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Logos & Melos

The aristotelian «Rhetoric» in the musical Aesthetics of seventeenth-century Italy: from the «seconda prattica» to the «teoria degli affetti»<sup>1</sup>

«Vox est sonus animalis a glottide ex percussione respirati aeris ad affectus animi explicandos productus».<sup>2</sup> With this definition, drawn from the *Musurgia universalis sive ars magna consoni et dissoni*, the Jesuit priest Athanasius Kircher summarised in 1650 the *status quaestionis* on the classical conception of voice, consolidating at the same time the basis for the ‘theory of affect’ that would constitute the dominant musical and aesthetic concept throughout the Seicento. Thus, in the philosophical antecedents of the Kircherian definition, ‘voice’ and ‘affect’ came to constitute elements of an alchemical laboratory in which the musician was moved by the search for the perfect «expression of musical affect». For this reason, it is of fundamental importance to retrace the cultural and linguistic origins of an approach thus theoretically connotated.

The Latin term *adfectus* derives from the verb *adficio*, which means both «to render affect by» and «to influence». The first meaning is determined by the ablative that accompanies it and which qualifies the specificity of the affect (*laetitia, dolore, maestitia*); the second meaning refers instead to the subject to which it refers, the soul or even the body.<sup>3</sup> The latter meaning, relative to

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<sup>2</sup> «The voice is an animal sound produced by the glottis by means of a percussive of exhaled air directed towards expressing the affect of the soul»: ATHANASIVS KIRCHER, *Musurgia universalis sive ars magna consoni et dissoni, in X libros digesta*, Romae, ex Typographia Haeredum Francisci Corbelletti, MDCL, Liber I, caput X: *De vocis natura ac Genesi*, p. 20 (ed. anast.: ATHANASIVS KIRCHER, *Musurgia Universalis. Zwei Teile in einem Band Mit einem Vorwort, Personem, Orts-und Sachregister von Ulf Scharlau*, Hildesheim, New York, 1970; translation by the author). For a general overview of this work, see the very recent volume by TIZIANA PANGRAZI, *La “Musurgia universalis” di Athanasius Kircher. Contenuto, fonti, terminologia*, Firenze, Olschki, 2009, published when this essay was already in an advanced phase of publication.

<sup>3</sup> Similarly DESCARTES, *Les passions de l’âme*, first chapter, art. 1: «In order to begin, I consider that all that which occurs or happens afresh is, in general, called by the philosophers ‘passion’ with respect to the subject to which it happens, and ‘action’ with respect to that which determines it. Thus, although agent and patient are often very different, action and passion are always the same thing with two names, according to the two different subjects to which it can refer». Italian translation by Eugenio Garin, in CARTESIO, *Opere*, Vol. IV: *Le passioni*

the body, identifies likewise the pivotal elements of that Galenic and more generally medical physiopathology, to which Kircher himself referred by citing the theories of Paracelso and Fludd:<sup>4</sup> physiopathology that inscribes the original Greek terminology of the verb *páthein* (*subire, patire*), and of the corresponding noun *páthema* within the semantic typology of *adfectus*. This double semantic valency, however, seems to persist unaltered within both the theoretical and the musical framework of the early baroque. According to Ercole Bottrigari, in fact, the project of the musician must be that

of the expression of the affects and the pronunciation of the word; from which, when greatly imitated by the Excellent musician in his Cantilena, truly derives the greater of all the emotions of the souls of the listeners.<sup>5</sup>

In accordance with this emotive and evocative purpose, «affect» is a title generally recurrent in the works of musicians at the beginning of the seventeenth century: as, for example, in Severo Bonini's *Affetti spirituali a due voci* (Venice, 1615), Sebastiano Miseroca's *I Pietosi affetti di* (Venice, 1618), and Sigismondo Largari's *Accenti spirituali* (Venice, 1620).<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, as the etymological root demonstrates, the definition of the voice as denoted by its capacity to express affect does not represent an entirely original elaboration of the Seicento, but finds its place in that channel of Greek philosophy and classical oratory that makes voice the instrument of rationality itself, expressed through the *lógos* (λοῦγοι). In this sense, if Plato had earlier exalted the word as the expression of human rationality, it was only Aristotle, however, who integrated the spiritual element of the *lógos* (*word, rationality*) with the physiological dimension of the *páthema* (*affection, emotion*), linking the two meanings through a close correlation of reciprocal cross-references and implications. In *De Interpretatione*, Aristotle wrote:

The articulated sounds of the voice are symbols of the affections of the soul and the written signs are those of the voice.<sup>7</sup>

Although thus directly linked to its classical antecedents, and in particular to Aristotle, the history of aesthetic-musical ideas in the Seicento only rarely

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*dell'Anima, Lettere sulla morale, Colloquio con Burman*, Bari, Laterza, 1999, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> KIRCHER, *Musurgia*, pp. 398 (about Paracelso), 335, 370 (about Robert Fludd).

<sup>5</sup> ERCOLE BOTTRIGARI, *Il desiderio ovvero de' concerti di varii strumenti musicali*, Bologna, appresso Gioambattista Della Gamba, 1599, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> GINO STEFANI, *Musica barocca. Poetica e ideologia*, Milano, Bompiani, 1987, nota 71, p. 111, *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> ARISTOTELES, *De Interpretatione*, 16a, 3-4.

recognised its real origins. The immediate perception of the seventeenth century in the theorization of musical problems was, in fact, predominantly tied to the figures of Plato, Pythagoras and Boethius, and only incidentally to Aristotle. The occurrence of the philosopher's name in the period's treatises of aesthetics shows a surprising relative infrequency when compared with that of other *auctoritates*: Kircher, for example, cited the name of Aristotle 19 times as against 27 references to Plato or 24 to Pythagoras.<sup>8</sup> One would almost be tempted to trace the lines of a relationship of inverse proportionality between the limited visibility that the author enjoyed in the coeval musical debate and the impact that, on both an historical and structural level, he actually had.

