

Hildegard of Bingen's Theology of Music

In this paper I will focus on several aspects of Hildegard of Bingen's theology and cosmology. I am particularly interested in her view of humanity and how this relates to her theology of music. I will begin with a brief biographical section, then will look at the problem of establishing female authority. I will then focus on Hildegard's view of humanity, followed by a discussion of the role of music in her cosmology. I propose that Hildegard perceived her world in a synesthetic way and that her music became a vehicle through which to work out this unity.

Biographical Information

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was the youngest of 10 children in a family of the lower nobility. She was dedicated to the church at an early age, and went to live with Jutta, also a noblewoman, who was a religious recluse. The hermitage became a Benedictine convent attached to the monastery of Disibod, and Hildegard took her vows as a teenager. She was educated first by Jutta, then received additional instruction from the monk Volmar, who later became her secretary. Upon Jutta's death in 1136, Hildegard was elected abbess of the convent (Newman 1990: 10-11).

Hildegard had visions all her life, beginning in her early childhood. In describing these early visions to her biographer, Gottfried of Disibod, she describes being confused and afraid (Newman 1985: 165). It was not until age 42, when she received a vision instructing her to tell what she saw and heard, that she felt confident to make her visions public. This vision is recounted at the beginning of her first book, *Scivias*, which was written between 1141-1151.

Hildegard wrote to Bernard of Clairvaux in 1147, seeking confirmation of the truth of her visions. He brought her to the attention of Pope Eugenius III, who was in Trier for a synod (1147-1148). The Pope read portions of the *Scivias* to the synod, then officially endorsed her work (Newman 1990: 12-13).

Shortly after the synod, Hildegard received a vision instructing her to move her convent to Bingen. Although the move was opposed by the monks at Disibod and by some of her own nuns, Hildegard left Disibod in 1147 and the church in Rupertsburg was dedicated in 1152. During the 1150s, Hildegard collected many of her songs into the *Symphonia*. She also completed the *Ordo Virtutum*, the oldest known music drama or morality play. Her two books on medicine were also compiled during this period (Newman 1990: 13-15).

Between 1158-1163 Hildegard undertook several preaching tours (Newman 1990: 13-14). During this period she also wrote another book of visions, *The Book of the Rewards of Life*. Her final book of visions, *The Book of Divine Works*, was written between 1163-1173.

Towards the end of her life, in 1178, the convent was put under an interdict for refusing to exhume the body of a nobleman who had been buried on convent ground. He had at one point been excommunicated; Hildegard maintained that he had been received back into the church before his death, and that his remains had become sanctified by being buried in holy ground. During the interdict, the convent was barred from using music (Newman 1990: 16). After six months of this deprivation, Hildegard wrote a letter to the Prelates of Mainz, who had jurisdiction over the convent, in which she outlined her theology of music, which I will discuss below. Hildegard died shortly after the interdict was lifted.

Establishing Female Authority

Hildegard has often been classified as a mystic because she wrote books of visions. She falls into the broad category defined by Lerner as follows: "Mysticism, in its variant forms, asserted that transcendent knowledge came not as a product of rational thought, but as a result of . . . individual inspiration and sudden revelatory insight" (1993:66). Hildegard herself describes the experience of her vision by saying "And I was able to understand books suddenly" (*Scivias* 1986: 2). In a 1173 letter to Guibert (who became her last secretary), she states,

"I simultaneously see, hear, and understand. In an instant I learn what I know through the vision. But whatever I do not see in the vision, I have no knowledge of, for I am without formal education and was only instructed to read simple letters" (*Divine Works* 349)

Throughout her life she emphasized her own ignorance and the divine origin of the knowledge she learned in her visions.

Lerner expounds on the role of Christian mystics, stating that: "The aim of Christian mystics was spiritual union with Christ, which could be reached by ascetic practices, suffering and mortification of the flesh, meditation, and openness to the revelatory experience" (1993: 67). Hildegard does not fit this definition in that she did not fast or mortify her body in order to receive more visions (Bynum 1990: 5); in some of her writings she discourages asceticism because it weakens the body too much and makes the ascetic susceptible to the whisperings of the devil (letter to Elizabeth of Schönau, *Divine Works* Letter #35, 341).

