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in Medieval Culture and Society



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CONTENTS

IDEAS OF HARMONY IN MEDIEVAL CULTURE AND SOCIETY

- VII Oleg Voskoboynikov, *Le Moyen Âge en quête de l'harmonie*
- 3 Cecilia Panti, *Boethius and Ptolemy on Harmony, Harmonics and Human Music*
- 37 Varvara Zharkaya, *The challenged Harmony Byzantine Dispute over the Form of the Universe*
- 47 Valery V. Petroff, «Armonia rerum» in John Scottus' *Aulae siderea*
- 67 Jean-Patrice Boudet, *L'harmonie du monde dans le De radiis attribué à al-Kindī*
- 87 Anna Litvina – Fjodor Uspenskij, *Dynastic Power and Name-giving Principles in Kievan and Muscovite Rus' (10th - 16th Centuries)*
- 107 Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *La papauté médiévale et le concept d'harmonie*
- 121 Irene Caiazzo, *Harmonie et mathématique dans le cosmos du XII^e siècle*
- 149 Francesco Santi, *How, when and why the so-called Chirping of Birds pointed out the Harmony of the World*
- 169 Oleg Voskoboynikov, *Deux harmonies en comparaison: Michel Scot et Grégoire du Mont Sacré*
- 197 Nicolas Weill-Parot, *Nature universelle et harmonie du monde (XIII^e-XIV^e siècle)*

CONTENTS

- 223 Jean Wirth, *La notion médiévale d'harmonie et ses applications artistiques*
- 243 Maria Sorokina, *Le ciel des empyrées une fonction harmonique? Un débat théologique au XIII^e siècle*
- 303 Tiziana Suarez-Nani, *Les anges et les cieux, figures de l'harmonie universelle*
- 321 Mikhail Khorkov, *Harmony of Intellect and Disharmony of Soul in German Mystical Texts of the Late Middle Ages*
- 335 Mikhail Boytsov, *Seeking for Harmony after Chaos Political Ceremonies in the First «Ceremonial Section» of the Golden Bull of 1356*
- 355 Danielle Jacquart, *L'harmonie des parties du corps entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance*
- 373 Mikhail Shumilin, «*At uidete quam concinne*». *Changing Attitudes to Metrical Harmony in Giovanni Pontano's Actius*
- 391 Galina Zelenina, *Harmonizing the Spanish Inquisition in Castilian and Sephardi Historical Schemes and in Messianic Scenarios*
- 413 Olga Togoëva, *Sorcellerie comme disharmonie dans l'univers de Jean Bodin*
- 429 Katrin Bauer, *How to imagine the Harmony of the World in the Seventeenth Century The Harmonice mundi by Johannes Kepler*

INDEXES

- 451 *Index of names and places*, by Agostino Paravicini Bagliani and Oleg Voskoboynikov
- 461 *Index of manuscripts*, by Agostino Paravicini Bagliani

Valery V. Petroff

«ARMONIA RERUM» IN JOHN SCOTTUS' *AULAE SIDEREAЕ*

John Scottus' poem *Aulae sidereae* («Starry temple/court», c. 869–77)¹ was supposedly written in response to Charles the Bald's plans to construct at Compiègne a new church which could rival Aachen's Palatine Chapel of Charlemagne, his glorious grandfather². It describes real or imaginary Christmas mass served by Charles the Bald in an ideal temple. By means of sophisticated poetical symbolism John Scottus proposes multilayer vision of the harmonic universe the hearth of which constitutes an ideal temple. Most probably, the new church of King Charles was still only a project when John Scottus was composing his poem. This allowed John Scottus the liberty to propose a building program, his own ideas concerning what a royal temple should be. The *Aulae sidereae* provided Charles the Bald with a plan and design of an imperial temple which combined the features of Biblical temple of Solomon (as represented in the Ezekiel's vision)³ and Aachen's palatine church. Moreover, John Scottus made this church a corner-stone of the universe centered around the ideal temple and its main figure – the would-be emperor Charles.

Astronomy, arithmology, the sacred history, and eschatology are interwoven in *Aulae sidereae*'s worldview. The poem's prologue depicts cosmos and its ruler, the Sun, that travels through the cardinal signs of the zodiac in the course of the year. On a theological and metaphysical level, these calendar moments coincide with the

1. Critical editions of the poem: *Iohannis Scotti Eriugenaе Carmina*, ed. M. W. Herren, Dublin 1993, 116–20; *Iohannis Scotti Carmina*, ed. L. Traube, Berlin 1896 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Poetae Latini aevi Carolini*, 3), 550–52.

2. M. Herren, «Eriugena's *Aulae sidereae*, the *Codex Aureus* and the Palatine Church of St. Mary at Compiègne», *Studi Medievali*, 28 (1987), 593–608; V. Petroff, *Aulae sidereae*. The World by Eriugena, M. A. thesis defended at the Central European University, Budapest (1996).

3. Ez 40–42.

events of the sacred history: the conception and birth of Jesus Christ and John the Precursor occur under these zodiac signs. The cosmic harmony is manifest when the order of things sings along (*concinit*) to what is told by Scripture (*mundus gestans symbola Christi*). The divine deeds are harmonized by means of the *octaves* (*octonus numerus divinos symfonat actus*). The term *octava* too has multiple meaning and importance in the *Aulae sidereae* (astronomical, calendar, liturgical, musical, arithmological): the universal concord symbolized by the harp of King David (*nabla sonorum*) too is arranged by the octaves.

The harmony of History and the Bible

In the *Aulae sidereae* (v. 85-100) John Scottus deliberately draws parallels between Charles' church and the Biblical temple of Solomon⁴. Architectural or artistic details described in the poem are, for most part, archetypical and refer to the description of the temple built in Jerusalem by Solomon (as represented in 1 Kings 6-7, 2 Chron. 3-4, and Ezekiel 40-43). Both churches were houses of God built by mighty and wise kings near their own palaces⁵. Remarkably, «Solomon» was a well-known epithet of Eriugena's royal patron, Charles the Bald.

