THE SOUND OF PHANTASIA IN MOTION: MUSICAL IMAGINATION FROM ARISTOTLE TO ZARLINO / O SOM DA FANTASIA EM MOVIMENTO: IMAGINAÇÃO MUSICAL DE ARISTÓTELES A ZARLINO

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ABSTRACT: Ambiguously poised between composition and improvisation, works designated as fantasia in the sixteenth century thrived on the imaginative power of virtuoso performers. Or so the term would seem to suggest: it is not immediately clear in what sense this music should be understood and singled out as the product of the imagination. Isn't music, any kind of music, the product of the imagination? What idea of imagination was this particular kind of music meant to represent? Drawing on the Aristotelian doctrine of the internal senses, this essay explores the relationship between fantasia as a musical process and sixteenth-century notions of fantasia as a mental process. From our vantage point in history, fantasia offers a rare opportunity to observe a cultural and musical practice aimed at translating the workings of the mind into a sensible object, which the perceiving subject can then (re)experience as a representation of his own inner life, in the way he himself imagines it.

KEYWORDS: Fantasia; Imagination; Improvisation; Mind; Sense perception; Zarlino; Aristotle; Della Barba; Varchi.

RESUMO**:** Ambiguamente posicionada entre a composição e a improvisação, as obras designadas como fantasia floresceram no poder imaginativo dos intérpretes virtuosos durante o Século XVI. Ou assim o termo pareceria sugerir: não nos fica claro de imediato em que sentido essa música deveria ser entendida e distinguida como o produto da imaginação. Não seria a música, qualquer tipo de música, o produto da imaginação? Que ideia de imaginação deveria representar esse tipo específico de música? Com base na doutrina aristotélica dos sentidos internos, este ensaio explora a relação entre fantasia como um processo musical e a noção quinhentista de fantasia como um processo mental. A partir do nosso ponto de vista histórico, a noção de fantasia oferece uma rara oportunidade de observar uma prática cultural e musical que visa traduzir o funcionamento da mente em um objeto sensível, a qual o sujeito percipiente pode, então, (re)experimentar como uma representação de sua própria vida interior, na forma como ele a imagina.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Fantasia; Imaginação; Improvisação; Mente; Percepções dos Sentidos; Zarlino; Aristóteles; Della Barba; Varchi.

It was at the end of a journey of over a thousand years that the faculty of the mind known as phantasia found its way into the world of sensory objects and became music. It seems that the term began to be used in a musical context in the late fifteenth century. A three-part instrumental piece bearing the title "Ile fantazies de Joskin" appears in the Casanatense Chansonnier, a handsomely decorated manuscript that was perhaps commissioned as a gift for Isabella d'Este on the occasion of her betrothal to Gian Francesco Gonzaga in 1480 (BENTHEM; BROWN, 1987, pp. 108-111).[2] With the development of printing techniques that made different kinds of music available in ever-greater quantities, fantasia emerged in the sixteenth century as a staple of popular collections for lute, vihuela, keyboard instruments, and instrumental ensembles.[3] Ambiguously poised between composition and improvisation, fantasia thrived on the imaginative power of virtuoso performers. Or so the term would seem to suggest: it is not immediately clear in what sense this music should be understood and singled out as the product of the imagination. Isn't music, any kind of music, the product of the imagination? What idea of imagination was this particular kind of music meant to represent? Perhaps it is only fitting that music purporting to display the musician's fantasy would appear to lack easily circumscribable boundaries. However, from a stylistic point of view, the boundaries are there, and they become relatively predictable as we grow more familiar with the conventions of the genre.[4] Here fantasia does not stand for the unbridled flight of the mind into invisible worlds, or the ability to transcend the reality of natural objects. In other words, of the twelve conceptions of imagination sur-

[2] See also LOCKWOOD (2009). The most comprehensive survey of the use of the term "fantasia" in music is BETZ (2001).

[3] To avoid confusion, I will use the term phantasia to refer to the faculty of the mind, and fantasia to refer to the musical genre.

[4] In this sense, following John Griffiths' suggestion, it is useful to think of fantasia as a set of procedures rather than a form (GRIFFITHS, 1990, pp. 1-6).

veyed by Leslie Stevenson, we can lay aside those that concern the ability to think of things acknowledged to be fictitious, as well as "the liability to think of something that the subject believes to be real, but which is not." (STEVENSON, 2003, pp. 238-259). To some extent, the sixteenth-century musical conception of fantasia seems to resonate more closely with the Aristotelian tradition, in particular with the notion of compositive imagination, namely the faculty of the mind that composes, divides, and reassembles sensible forms. I shall return to this later, but before proceeding to the principal questions, it may be worth dwelling on some specific features of the music, and in particular on the somewhat counterintuitive coexistence of structural freedom and contrapuntal constraint.