As noted above, Hildegard did not perceive her early experiences of the presence of God as joyful or freeing; rather, she found the visions disturbing for the first half of her life. For Hildegard, the mystical experience of vision was secondary to the ability to interpret and explain what she saw and heard in a way that provided guidance for other Christians. Her self-definition is more that of a prophet.

As a woman in the medieval church, Hildegard had no authority over male clerics, and limited authority over her own convent. She accepted the hierarchy of the church, which excluded women from teaching and leadership roles. She repeatedly asserted that her role as a prophetess was necessary because the male guardians of the church had neglected their moral duties in this "effeminate" age (Newman 1990: 21). Her self-description as an "ignota," or ignorant woman--even though it is clear from her writings that she was well-read--provided further justification for her assumption of a leadership role, because it illustrated God's power to use weak instruments (Lerner 1993: 51, 54). This "humility topos" was common among mystics (Lerner 1993: 69). What sets Hildegard apart is her use of the authority thus established to provide a forum for her message, which is a clearly-designed, consistent cosmology and theology. The establishment of her authority was affirmed by the authentication of her visions by Pope Eugenius III (see above), which also increased her own confidence in her gift. She went on to give spiritual counsel to popes, emperors, abbots, and lay people in her letters and in her theological works.

Hildegard's View of Humanity: A Theology of the Senses

Hildegard's three theological books present different aspects of a consistent cosmology and theology. The visions in the *Scivias*, the earliest book, are grouped into three sections: I. The Creator and Creation (6 visions); II. The Redeemer and Redemption (7 visions); and III. The Virtues and the History of Salvation (13 visions). The second book, *The Book of the Rewards of Life*, is divided into six sections, each presenting contrasting pairs of vices and virtues. The final book, *Book of Divine Works*, is in three sections: I. The World of Humanity; II. The Kingdom of

the Hereafter; and III. The History of Salvation. The bulk of each work is devoted to explicating the visions; the descriptions of the visions are in terms of the five senses, not in terms of emotions.

Hildegard conceives of humans as consisting of three "paths": body, soul, and the five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) (*Scivias* I.iv.18 1990:120).

"It is the senses on which the interior powers of the soul depend. . . the human senses manifest the reason and all the powers of the soul. . . human senses protect a person from harmful things and lay bare the soul's interior. For the soul emanates the senses. . . . For the senses are the sign of all the powers of the soul, as the body is the vessel of the soul" (*Scivias* I.iv.24 1990:123)

In another place she states that the Holy Spirit made Man's five senses able to know good and evil (*Scivias* III.ii.22 1990:336).

This image of the five senses is symbolized by groups of five that appear in other visions. For example, during the Middle Ages the nine orders of angels were usually grouped in three groups of three; however, in her vision of the choirs of angels (*Scivias* I.vi), Hildegard classes them in one group of two, which represents the body and soul; one group of five, which represents the five senses; and a final group of two which represents the knowledge and love of God. In *The Book of Divine Works* II.v.2 (155), she equates the five-part division of the sphere of the earth with the five senses. In this vision she goes on to state that we are "brought to our soul's salvation by the five senses that stimulate us to everything we need."

She recognizes that the senses can also lead a person into sin, and writes that "The human body and soul must, by virtue of their strength, contain the five human senses, purify them by the five wounds of My Son, and lead them to righteousness" (*Scivias* I.vi.3 1990:140). It is striking that she conceives of this purification as being carried out by body and soul. Her conception of human nature is that of a trinity-in-unity, analogous to the divinity (*Divine Works* I.i.3, p.11). Humans gain insight into the nature of the divinity through their five senses (*Divine Works* I.iv.102, p.124) and through their reason. Whichever way the knowledge is attained--through reason or the senses--it can be turned to good use or bad use (*Divine Works*, Letter 20, 313; *Scivias* I.iv.23 1990:122).