There are references to Aachen too. First, the Aachen basilica was of special importance to the poem's addressee, Charles the Bald⁶. In addition, the Aachen chapel was the most prominent of the imperial buildings, being the symbolic centre of the Carolingian empire, where the high throne of Charlemagne was placed⁷. The exterior

4. Y. Christe, «Sainte-Marie de Compiègne et le temple d'Hézéchiél», in *Jean Scot Érigène et l'Histoire de la Philosophie*, ed. R. Roques, Paris 1977, 478-79. For a broader context see S.S. Tuell, «Ezekiel 40-42 as Verbal Icon», *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 58/4 (1996), 649-64.

5. 2 Par 8:1: «aedificavit Salomon domum Domini et domum suam»; 2 Par 7:11: «complevit Salomon domum Domini et domum regis». Such an interpretation supports the opinion that the church in question was to be constructed at Compiègne in the residence of King Charles.

6. P. E. Dutton, É. Jeuneau, «The Verses of the *Codex Aureus* of Saint Emmeran», *Studi medievali*, 24/1 (1983), 115-20.

7. P. E. Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire*, London 1994, 53; Id., *Charlemagne's Moustache and Other Cultural Clusters of a Dark Age*, New York 2009, 121-22.

and interior design of *an* ideal imperial church had, for Carolingian intellectuals, become inevitably associated with that of Aachen. Like the church in the *Aulae sidereae* the Aachen chapel was dedicated to the honor of the Virgin; and like Solomon's temple, which was likewise located near the house of the king, the Aachen «basilica» constituted a part of Charlemagne's imperial palace. The chapel's core was octagonal (which might also indicate its imperial character)⁸, and the church in the poem also had πολύγωνος *flexus* (v. 88).

There is probably one further, and heretofore unnoticed, reference to Aachen in the *Aulae sidereae*. Verse 94 of the poem clearly speaks about «*sursum deorsum* populos altaria circum», and this extraordinary detail again alludes to Aix-la-Chapelle, where Charlemagne, from his throne in the tribune over the main portal, could watch two liturgies being served simultaneously on two levels, one above the other⁹. It is worth mentioning that among the models which John Scottus might follow describing the church interior are Bede's *De tabernaculo* and *De templo*, as also Alcuin's verse inscriptions for the altars and churches dedicated to Virgin Mary¹⁰.

Below I will observe the ways John Scottus understands harmony in his poem with special emphasis on his sources and predecessors. Particularly, I am going to indicate close affinity between representations of the Sun in *Aulae sidereae*'s astronomical prologue and philosophical hymns of Late Antiquity, pointing out Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis* as his direct source. It will be suggested that

8. One of the first descriptions of a Christian octagonal church built by the emperor is found in the third book of Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*. In ch. 50 Eusebius reports that in Antioch Constantine consecrated a church of surpassing size and beauty which was «of an octagonal form (ἐν ὀκταέδρου μὲν συνεστώτα σχήματι), and surrounded on all sides by many chambers, courts, and upper and lower apartments». See Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine*. Book III, ch. 50. Trans. E. C. Richardson, in: *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Second Series. Vol. I. Grand Rapids 1979, 532-33.

9. The corresponding drawing see in P. Clemen, *Die romanische Monumentalmalerei in den Rheinlanden*, Düsseldorf 1916, 9, fig. 2 (reprinted in Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming*, fig. 12).

10. See V. Petroff, «The *De Templo* of Bede as the Source of an Ideal Temple Description in Eriugena's *Aulae Sidereae*», *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales*, 65, 1 (1998), 97-106; Id., «Эпилог *Aulae sidereae* Иоанна Скотта (vv. 72-101) и предшествующая поэтическая традиция», *Диалог со временем* [«Eriologue of John Scottus' *Aulae sidereae* (vv. 72-101) and the Earlier Poetic Tradition», *Dialogue with Time*], (1999), 46-59.

verses 82–92 of the *Aulae Sidereae* may allude to Lucretius' prologue to the *De Rerum Natura*. I also discuss how arithmological symbolism of the four and the eighth is treated and engaged by John Scotus in an attempt to link harmonic structures of cosmos and history.

The astronomical prologue: harmony of the poem's sources

I'd like to point out the remarkable affinity between *Aulae sidereae's* prologue and philosophical hymns of Late Antiquity. The *Aulae sidereae* (v. 1–8) begins with the image of the Titan-Sun that binds the circles of the starry temple with his golden hair:

Aulae sidereae paralelos undique circos
 Crinibus auratis nectit Titania lampas.
 Umbram bis luci parilem bis lance **staterans**
 Sese bis tropicos¹¹ ambarum vertit in auctus,
 Ac sic distingens binis bis motibus annum
 Regnat **tetragonum** pulcro discrimine **mundum**
 Signis ambitum bis senis limite curvo,
 Quae totidem menses terrenis usibus aptant.

The lamp of Titan binds with its golden hair
 The ever-parallel rings of the starry temple.
 Twice it **weighs out** on its scale shade and night, twice a year equal to
 each other,
 And twice it turns back at the tropics to the increase of each.
 Thus dividing the year with its twice-two motions
 It rules the world, four-fold in this excellent division,
 Girt with twice-six signs, distributed along curved [zodiacal] path,
 Which furnish the same number of months for earthly use¹².

Quite unexpectedly for Carolingian poetry, these initial lines seem to echo the tradition of Greek and Latin philosophical and astronomical poems of antiquity.

11. *Iohannis Scotti Annotationes in Marcianum*, ed. C. Lutz, Cambridge, MA, 1939, 175 (437, 24 Dick): «*Tropicus* id est conuersibilis. Ibi sunt duo solstitia in quibus conuertitur sol in auctum diei uel noctis».

12. I use two English translations (with my corrections): J. J. O'Meara, *Eriugena*, Oxford 1988, 184–87; and *Iohannis Scotti Carmina*, ed. M. Herren, Dublin 1993, 117–21.