In reality, if one notes that for the definitive affirmation of Descartes' aesthetic theories of music, begun in 1618 with the *Compendium Musicae*, it is possible to fix 1649 (the publication date of *Les Passions de l'âme*) as the *terminus post quem*, the role played by the Aristotelian theory of the passions as developed in the *Rhetorica* (understood as the only real alternative preceding Descartes) in the codification of the so-called *Affektenlehre* assumes broader and hence less easily identifiable contours. On one hand, specific considerations relative in various measure to the dissemination of the Aristotelian texts, to their re-elaboration and to the role in the counter-reformation to which the re-evaluation of the Aristotelian-Thomist philosophy was tied, contributed to the delineation of a similar cultural alignment. On the other, the rhetorical dimension of the *affectus musicalis* had already constituted for some time a patrimony of Italian musical culture in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, within which the codification of the music-text relationship employed by the Camerata's theorists ratified the consolidation of a musical practice tied to the needs of the text, be it the sacred text of the mass or the profane verses of the madrigal.

It is not therefore incidental that a distinct attention to the needs of the text may be already discerned in the *Istitutioni Armoniche* (1558) by Gioseffo Zarlino, the theorist *par excellence* of the renaissance polyphonic style known as *Prima prattica*:

Harmony [...] may be totally accommodated to Oration: that is, to the word, so

<sup>8</sup> KIRCHER, *Musurgia Universalis*, cit., *Person und Ortsregister*, pp. XII-XIII, XX, XXI. The relative references to ancient philosophers occur on the following pages:

<i>Aristoteles:</i>	pp.	A 2, 3, 4, 8, 40, 46, 49, 71, 140, 362, 532-533, 538, 554, 571; B 30, 211, 455 XV;
<i>Plato:</i>		A 23, 39, 68, 71, 140, 151, 422, 533, 535, 538, 554, 571, B 28, 30, 213, 225, 366, 375, 426, 439, 441, 447-48, 451, 454, 456, 461 A 71, 192, 139, 151, 216, 504, 533, 536, 537-538, 549, 566;
<i>Pythagoras:</i>		B 202, 217, 228, 346, 350, 352, 371, 374-375, 448, 455, 460

that in cheerful matters, harmony may not be plaintive; and for the contrary, in plaintive matters, harmony may not be cheerful.<sup>9</sup>

It is perhaps also partly for this reason that one of the clearest descriptions of the rhetorical elements presiding over the foundation of the new Italian style occurred above all in Germany in the work of authors such as Gallus Dresler and Heinrich Faber. Their works, in this sense, represented the direct precedent to the later Kircherian synthesis. On the topic of the origin and the evolution of the theory of *Affektenlehre* as a specific phenomenon codified by the transalpine theoretical and musical sensibility, Gregory Butler has written:

the term *Affektenlehre* was coined for the first time by German musicologists such as Kretzschmar, Goldschmidt and Schering in order to refer to the process of the application of Greek and Roman doctrine on rhetoric and oratory to baroque music. Not surprisingly, since the beginning the term itself and how it was understood — namely, the systematic formation of rhetorical means in order to control and direct the emotions of the audience — were already in the late Cinquecento essentially German aesthetic concepts. Both Michael Praetorius and Heinrich Schütz made reference to the novelty of the Italian musical language full of rhetoric in the Germany of the early Seicento. But while in Italy this madrigalistic language arose naturally as the consequence of the close correlation between poetic texts and music, for the young German musicians it was wholly extraneous, and it was something to teach and to learn, so that its presentation in Germany tended to be didactic and doctrinaire.<sup>10</sup>

The awareness of this phenomenon, therefore, originated in Italy, where the requirements of the new style provided fertile ground first for debate, and then for theorization: the debate between abbé Giovanni Maria Artusi and Claudio Monteverdi between 1600 and 1603, or the declarations of the priest Adriano Banchieri in the *Prologo* of his Opera XVIII, *Festino nella Sera del Giovedì Grasso avanti Cena* (Venice, 1608), in which the author openly took sides with the supporters of the modern style, were precursors to the statements of Michael Praetorius and the work of Kircher.

In its historical development, this aspect was largely stimulated by the long process of the ‘rhetoricisation’ of music transmitted by the diffusion and reception of the Aristotelian works in the seventeenth century.

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<sup>9</sup> GIOSEFFO ZARLINO, *Istituzioni Armoniche divise in quattro parti, nelle quali, oltre alle materie appartenenti alla musica, si trovano dichiarati molti luoghi de’ poeti, istorici e filosofi*, Venezia, appresso Pietro da Fino, 1558, cap. XXVI.

<sup>10</sup> GREGORY BUTLER, *La Retorica tedesca e la Affektenlehre*, in *Enciclopedia della Musica*, Diretta da Jean-Jacques Nattiez, IV: *Storia della musica europea*, Torino, Einaudi, 2004, p. 447.

