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From *Musica Instrumentalis* to *Musica Mundana*: A Semiotic-Hermeneutical Reading of Neoplatonic Music Philosophy in Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game**

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Abstract

Hermann Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel* (1943) is a text of unusual philosophical density, one that has continuously invited scholarly inquiry and remained at the center of sustained international academic attention. Nevertheless, existing Western-centered scholarship has directed its focus primarily toward the novel's literary and narrative layers rather than toward the deeper structure constituted by its philosophy of music - situating the work within educational-sociological, psychological-biographical, or political-ideological frameworks. None of these approaches identifies the Neoplatonic music ontology and the Pythagorean cosmological signs that constitute the backbone of *Glasperlenspiel* as primary objects of analysis. This study addresses that lacuna by examining *The Glass Bead Game* as a modern literary projection of ancient Pythagorean–Neoplatonic music ontology, and by analyzing this

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nexus systematically through a hybrid semiotic-hermeneutical model. The model synthesizes Roland Barthes's layers of signification (denotation / connotation / myth), Paul Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics, and Umberto Eco's principle of *intentio operis* with the tripartite music hierarchy (*Musica Instrumentalis / Humana / Mundana*) articulated in Boethius's *De institutione musica*, and with Plotinus's dialectic of Emanation and Reditus. The analysis demonstrates that *Castalia* and the *Glass Bead Game* ritual function not merely as literary fiction or pedagogical experiment, but as the institutionalized form of cosmic harmony and as a spatial-narrative reflection of *Musica Mundana*. Furthermore, Josef Knecht's intellectual and existential transformation is read as a literary correlate of the Plotinian dialectic of Emanation and Return to the Source. The study makes three principal theoretical contributions: it consolidates the methodological bridge between literary criticism and the philosophy of music; it extends the applicable domain of the hybrid semiotics model to other philosophically dense literary works; and it tests the methodological possibility of situating Eastern philosophy and Western Neoplatonism within a simultaneous analytical frame.

Keywords: *Musica Mundana*, Neoplatonism, Pythagorean cosmology, semiotic-hermeneutical analysis, *Das Glasperlenspiel*, musicology, philosophy of music.

Hesse'nin Boncuk Oyunu'nda Yeni Platoncu Müzik Felsefesinin Göstergebilimsel-Hermeneutik Bir Okuması

Öz

Hermann Hesse'nin felsefi yoğunluğuyla öne çıkan *Das Glasperlenspiel* (1943) adlı eseri, bilimsel araştırmalara konu olmuş ve uluslararası akademik ilginin merkezinde yer almıştır. Ne var ki Batı merkezli akademik geleneğin büyük bölümü, çözümleme odağını eserin anlatısal ve edebi yüzeyine yoğunlaştırmış; romanı eğitim-sosyolojik, psiko-biyografik ve siyasal-ideolojik yorumlama çerçeveleri içinde konumlandırarak onun daha derin felsefi ve kozmolojik boyutlarını büyük ölçüde göz ardı etmiştir. Bu çalışma söz konusu boşluğu, Boncuk Oyunu'nu kadim Pythagorasçı-Yeni Platoncu müzik ontolojisinin modern bir edebi izdüşümü olarak ele alarak ve bu ilişkiyi melez bir göstergebilimsel-hermeneutik model aracılığıyla sistematik biçimde çözümleyerek gidermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Model; Roland Barthes'ın anlamlandırma katmanlarını (düzanlam / yananlam / söylen), Paul Ricoeur'ün felsefi hermeneutiğini ve Umberto Eco'nun *intentio operis* ilkesini, Boethius'un *De institutione musica* eserindeki üçlü müzik hiyerarşisiyle (*Musica Instrumentalis / Humana / Mundana*) ve Plotinos'un Emanation ile Reditus diyalektiğiyle sentezlemektedir. Analiz, Kastalya'nın ve Boncuk Oyunu ritüelinin yalnızca bir edebi kurgu ya da pedagojik bir deneme olarak değil; kozmik uyumun kurumsallaşmış biçimi ve *Musica Mundana*'nın mekânsal-anlatısal bir yansıması olarak işlev gördüğünü ortaya koymaktadır. Öte yandan Josef Knecht'in entelektüel ve varoluşsal dönüşümü, Plotinosçu Emanation ve Kaynağa Dönüş diyalektiğinin edebi bir karşılığı olarak okunmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın disipline yönelik üç temel teorik katkısı öngörülmektedir. Birincisi, edebiyat eleştirisi ile müzik felsefesi arasında yeni bir metodolojik köprü kurulmasıdır. İkincisi, geliştirilen melez göstergebilim modelinin felsefi yoğunluklu diğer edebi yapıtlara da uyarlanabilir bir analitik çerçeve olarak sunulmasıdır. Üçüncüsü ise Doğu felsefesi ile Batı Yeni Platonculuğunun eşzamanlı bir düşünsel çerçeve içinde ele alınmasının metodolojik zeminini oluşturmaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Musica Mundana*, Yeni Platonculuk, Pythagorasçı kozmoloji, göstergebilimsel-hermeneutik analiz, *Das Glasperlenspiel*, müzikoloji, müzik felsefesi

Introduction

Hermann Hesse completed *Das Glasperlenspiel* (The Glass Bead Game) in 1943 and published it in Zurich; three years later, in 1946, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. More importantly, the prize was not awarded for this novel alone but for the totality of the author's literary work; the Swedish Academy's citation noted that Hesse was honored "for his inspired writings which, while growing in boldness and penetration, exemplify the classical humanitarian ideals and high qualities of style" (Frenz, 1969: 416). This distinction matters methodologically: *Das Glasperlenspiel* should be understood not as the singular cause of Hesse's international recognition, but as the culminating work within a lifelong literary trajectory that the Nobel Committee retrospectively honored as a whole.

The existing Western-centered literature on *The Glass Bead Game* tends to situate the novel within one of three dominant interpretive frameworks. The first is an educational-sociological reading that treats the novel as a pedagogical utopia. Within this line of inquiry, Roberts reads the work as Hesse's critique of modern educational institutions and as an interrogation of the individual's autonomy within the social system (Roberts, 2009, pp. 21–23). The second framework is a psychological-biographical approach that reads the novel, together with Hesse's earlier narratives, as a form of spiritual autobiography. Along this vein, Johnson argues that all of Hesse's major novels are, in essence, "the same song sung in different registers of the inner life," and interprets Knecht's intellectual journey as the final station in the author's own spiritual quest (Johnson, 1956, pp. 161–162). The methodological limitation of the psychological approach - particularly of studies conducted within the framework of Jungian unconscious archetypes - lies in its treatment of music not as an intellectual domain freighted with symbolic and philosophical meaning, but merely as a projection of the unconscious. The third framework consists of political-ideological readings that view Castalia either as an Enlightenment utopia or as an authoritarian police state. Durrani argues that beneath Castalia's apparent perfection lies an oligarchic order, sealed off from the world and depriving its members of individual will (Durrani, 1982, pp. 655–658). While this reading yields important findings in the context of ideology critique, it excludes the novel's musical-cosmological strata from analysis and thereby reduces its philosophical architecture to a reductive interpretation.