Hildegard's image of reason carries multiple meanings. It is related to her image of the incarnate Word of God, and is therefore often associated with sound images. For example, she writes that "Reason stands forth as the loud sound of the soul, which makes known every work of God or man" (*Scivias* I.iv.23 1990:122). It is a gift from God, and it is what sets us apart from other creatures. The gift is given to us through the Word of God which became Incarnate in human form (*Divine Works*, Letter 20, 313).

The incarnate Word of God, who also calls Himself "Reason," is a key figure in Hildegard's cosmology. In *The Book of Divine Works*, she writes a lengthy exegesis of the opening of the Gospel of John, focussing on Christ as the Word of God which was in the beginning. Images abound of the "holy sound which echoes through the whole creation; the Word, from whom the world has come to be" (*Divine Works*, Letter #1, 273). Elsewhere, the "voice like a thunderbolt" of the Word of God is said to keep the entire universe alive and in motion (*Divine Works*, I.iv.105, 128).

Hildegard uses this image to distinguish between the dispensation of the Old Testament versus that of the New. She compares the old law to "the sound or shadow of the Word" before it is understood. When Christ became the incarnate Word, "the sound and the Word turned into one thing, making the old and new laws complement each other" (*Rewards* I.40-41, 22-23). This

distinction between sound and meaning appears elsewhere in her writings. She speaks of the intellect as being expressed through sound, word, and breath. Each aspect is dependent on each in order for meaning to be realized. This becomes another analogy to the Trinity-in-unity of the Divinity (*Divine Works*, Letter #3, 281).

Another key aspect to Hildegard's exegesis of the Word of God is that humanity is saved because the Word became incarnate. If the Word had not assumed humanity, humans could not have been saved, but would have been as lost as the fallen angels (*Divine Works* III.vii.9, 193). In addition, the incarnation of the Word amazes and astonishes the angels, inspiring them to further songs of praise (*Divine Works* III.vii.11, 196).

It is striking that Hildegard's theology does not focus on the passion and resurrection of Christ. It is not the crucifixion of the body of Christ, or the body of the faithful, that interests her. What she perceives is that the incarnation glorifies the body of humanity as well as redeeming it. She is one of the earliest theologians to suggest that man's fall was predestined so that Christ would be incarnated. She suggests that God created woman out of man's flesh so that Christ would have pure flesh. But this aspect of Eve's creation made her more susceptible to the wiles of Satan--at the same time making her more susceptible to redemption (Miles 99-105).

Hildegard strongly emphasizes the full divinity and full humanity of Christ. This was in part a response to current heresies which either discounted bodily deeds or called for extreme mortification of the body. Hildegard's emphasis was on the fulfillment of creation in humans, who being in God's image will also in the end be fully divine and fully human.

It is, in fact, man's humanity--his embodied nature--that gives God joy. "God has joy in the angels' hymn of praise and in the holy deeds of human beings" (*Divine Works* III.vii.10, 195). Humans were created to take the place of the fallen angels, to be the tenth choir of angels (*Divine Works* I.iv.102, 124). The angels, having no bodies, praise God continually; it is the duty of humans to praise God and to do good works through their bodies "for man is full of God's work and all of God's miracles are accomplished through man's praise and work" (*Rewards* V.96, 258).

The body and soul of humans are mutually dependent on each other; neither is better or worse than the other. The body is susceptible to corruption, but it is also the instrument through which a person does good works (*Scivias* I.iv.30 1990: 126).

"Our body would be nothing without the soul, and our soul could do nothing without the body. And thus they are one within us, and we accept this arrangement. And thus God's work, humanity, has been created in the image and likeness of God." (*Divine Works* I.iv.105, 146).

Hildegard does not perceive the body as necessarily evil, and therefore does not see it as in need of mortification. Rather, she emphasizes the soul's need for the body. Several passages refer to the souls in heaven eagerly awaiting the resurrection of their bodies. She goes so far as to say that the soul "cannot have the fullness of God since it cannot see the face of God fully without the body" (*Rewards*, II.45, 91).

