

Diese Positionen, die nicht unbekannt sind und auch nicht verfestigt werden sollen, stehen antithetisch zueinander. Ihre eindeutige Gültigkeit soll nicht Gegenstand der Diskussion sein, vielmehr scheint es erstrebenswert zu versuchen, genauer zu ergründen, welche Parameter solche Ansichten implizieren; und hier gerade: welche Parameter es sind, die das starke Vertrauen der Musikwissenschaft in die Schrift suggerieren? Was ist es genau, was Schrift den Status verleiht, den sie in der Musikwissenschaft genießt? Kann man die Bedeutung von Schrift systematisieren und objektivieren?

Auch wenn die hier veröffentlichten Beiträge sich auf diese Fragen beschränken müssen, sei als Ausblick formuliert, dass die Untersuchung hier keineswegs ihr Ende finden kann. Denn sollte in der Schriftbezogenheit der Musikwissenschaft in der Tat Einseitigkeit greifbar werden, so wäre umgekehrt überhaupt erst einmal zu klären, wie eine Wissenschaft von der Musik beschaffen sein könnte, die den nicht schriftlichen Teil der Musik ins Blickfeld rückt.

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## The ›Word of God‹ and the Languages of Man

### Systems of Rhythmic Signification and Cultural Identity in the Late Middle Ages

#### Introduction

This paper explores the philosophical subtext of late Medieval rhythmic notation, and focuses on the difference between the French and the Italian mode of writing music. My point of departure is the fact that Italian notation, as described in Marchetus de Padua's *Pomerium* of 1318, is a transformative expansion and reformation of the French system. I will argue that the Italian abandoned the Christian-scholastic ground of the French system and developed a writing style that reflected the agenda of fledgling Italian Humanism: a style that sought for clarity and simplicity, as a reaction against the theological and the scholastic foundation of French notation.

#### Medieval French Notation

French notation was grounded in Divine perfection as the interpretative center and the ultimate principle of rhythmic intelligibility. That is, the meta-category of perfection mediated between the given signs and the readers. Notation was based on ternary groupings that symbolize the perfection of the Holy (Divine) Trinity. Imperfect binary note values had neither separate reality nor distinctive shape, as the meaning of rhythmic signs

had to be ›understood‹ through mental consideration of potential perfection or alteration.<sup>1</sup> In short, French notation reflected the Augustinian system of signification, and theology of the word: rhythmic signs, like words, point to things, but all things and all events are signs pointing back to God.<sup>2</sup> To this Augustinian foundation the French added a complicated scholastic frame which affected not only the language of theory but also the practice of notating music.<sup>3</sup> Here I would like to emphasize one feature of scholastic writing, which has not yet been fully studied in relation to the French system of rhythmic notation. Scholastic writing was not only compressed and based on abbreviations. It did not rely on punctuation-marks as an essential component of written language. Punctuation-marks, which are so important for resolving structural uncertainties and for signaling nuances of semantic significance, were not common in scholastic writing. Why? Because the nature of an argument, and its syntactic structure were identified not through punctuation, but through a precise use of certain key words such as *quia, sed, ergo, consequentur*, etc. That is, these words had a double function: they had their meaning, but they also punctuated the sentence, and indicated its grammatical structure.<sup>4</sup> Let me suggest that the conventions that operate in French music as a written language can also be described as a type of formulaic notation, where the structural boundaries of the rhythmic cycles were identified by a precise use of certain notes, rather than by a systematic use of special punctuation-marks. As in scholastic arguments, in music, too, certain note-shapes had the double function of representing rhythmic signification, and of indicating rhythmic boundaries. To appreciate this fact, it suffices to say that according to the fundamental rule of Franconian notation, if the figure of the longa follows another figure of the longa, then the first longa is a perfect longa and contains three time-units. And as such, it signifies the number of units allotted to the longa, and at the same time, demarcates the boundary of a cycle of rhythmic perfection.

Likewise, if the figure of the longa is followed by the figure of the brevis, which is followed by another longa, then the first longa is an imperfect longa containing only two time-units. Hence, the figure of the brevis that follows that longa rounds off the cycle of perfection, indicating both the rhythmic value of one time-unit and the boundary of the cycle of rhythmic perfection, as composed of an imperfect longa + a brevis = 2 + 1 = 3 = one cycle of rhythmic perfection.

Italian notation was certainly different. Italian notation was clearer, simpler, and shorn of a transcendental principle of intelligibility. According to the French, the meaning of a given note-shape had to be understood through the mediation of the metaphysical category

1 For a recent description and analysis of mensural notation, see Anna Maria Busse Berger, ›The Evolution of Rhythmic Notation‹, in: *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. by Thomas Christensen, Cambridge 2002, p. 628–656.