## 1. NOTES ON THE RHETORICAL TRADITION BEFORE AND DURING THE RENAISSANCE

Through the intermediations of Cicero and then Quintilianus, the *Rhetorica* survived throughout the mediaeval period within the disciplines of the *Trivium* (dialectics, grammar and rhetoric), even if this scholarly practice was based on an indirect knowledge of the text. Important translations from the Arab version into Latin included that by Ermanno il Tedesco in 1256, followed by another by Guglielmo di Moerbeke between 1269 and 1279. But, in general, the Latin Middle Ages primarily valued Aristotle's work on logic, significantly neglecting the texts of the *Rhetorica* and the *Poetica* — known thanks to the Latin translation of Moerbeke in 1278. This situation underwent a decisive change only with humanism, when the *Rhetorica* was newly translated and annotated by a fuller series of comments, drawn from study of the original Greek text. A significant statistic in this sense emerges from the publication history of the text, which between 1570 and 1605 counted in Italy not less than 20 editions, including 7 at Venice, 3 at Bologna, and 2 at Rome.<sup>11</sup> Courtesy finally of Giorgio Valla's translation in 1498, the *Poetica* also had a new circulation, which, together with the *Rhetorica*, constitutes the other text on which the current reflections turn.<sup>12</sup>

When the exercise of rhetoric passed into the seventeenth century it was completely reformulated within a new perspective, and established its principal influence in the *ratio studiorum* of the Jesuit colleges and in the devotional practices of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. The teaching of rhetoric became in this sense a directional and focal centre for a whole series of interdisciplinary activities, from the so-called 'Teatro dei Gesuiti' to the 'Sacra Rappresentazione', from prose to politics and art and, in particular, to music. It is not incidental that eminent musicians such as Emilio de' Cavalieri and Giacomo Carissimi found their ideal place within the traditions of one or another of these institutions. Rhetoric moreover codified a political and cultural message beyond a religious one. On one hand, it represented the primacy of the word over the unlettered, justifying the ideology of the dominant power; on the other, it transmitted the message of the sponsor (italian: *committente*) to the public. It therefore had to be the manifestation of magnificence or terror, of ecstasy and astonishment before the divine. Essentially derived by a representative need determined from above, it assumed the feature of an efficacious instrument capable of moulding characters and of transforming them, according to the Philipian motto, into «fishers of

<sup>11</sup> Source: Database of "Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale-SNB", available *on line* at <http://opac.sbn.it/opacsbns/opac/iccubase.jsp>.

<sup>12</sup> The editions of the *Poetica* were not less numerous than those of the *Rhetorica*; for a comprehensive survey of the Aristotelian *Poetica* in Italy and on Italian poetics of the sixteenth century in general see the excellent study of FERRUCCIO CIVRA, *Musica Poetica*, Torino, Utet, 1991, pp. 45-51 (now also in an anastatic edition: Lucca, LIM, 2009).

men». It was because of this peculiar character that music was invested with a liturgical value, even if precise restrictive conditions were defined.

Indeed, neither the sponsor nor the devotional destination of the piece admitted dispensations, precluding to sacred music any dissemination extraneous to its context: to such a degree that, among the sanctions applicable in the case of violation, even excommunication could be contemplated, as in the instances of the famous *Miserere* of Gregorio Allegri or of the entire devotional production of Carissimi. In more than one session, moreover, the Council of Trent expressed the intention of abolishing liturgical music as a practice subject to various forms of popularisation (as, for example, the profane theme *l'homme armé* on which both Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Orlando di Lasso set entire masses), by requesting a simplification of counterpoint and a clearer intellection of the sacred text that avoided the distraction of the faithful. The church of Rome confronted such instances not only by promoting a more direct adhesion of the music to the text, but also by effectively implementing a capillary control of music publishing, leading to the creation of a general censor by Urbano VIII with the ecclesiastical bull *Pietatis et Christianae* of 20 November 1624.<sup>13</sup> Given music's manifest aptitude in communicating the ideological and emotive intentions of the sponsor, the task from time to time delegated to it was defined in the capacity of transmitting a pre-established message by means of moving or expressive nuances of anger or compassion, in relation, naturally, to the event celebrated and/or to the nature of the audience. It therefore increasingly conformed to the Aristotelian dictates that assumed the objective of rhetorical discourse — in our case, musical — to be the persuasion of the listener<sup>14</sup>, by rendering more generally possible the substantial assimilation of music to the *téchnē rhetoriché* in its Aristotelian definition of «an instrument capable of discovering the most appropriate means of persuasion in respect to each object»<sup>15</sup>.

In this sense, the *musico-oratore* is configured in the seventeenth century in his original dimension and distinctive *status* as containing in himself the experiences of the rhetorician and the *cantore*. This notion signalled the definitive surmounting of the classic rhetorical practice, by reassuming and synthesising within it the entire field of the expressible through sound, that is to say *musical affect* and *significance*. The cantata for solo voice and the *melodramma* are direct expressions of it.

Because of the reasons outlined above, the correspondences between the tradition of Aristotelian *Rhetorica* and baroque music are not reduced to sporadic

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. *Bullarium Romanum*, IV 78 e ss.; for an Italian translation of the text see REMO GIAZOTTO, *Quattro secoli di storia dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia*, Roma, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, 1970, vol. 1, pp. 93-96.

<sup>14</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Rhetorica*, 1356a, 1 ff.; cfr. also 1403b, 5-7.

<sup>15</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Rhetorica*, 1355b, 26-27.

analogies or to occasional generalisations, but demonstrate profound conceptual roots. In particular, with the delineating of the *seconda prattica*, eminently tied to the communicative needs of the text and above all by means of an uninterrupted dialogue *between ancient and modern music*, the rhetorical-textual model was assumed as the emblem of the new aesthetic conception, and contributed to the stylisation of the early vocal baroque (Monteverdi, Carissimi, Legrenzi) and later of instrumental baroque (Stradella, Corelli and Vivaldi). While ever more care was paid to the text and its nuances, correspondingly it was necessary to decodify an effective musical rhetoric, in the sense of a strengthening of the musical language through the reinforcement of its immediate extramusical referent, the text: praxis that later assumed the contours of a genuine aesthetic theory.

In order to illustrate more closely the theoretical influence of the Aristotelian *Rhetorica* in the musical panorama of the Italian Seicento, five influential concepts deduced from it have been selected for analysis. In their recursivity, they characterise the overall development of the seventeenth-century musical aesthetic: *lógos*, *phonē*, *páthos*, *mímesis* and *prépon*, that is to say, «needs of the word» (*lógos*), «expression of the voice» (*phonē*), «affect» (*páthos*), «imitation» (*mímesis*) and «adequacy of the expressive means» (*prépon* or, in the Latin term, *convenientia*).