Hildegard's conception of the equality of the body and soul is far removed from the extreme asceticism often found among mystics. It is based essentially in Hildegard's view of the incarnate Word, which transforms forever the way humans relate to their body. It is also based in her cosmology, which is laid out in great detail in Part I, Vision IV of the *Book of Divine Works* (80-148). In this section, Hildegard presents an elaborate description of the symmetry and proportions of the human figure and how they match those in the cosmos. For example, the width and length of a human body with outstretched arms are the same; in the same way, the

firmament is a circle with an equal length and width. Hildegard explains that in earlier works she used the image of an egg to explain the cosmos because that illustrated its layers. Now she uses a sphere because it better illustrates the proportional relationships. She goes on to equate the rounded head of the human with the round firmament.

Ultimately, the importance of all the proportions mirrored in the microcosm of the human body and in the cosmos is their ability to draw the mind towards God. In this conception of the body, the body itself becomes an instrument of instruction for the soul seeking God. It becomes a measure by which to understand the cosmos and thereby to understand God. It is a logical outcome of the emphasis on the five senses and Reason, the former of which leads to the observations and the latter of which interprets their meaning.

It would be impossible to leave a discussion of the human body without mentioning the special problem of the female body. Hildegard was writing at a time in which the female body was viewed as inherently fleshly, weak, and sinful. She inhabits a female body, and must in some way deal with this hegemony. Although she accepts the teaching that women are weaker than men, and therefore should not be in prominent church positions, some of what she writes points toward other interpretations.

Hildegard asserts that although males and females are different they are complementary to each other, and dependent on each other:

"And thus man and woman are dependent on each other so that each is necessary to the other; because man is not called "man" without woman nor is woman named "woman" without man. For woman is necessary to man, and man is the consolation of woman; and neither of them can be without the other. And man truly signifies the divinity of the Son of God, and woman his humanity. For the same God created man strong and woman weak, and her weakness gave rise to sin. And divinity is strong but the flesh of the Son of God is weak, and through it the world is restored to its first life. For truly that flesh, immaculate and inviolate, like a spouse, proceeds from the virgin womb." (Hildegard *Book of Divine Works*, bk. 1 ch. 4 or *Book of Rewards of Life*, bk 4 ch. 32. quoted in Bynum 1987: 260)

There are several interesting concepts in this passage. As we have seen above, the Son of God is both truly divine and truly human, yet a unity. This bolsters Hildegard's view of the essential unity of men and women, whom she perceives as "necessary to each other in religious life and in the biological process of procreation" (Bynum 1987: 264). Although Hildegard speaks of women as weak, and frequently evokes the image of Eve, she does so with a different emphasis. At every mention of Eve, she also emphasizes the role of the virgin mother in redemption history. Because she views the fall as predestined, she even at times conflates the two women into a single figure. The Son of God received his humanity from his mother--and it is because of his humanity that humans can be saved.

Bynum discusses Hildegard's use of the image of woman as a symbol of humanity (1987:264-269). One point she makes is that humanity is both spirit and flesh, so this symbol undermines the usual male/spirit vs. female/body dichotomies.

Hildegard's visions and illustrations abound with female figures. In illustrations of groups of people, whether laity, martyrs, or clergy, female and male figures are represented equally. There are three striking female images that recur: Charity, Ecclesia, and Sapientia Dei (Knowledge of God). At times Charity and the Virgin, or Ecclesia and the Virgin are conflated. In addition to these are the Virtues, whose role is to strengthen the faithful and help them in their fight against the devil (*Scivias* I.vi.4, 141). According to Newman, Hildegard perceives of them as being a "synthesis of grace and moral effort. . . . They appear in feminine form in keeping

with a long tradition of virtue-vice allegory that goes back to Prudentius, but also because in Hildegard's symbolic theology the feminine represents the sphere of synergy in which divinity and humanity work together for salvation" (1990: 37). Book III of the *Scivias*, and the entire *Book of the Rewards of Life* are built around the virtues. In addition, they are the subject of Hildegard's morality play, *Ordo Virtutem*, or *Order of Virtues*.