Proclus. For instance, Proclus too began his *Hymn to Helios* with an invocation to Helios depicted as the king of the visible universe pouring down the flow of harmony into the material worlds. Helios is presented as Titan binding the planets with his gold-like radiance:

Κλύθι, πυρὸς νοεροῦ βασιλεῦ, χρυσήνιε Τιδάν,
Κλύθι, φάους ταμία, ζωαρκέος, ὦ ἄνα, πηγῆς
αὐτὸς ἔχων κληῖδα καὶ ὑλαίοις ἐνὶ κόσμοις
ὑπόθεν ἁρμονίης ῥύμα πλούσιον ἐξοχετεύων.

Hearken, king of noeric fire, Titan holding the golden bridle,
hearken, dispenser of light, you, o lord, who hold yourself
the key to the life-supporting source and channel off from above
a rich stream of **harmony** into the material worlds¹³.

According to Proclus, Helios is the father of the Seasons who provides the harmonious ordering of the cosmos of the heavenly bodies (v. 8-12), of the four universal elements (v. 13-4), of music (v. 18-20) and of health (21-3). Proclus even mentions «the bright-shining court of the lofty Father»¹⁴, the all-creating god, of whom Helios is an image. This Father is the Demiurgic Nous, to which all souls should ascend.

Synesius. The poetry of Synesius, the bishop of Cyrene (c. 370-412/3), too presents parallels to John Scottus' *Aulae sidereae*. There is a short poem placed at the end of Synesius' *Letter to Paeonius*:

Σκέπτεο τείρεα πάντα πρὸς ἄντυγα, τῆς ἔπι Τιδάν
Νύκτα ταλαντεύει καὶ φάος ἀρχόμενος·
Δέξο ζωδιακοῦ λοξώσιας, οὐδέ σε λήσει
Κλεινὰ μεσημβρινῆς κέντρα συνηλύσεως.

Observe all the constellations near curvature of horizon, whereon
The rising Titan **weighs out day and night**.
Learn the obliquity of the Zodiac, nor let escape
Those renowned intersections of their joint arrival¹⁵.

13. *Procli Hymni*, ed. E. Vogt, *Klassische-Philologische Studien*, Wiesbaden 1957. I use the translation from: *Proclus' Hymns: Essays, Translations, Commentary*, ed. R. M. van den Berg, Leiden 2001.

14. *Ibid.* I, 32: ὑπιτενοῦς πατρὸς πολυφεγγέος αὐλής.

15. Synesius, *Letter to Paeonius*, PG 66, 1587A. I wish to thank Andrei Ros-sius (Institute of Philosophy, Moscow) who helped me with translation of this

And another example, from Synesius' *Hymn IX*:

τὰν δ' εὐρυφαῆ κόμαν
 Τιτὰν ἐπετάσσατο
 ἄρρητον ὑπ' ἔχινον,
 ἔγνω δὲ γόνον θεοῦ,
 τὸν ἀριστοτέχναν νόον,
 ἰδίου πυρὸς ἀρχάν¹⁶.

Titan spread out
 his far-flaming hair
 under the ineffable track,
 and recognised the Offspring of God,
 Mind, the Artificer of all that is best,
 and the origin of his [Titan's] own flame¹⁷.

Synesius' image of the rising Titan who weighs out (ταλαντεύει) day and night and the Titan who spread out his far-flaming hair (εὐρυφαῆ κόμαν) is quite close to that of the *Aulae Sidereae*. Obviously, John Scottus had no access to the poems of Proclus and Synesius. But they seem to be surprisingly close to initial lines of his own poem. Moreover, the *Aulae sidereae's* hapax *staterans* (v. 3) that puzzled scholars derives from the noun *statera* and was probably coined by Eriugena in imitation of corresponding Greek pair: τὸ τάλαντον (a scale, a definite weight) – ταλαντεύω (to balance, weigh out). As we see, the verb ταλαντεύω appears in the same context in Synesius' *Letter to Paeonius*.

Aldhelm of Malmesbury. But the direct and indirect sources of *Aulae sidereae's* prologue are not limited to Greek tradition only. The formula *Titania lampas* (v. 2) points to the Latin west where it had

ambiguous passage and pointed out that the duration of the sun day and night was calculated by observation of the horizon on which the Sun appears together with certain constellations that rise or set at the same moment. See corresponding discussion in Aratus, *Phaenomena* I, 559–68, to which Synesius is alluding here. Also cf. Theocritus, *Idyllia* II, 166: ἀστέρες, εὐκάλιοι κατ' ἄντυγα Νυκτὸς ὀπαδοί, «the stars, attendants at silent Night's chariot».

16. *Synésios de Cyrène I Hymnes*, ed. Ch. Lacombrade, Paris 1978, 96, v. 49–54 (= PG 66, 1613).

17. *Id.*, *Hymn IX*, PG 66, 1613, transl. A. Fitzgerald.

its history. A similar phrase *Phoebea lampas* was used once by Seneca¹⁸. And the adjective *Titania* as such is also not rare in Latin poetry, having become widespread with the works of Vergil¹⁹. It is worth mentioning, that *Titaneus arotus* occurs several times in the *Hesperica famina*, which has the insular origin²⁰. If *titania* or *lampas* occur rather frequently, the set expression *titania lampas* is extremely rare. The only *titania lampas* I found, exists in the *Aenigmata* of Aldhelm of Malmesbury (c. 639–709): «saecula dum lustrat *lampas titania phoebi*», «when the Titanian lamp of Phoebus brightens the world»²¹. Thus, it is quite plausible that the set expression *titania lampas* might have been borrowed by John Scottus directly from Aldhelm.

Martianus Capella. Martianus' *De nuptiis* is another Latin source of *Aulae sidereae's* astronomical prologue. *De nuptiis* contains a verse about the gleaming Titan who «inflamed his golden red orb»²², and a passage explaining that the heavenly spheres produce harmony, while Apollo, in the form of the Sun, modulates the spheres of the heavens. He is called «Phoebus» and «the Golden-haired» (*auricomus*), since «the august head of the sun, streaming and surrounded with flaming rays, is like a gleaming head of golden red hair»²³.

