...]'; Évrart de Conty, *Le Livre des Eschez*, fol. 66r40.

[9] Ibid., fols. 69v13–82r42.

harmonies too frequently. It must be accepted, therefore, that music may not only give pleasure to the soul, but can also very often change our mood. Whatever it does, it always serves to improve man: it dispels anxiety, turns anger and folly into gentleness, meanness – into generosity. It also cures illnesses, and especially the melancholy caused by lovesickness, and it helps to fight off fatigue, both in men and in animals.

Depending on the sounds and their arrangement, melodies have different impact on people. Similarly people like different kinds of music depending on character. This is normal and natural, as everyone likes what is similar to him and what best suits his bodily constitution and inner nature. The ancients distinguished three kinds of music: Dorian, Phrygian and Lydian. Dorian music is simple, serious, moderate and slow. By its nature it induces the listeners to be virtuous, good and honest. This is why this kind of music was recommended by Plato. Fast Phrygian music induces courage, anger, valour and revenge, helps achieve victory in battle and in love. Men and horses listen to Phrygian music in order to increase their strength and courage. The sweet, mild and noble measure of Lydian music enhances joy and gentleness. Aristotle also mentions Mixolydian music, which inspires compassion and pity.

The potency of music is illustrated by the old stories of Amphion and Orpheus, invented by the ancients so as to demonstrate the secret power of beautiful speech which transforms unruly, mean and insane people, diverting them to the path of good and virtuous life.

Music has impact on animals as well[10]

The magnificence of music is evident in the fact that it is loved also by animals, and particularly by those who have good judgement and incredibly sharp senses. When a noble horse hears the sounds of trumpets and other loud instruments playing military Phrygian music, it marches to battles with greater resolve. Camels and cattle are also fond of music, similarly as sheep and goats. When a shepherd plays an instrument for them, the animals keep close to each other in the herd and follow him calmly to their pastures. Also the stag admires music and frequently falls prey to the hunter as a result of this inclination. When the hunter plays the flute or sings, the amazed animal stops thinking and, engrossed in the music, it falls pierced with an arrow. It also happens at times that, not hearing the dogs barking in the distance, it comes closer to the hunter, heedless of danger, in order to listen to the music.

[10] Ibid., fols. 76v43–78r27.

magic may be performed by natural means without the intervention of any spirits, while other types of magic are impossible without spirits. Those latter types of magic seem so far removed from any natural phenomena that there is no way one could believe in their natural causes. This last opinion is the most sensible one.

Epilogue[13]

It is evident from what we have said that music has a very powerful effect on all conscious creatures; it delights them, and therefore it is present in all the well-made natural things. The power and efficacy of musical sounds and words uttered in a certain manner is used by a type of magical and divinatory arts called incantatory. Music plays an especially important role in necromancy, which makes use of spirits.[14] Among the liberal arts, music is worthy of praise and recommendation. I have dedicated so much space to it because it is so pleasant that those who listen to it do not want to give it up for anything in the world. This is why the author of the poem has dwelt for such a long time on the subject of music, explaining many things that concern this subject.

Afterword

Évrart de Conty's teaching on magic is a part of his large opus in which he discussed the key elements of medieval knowledge about the world – simplified for educational purposes, but still well grounded in erudition and presented in an intellectually daring fashion. His text provides one of the numerous examples of rational scientific reflection on reality that we find in medieval writings – coexisting in complete harmony with religious-magical thinking. The unproblematic coexistence of what might seem to be two opposite extremes in the description of reality was possible first and foremost because magical behaviour and beliefs were not treated in the Middle Ages as irrational. There was a widespread belief in the efficacy of magical actions organised in accordance with specific rules and principles that could be coherently described, and in this sense – they were not contrary to reason.[15] As Richard Kieckhefer correctly observed, the word

[13] Ibid., fols. 37v32–82v43.

[14] Ibid., fols. 82r42–82v5.

[15] 'But the people in medieval Europe who used, feared, promoted, or condemned magic, and who identified magic as such, not only assumed it worked but could give [...] reasonably specific explanations of how it worked. Not all those who shared these assumptions were rational in the sense of being bookish, given to abstraction, or even particularly deliberative, yet they normally used words in ways that had reasonably specific meaning, and their language reflected the way the world made cognitive sense to them', see Richard Kieckhefer, 'The specific rationality of medieval magic', *The American Historical Review* 99 (1994) no. 3, p. 814. Cf. also idem, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., Cambridge 2014.