None of these approaches identifies the Neoplatonic music ontology and the Pythagorean cosmological signs that constitute the backbone of *Glasperlenspiel* as primary objects of analysis. In the majority of existing studies, music is defined either as an aesthetic phenomenon, a pedagogical instrument, or a psychological function; it is not conceptualized as a universal principle of order (*Musica Mundana*) or as a series of ontological categories. The most readily identifiable register in which this deficiency becomes apparent is the textual evidence concerning how the Glass Bead Game itself is described within *Glasperlenspiel*. In narrating the Game, Hesse portrays its player as a performer at "a giant organ whose manuals, pedals, and stops survey the entire universe" (Hesse, 2014, p. 14). This relational network - moving from the musical theme of a Bach fugue to the formula of an astronomical planetary orbit, thence to a philosophical proposition of Leibniz or a sentence from the Upanishads - can be interpreted as the direct literary translation of the classical Pythagorean doctrine of universal sympathy: that is, the principle by which the macrocosm and the microcosm mirror one another through numerical-musical laws.

Mileck's foundational archival study documents that between 1932 and 1934, Hesse kept systematic notes on Pythagorean number mysticism, Kepler's *Harmonices Mundi*, and the Boethian literature (Mileck, 1970, pp. 62–67). Mileck, however, does not systematically map this archival finding onto the novel's narrative structure through the lens of Boethius's tripartite music hierarchy (*Musica Instrumentalis / Humana / Mundana*). His contribution thus supplies the raw archival foundation for the hybrid analytical model the present study aims to construct, yet the theoretical framework capable of interpreting that foundation remains conspicuously absent. A comparable incompleteness characterizes Taylor's study published in *Monatshefte* and among the most original contributions in the literature which convincingly demonstrates that the philosophical fabric of *Glasperlenspiel* draws directly from Platonic, and specifically Neoplatonic, sources, and that the tension between Castalia and the external world constitutes a modern restaging of the Platonic bifurcation between the intelligible world and the sensible world (Taylor, 1982, pp. 156–159). Yet Taylor's analysis remains largely at the level of general philosophical comparison, leaving the philosophy-of-music dimension of Neoplatonism unexamined.

Prior scholarship on *Glasperlenspiel* has partially recognized the novel's affinities with Neoplatonic and Pythagorean philosophy, yet no existing study has systematically elaborated those affinities within a semiotic-analytical framework that foregrounds the prominent themes of the philosophy of music. More precisely: the majority of existing studies have intuited the presence of a finding but have not constructed the method capable of producing it. To detect philosophical ideas within a novel and to analyze the semiotic operation of the philosophy of music within that novel are epistemologically distinct undertakings.

The existing Western literature on *The Glass Bead Game* lacks a study that takes the novel's philosophy of music dimension — specifically the semiotic and hermeneutical reflections of the Pythagorean-Neoplatonic *Musica Mundana* tradition within the text — as its primary object of analysis, and that systematically synthesizes semiotic and hermeneutical methods with medieval models of musical thought. This deficiency can be formulated as two fundamental research questions:

- i) What are the semiotic signs in Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* that correspond to the Neoplatonic philosophy of music in particular to the Boethian hierarchy of *Musica Mundana / Humana / Instrumentalis*- and how do these signs operate within the text?
- ii) Can Josef Knecht's intellectual transformation be read as a literary correlate of the Plotinian dialectic of *Sudūr* (Emanation) and *Reditus* (Return to the Source)?

The answers to these research questions aim to make an original theoretical contribution to *Glass Bead Game* scholarship and to interdisciplinary studies at the intersection of musicology and literary semiotics.

The primary aim of this study is to examine Hermann Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel* as a modern literary projection of ancient Pythagorean-Neoplatonic music ontology, and to analyze this nexus systematically through a hybrid semiotic-hermeneutical model. This model synthesizes Roland Barthes's layers of signification (denotation / connotation / myth), Paul Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics, and Umberto Eco's principle of *intentio operis* with the tripartite music hierarchy (*Musica Instrumentalis / Humana / Mundana*) articulated in Boethius's *De institutione musica* (Barthes, 1970, p. 20; Ricoeur, 1974, p. 12; Eco, 1992, p. 23; Boethius, 1989, p. 9). The hybrid model constructed by the study occupies a methodologically distinctive position at the intersection of musicology, literary theory, and philosophy. The secondary aim is to demonstrate that Josef Knecht's intellectual and existential transformation constitutes a literary reflection of the Plotinian dialectic of Emanation (*Sudūr*) and Return to the Source (*Reditus*).

To minimize the risk of “methodological dispersion,” the scope of analysis encompasses three components: (i) the Neoplatonic philosophical signs directly encoded in Hermann Hesse's text; (ii) the function of those signs in Josef Knecht's intellectual transformation; and (iii) the symbolic meanings of Castalia's institutional structure and the Glass Bead Game rituals, as mappable onto the Boethian tripartite classification of music.

The units of analysis are confined to the following seven focal scenes in the novel:

- The initial encounter between Magister Musicae and Knecht (the ritual of music and silence)
- The Waldzell game-archive scenes (the performance of mathematical-musical symbols)
- The dialogues with Plinio Designori (*Vita Contemplativa* / *Vita Activa* opposition)
- The scenes with Father Jacobus at the Mariafels Monastery (philosophy of history and organic time)
- The Bamboo Grove and the “Elder Brother” dialogues (East-West musical harmony synthesis)
- Knecht's “Circular Letter” and his departure from Castalia (the precursor to *Reditus*)
- The mountain lake scene (death as the final *Reditus*)

The Central Theoretical Axis: Neoplatonic Philosophy of Music, Pythagorean Cosmology, and Eastern Thought

To bring the ontological and cosmological codes embedded in the deeper strata of *The Glass Bead Game* into conceptual clarity, it is first necessary to examine systematically the philosophical ground upon which those codes are constructed namely, Pythagorean and Neoplatonic musical cosmology.

The first systematic formulation of the ontological bond between music and cosmology originates with the Pythagorean school (6th century BCE). Ancient music theory was organized around three main orientations: the Pythagorean tradition, which centered on the relationship between music and the cosmos and the doctrine of number; the Aristoxenian approach, which took musical perception as its point of departure; and the Harmonicists, who proceeded along a more empirical line (Mathiesen, 2008, p. 114). Of these three orientations, it is specifically the first - Pythagorean musical cosmology - that determined not only the course of philosophy but also the epistemological horizon of music theory in the centuries that followed, generating a long-lived sphere of influence extending through the concept of the “Music of the Spheres,” harmonia, and universal sympathy into the Middle Ages, Islamic thought, and ultimately the Ottoman theoretical tradition.