There is also a hymn praising the Sun in the *De nuptiis*²⁴ that provides parallels with the *Aulae sidereae*. It says that the circle of aether

18. Seneca, *Phoenissae*, 86: «[...] noctem afferet / Phoebea lampas, Hesperus facit diem».

19. John Scottus himself quotes Vergil's *Aeneid* VI, 724–6 in the *Periphyseon* I, 476CD: «Hinc Poeta: Principio caelum ac terram camposque liquentes, / Lucentemque globum Lunae, Titaniaque astra, / Spiritus intus alit».

20. See *Hesperica Famina, A-Text*. Ed. by M. W. Herren, Toronto 1974. For instance, cf. v. 11: «ti<ta>neus sidereis ampliori rutilo precellit arotus tedis», «the Titanian fire excels the torches of the stars with fuller golden red glow»; v. 303: «Titaneus occiduuum rutilat arotus pontum, / roseos imam curuat radios sub speram», «the Titanian fire reddens the Western Sea, / it bends its rosy rays toward the bottom of the sphere»; v. 364: «Titaneus diurnas rutilat orion metas», «the Titanian star illuminates the diurnal boundaries».

21. Aldhelm, *Aenigmata* 97, 7.

22. Martianus, *De nuptiis* VI, 585 Willis: «hinc nitidus rutilum Titan succenderat orbem».

23. *Ibid.* I, 12–13: «in caelo orbis [...] concentus edere [...] Apollinis silva ita rata modificatione congrueret, cum caeli quoque orbis idem Delius moduletur in Sole, hincque esse quod illic Phoebus et hic vocitetur Auricomus; nam Solis augustum caput radiis perfusum circumactumque flammantibus velut auratam caesariem rutili verticis imitatur».

24. *Ibid.* I, 184–97.

obeys the Sun (*cui circulus aethrae paret*) while he governs the celestial bodies great circuits (*immensis moderaris raptibus orbis*), drives and restrains the sacred constellations of the gods by imposing laws upon the circuits (*compellens atque coercens sidera sacra deum, cum legem cursibus addis*). The number 4, perfect in nature, may be approved as belonging to the Sun (*tibi perfecta numerus ratione probetur*), and by means of this number the Sun bestows upon the two twin tetrachords a beginning (*a principio geminum tu das tetrachordon*).

The Sun, called Phoebus, holds back the shadows, reveals celestial light (*tenebras prohibens retegis quod caerulea lucet*), and annuls the actions of the night (*dissolvit nocturna admissa*). Martianus says that the number of the Sun is 8 and 600 (*octo et sescentis numeris*), which resembles Eriugena's discussions concerning the meaning of the *octaves* in the world.

There are even lexical parallels between the two poems. For instance, when Martianus passes from the eulogy on number 4 to praises of number 6, the corresponding lines of *De nuptiis* find close lexical parallel in Eriugena's poem (which at this point makes the same transition from 4 to 6). Thus, Martianus says that the Sun's «sacred head bears *twice six* beams of golden light, because he makes *the same number of months* and the same number of hours» (*radiisque sacratum bis senis perhibent caput aurea lumina ferre, quod totidem menses, totidem quod conficis horas*), and John Scottus says that the world is «encompassed with *twice-six* signs, distributed along curved zodiacal path, which furnish *the same number of months* for earthly use» (v. 7-8: *signis ambitum bis senis limite curvo, quae totidem menses terrenis usibus aptant*).

There are minor parallels too:

<i>De nuptiis</i>	<i>Aulae siderea</i>
192: te nomine convocat orbis	v. 83: te votis inclytat orbis
193: salve, vera deum facies	54: salve, sancta domus
196-7: Da, pater, ... conscendere... astrigerumque... caelum	78-81: Da nostro regi Karolo... simul tecum caelestis gaudia regni

Martianus' influence is manifest in Eriugena's mentioning the «parallel circles». It is Martianus, who writes that «the sun has 183 circles, which it describes as it goes back and forth from the summer tropic to the winter tropic; it alternates its course over the same cir-

cles... These circles are also referred to as *parallels*»²⁵. In this passage of the *De nuptiis* the «parallel circles» are the Sun's daily trajectories around the visible sky²⁶. Significantly, this passage belongs to Book 8 of the *De nuptiis*, which discusses numbers and harmony. But it is also possible that the «parallel circles» are the 5 imaginary parallels belonging to the celestial sphere²⁷. Besides, John Scottus once speaks about the firmament encompassing the concentric planetary spheres («aetherios cyclos ambibat stelliger orbis»), the revolutions of which produce sweet tones («consona turba errantium dulces edidit ipsa tonos»). The harmony of the celestial sphere is made of eight notes, seven intervals, and six tones («sex numero septem spaciis modulantibus octo caelestis sperae constitit armonia»). And at the end of the cosmos the heavenly King holds his court («extremus rex mundi aulam possessurus»)»²⁸.

The harmony of the four

John Scottus enjoys playing with numbers in the *Aulae sidereae*. According to him, the Sun divides the year by «twice two motions»,

25. *Ibid.* VIII, 856: «quod si est, dubium non est CLXXXIII circulos habere Solem, per quos aut ab solstitio in brumam redit, aut ab eadem in solstitialem lineam subleatur; per easdem quippe mutationes comitat circulorum [...] qui *paralleli* etiam dicti sunt, circumcurrunt».

26. Half of the year (182 or 183 days) the Sun, moving along the ecliptic, ascends from the winter tropic to the summer tropic. Each given day, the Sun's diurnal motion draws an imaginary circle across the sky. Thus, 182 days of the Sun's journey along the ecliptic from the winter solstice to the summer solstice produce 182 parallel circles on the celestial sphere. They are «bound» between the tropics at which the Sun turns back. This peculiar astronomical detail, which goes back to Geminus' «Introduction to the Phenomena», is absent from philosophical hymns. Geminus speaks about 182 circles in his *Elementa astronomiae* V, 12, ed. G. Aujac.

27. According to Geminus' *Introduction to the Phenomena* (5, 1-9) there are 5 major parallels in the sky: the Arctic (ἀρκτικός) circle, the summer tropic (θερινός τροπικός), the equinoctial (ισημερινός) circle, the winter tropic (χειμερινός τροπικός), the Antarctic (ἀνταρκτικός) circle.