Fantasias tend to exhibit techniques of imitative counterpoint.[5] One of the most important manuals of improvisation of the sixteenth century, *El Arte de Tañer Fantasia* by the Spanish organist Tomás de Sancta Maria, is largely devoted to instructing how to improvise in imitative style, which, together with the chordal technique of improvisation (*tañer a consonancias*), provides the textural and structural qualities of "the art of playing the fantasia."[6] Interlocking points of imitation in a style rooted in improvisatory practices were already a key component of the *Fantazies de Joskin*, and by the end of the sixteenth century, fantasias, especially of the monothematic kind, could very well serve as showpieces of contrapuntal ingenuity.[7] Works with similar, sometimes indistinguishable, features were also called *ricercare*. In fact, the terms *fantasia* and *ricercare* were often used interchangeably. *Ricercare* – to search for, to seek, or to research, to investigate – evokes an inquisitive disposition, a spirit of exploration, as well as a willingness to undertake a journey whose purpose may simply be the journey itself.[8] In his book on architecture (1461-64), Filarete evokes a similar linguistic and conceptual cluster by turning "fantasia" into the object of the artist's creative action: "investigare e cercare nuove fantasie e nuove cose." [9] It is true that imitative polyphony is a pervasive feature of Renaissance music. It was the native language of professionals working at the high end of the musical market of the time. In these terms, its application under the rubric of fantasia is not by itself surprising. The question is rather what distinguishes fantasia from other types of imitative counterpoint.

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[5] Early examples of fantasia rely much less on imitative techniques and contain long episodes in free counterpoint and in chordal writing. Imitation becomes a more pervasive feature starting in the 1540s.

[6] Tomás de Santa María, *Libro llamado Arte de tañer fantasía* (Valladoid, 1565; facsimile edition Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Institución "Milà i Fontanals," Departamento de Musicología, 2007). See also ROIG-FRANCOLÍ (1995, pp. 461-471).

[7] Gregory Butler links the "sequential imitations" found in early examples of fantasia to techniques of improvised vocal counterpoint. See BUTLER (1974, pp. 602-615). On improvised vocal counter- point in general see FERAND (1956, pp. 129-174), and, more recently, CANGUILHEM (2011, pp. 55-103).

[8] A particularly interesting example, in terms of both form and nomenclature, is Giuliano Tiburtino's *Fantasie et recerchari a tre voci* (1549), on which see HAAR (1973, pp. 223-238). For a modern edition of the music see Giuliano Tiburtino, Baldesar Donato, Cipriano de Rore, Adriano Willaert, and Nadal, *Fantesie, et recerchari a tre voci, accomodate da cantare et sonare per ogni instrumento (Venice, 1549)*, ed. Robert Judd (New York: Garland, 1994).

[9] Martin Kemp points out similarities between Filarete's language and later musical terminology in "From Mimesis to Fantasia: The

Gioseffo Zarlino makes an oblique allusion to a similar question in Chapter 26 of the third book of his *Istitutioni harmoniche* (1558). The topic under discussion is the choice of the "soggetto" of a composition, that is, the material that the composer will subject to elaboration, or more specifically the initial musical idea from which the other parts in a polyphonic piece are derived. A subject can be borrowed from a pre-existing work, or can be newly invented. In the latter case, one way of proceeding is for the composer to derive

> [...] his subject as he composes the parts of a composition, that is when he derives one voice from another and arrives at the subject as he composes the parts all together, then that fragment of it from which he derives the parts of the rest of the composition is called the subject. Musicians call this "composing by fancy" (comporre di fantasia). It could be as well be called counter-pointing, or making counterpoint, as one chooses.[10]

What Zarlino seems to be describing is a procedure in which the composer starts with a contrapuntal idea or "invention," which is in turn used to generate the subject of the next section of the work. Implicit in this description is the suggestion that some form of preliminary planning is latent within the initial idea. The connection between fantasia and the use of an original subject devised by the composer is clarified in Chapter 43 on "the method of writing counterpoints upon a part or diminished subject." Of the two examples provided by Zarlino, the first is based on a pre-existing subject (abstracted from Willaert's *Scimus hoc nostrum meruisse crimen*), while the second, on an original subject, is said to be "tutto composto di fantasia" [entirely made out of fantasy] (ZARLINO, 1968 [1558], pp. 200-201 [pp. 102-103]). But what is relevant for us here is that Zarlino seems a little puzzled by the fact that this way of writing music is called *comporre di fantasia* – an expression in use among practicing musicians, as he is ready to point out – although it does not seem to differ significantly from what is simply called counterpoint.