In Pythagorean thought, the universe is conceived as a vast instrument - a monochord (a single-stringed instrument) - built upon mathematical ratios (logoi). The intervals between tones (the octave as 2:1, the fifth as 3:2, the fourth as 4:3) are not arbitrary acoustic phenomena but rather the sonic manifestation of arithmetic laws that constitute existence itself. Within this speculative framework, the number - positioned by the Pythagoreans beyond all else, as the source and prime matter of being - contains within itself a special chain of relations; the relationship present in the first four numbers (1-2-3-4), designated as tetrad numbers, and in the tetraktys formed by these four numbers, comprises the totality of cosmological and ontological knowledge (Barker, 1989, p. 30). These simple integer ratios, obtained by dividing the string of the monochord, represent in Pythagorean cosmology a common mathematical consistency that also accounts for the structure

of crystals, the orbits of planets, and the growth laws of organic forms. If the order and quality of the universe resemble music, and if music originates from ideal numbers, then the entire cosmos is likewise composed of numerical elements (Tornese, 2010, p. 44). This ancient orientation also occupies a central place in the mode of thought that Joscelyn Godwin examines under the heading of “speculative music”: music is regarded as a model - and at times even as the audible reflection - of cosmic order; consequently, concepts such as number, ratio, motion, and harmonia become essential constituents not only of music theory but of metaphysics itself (Godwin, 1982, p. 388). In the esoteric dimension of Pythagorean thought, this knowledge is shared between the akousmatikoi (listeners) and the matematikoi (mathematicians); for the former, the tetraktys directly contains the answer to the question “What is Harmonia?”, “What is the oracle at Delphi? The tetraktys. What is Harmonia? What is present in the voice of the Sirens ... What is the wisest thing? Number. What is the most beautiful? Harmonia” (Taylor, 1986, p. 43). For the mathematicians, number is treated as an ontological problem; transmitted through geometric channels, the unity of one-ness expressed by a point, the opposition of two-ness described by a line segment, the consonance of three-ness shown by triangular surfaces, and the four-ness that finds corporeal representation in the form of a pyramid that these describe the cosmos (Baysal, 2014, p. 59).

The idea that knowledge of the intelligible world is concealed within numbers, and that music is the most privileged form of knowledge enabling access to that knowledge, found its place in the speculative theory tradition of the Middle Ages as well. The fundamental character of this tradition consists in the Neoplatonic interpretation of the metaphysical mystery surrounding the human being in other words, of the symbolic ideas that bear on cosmic and ontological operation. The Swiss-German music theorist Hans Kayser (1891–1964), one of the most significant inheritors of this speculative musical tradition in the twentieth century, systematically revived the Pythagorean theory of harmonics. According to Kayser, the structure of the universe rests on mathematical-musical laws readable in the relationships between pitch and small integer ratios; at the macro level these laws shape the cosmos, and at the micro level they shape organic life and human consciousness (Tokar, 2002, pp. 11–15). Hesse's intellectual relationship with Kayser is not incidental: Mileck's archival research documents that between 1932 and 1934, Hesse kept systematic notes on Pythagorean number mysticism, Kepler's *Harmonices Mundi*, and the Boethian literature (Mileck, 1970, pp. 62–67). Hesse consciously placed Kayser's harmonic theory at the intellectual foundation of *Castalia*, constructing a *lingua sacra* in which mathematical formulas and musical themes are mutually convertible (Taylor, 1982, pp. 163–166).

The channel through which the Pythagorean speculative music tradition was durably transmitted to Western thought is *De institutione musica*, the work of Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (c. 480–524 CE), the bridge figure of Roman-Christian late antiquity. In this treatise, Boethius divided music into three hierarchical categories: *Musica Mundana* (Universal/Cosmic Music), *Musica Humana* (Human Music), and *Musica Instrumentalis* (Instrumental Music) (Boethius, 1989). *Musica Mundana* designates the macrocosmic universal harmony produced by the movements of celestial bodies, the cycle of the seasons, and the combination of the elements. Although inaudible to the human ear, this harmony is comprehensible through reason (*nous*). In Pythagorean number mysticism and Neoplatonic cosmology, the universe is conceived as a vast instrument operating according to specific mathematical ratios (*harmonia*). *Musica Humana* represents the reflection of universal harmony upon the human soul and body the microcosmic consonance of the rational and the irrational, of soul and body. *Musica Instrumentalis*, in turn, is the audible and practical musical act produced by the human voice or by instruments (Esen, 2022, pp. 66–67). The Boethian tripartite music hierarchy constitutes the axis of a sustained tradition of thought

extending from the Renaissance thinker Francesco Giorgio's conception of universal harmony in *De Harmonia Mundi*, through the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' in the Islamic world, to Kepler's *Harmonices Mundi* (1619) and ultimately to the speculative music philosophers of the twentieth century. Neoplatonic influences are particularly evident in themes such as the "Music of the Spheres / harmony of the worlds," musical cosmology and cosmic sympathy, the theory of emanation (*sudūr*), the microcosm-macrocosm relationship, the Hermetic body of knowledge, and the doctrine of the four principles and four elements.

Plotinus (c. 205–270 CE), the architect of the Neoplatonic tradition, argues in the *Enneads* that all of being proceeds from a single, absolute, and indivisible source the One (to Hen) and unfolds through a hierarchical sequence. In this process of *Sudūr* (Emanation), being multiplies as it descends through the planes of Intellect (*Nous*), Universal Soul, and finally Matter; each lower level attains existence as an imperfect reflection of the level above it (Plotinus, 2018). In this respect, Neoplatonism is not merely a philosophical school defined by Plotinus's metaphysics; it possesses an expansive network of meaning woven from concepts such as the One, *Nous*, Soul, emanation, contemplation, cosmic sympathy, the microcosm-macrocosm relationship, and circular perfection. The significance of this theory for the philosophy of music lies here: while *Musica Instrumentalis* is music manifesting in the sensory world of sound (*Hyle*/Matter), *Musica Humana* represents the microcosmic harmony at the layer of Soul (*Psychē*), and *Musica Mundana* represents the macrocosmic harmony overflowing from Intellect (*Nous*) and the One. In Proclus's commentary, the Muses are entities of the intelligible realm, while the Sirens correspond to the sensible world by virtue of the eight planets. The soul that has fallen into the sensible world must awaken and be purified, aiming to reach the Idea through the image. The movement arising from this condition and from desire constitutes the foundational doctrine of Neoplatonic philosophy (Tornese, 2013, p.125). As Plotinus formulates it in the *Enneads*, the fundamental philosophical aim of the human being is to purify the soul through contemplation (*contemplatio* / *tefekür*) by grasping the mathematical ratios and harmony present in audible music, and thereby to return to the source, to the One (*rūcū' / reditus*). (Venable, 1976, p. 36). The musical contemplation of the universe carries great importance in this thought: the soul's path of return passes through the remembrance of the macrocosm, and what will cause the soul to recollect that path is concealed within the musical modes that contain cosmic harmony (Tornese, 2010, p. 178).