2 On Augustine theory of language see the illuminating discussion in Marcia Colish, *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge*, Lincoln 1983.

3 See Dorit Tanay, *Noting Music, Marking Culture: The Intellectual Context of Rhythmic Notation 1250–1400* (= Musicological Studies and Documents 46), Holzgerlingen 1999, p. 17–63.

4 See Malcolm B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West*, Cambridge 1992, p. 80.

of rhythmic perfection. Hence, the ›meaning‹ of the signs, which signified temporal/musical events, transcended the concrete temporal events, referred to, by the notation. In the French notation, then, all the rhythmic events were unified, and in the final analysis equal, in the sense that God was the ultimate author, and ultimate subject matter of all discourse, including the musical compositions controlled by the principle of rhythmic perfection. The Italians did not posit a transcendental meaning. Their system was based on the brevis as central unit, which was subdivided into 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 or 12 smaller units.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the arbitrarily chosen rhythmic division, and the particular arrangement of rhythmic units within it (within the given division) was the sole meaning of the music. Moreover, unlike the French, the Italians conceived punctuation as an essential component of written music. They differentiated systematically and consistently between a sign that signifies rhythmic value, and a sign that indicates the boundaries of rhythmic units.<sup>6</sup> They used points of division, called *pontelli* (sing. *pontellus*), to indicate the beginning and termination of various Italian measures or divisions. To facilitate the reading of musical compositions the Italians not only used the equivalents of bar lines (the points of division), but also registered details of the rhythmic structure by adding upward and downward tails or stems. Not assuming, and not referring to a transcendental interpretative center or principle of coherence, the Italians shifted the focus from God to the composer as the source of authority, certainty, and above all, musical meaningfulness. In a sense, Italian notation aspired to establish trust in the adequacy of man-made signs to attain the consistency of reference, and the power to mean autonomously. The Italian notation can now be situated within the broader context of the humanists' style of writing. The humanists believed that written language should persuade and not just demonstrate abstract truth. They debunked the formulaic expressions of the scholastic philosophers, and rejected the fastidious, painstaking and abstract constructions of scholastic writing. Instead, the humanists focused on clarity and legibility.<sup>7</sup> Their approach to the act of writing reflects the internalization of the idea that authorship includes the writing of one's own work. The activity of writing as part of the definition of authorial subjectivity was new and resulted (especially in the case of Petrarca) in a growing awareness that there is an intimate connection between cultural renewal and scribal renewal, that is, between the way one writes and the content of what one writes.

Marchetus de Padua canonized the rules of the Italian notation in his *Pomerium* of 1318–1319. The treatise can be interpreted as a reaction against the scholastic method of writing theory. Although scholastic in format, and elaborated through the scholastic procedures of *dubitationes*, *responsiones*, *contradictiones*, *solutions*, etc., deep inside it reverses

5 For a recent description of the Italian system, see Jan Herlinger, ›Music Theory of the Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries‹, in: *Music as Concept and Practice in the Late Middle Ages*, eds. Reinhard Strohm and Bonnie J. Blackburn (= *The New Oxford History of Music* 3,1), Oxford 2002, p. 279–284.

6 The French had also special signs for indicating boundaries, but they were used mainly to indicate special rhythmic conditions and deviations from the norm.

7 For a general survey of the evolution and characteristics of Italian writing styles, see Armando Petrucci, *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy: Studies in the History of Written Culture*, ed. and trans. Charles M. Radding, New Haven 1995.

scholastic pedagogy. Aristotelian Scholasticism claimed that knowledge of universals preceded knowledge of particulars, essences preceded accidental predicates, and speculative theories preceded practical instructions. For example, Johannes de Muris followed exactly this scheme in his famous *Ars nova* treatise of 1321. *Primus liber* on *Musica theorica* was followed by *Secundus liber* on *Musica practica*.<sup>8</sup> Marchetus ignored *Musica speculativa* altogether, and his *Pomerium* is different. Its first 12 chapters are dedicated to the accidental predicates of measured music, rather than to essences or musical universals. These opening chapters address the semantic function of all the upward and downward stems, the stems for rest, points of division and the signs of *musica ficta*. That is, for Marchetus, practical questions that bear on the legibility of the musical text, and on accurate writing and reading, were more important than the scholastic concern with intricate mental categories.