28. John Scottus, *Carmina* III, 15-22 Herren. Cf. *Idem.*, *Periphyseon* III, 718B: «perfecti numeri [...] senarius videlicet et septenarius et octonarius, in quibus maxima symphonia musicae naturaliter constituitur, quae diapason vocatur! Habet enim octo sonos, septem spatia, sex tonos»; «The perfect numbers, namely 6 and 7 and 8 by nature constitute the chief symphonic proportion of music which is called diapason. For this has eight notes, seven intervals, and six tones».

since we have two solstices and two equinoxes (v. 5). Thus, four zodiacal signs stand out: Capricorn (December), Cancer (June), Aries (March), and Libra (September). The Sun rules the world, which is «four-fold in this excellent division» (v. 6: «regnat **tetragonum** pulchro discrimine **mundum**»); and the seasons change in the above-mentioned articulations (v. 9: «talibus articulis, quos circum tempora currunt»). The formula *tetragonus mundus* is of special importance here. It goes back to the formula *mundus quadratus*, which was an ancient Roman set expression (*Roma quadrata*), later accepted by Christian authors who speculated about the form of the earth²⁹. *Mundus quadratus* was understood either as a four-sided (four-angled) world or as a four-fold (four-square) one, which consist of four smaller squares as if divided by a cross³⁰. There was also a mystical meaning to this, which Bede discussed in his *De templo*, the text Eriugena knew well. When Bede examines the mystical meaning of the exact dimensions of the Solomon's Temple, he associates the squareness of the world and the Church (which was to be assembled from the four cardinal directions of the world) with the eternal life: «quadratus vero est mundus in quo pro adquirenda eadem uita certamus. Unde et psalmista: "a solis ortu et occasu, ab aquilone et mari" (*Ps* 106: 2-3)»³¹. A completely allegorical meaning can be found in Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* in a description of the mind of the elite which stays immutable, unaffected by the turmoil of the world, as if showing its innate «square figure of invincible virtue»³².

And of course, medieval reader inevitably linked *quadratus* with the sign of the cross. For instance, when Bede paraphrases Sedulius, he depicts an image of a giant cross which once bore the Lord and now gathers all four corners of the world: the morning star (Venus

29. Tertullian, *Ad nationes* 2, 4, 47, 17: «rotunda mundo platonica forma: quadratum angulatumque commentum ab aliis»; Augustine, *Sermones* 306B: «quadratus et antea vocabatur»; Marius Victorinus, *Explanaciones in Ciceronis rhetoricam* I, 6: «Quae sit mundi facies: multi enim dicunt [...] quadrata».

30. F. Altheim, in W. Müller, *Kreis und Kreuz*, Berlin, 1938, 60ff. Cf. Aldhelm, *Aenigmata* 79,7: «Dividimus mundum communi lege **quadratum**: / nocturnos regimus cursus et frena dierum»; and *Aenigmata* 95, 5: «Nulla mihi constat certi substantia partus, / sed modo **quadratum** complector caerulea mundum».

31. Bede, *De templo* I, 1031-35.

32. Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam* I, 1304: «Et electorum mens dum inter universa mundi siue aduersa seu prospera permanserit immota quasi quadratam sibi inesse figuram uirtutis inuictae demonstrat».

or Lucifer)³³ shines in the forehead of the Maker; his feet reach the Hesperian constellations, his right hand touches the Arctic sky, his left hand erects the central axis of the world, and all nature «lives» from his limbs. Christ rules the world which is bound from every quarter by the cross³⁴. Eriugena repeated this image in his own poem written in 859: «Ecce crucis lignum quadratum continet orbem / In quo pendebat sponte sua dominus»³⁵.

This resembles the image of the *mundum gestantem symbola Christi* (v. 21) discussed by Eriugena in the first part of the *Aulae siderae*. The exact word used by Eriugena, namely the rare *tetragonus*, is also not confined to geometry only. In Ambrose, for example, it possesses ethical³⁶ and arithmological³⁷ connotations. It has mystical sense in the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram, made under Eriugena's influence³⁸. In astronomy it referred to the four zodiacal signs³⁹.

33. Jean Scot, *Commentaire sur l'évangile de Jean*, ed. É. Jeuneau, Paris 1972, p. 144, 20-22 (305B).

34. Bede, *In Lucae euangelium expositio* 6, 23, 1533: «neue quis ignoret speciem crucis esse colendam quae dominum portavit ouans ratione potenti quattuor inde plagas **quadrati** colligit **orbis** splendidus auctoris de uertice fulget eous **occiduo** sacrae lambuntur sidere plantae **arcton** dextra tenet medium laeua erigit axem cuncta que de membris uiuit natura creantis et cruce complexum christus **regit** undique **mundum**».

35. John Scottus, *Carmina* I, 19-20. Cf. *ibid.*, 2, 1-12: «Aspice praeclarum radiis solaribus orbem, / Quos crux saluiflua spargit ab arce sua. / Terram Neptunumque tenet flatusque polosque / Et siquid supra creditur esse procul».

36. Ambrose, *De Abraham* 2, 9, 65: «qui nunc psalmum canit uelut aptis numeris uitam istius mundi transigit quasi tetragonus et stabilis atque perfectus».

37. *Ibid.* 2, 11, 80: «ideoque non cybos geometriae nec tetragonum numerum philosophiae nec confessionem ut aiunt Pythagoricam [...] sed vera aperimus mysteria, unam salutem esse Christi resurrectionem».

38. Cf. the *tituli* of the *Codex aureus* (Evang. of St. Emmeram of Ratisbonne, München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14000), ed. MGH, *Poetae latini aevi Carolini*, III, p. 253, III, 1-4: «Christus, vita hominum, caelorum gloria summa, / Librat tetragonum miro discrimine mundum. / Ordine quadrato variis depicta figuris / Agmina sanctorum gaudia magna vident»; «Christ, the life of men, the greatest glory of the heavens, / Weighs out the four-fold world with its excellent intervals. / The ranks of the saints arranged in quadrate pattern, as shown in the various drawings, behold great joys».