In the treatise I.3 of the *Enneads*, titled "On Dialectic," Plotinus delineates three principal typological pathways by which the soul ascends from the sensory world to the intelligible world: the philosopher who can grasp truth directly; the lover who is oriented toward divine beauty through the faculty of sight; and the musician who perceives universal harmony through the faculty of hearing (Plotinus, 2018, p. 64). This tripartite classification prefigures the ontological map of the characters Magister Musicae, Josef Knecht, and Fritz Tegularius in *Glasperlenspiel*; as the subsequent analysis will demonstrate, Hesse has embodied Plotinus's three typological pathways as ontological orbits in his novelistic figures (Taylor, 1982, pp. 156–159). The symbolic polysemy articulated in Ricoeur's hermeneutical framework also gains its function within this context: the soul's ascent from sensory image to Idea is not stated directly in the text but is encoded within symbolic structures as a concealed meaning — a latent significance that can only be brought to light through the act of interpretation.

The Auxiliary Theoretical Axis: The Semiosphere and the Production of Meaning in Literary Texts

The concept of the “semiosphere,” developed by Yuri Lotman, is employed to designate the cultural and linguistic space within which semiotic processes unfold. The semiosphere is a cultural universe with its own content and boundaries, operating according to its own internal laws and continuously generating new meaning (Lotman, 2012, pp. 123–130). This concept is highly productive for explaining the structure of *Glasperlenspiel*: while Castalia functions as a province of pedagogy within the fictional reality, at the semiotic level it constitutes an autonomous semiosphere carrying its own boundaries, internal language, and laws of meaning production. At the outer boundary of this semiosphere stands the “external world” represented by Plinio Designori, that is, other cultural semiospheres; the border zone itself is the threshold at which meaning negotiation and transformation occur (Lotman, 2012, pp. 140–145). Lotman's semiosphere theory enables us to read the tension between Castalia and the cultural chaos of the Age of the Feuilleton not in merely political or sociological terms, but within a semiotic framework as a boundary conflict between two semiospheres. The construction of the novel as a semiosphere constitutes the auxiliary theoretical foundation of this study's hybrid analytical model.

The semiological structuralism that Roland Barthes developed in *Mythologies* (1957) forms the primary instrumental framework for the textual analysis in this research. Barthes expanded the basic sign relation consisting of signifier and signified and divided the process of signification into three fundamental stages: *Denotation* is the lexical, objective, and immediately apprehensible level of the sign; *Connotation* moves beyond denotation to the stage at which cultural, historical, and ideological accumulation seeps into the system (Barthes, 1970, pp. 89–91). The uppermost layer in Barthes's theory, *Myth*, is the domain in which ideologies and philosophical paradigms embed themselves in the text by “naturalizing” themselves — the domain in which culturally constructed meaning is presented as though it were a universal reality (Barthes, 1957, pp. 109–113). The use of ancient symbols in literary works occurs precisely at this level of Myth: the author conceals a philosophical truth within the text under the guise of fictional naturalism.

The hermeneutical dimension of the central theoretical axis is provided by Paul Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics. Ricoeur critiques the structuralist-semiological tendency to treat the text as a closed system and draws attention to the opaque character of symbols (Ricoeur, 1974, pp. 12–17). According to Ricoeur's principle of “symbolic polysemy,” the signifiers in a text do not lead the reader directly to a single, objective signified; rather, they function as thresholds that invite the reader toward a deeper and concealed ontological horizon — the “world of the text” (Ricoeur, 1974, pp. 14–18). This principle is of vital importance for analyzing how apparently science-fictional elements of *Glasperlenspiel*, such as “Castalia,” the “Bamboo Grove,” and the “Magister Ludi,” are in fact hermeneutical gateways opening onto medieval philosophy, Pythagorean number mysticism, and Neoplatonic Emanation theory. Ricoeur's concept of the “hermeneutical circle,” in turn, describes the whole–part relationship and the process of pre-understanding and understanding as a spiral: the reader constructs the meaning of Knecht's action in a given chapter from the novel's holistic philosophical framework, and constructs that holistic framework progressively from the individual discursive fragments of each chapter (Ricoeur, 1974, pp. 18–24).

The table below summarizes the combination of the study's central and auxiliary theoretical axes, which together form the core analytical backbone of the article:

Table 1 Synthesis of Two Axes: A Three-Layer Mapping

<i>Analytical Stage</i>	<i>Barthes</i>	<i>Boethius (Musical Level)</i>	<i>Plotinus (Level of Being)</i>	<i>Correlate in the Novel</i>
Stage 1	Denotation	Musica Instrumentalis	Matter	Physical performance of the Glass Bead Game; plot
Stage 2	Connotation	Musica Humana	Soul	Knecht-Designori conflict; Vita activa / contemplativa
Stage 3	Myth	Musica Mundana	Intellect / Nous — the One / Hen	The cosmological order of Castalia; the Magister Musicae

This three-layer mapping constitutes the analytical architecture that enables us to read any sign in *Glasperlenspiel*, whether a character, a space, a ritual, or an object, simultaneously on the semiotic, hermeneutical, and philosophy-of-music planes. It thereby provides the methodological ground for the analysis conducted in the findings section of the article.

Research Design: The Synthetic-Hermeneutical Semiotics Model

This study adopts a text-centered and interpretive research design situated within the qualitative research paradigm, developed to analyze the signs of the philosophy of music in Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game*. The distinctive character of the design consists in a synthetic-hermeneutical semiotics model that articulates structuralist semiotics and philosophical hermeneutics; this model does not limit itself to classifying signs but also aims to demonstrate how those signs acquire meaning within the novel's holistic ontological horizon.

The first component of this hybridization is Roland Barthes's layers of signification. For Barthes, a narrative text is not merely a sequence in which events are ordered; it is transformed into a multilayered field of meaning production through hermeneutic, proairetic, semic, symbolic, and cultural codes (Barthes, 1970, pp. 20-22). This framework is productive for detecting the transitions between the surface narrative and the deep structure in a novel as densely allegorical and philosophical as *The Glass Bead Game*. When applied in isolation, however, the Barthesian model while capable of revealing the structural functions of signs may prove limited in sufficiently grounding their ontological and metaphysical connotations. It is precisely for this reason that the study supplements Barthes's structural-analytical capacity with Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical circle.