Turning from the anti-scholastic orientation of the *Pomerium*, qua musical theory, to the convention that governs the Italian notation as a written language, it seems that the persistent use of *punctus divisionis* to demarcate the boundaries of the rhythmic structure, and the persistent use of upward and downward stems to remove ambiguities and highlight rhythmic nuances within the rhythmic division – these two features of Italian notation can be compared to the humanists' sedulous attention to punctuation. Unlike the scholastic writers the humanists applied a rich set of different punctuation-marks to assist a reader to identify quickly and precisely all the logical and syntactical relationships within a period. They signaled nuances of semantic significance with various types of *punctus*, *commas*, and even invented many new punctuation symbols in order to speed up the process of reading and guarantee the reader's full understanding of the author's intention.<sup>9</sup> This feature of humanist writing can be compared to the persistent use of special signs in Italian music to demarcate the boundaries of the rhythmic structure and the use of upward and downward stems or *caudae* to highlight rhythmic nuances within the rhythmic division.

In passing let us note that in both Trecento music and literature the desire to probe the boundaries of languages initiated the creation of new expressive modes. Dante's explorations of the limits of referentiality in his transgressive *Commedia* are famous. His journey through the realms of afterlife, above all in *Paradiso*, pushed poetic language to its limits, creating new words, and modes of expression, for the inexpressible – the realm beyond nature. It is obvious that rhythmic notation, in contrast, developed along a very different scale. Yet French and Italian theorists continuously transgressed given ontological boundaries. They too, eventually, entered the realm beyond nature, beyond the *minima naturalis*, and through the rhythmic complexities of the *Ars subtilior*, explored the limits of referentiality and intelligibility in music. In 1321, Johannes de Muris envisioned the possibility of transgressing the minima, discussing in his *Notitia artis musicae* the infinite theoretical divisibility of the continuum. Marchetus admitted the possibility of dividing imperfect tempus not only into 12 minimae but also into 18 minimae. Furthermore, he exhausted the potential richness of the rhythmic modes, devising a new set of imperfect rhythmic modes, and a new level of variety attained through a mixture of perfect and imperfect *modus* and

8 Johannes de Muris, *Notitia artis musicae*, ed. Ulrich Michels (= CSM 17), s.1. 1972.

9 Parkes, *Pause and Effect*, p. 81–87.

*tempus*.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Marchetus' distinction between *via naturalis* and *via artis* was symptomatic of the broader preoccupation with the possibility of redrawing the boundaries of language, and transgressing what is known, expected, or natural.

Linguistic versatility, creativity and eloquence manifested the dignity of man. Language became a means to conquer nature, and the continuous efforts to enlarge its scope and authority by individuals such as Marchetus and Muris, in music, Dante *et alii*, in literature prepared for man's new position as *Deus in terris*.

Yet before turning to Marchetus' distinction between writing *via naturalis* and writing *via artis*, it is important to recall that Marchetus imagined his own expansion of the rhythmic vocabulary as an immense orchard (*Pomerium*). Marchetus says: »Libellum quoque hunc decrevi POMERIUM nuncupari, eo quod florum et fructuum velut immensitatis cultu plantario emissiones poterunt invenire cantores.« (I have decided to name this book Pomerium because singers will be able to find inside the product of the flowers and fruits as in a vast cultivated nursery.)<sup>11</sup>

The *Pomerium* celebrates, then, the beauty and plenitude of the Italian notation, and, as a by-product, it also celebrates the capacity of musical notation to become an impressive semiotic field, comparable to a vast orchard. In the idea of a *Pomerium* or orchard, natural growth and artificial or artful cultivation converge. This brings us to Marchetus' semiotic field, where the possibility of composing by both *via naturalis* and *via artis* grounds the new Italian way of notating rhythm.

As well known, the addition of downward or upward stems to the simple unstemmed semibrevis of the various Italian divisions of the brevis changed the value of the unstemmed semibrevis. All the possible arrangements of the unstemmed semibrevis were conceived as proceeding *via naturalis*. By the addition of various stems composers could proceed *via artis* and deviate from the established conventions. As such *via artis* was a legitimate path to innovation, as it allowed for transgression of pre-existing musical ideas. In simpler words, composers could manipulate conventional rhythmic signs and thereby change their rhythmic meaning. Composers could thus treat rhythmic signs as the orator and poet treated words to invent figures of speech.