The Role of Music in Hildegard's Cosmology

Hildegard writes that she received the words and music of her songs in visions. "I also composed chants with music in praise of God and the saints, with no instruction from anyone, although I had never learned either musical notation or singing." (Hildegard's *Vita*, quoted in Newman 1985: 166). Elsewhere she affirms that she does not hear or see with the outer ears or eyes, but with the inner. "The words in the vision do not sound like words from a human mouth, but they are like flaming lightning and like a cloud moving in the pure ether. I am not able to perceive the shape of this light, just as I cannot look with unprotected eyes at the disk of the sun" (Letter 39, 350)

The last vision of the *Scivias* (III.xiii) is a "Symphony of Praise." Introducing it, she writes that the words and music she hears in visions "marvelously embody all the meanings I had heard before" (Scivias 1990: 525). The musical morality play *Ordo Virtutem*, which ends this vision, clearly demonstrates this. The play begins with the patriarchs asking the virtues who they are. The virtues then reveal themselves. Several lost souls are heard lamenting, and the virtues go to their aid. One soul initially comes to them, but is lured away by the Devil. While she is gone, the Devil and the Virtues have a debate about their respective powers. The penitent soul returns, asking help, and the virtues are thereby given authority to bind the Devil. They then rejoice at the soul's return. All of these images have been seen in previous visions: the soul's journey and the soul buffeted by the arrows of temptation (Vision I.iv). Before the soul is lured away, she takes off her robe, which is an allegory of the discipline of the church (Vision II.iii). The soul is aided on her return to God by the virtues (Vision III.viii and elsewhere).

It is clear that music is central to Hildegard's conception of spiritual life and to her view of the cosmos. Imagery of music and voices is used extensively throughout Hildegard's three theological books, as well as in her letters and songs. I will begin by looking at the letter she wrote to the prelates at Mainz on the occasion of the interdict against the convent (*Divine Works*, Letter #41, 356-359).

Hildegard begins by affirming that:

"In these words (Psalm 50) we are taught about inner matters through external ones, namely, how we, according to the material and character of our instruments, should do our best to bring our inner devotion to the praise of the Creator and give it full expression" (356).

This concept--that we can learn about inner matter from external--is the same impulse behind the elaborate presentation of the symmetry between the cosmos and the microcosmos of the human body. From the symmetry we learn about God; from an outer observation we learn about an inner. As we have seen above, Hildegard sees the role of humans as to serve God by actions and praise. In this psalm we learn that different people do this in different ways, depending on what kind of instrument they are.

In this letter, Hildegard describes Adam's loss of the ability to harmonize his voice with that of the angels as a primary consequence of the Fall (356). Because he could no longer sing with the angels, he forgot about the celestial music, as if he had awakened from a dream. God

taught the prophets to sing psalms and hymns and inspired them to invent musical instruments so that humans would remember heavenly bliss and "through the form and character of these instruments, and especially through the meaning of the words, be so excited by these external things and brought into their rhythm that inwardly they might delight in their meaning" (357).

This vision of the power of music to direct people's thoughts is common to this period. "According to Boethius, the Pythagoreans had taught that 'the whole structure of soul and body is united by musical harmony'. . . . Humans are morally affected by music because their bodies are proportionate microcosm to cosmos (Newman, 1988: 19). Music therefore creates harmony among us. We have communion with the saints through music.

Hildegard expands this to say that humans are affected by music because it reminds them of heaven: "A man's soul also has harmony in itself and is like a symphony. As a result, many times when a person hears a symphony, he sends forth a lamentation since he remembers that he was sent out of his fatherland into exile" (*Rewards* IV.59, 202-203). She even speaks of God as music: "God is music, God is life" (*Symphonia* 26, 143) and "Praise to you, Spirit of fire! to you who sound the timbral and the lyre. Your music sets our minds ablaze!" (*Symphonia* 27, 143).