'magic', which in the Middle Ages was in common use, constituted a linguistic reflection of the period's cognitive consciousness in relation to its knowledge of the world. This world consciousness is probably the key to an understanding of the role and place of magic in medieval European culture.[16]

At the earliest stage of cultural evolution, people explained the world only by reference to their self-knowledge and to direct observation of the flora and fauna around them. The second source of world knowledge were dreams and trance states, which gave man access to contents of the subconscious, represented in symbolic forms.[17] In conditions that facilitated a natural proneness to hallucinations, visions and trance states, people tended to be deified and objects – animated. The real and the supra-real merged into one, while the images of the external world from sensual perception and those created by the unconscious mind – were superimposed on one another, and began to interact. Reality was perceived as polarised between the world of the senses and psychological-spiritual life.[18]

The model of the world was defined by an animistic cognitive paradigm, in which objects and processes observed in the environment were perceived as resulting from an interplay of spiritual forces which belonged to a mysterious side of reality concealed from the senses. The universe was understood as one huge living organism, endowed not only with material form, but also with internal spiritual structure. In the world view determined by an animistic cognitive paradigm, every material object was believed to possess its symbolic counterpart in the higher world, of which this object was a representation. It was also believed that the mysterious interplay of spiritual forces in that world could be influenced by magical actions and religious rituals addressed to various creatures in the supernatural reality.

The animistic cognitive paradigm, manifesting itself in the animation, personification and deification of various elements of the natural environment, was rooted in the magical--religious paradigm that views the world as essentially organised in all its dimensions. All phenomena of the past, the present and the future partake in this order. This perfect whole, in which everything is contained in everything else, comprises three correlated levels of existence: the macrocosm, the mesocosm, and the microcosm. The macrocosm is the world as a whole; the mesocosm – is the natural and social environment of humans, who see

[16] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magia w średniowieczu* [Magic in the Middle Ages], trans. Ireneusz Kania, Kraków 2001, p. 10.

[17] Andrzej Wierciński, *Magia i religia. Szkice z antropologii religii* [Magic and religion. Sketches in the anthropology of religion], Kraków 2010, p. 136.

[18] Krzysztof Kowalski and Zygmunt Krzak, *Tezeusz w labiryncie* [Theseus in the labyrinth], Warsaw 2003, p. 11.

themselves as part of that total organism and believe themselves to be the microcosm, experiencing the unity of man and the universe in a broad cosmic perspective.[19] The dualistic view of the world, manifesting itself in the material and spiritual dimensions, was undoubtedly supported (if not initiated) by man's experiences with sound. As a link between the external world and the inner, psychical reality, sound was viewed as an indication of the spiritual-psychological bond between the microcosm and the macrocosm. The concept of the ear as the 'gate to the other worlds'[20] lay at the foundation of the ancient notion of the musical nature of the universe, which the Middle Ages elaborated into a complex system of acoustic-numerical interrelations.

Sound phenomena, division of the monochord, intervals, scale structures – these topics take up many pages in Évrart's work, which also presents the concept of universal harmony, formulated by Boethius and repeated by authors throughout the Middle Ages. This harmony coexists in the heavenly spheres and in the elemental world, on the level of the human microcosm as well as in music and poetry, which reflect the rules that govern the universe as a whole. The idea of a sonic unity of man and the world elevated music to a special place among the seven liberal arts. As the science of sounds-numbers determining the beauty of the celestial order, music became a field of reflection on human emotions and moods, as well as a point of departure for an analysis of aesthetic experience and cognition. On the other hand, the strong emotions and sensations evoked in people by words and sounds, confirmed for all the known cultures, gave rise to the conviction that words and sounds could exert an analogous impact on the spiritual world – an idea discussed in some detail by Évrart de Conty. We should add that the sensitivity of many animals to sound, as observed in traditional cultures, contributed to the belief in the magical power of music. The topic of Évrart's presentation was, therefore, music's ability to exercise its power on the entire world, populated by people, animals and all kinds of non-human creatures, inspiring in them the desired emotions and persuading them to act on behalf of, and behave in a way advantageous to human beings.

Despite the great advances in Western science and rational thinking in the early 15th century, the animistic paradigm (in the sense defined above) did not entirely lose its systematic influence on the representations of the world. Various aspects of contacts with the spiritual world became the topic of scientific research and were subjected to

[19] Łukasz Trzciński, *Mit wolności w cyberkulturze* [The myth of freedom in cyberculture], Kraków 2013, pp. 13–21.

[20] Max Peter Baumann, 'The ear as organ of cognition: prolegomenon to the anthropology of listening', *European studies in ethnomusicology: historical developments and recent trends*, eds. Max Peter Baumann, Artur Simon and Ulrich Wegner, Wilhelmshaven 1992, pp. 123–142.

rationalised logical-mathematical procedures, developed for the study of morality, movement, diseases, sorcery and divine revelation.[21] In *Le Livre des Eschez amoureux moralisés* magic is represented as part of the science of music, deeply mathematicised in the Middle Ages, but at the same time representing the wealth of spiritual reality, to which music offers the most perfect of keys. Sound, music and the word actualise the magical experience of participation in that reality. This is what Évrart de Conty told his pupils about.

[21] Alistair Cameron Crombie, 'Historical commitments of European science'. in: idem, *Science, optics and music in medieval and early modern thought*, London-Ronceverte 1990, pp. 1–23.