## 2. «LÓGOS» AND «PHONĒ». NEEDS OF THE WORD AND EXPRESSIONS OF THE VOICE

Western music has always been tied to textual requirements, but the change made in Italy between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries assumed an extraordinary nature by virtue of the aspiration to render such a tie more adherent.

Despite the elements of continuity with the classical epoch of polyphony, it was in many aspects a genuine revolution owed to a radical change of perspective: with the practice of *recitar cantando*, one had turned from the music to the text, in order then to return again from text to music. If in polyphony the harmonic rules of counterpoint were preminent, and the task of the musician that of uniting text and music in accordance with those rules (to the extent that, not infrequently, the rules of counterpoint and the number of voices had the upper hand over textual needs, to the advantage of harmony and ‘pure music’), with the Seicento it was the primacy of the word that dominated the scene, according to the Monteverdian motto of an *oratione padrona et non serva*.

In its fundamental instances, seventeenth-century musical culture reproached the preceding polyphonic tradition for having sacrificed the intelligibility of the text, and with it the emotive effect of sound expressed by the means of the voice, in favour of pure musical sentiment. Counterpoint had thus been reduced to a

mere intellectual exercise in which the *lógos*, the significant element of vocality, was multiplied endlessly in the context of the voices and subordinated to the needs of contrapuntal technique, becoming incomprehensible.

Pietro della Valle wrote on this subject in 1639:

music that is too artful, with so many subtleties of counterpoint, [...] in effect is beautiful music, but music only through notes, not through words; that is to say, beautiful bodies, but bodies without souls, which, if not stinking corpses, were at least bodies of painted figures, but not living men.<sup>16</sup>

and Giulio Caccini, in 1601, affirmed his determination:

not to praise that type of music, which by not allowing clear understanding of the words, spoils the concept and the verse, now prolonging and now shortening the syllables in order to accommodate itself to the counterpoint, lacerating the poetry.<sup>17</sup>

In reaffirming *meaning* beyond pure sound, and in analogy with the relationship *meaning-word*, therefore, *mélos* (namely, *melody*) assumed the purpose of expressing feelings, emotions and states of soul, that is, «affects». In order to do this, it was necessary to redefine completely musical language with regard to the function of the text, by leading it towards a greater simplification; and to rediscover an ideal of stylistic clarity corresponding to the Aristotelian notion.<sup>18</sup> The modal harmonic structure, too complex and purely intellectual, was substituted by a simpler and more natural tonal-melodic structure; the severe Flemish style of polyphony by homophony and declamation; the *basso cantabile* by the *basso seguente* and *basso continuo*. This was the task that was assumed and largely effectively undertaken by the Camerata De' Bardi or *Camerata Fiorentina*, a group of intellectuals and musicians who attempted to restore to contemporary music a greater theoretical awareness and improved artistic effect by recalling a kind of musical *prisca philosophia*, inspired by the theatre music of the Greeks and therefore modelled on a rhetorical and specifically Aristotelian concept of *pathos*.

The underlying policy of this movement was coordinated on two principally theoretical schemes, that of *analogy*

word : meaning = sound : affect

<sup>16</sup> PIETRO DELLA VALLE, *Oratorio della purificazione* (1639) quoted in STEFANI, *Musica barocca*, n. 93, p. 115.

<sup>17</sup> GIULIO CACCINI, *Le Nuove Musiche*, Firenze, Marescotti, 1602: *A Lettori*, pp. [5-6].

<sup>18</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Rhetorica*, 1404b, 1-3.



and that of *subordination*

{ meaning  
 { affect  
 { sound

Attempting, therefore, to rediscover the classics, the Florentine Camerata proposed first of all a theoretical model, even if one already consolidated by the contemporary madrigalistic praxis (Rore, Gombert, Lasso, Marenzio), in which the adhesion to the text was more explicit and direct. Thanks above all to the cultural osmosis made by Vincenzo Galilei's *Dialogo della Musica Antica et della Moderna* (1581), the key point was the assumption of the model of the voice as the elementary structure through which language, composed of *sounds*, became, as transmitter of one or more *meanings*, the manifestation of states of mind or affects.

### 3. PATHOS: AFFECT

The principal implication of this assumption was that of identifying the equation,

meaning = affect – word – sound

with that of

sound = word – affect – meaning

by thus introducing the marked presence of an extramusical semantic made of images and affects, which provided the listener with a direct referent. Affect was therefore created by the 'character' that music imprints from time to time on meanings expressed by the text, as the theorist Pietro Mengoli reaffirmed in 1670:

He who listens – in fact – devotes himself with the abstract and rational attention of the mind (through which one is moved) is affected according to the meaning of the words, increased with the accents, that is with the rises, falls and

circumflections of the voice.<sup>19</sup>

In line with these reflections, Butler continues, it is necessary to understand how: «the representation of affect constituted the fundamental base of numerous treatises, and the principal aim, both for the composer and the rhetorician, became that of arousing an entire gamut of emotive states in the listener. This had nothing to do with the spontaneous emotional response typical of the audience in the Romantic period. The composers rationally planned the affective content of a musical work and expected the audience to react appropriately on the base of its rational discernment of such content. All the parameters of music became rhetorically connotated – harmony, tonality, rhythm, melody, phrasing and tessitura. This preoccupation extended to yet more comprehensive considerations: form, tempo, instrumental timbre».<sup>20</sup>