Cassiodorus, another theorist known in the Middle Ages, wrote that "if we perform the commandments of the Creator and with pure minds obey the rules he has laid down, every word we speak, every pulsation of our veins, is related by musical rhythms to the powers of harmony . . . but when we commit injustice we are without music" (quoted in Newman, 1988:19).

According to Hildegard, Satan was frightened at the way music reminded people of the celestial sphere. He tries to bring discord into it; to disrupt the harmony. In this case harmony has multiple layers of meaning, referring on one level to music, on another to relations among people; on another to relations between humans and God. In Hildegard's cosmology, these are all interrelated and affect each other. Good music makes people better; it makes them live more harmoniously with each other and it makes them understand more and draw closer to God.

Hildegard says that "sluggish souls" can be aroused to vigilance by the resonance of song (*Scivias* III.xiii.13 1990: 533). Later in the same vision she says, "The song of rejoicing softens the hard heart and summons the Holy Spirit. . . for jubilant praises, offered in simple harmony and charity, lead the faithful to that consonance in which is no discord. . . *And their song goes through you so that you understand them perfectly*" (*Scivias* III.xiii.14 1990:534). Music wakes humans up spiritually. It softens their hearts, thus giving the Holy Spirit access to their souls.

Just as listening to good music makes humans better, listening to bad things makes them worse. In the same way, "listening to what is evil often plunges us into the turmoil of evil" (*Divine Works* I.iii.12, 71). With this in mind, I will turn to a discussion of images of voice, some of which lead us to good, and some of which lead us to evil.

Hildegard reserves a special place in her imagery for metaphors of voice. The reason for this is that what we conceive of as voice actually consists of three parts: the voice, the understanding, and the breath. This becomes another metaphor for the Trinity and for the tripartite division of humanity (in this case, body, soul, and reason or understanding). It also leads her to suggest that the understanding realizes its works through the voice: "When, therefore, the understanding, taking on form in the word, is heard through the voice, all of its works come to realization. And it is from there that its creative effectiveness comes" (*Divine Works*, Letter #3, 281-2). All creative arts have their source in the breath, which is what the Word of God left in the human body. The breath--which also allegorizes the soul--gives life to

the voice, making it especially important to sing God's praise (*Divine Works*, Letter #41, 358-359).

The singing voice is especially emphasized. According to Thornton, Hildegard "believes that musical tone enhances the holiness of words when combined in sung speech, arousing sympathetic vibrations in the body and allowing the sense of the words to enter directly into the soul" (1982: 15).

Throughout the books several metaphors for good voices recur. The voice of the Son of Man may be "gentle" or "terrible," depending on whether He is speaking to the just or unjust (*Scivias* III.xii 1990:515). In one place she describes it as "the sweetest and softest sound of a voice that was like tasting the dripping of balm" (*Rewards* VI. 51, 283).

The voices of the saints are characterized as clear and resounding (*Symphonia* #14, 119; *Divine Works*, Letter 16, 305 and Letter 20, 312). Other times they are likened to the sound of the sea or rushing waters "because when they praise, they sound like one sound and like the spiritual breath of one will, like the water of salvation" (*Rewards* I.63, 32; I.5, 11; *Divine Works* III.vi.6, 183).

The Devil, on the other hand, can't sing. As we have seen above, the Devil is antithetical to harmony; he strives to create discord. In the *Ordo Virtutum*, the actor performing the role of the Devil is instructed to shout or speak harshly. The Devil is also presented as a whisperer (*Divine Works*, Letter 34, 339; Letter 35, 341).

The disobedient are presented as being dumb or speechless (*Divine Works*, Letter 24:323-324; *Rewards* III.42, 141). Elsewhere they are presented as sounding like various animals--cackling roosters, barking dogs, hissing serpents (*Divine Works*, Letter #2, 274; *Scivias*, III.9, 452). At times the imagery suggests a loss of rationality, as when they are described as howling or as being the noise a hand makes (*Scivias* III.xii 1990:516; *Rewards* I.vi.15, 14).