Ricoeur's hermeneutics acknowledges that symbols are not univocal signs but multilayered structures open to deepening. In his view, the symbols in a text function as meaning thresholds that invite the reader not to a single signified but to the "world of the text" (Ricoeur, 1974, pp. 14-18). This approach makes it possible to read elements such as "Castalia," "the Glass Bead Game,"

“Magister Musicae,” “the Bamboo Grove,” and “the lake scene” in *The Glass Bead Game* not as purely narratological functions but as symbolic nodal points of Neoplatonic music ontology and cosmological order. By deploying Barthes's code-analytical approach in conjunction with Ricoeur's hermeneutical circle (grounded in the whole-part relationship) both the internal organization of the text and its philosophical deep structure become traceable.

The third component of the research design is Umberto Eco's principle of *intentio operis*. Eco observes that the greatest danger in the analysis of symbolic and allegorical texts is the reader's unlimited projection of subjective associations onto the text that is, overinterpretation (Eco, 1992, pp. 64–67). The present study is particularly susceptible to this risk, given the density of the layers of music, number, cosmology, and mysticism present in Hesse's text. For this reason, Eco's concept of “the intention of the text” has been adopted as the regulatory principle of interpretation. This theoretical combination accounts for the “synthetic” character of the study. The synthesis here is not an arbitrary gathering of disparate theories; rather, each is functionally positioned to complete the gap left by the others. Barthes supplies the structural circulation of the sign; Ricoeur supplies the ontological deepening of the sign; and Eco supplies the epistemological limit of interpretation. The study thereby moves beyond being merely a semiotic application or merely a hermeneutical reading, transforming into a hybrid analytical model that combines the methodological strengths of both approaches.

The dataset of this study consists of narrative passages in Hermann Hesse's 1943 novel *Das Glasperlenspiel* that are directly related to the themes of the philosophy of music, number, cosmology, education, spiritual transformation, and ontological order. While the primary material of the research is the novel as a whole, the analysis is delimited so as to focus not on randomly distributed passages but on narrative nodes carrying specific theoretical density.

The unit of analysis in this study is not randomly extracted sentences from the novel as a whole but textual signs that carry meaning density and operate along the axes of the philosophy of music, cosmology, number, ritual, education, transformation, and ontological order. These signs may at times take the form of a character, at other times a space, a cluster of dialogues, or a particular image or narrative event. The unit of analysis is therefore not formally reduced to a single type but is functionally defined as a “meaning node connectable to Neoplatonic music ontology.” This approach is suited both to the plural structure of the literary text and to the flexible nature of semiotic analysis.

In the first phase of the coding process, the novel was re-scanned through a multiple close-reading technique in line with the research question; passages related to the themes of music, ratio, number, order, silence, education, ritual, celestial harmony, spiritual purification, the external world, nature, death, and return were subjected to preliminary marking. In the second phase, these passages were clustered not merely according to thematic similarity but according to the semiotic functions they carry. In the third phase, these clusters were cross-referenced with the Boethian classification of music and Barthesian layers of meaning and transformed into higher-order analytical categories.

The core code groups derived from the text through this procedure were organized under three main headings. The first group consists of *musical signs*. This group encompasses the direct music-related definitions of the Glass Bead Game, the figure of the Magister Musicae, and all expressions that enable the Game to function as such, including references to Bach, counterpoint, harmony, silence, meditation, and the Game's construction as an interdisciplinary “universal language”. These signs reveal that music in the novel operates not merely as an artistic object but simultaneously as a principle of order, education, and spiritual formation. The second group

consists of *mathematical/cosmological signs*. Here, passages containing references to number, ratio, formula, geometry, planetary movements, universal harmony, order, *sema*, rhythm, and calendrical and cosmic connotations have been coded. The Glass Bead Game's capacity to connect a musical theme to an astronomical orbital formula and from there to philosophical propositions constitutes the nucleus of this code group. These signs feed the study's Boethian *Musica Mundana* axis and demonstrate that the novel constructs knowledge not as fragmentary but within a cosmic whole. The third group consists of *ontological/existential signs*. This category includes passages evoking Josef Knecht's inner transformation, his ethic of service, the contemplation action tension, the opposition between Castalia and the external world, the decision to resign, images of water/nature/death, and the idea of return to the source. These signs have been analyzed specifically within Ricoeur's hermeneutical circle; it is assumed that the meaning of the part can only be grasped within the novel's holistic philosophical horizon, and that the whole can only be understood through precisely such dense nodal points.

The coding procedure was not left at the level of thematic labeling alone but was deepened through a three-stage analytical procedure. In the first stage, each sign was related to Barthes's level of Denotation and Boethius's *Musica Instrumentalis* layer that is, its function within the narrative at first glance, its role in the plot, and its place within a given physical or institutional order were determined. In the second stage, the same sign was evaluated at the level of Connotation and interpreted within the *Musica Humana* context in terms of the characters' inner worlds, the balance of soul and body, ethical orientation, and psychological and social connotations. In the third stage, the sign was related to *Musica Mundana* at the level of Myth; here, the function of the sign within Neoplatonic cosmology, the theory of Emanation, universal sympathy, or the idea of return to the source was discussed.

The Cosmic-Mathematical Signs of Castalia and the Glass Bead Game

In the first analytical layer of the synthetic-hermeneutical semiotics model, the denotative level of *Musica Instrumentalis* is established through the novel's objective plot and the physical architecture of the Glass Bead Game. At this level, the Game is defined not as a cultural symbol or a metaphysical allegory but as a reproducible practice performed within a framework of specific rules and rituals, bound to an institutional hierarchy. The performance of the Game in the novel is enveloped by a ceremonial staging: on the evening before the Game begins, all of Castalia is enfolded in a deep and reverent silence, which is followed by a communal meditation ritual, and only then does the Game commence. This preparatory protocol constitutes the objective, concrete, and action-based first stratum of signs in Barthes's definition of Denotation — that is, the surface structure of the novel. The physical material of the Game is a universal symbolic language composed of hieroglyphs, mathematical formulas, and musical notations from different scientific disciplines, interlocked with one another. Hesse constructs the historical origins of the Glass Bead Game along a developmental trajectory that evolves from Bastian Perrot's counting apparatus using beads, which represents the most concrete form of physical musical practice, toward an increasingly abstract metalanguage that unifies all disciplines within a single symbolic system (Hesse, 2014, p. 30). This design reveals that *Musica Instrumentalis* is conceived as a point of departure in the fullest sense, functioning as a threshold that opens from practical music onto cosmic music.