This *rhetorical deployment of expressive means* has as its principal source the character of the text and the music that expresses it. More than the usual classification made by Aristotle in the *Politica* around the character of Greek modes, this theorization has as an antecedent the treatment of the character-emotion implications outlined in the *Rhetorica*. According to the Stagirite, the most direct way that affect can be transmitted to the listener was by virtue of the *carattere* of the orator, *ēthos*; or by means of the capacity to arouse an *emotion* in the listener, *páthos*; or, in short, by virtue of the discourse itself, understood in its rhetorical *dynamis*, that it is to say *dià lógou*.<sup>21</sup> This general classification is further articulated by Aristotle in three books: in the words of Roland Barthes<sup>22</sup>, in fact, we might affirm that

Book I of the *Retorica* is the book of the transmitter of the message, the book of the orator: it deals principally with the conception of the argumentation, in the measure to which it depends on the orator in adapting himself to the audience [...]. Book II is the book of the recipient of the message, the book of the audience, which deals with the emotions (passions) and again of the argumentation, but this time as received (and no longer, as before, conceived). Book III is the of the message: it deals with the λέξις or *elocutio*, that is of the figures and of the τὰξις or *dispositio*, that is of the ordering of the parts of the discourse.

For Aristotle, poetic-rhetorical discourse possesses not only a highly evocative

<sup>19</sup> PIETRO MENGOLI, *Speculationi di Musica*, in Bologna, per l'erede del Benacci, 1670, p. 247.

<sup>20</sup> GREGORY BUTLER, *La Retorica*, *ivi*.

<sup>21</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Rhetorica*, *loc. ivi*.

<sup>22</sup> ROLAND BARTHES, *La Retorica antica. Alle origini del linguaggio letterario e delle tecniche di comunicazione*, Milano, Bompiani, 2000, pp. 20-21.

capacity, but actively disposes the listener towards some sentiments (*pathē/mata*) such as anger, grief or joy<sup>23</sup>, as is apparently further underlined by the concept of *kátarsis*, *purification*, developed in the *Poetica*.<sup>24</sup> A significant echo of this formulation is found again, although with profoundly different accents, both in Gioseffo Zarlino and in Vincenzo Galilei<sup>25</sup>, and above all in Kircher with whom, in Book IX of the *Musurgia*, the *sonus*, defined *prodigiosus*, assumes an extraordinary therapeutic capacity.<sup>26</sup>

The elementary structure *ēthos-páthos-logos* in Aristotle's work assumes its precise taxonomy through vocal mimesis: through recitation, voice (which in man is the most fitting anatomical part for the act of imitation<sup>27</sup>) not only arouses emotions<sup>28</sup> but succeeds best the more it is tied to the mimetic aspect of reality, of which it gathers, by means of the words, cognitive aspects.

#### 4. «MÍMESIS» AND «PRÉPON» – «IMITATIONE» AND «CONVENIENTIA»

This mimetic capacity (to which, for the Stagirite, almost any artistic activity is tied in the measure in which it gathers the real by means of representation<sup>29</sup>) produces a theoretical and aesthetic pleasure connected to the sense of marvel and amazement on the part of the spectator.<sup>30</sup>

This last aspect is underlined particularly in the *Poetica*, first, in general terms, by dealing with various imitative arts:<sup>31</sup>

Epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambics, the greater part of music [composed] for the flute and cithara, are generally all imitations, but differ from each other in three respects, according to the different means, the different objects, or the different manner of their imitation. As some men, through art or custom, imitate various objects by reproducing their image with colour or shape, and others by

<sup>23</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Rhetorica*, 1380a, 3-6; 1380b, 32 ff.; 1383a, 8 ff.

<sup>24</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Poetica*, 1449b, 21-28; see also *Politica*, 1341b, 32 ff.

<sup>25</sup> For a overall summary of the ideas of the Italian theorists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and in particular the relationship between Zarlino and Galilei, see PAOLO CECCHI, *Il rapporto tra testo poetico e intonazione musicale in alcuni teorici italiani di fine Cinquecento*, in *Claudio Monteverdi. Studi e Prospettive*. Atti del Convegno. Mantova, 21-24 Ottobre 1993, a cura di Paola Besutti, Teresa M. Gialdroni, Rodolfo Baroncini, Firenze, Olschki, 1998, in particular pp. 552-596.

<sup>26</sup> ATHANASIVS KIRCHER, *Musurgia*, cit., p. 217.

<sup>27</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Rhetorica*, 1404a, 22.

<sup>28</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Rhetorica*, 1403b, 21-22.

<sup>29</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Poetica*, 1447a, 14-16.

<sup>30</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Poetica*, 1448b, 5 e ss; cfr. also *Rethorica* 1404b, 10-12.

<sup>31</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Poetica*, 1447a, 14-23; translation by Carlo Augusto Viano.

the voice, so do all the above-mentioned arts produce imitation with rhythm, word and melody, together or separately.

Later, by specifying the imitative aspect in its cognitive valency:<sup>32</sup>

Poetry seems to have derived from two causes, both natural. To imitate is instinctive in man from his infancy. By this he is distinguished from other animals because he is the most ready to imitate, and through imitation acquires his first education. All men likewise draw pleasure from imitation. This is evident from experience. Objects which give us pain to see in reality, we enjoy contemplating when perfectly reproduced, such as the images of the most hideous beasts and corpses. The cause again of this is that to learn is a very great pleasure not only for philosophers but also for everyone, with the difference that men in general partake of it in lesser measure.

By briefly summarising this first part of the Aristotelian argument in tabular form, the preceding stylistic scheme

*character - emotion - recitation*

assumes the role of a particular simple scheme whose belonging to a broader conceptual scansion is ratified by the logic of its own explanation, which — given it must take account not only of «how» the process occurs, but also and above all «why» it occurs — ties *imitation/representation* to *knowledge/marvel* and to *pleasure*, and depending on which the first assumes value and meaning.