The contrast between these good and evil images of voice are striking. Because the voice is an instrument of the soul that is operated by the breath of Reason (The Word of God), only the obedient can speak in clear, beautiful, musical voices. Those who have rejected the Word of God have also rejected Reason, and lack either the breath or the understanding that would make their speech intelligible or sonorous.

Another aspect of Hildegard's musical imagery is the allegorical use of musical instruments. It is not clear what Hildegard--or any medieval Christians--thought about instrumental music, although they seem to generally have disapproved of their actual use in worship, preferring to allegorize them (Newman 1987: 22-23). On the one hand, Hildegard puts instruments in the hands of the choirs of angels and the blessed, and puts an exegesis of Psalm 150 at the end of the *Scivias* (III.xiii.16 1990:534-536); on the other hand, what she writes allegorizes the instruments. It is clear from her writing that she conceived of certain instruments as being linked to certain moral qualities.

Psalm 150 instructs people to:

"Praise Him with the sound of trumpets; praise Him with psaltery and harp. Praise Him with timbrel and dance; praise Him with stringed instruments and flute. Praise Him on high-sounding cymbals; praise Him on cymbals of joy; let every spirit praise the Lord" (Ps. 150:3-5).

In Hildegard's allegorization, each instrument stands for two things: a characteristic of the blessed, and a particular category of the blessed. She arranges the latter category in what she perceives as an historical order:

<u>Instrument</u>	<u>Character Trait</u>	<u>Category of the Blessed</u>
trumpet	reason	the angels
psalter	deep devotion	prophets
harp (<i>Scivias</i>)	honey tones	apostles
harp (Letter 41)	coordination of the spirit	ten commandments
timbral	mortification	martyrs
dance	exaltation	priests
stringed instruments	human redemption	virgins who praise Christ as fully man/fully God
flute	divine protection	virgins who praise Christ as fully man/fully God
high-sounding cymbals	loud & joyful declarations	sinners who repent
cymbals of joy	statements of praise	virtue overcomes vice
lyre	discipline of the body	

Hildegard uses these analogies in other visions to characterize humans who are obedient. This is seen in two categories: (1) humans as instruments of God on earth; (2) the saved who are in the celestial sphere.

She speaks of herself at times as a lyre: "And she [Hildegard] brought forth the miracles of God not through herself, but through those things touched by God, just as a string that has been touched by the player of the lyre gives forth sound" (*Rewards* VI.68, 290; *Rewards* III.14, 130). This representation is probably due to her virginity, since the lyre represents discipline of the body. Elsewhere in *The Rewards of Life*, the virgins in heaven are represented as playing on lyres (VI.44, 45, 281).

The prophets are also represented with a lyre in hand "since the power of reason, inspired by the Holy Spirit, came in measure in voice and words for praising God" (*Rewards* II.39, 87). When Hildegard speaks of herself as a lyre it reaffirms her self-identification as a prophetess.

The other instrument with which Hildegard identifies herself is a trumpet upon which God blows to produce sound (*Divine Works*, Letter 34, 340). In her books she represents the angels as sounding forth like trumpets (*Rewards* I.56, 11). She also represents the obedient in this way because it is an instrument which speaks rapidly (*Rewards* I.4, 11; I.49, 27). Those who have been teachers in life are also represented with trumpets in the celestial sphere (*Rewards* VI.35, 37, 278-9). This is significant to Hildegard's understanding of herself. It reveals that she did perceive herself as a teacher, even though she accepted the status of women within the church.

Teachers are also represented as resounding on the "flutes of sanctity" which support their voices. "For by the voice of reason they chant justice right into the hearts of men and women. Thus says the Word, and that sound resounds once more. The Word is heard by means

of sound, and it is also disseminated so that it can be heard" (*Divine Works* III.vii.10, 194-5). This is because their teaching was under divine authority.

