

Handout - Ancient Theories of Sound

From *The Secret Power of Music: The Transformation of Self and Society through Musical Energy* by David Tame

In ancient times sound itself, the very basis of all music, was thought to be intimately related in some way to non-physical and sacred dimensions or planes of existence. Why was this? Because audible sound was considered to be but an earthly reflection of a vibratory activity taking place beyond the physical world. This vibration was more fundamental, and nearer to the heart of the meaning of things, than any audible sound. Inaudible to human ear, this Cosmic Vibration was the origin and basis of all matter and energy in the universe. In its purest, least differentiated form, this Cosmic Sound was known to the Hindus as OM...

And thus we find ourselves throwing light upon the widely-held belief that all matter is composed of one basic substance or energy. According to the great thinkers of old, this energy was Vibration. In modern times, the physical sciences are now arriving back at this original point of departure. Once again, science is beginning to suspect that matter is all composed of one fundamental something, and that the frequencies or rhythms of this something determine the specific nature of each object and atom.

The universal vibratory energies were called by the ancient Egyptians the Word or Words of their gods; to the Pythagoreans of Greece they were the Music of the Spheres; and the ancient Chinese knew them to be the celestial energies of perfect harmony. The Cosmic Tones, as differentiations of the OM, were the most powerful force in the universe according to the ancients, for these Tones were the universe—the very source of the Creation itself.

And herein lay the vast significance of all audible, earthly sounds, such as are produced by the performing of music or the uttering of speech. For audible sound was believed to be a 'reflection', within the world of matter, of the Cosmic Tones. Audible sound itself, which is taken so much for granted today, was in those days thought to contain within itself something of the enormous Creative, Preservative and Destructive force of the Cosmic Tones themselves. The very phenomenon of sound was regarded with great reverence.