In its syntactic dimension, the Glass Bead Game operates as a vast semiotic system in which each disciplinary symbolic unit functions as a “note” and the Game in its entirety functions as a “cosmic

fugue” composed of those notes assembled into a score. The institutional position of Castalian players also acquires meaning at this syntactic layer: the scholars live an ascetic and secluded life, segregated from the noise of politics, wars, and economics (the chaos of the Age of the Feuilleton) and occupy themselves exclusively with knowledge and aesthetics. Even the name Knecht carries a semantic residue at this syntactic level: the German word for “servant” marks, from the outset and implicitly, the character's position of submission to the hierarchical order and his existential self-constitution through that order.

In the second analytical layer of the synthetic-hermeneutical model, the framework of *Musica Humana* comes into operation: at this layer, the microcosmic reflections of cosmological order in the human soul, intellectual practice, and institutional life are analyzed. According to Boethius, *Musica Humana* represents the invisible frequency through which celestial harmony shapes the human soul and body — the process by which the rational and the irrational, reason and passion, form and matter, are brought into mutual equilibrium. The practice of the Game in *The Glass Bead Game* functions as the institutional technique of precisely this balancing process. The game practice itself — in which the musical theme of a Bach fugue can be connected to an astronomical orbital formula, and from there to a philosophical proposition of Leibniz or a sentence from the Upanishads — enacts a cosmological meaning-production operation (Hesse, 2014, p. 14). The dissolution of disciplines that appear at first glance to be independent of one another — music, astronomy, philosophy, Eastern mysticism — into a single symbolic language can be read as a concrete practice of Pythagorean Universal Sympathy: it is the rendering visible, through a game ritual, of the invisible bonds between the macrocosm (planets, stars) and the microcosm (the human intellect, art, music). In this context, the Glass Bead Game presents itself as a modern literary reflection of a Pythagorean orientation in which sounds are converted into numerical ratios, harmony is joined to mathematical formulas, and these are related to observations of cosmic significance. Castalia's intellectual ritual is an effort to create a *lingua sacra* — a sacred universal language — in which all disciplines can speak to one another on this harmonic ground. This effort constitutes precisely the expected function of *Musica Humana*: the human mind that internalizes visible mathematical ratios becomes simultaneously the carrier and the reflector of cosmic harmony.

The extended debates between Plinio Designori and Josef Knecht also reflect, at this semantic layer, the internal tension of *Musica Humana*. Plinio, who finds the Castalian order of pure intellectual harmony “emasculated” and severed from historical reality, is a sign that embodies the dissonance of *Musica Humana*. Knecht attempts but ultimately fails to resolve this tension — because *Musica Humana* is not by nature a state of equilibrium but a condition of sustained tension, much as in the Pythagorean conception of harmony, where opposing ratios mutually constitute one another. This dynamic reveals that the novel's mathematical order is not merely a utopian project but a living semiological system that carries its own internal contradiction and thus harbors within itself the seeds of its own dissolution.

In the third layer of the synthetic-hermeneutical model — at Barthes's level of *Myth* and Boethius's level of *Musica Mundana* — Castalia itself and the totality of the Glass Bead Game ritual can now be read not as literary fiction or as a pedagogical experiment, but as the institutionalized form of cosmic harmony and as a spatial-narrative reflection of *Musica Mundana*. In Boethius's terminology, *Musica Mundana* designates the macrocosmic harmony — inaudible to the human ear, comprehensible only through reason (*nous*) — constituted by the movements of celestial bodies, the cycle of the seasons, and the combination of the elements into a harmonic whole. Hesse's Castalia is precisely the fictional earthly counterpart of this “inaudible yet conceivable”

music. In this reading, the Glass Bead Game is not merely an intellectual exercise; within the framework of Pythagorean number mysticism and Neoplatonic cosmology, it is a contemplative practice through which the mathematical-harmonic structure of the universe is meditated upon by means of a ritual game — imitating the cosmic geometry of the Demiurge as described in Plato's *Timaeus*. The universe is conceived as a vast instrument — a monochord — operating according to specific mathematical ratios (*Harmonia*); the Glass Bead Game player functions as a “priest” who reproduces the vibrations of this cosmic string through mathematical symbols (Tokar, 2002, pp. 18-22). The Game thus becomes not a simulation of cosmic harmony but a ritual that, in the very moment of its performance, brings that harmony into being.

Spatial signs assume a carrier role in this cosmological reading. Castalia and its capital Waldzell are architecturally and atmospherically organized according to a principle of mathematical symmetry; emotions (irrational elements) are excluded, and rational harmony is adopted as the formal rule. This artificial perfection can be interpreted as a literary simulation of *Musica Mundana* — the cosmic order that can never be fully realized on the material plane. A simulation, however, is not the totality of the real; accordingly, the description of Castalia as “too perfect, too beautiful” — a formulation that also accords with Knecht's own observations — discloses that this system bears its own limitation internally. The true reflection of *Musica Mundana* resides neither in Castalia's mathematical order alone nor in the natural silence of the Bamboo Grove alone; it becomes possible only in the dialectical tension between both poles — between *Logos* and *Physis*, between Western rationality and Eastern intuition. At this point, a creative decision by Hesse — documented through Mileck's archival research — is highly illuminating: between 1932 and 1934, Hesse kept systematic notes on Pythagorean number mysticism, Kepler's *Harmonices Mundi*, and the Boethian literature, and worked this intellectual preparation directly into the conceptual architecture of *The Glass Bead Game* (Mileck, 1970, pp. 62-67). The cosmological signs observed in the novel at the *Musica Mundana* layer — the game practice that relates music to astronomical formulas, the institutional ritual that imitates celestial harmony, the monastic-ascetic life of the Castalians — are therefore not the product of intuitive reading. They are components of a stratum of meaning called forth by the *intentio operis* itself: by the very structure of the text and by the author's documented creative process.

Table 2 *Neoplatonic–Boethian–Novelistic Correspondence*

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Neoplatonism</i>	<i>Boethius (De inst. mus.)</i>	<i>Correlate in The Glass Bead Game</i>
Source / The One	To Hen (absolute One)	Divine order (ordo mundi)	Castalia's institutional ideal / the Game's concept of universal harmony
First Emanation	Nous (Universal Intellect)	Musica Mundana	Magister Musicae; the cosmic dimension of the Game
Second Emanation	Psychē (Universal Soul)	Musica Humana	Knecht's individual transformation

Matter Pole	Hyle matter)	(raw	Musica Instrumentalis	The external world; Tegularius's debased virtuosity
Return (Reditus)	Reunion the One	with	Ascent from practice to cosmic harmony	The lake scene; Knecht's death and Tito's awakening