<i>Character</i> [ἦθος]	<i>imitation/rappresentation</i> [μίμησις, <i>mimesis</i> ]
<i>Emotion</i> [πάθος]	<i>knowledge/marvel</i> [θεωρεῖν, <i>theorein</i> – θαυμάζειν, <i>thaumázein</i> ]
<i>Recitation</i> [λόγος]	<i>aesthetic pleasure</i> [ἡδονή, <i>ēdonē</i> ]

On the alternation of these elements, which in the seventeenth-century aesthetic formulary are reflected in the predominancy of melody, imitation of affect and the recitation of the text, is articulated the concept of the baroque marvel borrowed from Aristotle, as decisive in the literary field as in that of scientific prose, and which in music extends from the moral cantata to *historia sacra*, from the *concertato* madrigal to opera.

The first to incorporate the mimetic freight of music in aesthetic theorization in this sense was probably Teodato Osio, whose work *L'Armonia del nudo parlare*

<sup>32</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Poetica*, 1448b, 5-15; translation by Carlo Augusto Viano.

(1637) indicates in its title the union of the author's intentions with rhetorical expression<sup>33</sup>. Again in perfect parallelism with the dictates of the *Rhetorica*, Claudio Monteverdi heightened in his music the *imitation of the musical character*, by means of the *imitation of the character of the text* and the assumption of the 'opposites', that is to say, of the 'contrasts' in tempo and harmony, in the timbre of the voice and in the expression of the singer. Such is the case of the famous *Lamento di Arianna* or of the equally celebrated *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (1638) in which tempo, harmony and melody are pure functions of the emotive expression of the voice. Similarly, in prose as in poetry, Giovanni Battista Marino and Emanuele Tesauro at the beginning and the end of the seventeenth century praised the 'opposites' and the 'contrast' aroused between them as elements of concettism and poetic wonder. In particular, Tesauro's *Cannocchiale aristotelico* (written in 1654, but published in 1670) recorded the by now definitive acquisition in the baroque lexicon of the Greek term *logos* rendered from the full terminological casuistry of *wit, ingenuity, rage, marvel*<sup>34</sup>. The emblem of the baroque aesthetic thus determined is the concept of a pervasive, abounding exhaustivity, where wonder contains in itself both intellectual and aesthetic aspects. The musician, in his garb as rhetorician and *cantore*, constitutes the direct incarnation of this notion, according to the title of Ludovico Casali's work, *Generale invito alle grandezze, e meraviglie della musica* (Modena, 1629).

As in the Aristotelian formulation, the catalysing elements of wonder in the baroque also have as the functional structure the role of the voice that, above all with the constitution of the monodic genre in its multiform capacity for imitation/emulation of reality, coordinates the entire gamut of rhetorical meanings from the *ēthos* (character) to the *logos* (language, word) and from *mīmēsis* (capacity to

<sup>33</sup> TEODATO OSIO, *L'armonia del nudo parlare con ragione di numeri pitagorici scoperta [...] all'ecc.mo Sr. Don Fran.co di Melo*, in Milano, Carlo Ferrandi, 31 July 1637, pp. 175-176: «And because the representation of the actions of man is the imitation of the customs, which are one of the principal parts of the quality of the action, and perhaps such, that all the action itself is caught, so that without the expression of the customs there can not be imitation, therefore it happens, that the principal study of Poetry deals with the expression of the customs; and therefore the poet who expresses customs well, will imitate well, and by imitating well will be a good poet [...]. All the internal customs of men, or truly external habits and perturbations proceed from them [...] This quality of custom comes therefore from the operations of man, and at the awakening of those, either good or bad (I have already advised it many times) Music is very powerful for the sympathy of its harmonious composition; because the numerous musical accents, by penetrating the ear and communicating them to the soul itself, can with their numbers move the numbers of the soul; because in the unity of the unformed body the soul virtually governs every movement». Cit. in CECILIA CAMPA, *Il Musicista Filosofo e le Passioni. Linguaggio e retorica dei suoni nel Seicento europeo*, Napoli, Liguori, 2001, p. 355.

<sup>34</sup> ANNA MARIA LORUSSO, *Tra cannocchiali, lenti, riflessi e specchi: la lezione aristotelica nel Cannocchiale del Tesauro*, in *Metafora e conoscenza*, edited by Anna Maria Lorusso, Milano, Bompiani, 2005, pp. 213-232.

imitate) to *ēdonē* (pleasure).

A direct testimony is offered by Giulio Caccini in his advice *A discreti lettori* in *Nuove musichee nuova maniera di scriverle*, in which he writes:

Principally three things are learnt from whoever claims to sing well with affect. These are affect, its variety and *sprezzatura*. Affect in one who sings is none other than the strength of different notes and various accents tempered by soft and loud dynamics; an expression of the words and concept in singing, capable arousing affect in the listener. The variety in affect is the transition made from one affect to another with the same means, according to which the words and the concept successively guide the singer. And this should be closely observed, so that the same clothes (so to speak) are not used to represent the husband and the widower. *Sprezzatura* is the charm lent to a song by a few dissonant quavers or semiquavers above various tones, with which, by thus taking away a certain restricted narrowness and dryness from the song, it makes it pleasing, free and airy, just as in common speech eloquence and variety render easy and sweet the matters discussed. To the figures of speech and the rhetorical colours of this eloquence correspond the *passaggi*, *trilli* and other similar ornaments, which can occasionally be introduced in every affect. With the knowledge of these things and the observation of my compositions, I believe that whoever has the disposition to sing will perchance be able to fulfil that aim especially desired in song: that is, to delight.<sup>35</sup>

Such an explicit reference to rhetoric is surprising, above all if one considers that Caccini starts his observations from the perspective of the ‘practice’ of the singer-musician rather than from that of the pure theorist; and still more astonishing is the definition of the variation of affect, or *sprezzatura*, which follows almost to the letter the Aristotelian treatment of recitation and of the *prépon*. Aristotle had in fact written in the *Rhetorica*:

Recitation regards the voice and the way in which it must be used in order to express each emotion – when, for example, it must be strong, when weak, when middling – and the manner in which it must serve the pitch of intonation – high, low, medium – and what rhythms must be applied in each case.<sup>36</sup>

A little further on he adds:

Style is appropriate when it is capable of expressing emotions and qualities and

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<sup>35</sup> GIULIO CACCINI, *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle*, Firenze, appresso Zanobi Pignoni e compagni, 1614.