In fact, Marchetus may have borrowed the idea of the two musical writing modes – the *via naturalis* and *via artis* – from the medieval *ars dictandi*, the art of writing, which was concerned, among other issues, with the *via naturalis* and *via artis* in writing official letters. A sentence followed *via naturalis* if ordered as subject-verb-object. *Via artis* allowed for an artificial and more beautiful («quando partes pulcrius disponuntur»)<sup>12</sup> word order, such as the separation of the adjective from its noun, variations in the place of the verb, the placement of a relative pronoun before its antecedent, etc. *Via artis* required grammatical virtuosity, resulting in an unexpected, personal and especially elegant style.<sup>13</sup>

10 Marchetus de Padua, *Pomerium*, ed. Giuseppe Vecchi (= CSM 6), Rome 1961, p. 206–208.

11 Ibid., p. 37.

12 *Guidonis Fabe summa dictaminis*, ed. A. Gaudenzi, in: *Il propugnatore* 3 (1890), p. 287–338 and p. 345–393, here: p. 338.

13 See as an example Martin Camargo, *Ars dictaminis, Ars dictandi* (= Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental 60), Brepols 1991. See also Charles B. Faulhaber, »The Summa Dictaminis of Guido

Moreover, Marchetus legitimized his new *via artis* by referring to rhetoric as his model:

Et tamen naturalia ita componuntur ad invicem in arte, quod non sic reperiuntur in natura; nam hircum et cervum, quae sunt naturalia, ars ad invicem componit, faciendo hircocervum; et tamen talia non sunt simul in rerum natura quae ars habuit simul pro suo fundamento. Unde, licet tale quid non sit a natura, sed ab arte, ars tamen a rebus naturalibus ipsa accepit.

(Nevertheless, natural things may be combined in art, in ways that are not found in nature. Hence a goat and a deer are both natural, but art can combine them together and make a goatdeer, and yet they are not the same when they are in nature as they are when art use them as its foundation. In nature however, they are not made one, but they can be made one in art.)<sup>14</sup>

Hence, according to Marchetus, original and virtuosic rhetorical inventions set the model for musical *via artis*. Musicians like poets can superimpose two different rhythmic signs and create something new. The rhetorical art of interpreting pre-existing materials, of re-ordering, amplifying and ornamenting simple expressions can be seen as one possible origin of late medieval Italian music. I suggest that the composer's and orator's option to use both *via naturalis* and/or *via artis*, constituted a lowercase version of the theological distinction between the two Divine actions: *potentia Dei ordinata*, and *potentia Dei absoluta*. Theologians differentiated between the infinite possible worlds, God could have created, if He had so wished, vis-à-vis the actual world He ordained for us. The humanist composer and writer, though admitting that he physically exists in God's actual world, allowed himself to use the power of creative imagination to explore possible worlds that God could have created. In a God-like manner he created a new world, using the power of the word – his own word. In contrast, the scope of scholastic creativity was limited by the borders of the natural order as created by God. That is, for the French composer the signified is logically prior to the sign, for the Italian composer, the very act of writing carries with it the potential to create the signified. Now, only when the sign begets its reference one can talk about creative authorship. This is why the Italian way of manipulating rhythmic signs *via artis* is so important. While the signs of the French scholastic system of rhythmic notation stood for the natural order as ordained by God, the signs of the Italian system created meaning autonomously. In other words, the analogy between God's absolute and ordained power and man's *via naturalis* and *via artis* captures the humanist's theme of the dignity of man: »Et Deus dixit: faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.« (Genesis 1, 26.)

This analogy does not imply that the human mind has absolute power, but that the human mind has the power to contemplate *via artis* on a plurality of alternative worlds and thereby transgress physical as well as conceptual boundaries.

Faba«, in: *Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric*, ed. James J. Murphy, London 1978, p. 99–100.

14 Marchetus, *Pomerium*, p. 104.

For understanding the disjunction of French notation from the Italian notation the role of the notion of perfection in both systems is crucial. It is well known that Marchetus borrowed from the French the notion of *tempus perfectum* and *tempus imperfectum* to describe a brevis divisible into three semibreves (*tempus perfectum*) as against a brevis that contains only two semibreves (*tempus imperfectum*). Unlike Johannes de Muris, who insisted on the conceptual dependence of imperfection on metaphysical perfection, Marchetus claimed that rhythmic imperfection was in a way autonomous, and acknowledged that it can be studied in itself and absolutely.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Marchetus posited that human characteristics, physiognomy and self-interest constituted the sole point of reference, for the art of notating music as an imitative mode. Measured music, Marchetus argued, was invented as an art by and for humans and its properties should, therefore, be added according to human rather than divine perfection.<sup>16</sup> Hence, stems or *caudae* were added to the right or left side of the notes because ›right‹ and ›left‹ pertain to man alone: ›In homine autem primo et principaliter inventur dextrum et sinistrum. Probatio: quia nec in columna nec in aliqua re non viventi dicitur esse latus dextrum et sinistrum nisi per respectum ad hominem.« (Now it is in man that left and right are found first and foremost. Here is the proof. Right and left are not predicated of a column or any non-living thing, except, with reference to man.)<sup>17</sup> For Marchetus the right side of the body is more perfect, therefore, stems added to the right side of a note indicate a perfect long. In other words, the human being created the musical art in his image and likeness.