The Hermeneutical Circle and Existential Music in Josef Knecht's Transformation

The first major turning point in the trajectory of Josef Knecht's intellectual and spiritual transformation is his encounter with the Magister Musicae in childhood. In this initial meeting, when Knecht hears the elderly master improvising a fugue on a two-manual piano, he does not undergo a merely musical experience; rather, he confronts an ontological awakening that, in Platonic terminology, is designated *Anamnesis* — the recollection by the soul of the knowledge it acquired in the primordial world of Ideas. This is the most explicit literary manifestation of the Platonic theory of recollection in *The Glass Bead Game*: the material vibration of music awakens the soul's originary memory, and Knecht feels that he recognizes a truth he has never previously encountered. Knecht's decision to join the Order is therefore not a choice but the inevitable extension of the soul's recollection of its essential home and origin. For the musician archetype, this scene dramatizes the ontological transition between the three layers of the Boethian hierarchy. The Magister Musicae's improvisation is, at the level of Denotation (*Musica Instrumentalis*), no more than a fugue performance; at the level of Connotation (*Musica Humana*), it is a spiritual resonance established between teacher and student — an experience of microcosmic harmony on a human scale. At the level of Myth (*Musica Mundana*), this improvisation is the condensation of universal cosmic harmony into a single musical moment — the first occasion on which the language of the cosmos is made audible to Knecht.

In this scene of the novel in particular, the hermeneutical circle operates not unidirectionally but bidirectionally: Knecht will not come to understand the Order by understanding music; he will come to understand music by understanding the Order. Ricoeur's “whole-part” relationship acquires fictional reality here: Castalia's holistic philosophical system presents its promise within a single musical moment (the part), while that moment in turn acquires meaning only retroactively, as the entire system of Castalia is comprehended. The elderly Magister Musicae's eventual abandonment of words in the later pages of the novel — his transformation into a “pure musical personality” — images the apex of this cycle: where language ends, music begins, and this transformation functions as an audible projection of the ultimate existential mode that Knecht will reach.

The second major hermeneutical turning point in Knecht's transformation is the dialogues with Plinio Designori during the Waldzell years — dialogues whose resonance is never fully extinguished across the entire length of the novel. Designori is enrolled as a “guest student,” a status peculiar to a privileged outsider educated within the Castalian school system, and his roots extend to his family, to politics, and to the chaos of the external world (Hesse, 2014, p. 87). In semiotic analysis, Designori represents the plural, noisy, and contradictory texture of the sensory world; at the *Musica Humana* layer, this character is coded in the Boethian sense as an instrument whose balance of soul and body has not yet been established — a discordant instrument of the tension between soul and will. While Knecht defends reason, order, and contemplation, Designori foregrounds “nature,” “the authentic dynamism of the external world,” and historical

responsibility. As Negus also observes, Designori's celebrated critique directed at Castalia — “We read and explain Pindar or Goethe, but we are ashamed to write poetry ourselves ... In Castalia we lead a life like artificially bred songbirds” — demonstrates, at the level of *Musica Mundana* discourse, that Castalia's static harmony actually constitutes an incomplete cosmos, and reveals the difference between sustaining a single continuous tone and creating genuine harmony (Negus, 1961, pp. 181–184). With each encounter with Designori, Knecht is compelled to reinterpret Castalia from the perspective of history, of the body, and of worldly suffering; this compulsion prepares the transition to the next spiral of the hermeneutical circle.

Father Jacobus, the Benedictine monk of the Mariafels Monastery, is — according to Peppard — a wise figure modeled on the historian Jacob Burckhardt; he defends the concrete reality of time, history, faith, and human will against Castalia's timeless, abstract, mathematical philosophy. The fact that music cannot exist without time — that frozen in a harmony without rhythm and melody it becomes sterile — may be read as the most fundamental lesson Knecht learns from Jacobus. Formulated within the Boethian framework: a Castalia bereft of historical consciousness cannot comprehend the cosmic cyclicity that *Musica Mundana* claims to embody, because the cycle passes through time. After this encounter, Knecht undergoes what Taylor describes as his first great intellectual awakening: he begins to regard the world's “impure” reality, buried in history, not merely as a deception to be transcended but as an ontological dimension that Castalia has failed to complete.

To summarize: the first phase of Knecht's intellectual development — admission to Castalia, the mastery of game technique, maturation at Waldzell — represents an ascent within the Emanation hierarchy, a spiritual momentum rising from *Musica Instrumentalis* (practical musical education) to *Musica Humana* (inner transformation and ethical maturation), and from there to *Musica Mundana* (comprehension of the cosmic dimension of the Game). The attainment of the title of Magister Ludi is the culmination of this ascent and coincides, at this moment, with the literary representation of Plotinus's level of *Nous*. Yet Knecht, who has glimpsed the light and reached the world of Ideas, is compelled to descend rather than remain “above.” This compulsion is not a fracture of individual will but the consequence of a deep ontological comprehension. In Plotinus's system, while *Nous* exists as static contemplation within itself, *Psychē* assumes an activity turned toward the world; Knecht's resignation is precisely the dramatic moment of this transition.

Fritz Tegularius — Knecht's closest friend in Castalia and his intellectual antipode — is a virtuoso endowed with superior technical ability yet spiritually ill, lacking physical and social integration, and absorbed in pure aesthetic pleasure (Hesse, 2014, pp. 141–144). Plotinus's warning about “the musician lacking philosophical guidance” is concretized in this character: Tegularius performs the ratios but cannot sense the One behind them; he sequences the sounds but never hears the universal resonance of the primordial covenant. Evaluated within the Boethian hierarchy, Tegularius represents a consciousness in which *Musica Mundana* and *Musica Humana* remain inaccessible — a consciousness that has collapsed into the purely technical dimension of *Musica Instrumentalis* alone. By perceiving in Tegularius what he does not wish to become, Knecht arrives at a sharper understanding of what he does wish to become.

The most consequential decision of Knecht's mature years is his resignation from the apex of the office of Magister Ludi, his departure from Castalia, and his descent into the external world to serve as private tutor to Plinio's son Tito. In the circular letter he publishes, explaining that Castalia's disconnection from historical reality constitutes not an enlightenment but a

sterilization, Knecht arrives at a decision that is confirmed by the text's own internal consistency within Eco's *intentio operis* framework: the cosmic wholeness that Castalia claims cannot be constituted by excluding the external world and history but only by passing through them. This decision acquires deeper resonance when read alongside the corresponding concept in Sufi literature within the Neoplatonic understanding of being. The concepts of *kavs-i nüzûl* (the arc of descent) and *kavs-i urûc* (the arc of ascent) express the idea that being manifests through a necessary descent from the Absolute One into multiplicity, and that the production of authentic meaning resides in the cycle of return to the source (*Reditus*).