<sup>36</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Rhetorica*, 1403b, 21-24. Translation by Marco Dorati.

is proportionate to the subject. ‘Proportionate’ means not expressing oneself in a casual manner on serious subjects, nor with solemnity *a propos* ordinary matters, and without adding ornaments to trivial words, otherwise it will seem like a comedy [...] ‘Capable of expressing emotion’ means that in response to insulting acts, the style must be that of an angry man; before wicked and vile actions, that of an offended man, reluctant even to speak; before praiseworthy actions, that of someone who speaks with admiration; before deeds worthy of compassion, that of a man who expresses himself with sadness; and similarly in other cases.<sup>37</sup>

Astonishment at Caccini’s expressions may diminish, however, if one recognises the constant dialogue between the ancient and modern, between rhetoric and music, within the coordinates of which not only Caccini but all the composers of the ‘*seconda prattica*’ beginning from Vincenzo Galilei operated. And it is really within the double perspective of *imitazione-proporzione* delineated by Aristotle and Aristotelian rhetoric that, although indirectly and perhaps unconsciously, Giulio Caccini, Gioseffo Zarlino<sup>38</sup> and Nicola Vicentino<sup>39</sup> meet: a group commonly considered as the final theorists of the ‘*prima prattica*’. If a similar convergence on the themes of *imitation* and its modality of realisation is taken into account, it is understandable how the use of rhetorical preceptssuch as *convenientia* and *imitatione* might have represented an element of transversal sharing between *prima* and *seconda prattica*, creating at times problems and disputes.

A clear example of such disputes is that furnished by the already cited issue between abate Artusi and Claudio Monteverdi on the role of imitation and the best way to realise it musically: a question that, indeed, inaugurated the new century.

<sup>37</sup> ARISTOTELES, *Rhetorica*, 1408a, 10-19.

<sup>38</sup> GIOSEFFO ZARLINO, *Istituzioni Armoniche, di nuovo in molti luoghi migliorate e di molti belli secreti nelle cose della Prattica ampliate*, Venezia, Francesco de’ Franceschi senese, 1573, p. 419: «And he must take care to accompany when possible every word in such a manner that where it denotes harshness, hardness, cruelty, bitterness and other similar things, Harmony resembles it; that is, somewhat hard and harsh; however, in a manner that does not offend. Similarly, when some of the words display weeping, pain, mourning, sighs, tears and other similar things, Harmony is full of sadness». Quoted in CECCHI, *Il Rapporto*, appendice I, pp. 598-599.

<sup>39</sup> NICOLA VICENTINO, *L’antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica*, In Roma, appresso Antonio Barrè, 1555, libro IV, cap. XXIX: «Because music’s setting of words is made in order to express the concept, the passions and the affect of those [words] with harmony; and if the words speak of modesty, the composition will advance modestly, and not angrily; if [they speak] of cheerfulness, one does not make melancholy music; if of sadness, one does not compose cheerful music; and when the words are harsh, one does not make sweet music; and when sweet, one does not accompany them in another manner, so that they appear deformed from the concept; and when swift, not lazy and slow; and when they are about to stop, one does not hasten; and when they lose clarity, one makes all the parts conjoin with a *breve*». Quoted in CECCHI, *Il Rapporto*, appendice I, p. 598.

In *Artusi, ouero delle imperfettioni della moderna musica* (1600), the Bolognese abate Giovanni Maria Artusi, canon of S. Salvatore and pupil of the aforementioned Gioseffo Zarlino, took up position against the intemperance of modern vocal musical practice, by mentioning broad sections of Monteverdian madrigals (then constituting parts of Books IV and V), quoting in addition some passages without textual notes and without ever citing expressly the author. Artusi's aim was configured thus in a prevalently harmonic vein. He complained, in fact, of the inadequacy of modern composers, whose boldnesses flouted the rules of counterpoint: in particular, the use of unprepared seconds and sevenths appeared to the Bolognese theorist as a genuine harmonic abuse. To this clearly conservative position, even before the direct intervention of Claudio Monteverdi and his brother Giulio Cesare, the *Ottuso accademico* had partly replied, with whom Artusi had corresponded in Ferrara from 1599.

Essentially, the two positions were differentiated by the nature of musical *imitation* (*mimēsis*) and by the use of *proportion* (*prépon*) in expressive style, making evident yet again the influence that the elaboration of classical rhetoric exerted in the definitive affirmation of monodic style. If, for Artusi, Monteverdi's daring resulted in harmonic improprieties both to the ear and to the good practice of counterpoint, for the *Accademico Ottuso* such exceptions were justified by the expressive value of the musical setting of the text. And it is at this point of the discussion that one inserts the Monteverdian contribution.

In the dedicatory of the *Quinto libro di Madrigali a cinque voci* (1605), Claudio Monteverdi wrote *astatement for studious readers*:<sup>40</sup>

Do not marvel that I am giving these madrigals to the press without first replying to the objections that *L'Artusi* has brought against some minute details in them, because being in the service of His Most Serene Highness of Mantua, I have not had the necessary time at my disposal. Nonetheless, in order to make it known that I do not compose my works haphazardly, I have written a response that once revised will be published under the title of *Seconda pratica, overo Perfettione della moderna musica*. It will perhaps astonish some who do not believe that there is any practice other than that taught by Zerlino [sic]. But let them be assured that consonances and dissonances may be considered differently from the established perspective, in a manner that satisfies both the reason and the senses, and which defends the modern method of composing. I wanted to tell you this both so that the expression 'Seconda Pratica' may not be appropriated by anyone else, and so that meanwhile the ingenious may reflect upon other secondary matters concerning harmony, and believe that the modern composer

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<sup>40</sup> PAOLO FABBRI, *Monteverdi*, Torino, EDT, 1985, p. 61.



builds upon the foundation of truth.