Virgins are represented as playing upon the psalter, which represents deep devotion (*Divine Works* III.vii.10, 195). In the *Book of the Rewards of Life*, Hildegard hears in a vision that:

"Whenever the Lamb of God used his voice, this sweetest blowing of the wind coming from the secret place of the Divinity touches these pipes [on their heads] so that they resounded with every type of sound that a harp and organ make. No one was playing this song, except those who wore these crowns, but the others who heard this song rejoiced in it, just like a man who could not see previously, now sees the brightness of the sun" (VI.44, 45, 281).

Elsewhere virgins are also represented as singing a new song not heard before Christ, the true flower of virginity was resurrected (*Scivias* II.v.8., 206).

By far the most images of music in the celestial sphere have to do with singing and symphony (harmonious music). The reward of those who are obedient is to become part of the celestial symphony of praise: "Because of the devotion by which they had brought forth good fruit with the depth of sighs and the water of tears in their voices and works, they sounded like the sweetest symphony and their voices sounded like a lot of water does" (*Rewards* VI.31, 276; I.50, 27). According to Hildegard, this celestial music is "more wonderful than the music of the spheres that arises from the blowing of the winds that sustain the four elements" (*Divine Works* III.vi.4, 182).

This celestial music is in human language, according to Hildegard, and the blessed will "make a flowing path of words to the pure fountain of the mighty Ruler" (*Scivias* III.xi.12 1990:497). Words and music bring about the unity of body and spirit:

"And so the words symbolize the body, and the jubilant music indicates the spirit; and the celestial harmony shows the divinity, and the words the Humanity of the Son of God" (*Scivias*, III.xiii.12 1990:533).

Because of Hildegard's conception of the unity between words and music it is important to discuss her songs in relationship to both aspects. I will provide a framework for further study by discussing some aspects of these relationships.

Hildegard's poetry is sometimes difficult to understand. According to Newman, her Latin vocabulary is limited, and the ideas she wants to express are very complex. This means that she often uses the same word to express several different ideas. The poetry resembles modern free verse in that it does not have a regular metrical structure. Although Hildegard often uses a particular metric pattern to end phrases (1988: 32-45).

Her music is very different from contemporaneous music. She often uses extreme ranges, and a single piece may span as much as two octaves, making great demands on the technical abilities of the singer. Her use of modes is unusual in that she seems to juxtapose modes in a way resembling later harmonic practices. Although her music is primarily neumatic (several notes to each syllable), some pieces include lengthy melismas. The music is not strophic, but is rather free-composed.

The most striking thing about text-music relationships is the way in which the musical structure clarifies the poetic structure. She frequently uses melismas to indicate structural points in the poetry; she also uses changes of register to achieve the same goal. At times this amounts to a kind of text-painting, which is not a common procedure during the Middle Ages.

Conclusions

What most intrigues me in Hildegard's theology of music and the senses is that she seems to perceive the world in a synesthetic way. She sees sounds and hears visions. This overlapping of imagery is apparent in the metaphors and analogies she uses in both her theological works and in her poetic/musical works. It is also apparent in her emphasis on the bodily senses as a legitimate means of learning about God.

Music--metaphors about music and the actual sounding of music--became a vehicle through which Hildegard could begin to work out these concepts of interrelatedness and harmony. Music is the crux between body and spirit in Hildegard's theology. It both represents the hierarchies and harmonic proportions in the cosmos, and also serves as an important means to bring people close to God. It works on people's senses through their ears and voices while also reminding them of the right proportions of celestial harmony. God is revealed to humans through the structure of music and humans understand and recognize God through the hearing of music.

Although Hildegard's focus is on knowing God rather than on knowing self, her approach to this knowledge seems to me to be akin to what Miles refers to as "carnal knowing." Miles defines "carnal knowing" as "embodied self-knowledge . . . an activity in which the intimate interdependence and irreducible cooperation of thinking, feeling, sensing, and understanding is revealed" (9). Hildegard's conception of knowledge as something achieved through the senses, understanding, and Reason seems to me a step in that direction.

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