The novel's final scene is the breaking point at which the entire hermeneutical circle is completed and the existential music is heard for the last time. When Knecht awakens at dawn to observe the pagan sun dance of Tito Designori, he comes face to face with a dimension that Castalia's abstract harmony never incorporated — the rhythm of the body, of nature, and of instinct. Upon Tito's invitation, Knecht enters the ice-cold lake and succumbs, his physical strength overcome by the violence of nature, and drowns. At the syntactic (*Musica Instrumentalis*) level, this is an accident; but at the *Musica Mundana* layer, this ending is the ultimate reconciliation of the ontological opposition between Soul and Nature, *Logos* and *Hyle*, *Vita Contemplativa* and *Vita Activa* (Hesse, 2014, pp. 427–428). Knecht's physical annihilation has midwived Tito's spiritual birth; the old master's sacrificial death leaves a permanent resonance within the young student. This scene can also be read as the fictional manifestation of the moment at which the boundary between *Musica Humana* and *Musica Mundana* dissolves: Knecht, as microcosm, has merged with macrocosmic universal harmony in a *unio mystica*.

The Magister Musicae who makes his voice heard to the young Knecht in the novel's opening section is a figure who has fully divested himself of personal ambitions, worldly doubts, and even the analytical limits of language, attaining pure musical existence. Hesse constructs this figure as the embodiment of *Musica Mundana* in the human body. In the later pages of the novel, when Knecht visits the elderly Master, he conveys that their communication has moved beyond words with the following passage: “At least I felt what radiated from him, or what passed back and forth between us rhythmically, like a breathing in common, as sheer music, as an inward music without any materiality” (Hesse, 2014, p. 259). In Ricoeur's hermeneutical model, this passage is read as a moment of mystical union (*unio mystica*) at which the boundary between *Musica Humana* and *Musica Mundana* dissolves; the Master is the allegorical counterpart of the condition of pure being at which music begins where language ends.

Fritz Tegularius — Knecht's closest friend — possesses superior game ability yet presents a portrait that is physically and spiritually unbalanced, absorbed in aesthetic pleasure, and indifferent to ethical responsibility. At the level of Myth, Tegularius carries the appearance of a light so far removed from the source that he is a debased intellect — one that has become mired in the layer of *Musica Instrumentalis* (pure formal virtuosity) alone, never accessing the ethical dimension of *Musica Humana* or the cosmological horizon of *Musica Mundana*.

Plinio Designori, positioned as the antipode of Castalia, represents at the discursive level the chaos, desires, and politics of the material world. This figure — marking the point furthest from the One in the Emanation hierarchy — carries only the dissonance dimension of *Musica Humana*. In his post-Castalian life, Designori suffers deeply in politics and marriage and loses his spiritual equilibrium, bearing the appearance of an instrument left permanently out of tune; the scene in which Knecht attempts to “retune” him through meditation and musical discipline (Hesse, 2014, p. 326) presents itself as a practical allegory of *Musica Mundana*'s healing and regulatory function.

The figure of the Elder Brother, who has withdrawn to the Bamboo Grove, offers an intuitive representation of *Nous* — outside Western rationalism and institutional structures, oriented along the axes of *I Ching* wisdom and Taoism. At the level of Myth, this figure is a prior stage of being in which “the notes have not yet become sound, where absolute silence reigns” — the primordial form of the eternal vibration in nature. In the spatial dimension of the novel, it is equally possible to trace the Emanation hierarchy. The spaces surrounding Castalia are not an incidental geography; they are the topographic counterpart of the map of ontological levels:

Table 3 *Topographic counterparts of ontological levels in Das Glasperlenspiel*

Spatial domain	Ontological level	Conceptual function in the novel
<i>Castalia / Waldzell</i>	Nous (Universal Intellect)	The most sterile, purified, abstract, and One-proximate space on earth. It is the site of the Glass Bead Game's performance and represents the institutional form of <i>theoria</i> .
<i>Mariafels Monastery</i>	Transitional threshold of Psychē (Universal Soul)	An intermediate space where history, faith, and organic time begin to enter. Associated with Father Jacobus, it functions as the bridge where rational idealism confronts historical responsibility.
<i>The Bamboo Grove</i>	Intuitive Nous on the Eastern path	An alternative contemplative space outside institutional structure. Here, silence, intuition, and non-discursive wisdom prevail.
<i>The External World / Plinio's Universe</i>	Matter	The realm of chaos, politics, desire, and war. It marks the lowest point in the chain of Emanation.

Conclusion

This study has examined Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* (*Das Glasperlenspiel*) as a modern literary projection of ancient Pythagorean–Neoplatonic music ontology, and has aimed to ground this reading through an interdisciplinary analytical framework. The hybrid semiotic–hermeneutical model developed here has functioned as a synthesizing analytical architecture that integrates Barthes's layers of signification, Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics, and Eco's principle of *intentio operis* with the tripartite music hierarchy (*Musica Instrumentalis* / *Humana* / *Mundana*) in Boethius's *De institutione musica* and with Plotinus's dialectic of Emanation and Reditus.

This study advances three lines of theoretical engagement that may be situated within the broader discussion of literature, music philosophy, and semiotics. The first concerns the methodological relationship between literary criticism and the philosophy of music. Much of the existing scholarship on *The Glass Bead Game* treats its musical dimension either as a superficial

thematic device or subordinates it to an educational or psychological framework. This study has instead shown that music in the novel functions as a metalanguage (*lingua sacra*) and as a cosmological system of meaning production, a function that becomes fully visible only through a semiotic-hermeneutical-musicological synthesis. This reading suggests a methodological direction that future Hesse scholarship may find productive to pursue further, particularly with respect to treating music not as a thematic ornament but as a structural axis along which meaning deepens.

The second line of engagement concerns the applicability of the hybrid semiotic model developed here beyond the Hesse text. The model is not presented as specific to this novel; rather, it is offered as an analytical framework that may be adaptable to other literary works of high symbolic density that carry philosophical discourse -a possibility that remains to be tested through further comparative research.

The third line of engagement explores the methodological possibility of situating Eastern philosophy and Western Neoplatonism within a shared interpretive frame. The analysis suggests that the Far Eastern wisdom tradition represented in the novel articulates a conception of the universe running parallel to *Musica Mundana*, and that the Neoplatonic theory of Emanation may be read alongside this tradition as pointing toward a shared cosmological horizon of meaning - one that Western and Eastern traditions appear to express through distinct symbolic languages.

This study aims not to close the final interpretive gateways of *The Glass Bead Game* but to open them. The expansive horizon of interpretation that Hesse's work offers persists as a research arena that disciplines such as philology, musicology, the history of philosophy, and literary theory can sustain in common. In a manner analogous to a musical score, which yields new layers of meaning with each successive performance, Hesse's *Glasperlenspiel* may be regarded as a text that remains open to renewed philosophical engagement, one whose significance can be reconfigured by each new methodological framework brought to bear upon it.

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