Monteverdi therefore defended the new style. But unable to vaunt genuine credentials as a theorist, his much-awaited intervention in favour of the *Perfettione della moderna musica* was never brought to completion. Nevertheless, in the musician's brief notes it is possible to recognise all the grounds of a new musical poetics. It is apparent, moreover, how the use of both contrasts (or really, Aristotle's 'opposites') and the rhetorical means of the polyphonic tradition were insufficient to express the affects and that, for this reason, the *imitation* of the text could no longer be harmonic, but melodic and expressive.

With Monteverdi, the passage is thus made from harmony to melody, and from *convenientia modulationis harmonicae* to *convenientia melodica*, with its radial axis in the expressive use of the voice and the preminence of the meaning. This affirmation of the *mélòs* as expression of the *lógos* is definitively ratified by the intervention of the composer's brother, Giulio Cesare Monteverdi, in the dispute, in the appendix to the 1607 edition of the *Scherzi Musicali*:

Artusi, as a good teacher, takes certain details, or passages (as he says) of my brother's madrigal «Cruda Amarilli», caring nothing for the text [*oratione*], neglecting it in such a manner as if it had nothing to do with the music by then showing the said passages deprived of their text, of all their harmony and their rhythm. But if, in the passages noted by him as false, he had showed the text, the world would of course have known his judgement was lacking, and he would not have said that these passages were chimeras and castles in the air for their entire disregard of the rules of the *prima pratica*. But it would certainly have been excellent logic if he had done the same with Cipriano's madrigals «Dalle belle contrade», «Se ben il duol», «E se pur mi mantieni amor», «Poiché m'invita amore», «Crudel Acerba», «Un' altra volta» and, finally, with others, the harmony of which serves exactly the text, and which certainly would remain like bodies without souls without this, the most important and principal part of music. By criticising these passages without the text, the opponent implies that everything good and beautiful lies in the precise observation of the said rules of the *prima pratica*, which place harmony as mistress of oration. As my brother will demonstrate, music (of the *cantilena*, like his own) turns on the perfection of the melody, in which way harmony considered as patron becomes the servant of oration, and oration the patron of harmony, to which thought leans the *seconda pratica* or truly modern usage [...] By *prima pratica*, he means that which turns on the perfection of harmony, that is, which considers harmony not as commanded, but as the commander; it does not serve, but is mistress of the oration. And this was established by those first men who composed their *cantilene* and monodies in our notation, then followed and expanded by da Occhegem, Iosquin de Pres, Pietro

della Rue, Iovan Motton, Crequillon, Clemens non papa, Gompert [Gombert] and others of those times, finally perfected by Messer Adriano [Willaert] with actual compositions, and by the very excellent Zerlino with judicious rules. By *seconda prattica*, of which the first innovator in our notation was the divine Cipriano de Rore, as my brother will show well, followed and expanded not only by the afore-mentioned men, but by Ingegneri, Marenzo, Giaches Wert, Luzzasco, and equally by Giacopo Peri, Giulio Caccini, and finally by the most elevated and comprehending spirits of the true art, [my brother] means that which turns on the perfection of the melody: that is, which considers harmony as commanded and not as commander, and which places oration as mistress of the harmony.<sup>41</sup>

Such affirmations offer the opportunity to consider many other rhetorical aspects that invested Seicento musical poetics, and which it has not been possible to examine thoroughly here, such as the *agogica*, the *use of opposites*, the *number*, the *form* and the distribution of the composition across thematic areas beyond through ambits of performance, that is the destination of the musical message: all elements with respect to which a comparison with the text of the *Rhetorica* and with those of other classical authors (surely including Cicero) would undoubtedly be profitable and interesting.<sup>42</sup>

In conclusion, it is possible to note how, with respect to the reflections developed in the first part of this essay, the directory of the '*spiriti più elevati*' styled by Giulio Cesare Monteverdi counted many composers of the cinquecentesco madrigalistic style in its full expressive maturity, including Cipriano de Rore and Luca Marenzio: evidence of how, even before the most evolved theorization of affect, the rhetoricisation of the text constituted a totalising phenomenon in Italian music at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and how the development of the melodic possibilities of the text were coessential to the rhetorical ones, by prefiguring even from a purely theoretical perspective the

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<sup>41</sup> FABBRI, *Monteverdi*, p. 64.

<sup>42</sup> Some of the best research of recent musicology has concentrated on the role of rhetoric in the development of musical style and phrasing in Italian composers of the Seicento: investigations that are distinguished in both objective and structure from the present study, which is aimed more than anything else at a historical-theoretical reconstruction of the diffusion of rhetoric (specifically Aristotelian) in the cultural fabric of seventeenth-century Italy. Among the essays which in our view deserve greater attention in the musicological field, beyond those already noted in the text, are the works of SILVANO PERLINI, *Elementi di retorica musicale. Il testo e la sua veste musicale nella polifonia del '500-'600*, Milano, Ricordi, 2002; *Musica e Retorica. Atti della Giornata di Studi (Messina, 11 dicembre 2000)*, edited by Nunziata Bonaccorsi e Alba Crea, Messina, Edizioni Di Niccolò, 2004; *Musica, scienza e idee nella Serenissima durante il Seicento. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Venezia - Palazzo Giustinian Lolin, 13-15 dicembre 1993*, edited by Francesco Passadore e Franco Rossi, Venezia, Fondazione Levi, 1996.

entire expressive gamut of the melodic-tonal structure, successively codified by the German theorists.