39. Geminus, *Introd. to the Phenomena* II, 16, 1-18, 2: «Κατὰ τετραγώνον δέ ἐστι Κριὸς Καρκίνος Ζυγὸς Αἰγώνεργος», «Aries, Cancer, Libra, and Capricorn make up the quadrate». Cf. Martianus Capella's opinion according to which the number four is perfect and is called *quadratus*, with which are associated the four seasons of the year, the regions of heaven, the elements of earth. It is itself the square of two (*bis binum*), within which the musical harmonies (*symphoniae*) are produced (*De nuptiis* II, 106-107, p. 44, 17-45, 3).

Another term from the beginning of the *Aulae Sidereae*, namely *articulae*, was common in grammatical, medical, and *computus* works. The *articulae temporum* was a steady set expression widely used by Augustine, Bede, and Hrabanus Maurus⁴⁰. The *articulae* in the poem (v. 9) refer to the astronomical term, used in discussions on periods and intervals of astronomical and historical time⁴¹.

The harmony of the eight

However, the most complex concept is *octava*, which has various meanings in the poem: astrological, ecclesiastical, musical, Biblical, arithmological, eschatological, and architectural. First, Eriugena associates octaves with the events of sacred history (*tropea*) which occurred under particular zodiacal signs (v. 9–11):

Talibus articulis, quos circum tempora currunt,
Partibus octavis dico libraeque criuque
Nec non aegoceri, cancri praefixa tropea.

In such articulations, in which the seasons change,
That is, in octaves, those of Libra and Aries
And Capricorn and Cancer, is victory ordained.

Obviously, J. O'Meara's translation of verse 10 is erroneous⁴², that of M. Herren⁴³ too is not precise. In his French translation Michel Foussard⁴⁴ correctly makes reference to the similar passage in Eriu-

40. Augustine, *Epistulae* 139, vol. 44, 3, 152, 16: «in articulis temporum constituta»; Bede, *Homeliarum euangelii libri II*, *Hom.* I, 11, 149: «Sex etenim sunt huius saeculi aetates notissimis temporum distinctae articulis»; Bede, *De temporum ratione liber* 42, 21: «que articulis temporum uel caeli climatibus celebratur»; Hrabanus Maurus, *De computo prol.* 18: «Composui quidem ex numero et temporum articulis quendam dialogum».

41. Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* I, 183, 39.

42. J. J. O'Meara, *Eriugena*. Oxford 1988, 185: «With such divisions, around which the seasons run, / I celebrate the trophies of Libra, Aries, Cancer, and Capricorn, / Placed out before the other eighth».

43. *Iohannis Scotti Carmina*, ed. M. Herren, Dublin 1993, 117: «Through such divisions, round which the seasons course, / That is, by means of octaves, those of Libra and Aries/ And Capricorn and Cancer, is victory ordained».

44. M. Foussard, «*Aulae Sidereae*: vers de Jean Scot au Roi Charles», *Cahiers archeologiques*, 21 (1971), 85: «Telles les articulations le long desquelles les temps déploient leur course, / Je chante les trophées élevés au huitième degré / Et de la Balance et du Bélier, non moins que du Capricorne et du Cancer».

Lucis praecursor nascens in vertice cancri,
 Libra conceptus, cernis praefata tropea.

You, o Ram, may celebrate the triumph of Christ's conception,
 Let Capricorn claim the joys of the birth of the Word.
 The precursor of the Light was born at Cancer's zenith,
 Conceived under Libra: now you see the triumphs that were foretold.

The «trophies» fixed in octaves of the correspondent zodiacal signs introduce an important context. Having lost their historical and geographical connotations, *tropea* became in the Middle Ages «universal, abstract symbols of imperial victory»⁴⁸. They were always associated with the victory celebrations⁴⁹. Poems of the ninth century commemorating a king's epiphanies in his towns and monasteries had, as the most prevalent theme, that of royal victory. To enjoy trophies was the privilege of the Christian hero, a martyr or an apostle⁵⁰, or the emperor⁵¹. Imperial and Christian traditions were united in Christ, who was the first to gain the *tropea crucis*⁵² and was the only eternal emperor. His Nativity, once and forever, has made the Kalends of January «(proto)typical» (v. 31-32):

Haec octava tibi bifrontis rite Kalendas
 Insinuat typicas, dum vincit luce tenebras.

This octave⁵³ presents to you, in accordance with a rite, prototypical kalends
 of the two-faced god [Janus], as it conquers the darkness with light.

48. M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West*, Cambridge, Paris 1986, 26; see also G. S. Picard, *Les trophées romains. Contribution à l'histoire de la religion et de l'art triomphal de Rome*, Paris 1957, 469ff.

49. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 18, 2, 4 and 3, ed. W. M. Lindsay, II, Oxford 1911; Servius, *Commentarii in Vergilii carmina, ad Aeneidem* 10, 775, ed. G. Thilo-H. Hagen, II, Leipzig, 1883-1884, 446, 28-467, 3. Cf. J. Fontaine, *Isidore de Séville et la culture classique dans l'Espagne wisigothique*, II, Paris 1959, 749.

50. Hieronymus, *Epistulae* 46, vol. LIV, 12, 342, 4: «tropea apostolorum et martyrum»; Sedulius Scottus, *Collectaneum in Apostolorum prologus*, p. 109, 51: «uictoriae suae tropea retulit».

51. Sedulius Scottus, *Carmina* 2, 12 (Traube 180, 5); 2, 15 (Traube 183, 9, 14 and 27); 2, 25 (Traube 190, 4 and 9-10, 191, 39-40).