However, in the final analysis ›perfection‹ is a *modus loquendi* – a figure of speech, indicating longitude, or, in Marchetus' words: ›Percipere autem notam est ipsam prolongare, imperficere vero est ipsam abbreviare.« (To perfect a note is to prolong it and to imperfect it is to shorten it.)<sup>18</sup>

As noted by Michele Calella, Marchetus was the earliest theorist to acknowledge the authorial power of the composer to determine by the very act of notating the music whether or not it would follow perfect time.<sup>19</sup> Marchetus says:

Probatum est enim quod omnis cantus notatus potest cantari de tempore perfecto et de tempore imperfecto. Solum enim talis diversitas cantandi instituitur ab auctore, ratione scilicet armoniae. Et quia hoc solum dependet a voluntate auctoris, et non ex natura cantus, ideo signum talem diversitatem innuens debet poni ibi, solum secundum voluntatem auctoris.

(It has been demonstrated that any notated music can be sung either in perfect time or in imperfect, for this diversity in the manner of singing, it is provided by the composer, for the sake of harmony. And because this depends only on the preference and will of the composer, and is not derived from the nature of the music, a sign that

15 Ibid., p. 157.

16 Ibid., p. 53.

17 Ibid., p. 51.

18 Ibid., p. 52.

19 Michele Calella, *Musikalische Autorschaft: Der Komponist zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, HabSchr. Zürich 2003, p. 129.

indicates the difference should be put there, but only according to the wish of the composer.)<sup>20</sup>

Following Calella's observation, I suggest that Marchetus was taking a minimal first step here toward relocation of the source of authority in the field of writing music, allowing a partly formed authorial subjectivity to half emerge. His description of the relation between the very act of writing music and the process of composing can be seen as a miniature-portrait of the modern composer *in statu nascendi*. Marchetus' *Pomerium* was written during the transitional period in which the modern concept of authorship in literature was just budding. This is the period of Dante and Boccaccio, between tranquil medieval anonymity and individual authorship.

This presentation has thus offered merely an initial tentative interpretation of late medieval Italian notation as the inception of a new phase in the relation between the Word of God and the language of man.

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## Schrift und Schriftlichkeit als mediale und kulturgeschichtliche Matrix in der Musik-historiographie des späten 18. Jahrhunderts

Dem Forkel in Toms Bielefelder Hütte

Die folgende dreiteilige Skizze<sup>1</sup> zum Sujet ›Schrift‹ als Problemstellung der Kultur- und Musikhistoriographie des 18. Jahrhunderts<sup>2</sup> geht der Frage nach, welche Probleme einer eminent schriftlichen Narration begegnen, wenn sie die Geschichte ihres eigenen Mediums schreibt, kurz, wenn Schrift Schrift beschreibt. Im ersten Teil versuche ich einen Umriss der Problematik ›Schrift‹ im Rahmen der allgemeinen und speziell der anthropologisch-

<sup>20</sup> Marchetus, *Pomerium*, p. 164.

<sup>1</sup> Die geforderte räumliche Beschränkung erlaubt hier nicht mehr als einen äußerst verknüpften Abriss. Eine ausführlichere Darlegung wird zu finden sein im fünften Kapitel (Historischer Text – historiographischer Transtext) meiner Würzburger Dissertation (2004): *Apolls musikalische Reisen. Zum Verhältnis von System, Text und Narration in Johann Nicolaus Forkels »Allgemeiner Geschichte der Musik« (1788–1801)*, Mainz 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Die einschlägigen Werke von Martini, Marpurg, Roussier, Blainville, Hawkins, Burney, Forkel etc. sind als bekannt vorauszusetzen und bedürfen hier nicht des raumgreifenden bibliographischen Nachweises. Zur Vertiefung der Übersicht sei empfohlen: Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Allgemeine Litteratur der Musik*, Leipzig 1792, Reprint Leipzig 1992, S. 14–30 (allgemeine Geschichte) und S. 30–224 (Spezialgeschichte).