52. Ambrose, *De fide* IV, 1, 24.

53. The importance of this *haec* can hardly be overestimated. For a long time it was commonly accepted that the *Aulae Siderae* celebrated the dedication of St Mary' of Compiègne church on May 5, 877. This particular date also defined

The earthly life of Christ passed under octaves: Christ was born on the eighth day before the Kalends of January, was conceived on the eighth day before the kalends of April, his resurrection happened on the eighth day of the week, he was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. The world itself will end in the eighth age (v. 33-37):

Octonus numerus divinos symfonat actus;
Nam dominus noster, quem tempus formulat omne,
Octavis natus, conceptus, morte reversus,
Octavis veteris subiit signacula legis,
Mundus in octava finem dabit omnibus unum.

The number eight harmonises the divine deeds:
For our Lord, whom every time formulates,
In octaves was born, conceived, returned from death,
In octaves he submitted himself to the seals of the ancient law,
On the octave the world will bring one end to all.

As was shown, in emphasizing the importance of the octaves, Eriugena was not original; this was a long and elaborated tradition. The new element introduced by him was the notion of universal harmony that unites spirit and history, heaven and earth, sacral and profane, eternity and time (v. 45-49):

Haec sunt, quae tacite nostris in cordibus intus
Octoni numeri modulatur nabra sonorum,
Spiritus interior clamat nec desinit unquam
Semper concrepitans, quicquid semel intonat annus;
Haec scriptura docet, cui rerum concinit ordo.

the *terminus ad quem* of Eriugena's life. However, in the article published in 1987 («Eriugena's *Aulae Siderae...*»), Michael Herren argued that the *haec octava* meant that the poem was composed to celebrate the feast of Christmas (p. 601). And it might be only Christmas Day of 869, celebrated in the palace chapel of Aachen, with Charles the Bald really seated on the high throne of Charlemagne (p. 603). Herren's discovery changed the perspective of the poem, it also solved the puzzle of the correspondence between the poem's verses and the *tituli* of the *Codex aureus*, finished in 870. Moreover, it eliminated the only evidence that John Scottus himself was still alive after 869. However, I think we should be more cautious with dates and places: the building described in the poem looks rather as an ideal temple than a real church, although suggestion that reference is made to St Mary' of Compiègne church seems quite plausible, and although *Aulae siderae* seems to be written to celebrate Christmas Day, the year of the poem's composition still remains uncertain».

This is what the harp of the tones of the number eight
 Modulates in silence inside our souls.
 The inner spirit proclaims nor ever ceases,
 Always sounding what once the year intones.
 All this the Scripture teaches, and with it the order of things sings along.

With these words the poem comes full circle: from astronomy (v. 10), calendar (v. 31), and arithmology (v. 33), through Christology (vv. 35–6) and eschatology (v. 37), we came to harmony (v. 46) and the Bible (v. 49). A harp was an attribute of the Biblical David, *regis psalmidici, genitoris origine Christi* (v. 53). However, for a Carolingian reader there was another David: from about 794, this was a constant pseudonym for Charlemagne. As Peter Godman writes, while examining Carolingian poetry, «harps... mattered – symbolically, artistically, and therefore politically»⁵⁴. The name of David was associated with artistic inspiration and ideal kingship. Eulogizing the king as a wise man, learned in arts, was a strong tradition under the Carolingians.

The harmony of literary traditions

Taking into consideration the interest of Carolingian scholars to the classical tradition, it's not surprising that verses 82–92 of the *Aulae siderea* seem to allude to Lucretius' prologue to the *De rerum natura*. Indeed, John Scottus calls on the Mother of God to be the patroness and protector of King Charles, who builds a wonderful temple in her honor. After this appeal to the Virgin Mary, he provides a detailed description of the chapel:

Magna dei genitrix, ter felix sancta Maria –
 Te laudant caeli, te votis inclyat orbis – :
 Proxima sis Karolo tutrix, munimen et altum,
 Qui tibi mirifice praeclaram fabricat aedem...

.....

54. P. Godman, *Poets and Emperors: Frankish Politics and Carolingian Poetry*, New York 1987, 65. On religious and political connotations of Davidic kingship see: E. Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Acclamations and Medieval Ruler Worship*, Berkeley, LA, 1946, 55ff.

Turres, luriculas, laquearia, daedala tecta,
Obliquas tyridas, ialini⁵⁵ luminis haustus...

In vocabulary and meter this passage is quite close to the initial lines (v. 1-9 and 21) of Lucretius' poem in which Venus is praised:

Aeneadam genetrix, hominum divumque voluptas,
alma Venus, caeli subter labentia signa
quae mare navigerum, quae terras frugiferentis
concelebras, per te quoniam genus omne animantum
concipitur visitque exortum lumina solis
te, dea, te fugiunt venti, te nubila caeli
adventumque tuum, tibi suavis daedala tellus
summittit flores, tibi rident aequora ponti
placatumque nitet diffuso lumine caelum.

.....

quae quoniam rerum naturam sola gubernas

Let us specifically note the lexical correspondences of these two passages. Epicurean philosopher Lucretius eulogizes fruitful (*alma*) Venus, *genetrix* of the Romans, who becomes fortunate (*felix*) Mother of God (*dei genetrix*) and lofty bulwark (*munimen et altum*) in Eriugena. To Venus the sky gleams with the luminous light (*lumine caelum*), the variegated earth (*daedala tellus*) supplies flowers, and the sea surface (*aequora*) smiles. The same words are applied by John Scottus to Mary, whom the world glorifies with its vows. The wonderful, shining temple dedicated to her possesses a skillfully crafted roof (*daedala tecta*) and paneled ceilings (*laequaria*). Lucretian traditional division of the world, *caeli ... mare ... terras ...* corresponds to Eriugenan *caeli ... orbis, ...* and *altum* (the latter bears connotations of the sea and, in general, of the vertical extension.)

Here, besides the setting, we have direct correspondences in meter (hexameter), and in words *genetrix – genetrix, caeli – caeli, luminis – lumine*; here is a slightly changed but easily recognizable coinage of Lucretius, *daedala tecta*, which, according to my knowledge, before

55. This word John Scottus would have known through his studies of the liberal arts. He might have encountered it in Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis* 31,14: *vestis (h)yalina*. The Greek *ύάλινος* means «made of glass». Eriugena, who composed a commentary on the *De nuptiis*, wrote: «ialina – propter colorem aeris», see: É. Jeuneau, *Quatre thèmes érigéniens*, Montreal 1978, 155, 20.

Eriugena's usage was repeated only once, by Virgil; here are consonant pairs: *alta – altum, laequaria – aequora*. We have the same setting in both passages. The subject is identical: a poet singing to the goddess. The consequence of exposition is similar: the first line is a direct appeal to the deity on behalf of the poet himself, next follows the description of the world as a whole glorifying her: *caeli, orbis – caeli signa, mare, lumina solis*. Then the author describes particular beauties of the temple (as Eriugena) or of the summer earth, sea, and sky (as Lucretius). The characteristic feature of both passages is an atmosphere of a new world freshly born, of light, shining, and joy in the presence of the goddess.

There is another argument in favor of Eriugenian first-hand knowledge of the *De Rerum Natura*. Prof. Édouard Jeauneau, with whom I had a chance to discuss the *Aulae siderea* many years ago, had mentioned the opinion, according to which verses 82–101 could have been a separate poem initially. The fact that the line *Magna dei genitrix* would be an *incipit*, makes the entire poem typical in its genre and strengthens the claim to regard Lucretian *Prologue* as a prototype.

How could John Scottus know Lucretius? Though attempts have been made to investigate traces of Lucretius' poem in Eriugena's works⁵⁶, there has been no definite proof until now. However, two ninth-century Lucretian codices are extant. One of them bears marginal notes made by an «insular» hand. This is the famous «oblongus» manuscript of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, copied at Tours in the 9th century, which has more than sixty notes of this kind⁵⁷. This codex belonged to the library of Laon where the Irish community was located at that time. The master of Laon's school was the friend of Eriugena, Martin Scottus. Taking into account all of the above, we may admit Eriugena's possible acquaintance with that codex.

Whatever the probability of particular sources can be, the sum of direct and indirect sources observed, together with parallels and

56. J. Savage, «Two Notes on Johannes Scotus», *Scriptorium*, 12 (1958), 228–37. General overview see M. Reeve, «Lucretius in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance: Transmission and Scholarship», in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, eds. S. Gillespie, P. R. Hardie, Cambridge 2007, 205–13.

57. Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Voss. lat. F. 30 (oblongus), see *Lucretius. Codex Vossianus oblongus phototypice editus*, ed. É. Chatelain, Leyden 1908.

common *topoi* between the *Aulae sidereae* and the previous tradition, demonstrates that the *templum* (*aedes, domus*), dedicated to the Mother of God (*dei genitrix*) and consecrated on Christmas Day, becomes in John Scottus' poetical masterpiece a symbol and image of harmonically structured universe and emblemizes at once the starry temple of the Sun (*aula sidera*), the transcendent House of the Wisdom of God (*aula superna, remota domus*), the Bethlehem's manger (*sancta domus*), and the Heavenly Jerusalem as *visio pacis*.

Being a project of an ideal temple, it nevertheless reflects its author's personality in the insular traits of vocabulary, in his affinity to Greek, and in his allusions to historical circumstances. The historical dimension is engaged also by means of the portrait of Emperor Charles seated on his lofty throne and presented as an ideal ruler and a personification of the visible Sun, Kings David and Solomon, Christ, and Charlemagne⁵⁸.

ABSTRACT

The paper examines John Scottus' poem «The Starry Temple» (c. 869/77), supposedly written in response to Charles the Bald's plans to construct at Compiègne a new church which could rival Aachen's Palatine Chapel. By means of sophisticated poetical imagery John Scottus proposes multilayer vision of the harmonic universe the hearth of which constitutes an ideal temple. It is shown that arithmology, the sacred history, and eschatology are interwoven in *Aulae sidereae's* worldview. The poem's sources are under consideration. It is stated that John Scottus deliberately draws parallels between Charles' church and the Biblical temple of Solomon. Among his sources are Bede's *De tabernaculo* and *De templo*, as also Alcuin's verse inscriptions for the altars and churches dedicated to Virgin Mary. Affinity between *Aulae sidereae's* prologue and philosophical hymns of Late Antiquity is indicated: Proclus' *Hymn to Helios*, Synesius' *Letter to Paeonius* and *Hymn IX* are observed here. Insular traits of Eriugena's vocabulary appear

58. The tituli of the *Codex aureus* state that Charles the Bald is altogether Charlemagne, David, and Solomon: «Hic nomen magni Karoli de nomine sumpsit; / Numen et indicium sceptrā tenendo sua. / Hic David vario fulgescit stemmate regis / Atque Salomonica iura docentis habet». «The king you see received his name from Charles the Great: / the power, regalia, and sceptres he holds are his own. / This David is radiant in his manifold royal crown / and claims the rights of a Solomon to teach» (MGH, *Poetae latini aevi Carolini*, t. III, p. 252, IV, 1, 7–8).

in a set expression *titania lampas*, which might have been borrowed from Aldhelm of Malmesbury. Close lexical parallels between *Aulae sidereae*'s astronomical prologue and Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis* are pointed out. It is suggested also that verses 82–92 of the *Aulae Sidereae* may allude to Lucretius' prologue to the *De Rerum Natura*.

Among topics discussed is the cosmic harmony manifest in the order of things, which sings along (*concinit*) to what is told by Scripture (*mundus gestans symbola Christi*); as also the harmony of the octaves (*octonus numerus divinos symfonat actus*) which is symbolized by the harp of King David (*nabla sonorum*). It is argued that the *templum* (*aedes, domus*), dedicated to the Mother of God (*dei genitrix*) and consecrated on Christmas Day, becomes in John Scottus' poetical masterpiece a symbol and image of harmonically structured universe and emblemizes at once the starry temple of the Sun (*aula sidera*), the transcendent House of the Wisdom of God (*aula superna, remota domus*), the Bethlehem's manger (*sancta domus*), and the Heavenly Jerusalem as *visio pacis*. The figure of King Charles seated on his lofty throne is loaded with symbolism too: he is presented as an ideal ruler and a personification of the visible Sun, Kings David and Solomon, Christ, and Charlemagne.

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