Although fantasia was often associated with improvisation, Zarlino is clearly speaking of the way musicians "compose" by fantasy. In the 1573 edition of the *Istitutioni harmoniche* he added an expanded section on improvised counterpoint, which includes examples of "consequences that are made by fantasy"

Quattrocento Vocabulary of Invention, Imagination, and Creation in the Visual Arts", *Viator* 9 (1977), pp. 370-371. See also FILARETE (1965, vol. 2, f. 114.

[10] "Ma quando il compositore andrà cavando il soggetto dalle parti della cantilena, cioè quando caverà una parte dall'altra, et andrà cavando il soggetto per tal maniera, et facendo insieme la compositione, come vederemo altrove; quella particella, che lui caverà fuori delle altre, sopra la quale dipoi componerà le parti della sua compositione, si chiamerà sempre il soggetto. Et tal modo di comporre li prattici dimandano comporre di fantasia: ancorache sip ossa etiandio nominare contrapuntizare o far contrapunto, come si vuole." ZARLINO (1558; facsimile edition New York: Broude Brothers, 1965, p. 172). English translation from *The Art of Counterpoint: Part Three of Le istitutioni harmoniche, 1558*, trans. Guy A. Marco and Claude V. Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 52. On the concept of "subject" in Zarlino's theory see also RIVERA (1993, pp. 73-102).

(*consequenze che si fanno di fantasia*). No explicit definition is provided, but the examples are all three-voice canons notated as a single part, which is consistent with his general definition of "consequence."[11] Later on in the same chapter, Zarlino (1966 [1573], p. 314) refers to them, a bit unexpectedly, as improvised pieces without subject ("a mente senza soggetto").[12] The notion that there can be music without subject would seem to contradict his previous definition of what constitutes the subject of a musical work ("What I call the subject [...] is either the first part to be written or the first to be imagined by the composer").[13] However, it can be argued that the premise implicit in Zarlino's notion of fantasia is an idea of self-generating counterpoint; a procedure in which the musician "arrives at the subject as he composes the parts all together," in the sense that no evident temporal distinction can be drawn between the invention of the initial contrapuntal conceit and its manipulation, between the excogitation of the idea and the realization of the form.[14] This classificatory method becomes clearer if we consider that the pedagogical norm against which every variation was measured took as its starting point the adoption and study of a pre-existing or previously-created subject. Along similar lines, James Haar summarizes the early history of the *ricercare* in the following terms: "A *ricercare* was from the start a composer's elaboration of some idea; by 1550 this elaboration usually took the form of imitative counterpoint, and if this counterpoint was self-generated the *ricerca* was done *di fantasia*" (HAAR, 1973, pp. 236-237).

It is difficult to stay perched firmly on any musical definition of fantasia. However, if we combine Zarlino's use of the term within his classification system with the practical applications of the same term in the musical collections of the time — admittedly broader and fuzzier on the differences — we can highlight some elements that will become of particular interest in the rest of this essay. The degree of structural freedom that fantasia enjoys is associated with the non-textual and non-subject dependent nature of its musical material. The two properties are to some extent related, in the sense that, against the backdrop of Renaissance musical culture, writing music independent of a vocal model can be equated to writing music independent of a pre-existing *soggetto*. This is true even in cases where the structural properties of the music are described as

[11] On the terminology adopted by Zarlino to classify intervallically exact or inexact types of imitation see HAAR (1971, pp. 226-254).

[12] On this passage see also LORENZETTI (2009, pp. 137-138).

[13] "Soggetto io chiamo quella parte, che si pone avanti le altre parti nella compositione, overamente quella parte, che il compositor si ha primieramente imaginato di fare"; ZARLINO (1968 [1558], p.103 [p. 314]).

[14] "É ben vero, che volendo comporre il soggetto da se stesso, potrà aiutato da una parte della sua compositione comporre l'altra, di modo che tutto in un tempo verrà a comporre il soggetto, et a dar fine alla cantilena" [If he chooses to write his own subject, he may find that one part helps him compose the other so that he can at the same time compose the subject and complete the composition]. ZARLINO (1968 [1558], p. 103, slightly modified English translation).

the product of a contrapuntal mechanism generating its own subject, as in canonic writing. In brief, as a general proposition, the subject or subjects of a fantasia are feely formed in the musician's mind. In fantasias based on subjects borrowed from vocal models, the subject is usually treated as a solmization subject, that is, as a textless pitch collection to be explored contrapuntally. As music devoid of language, fantasia is not bound to the structural and expressive demands of language. Nor is it bound to the regular patterns of dance music. It can indeed unfold of its own accord, free to follow the musician's imagination.[15] However, this does not mean that fantasia necessarily unfolds in a rhapsodic, uncontrolled fashion. On the contrary, the principle of elaboration remains responsible for many of its distinctive traits. If anything, it is through the fantasia that the principle of elaboration can draw attention to itself (in the true sense of *ricercare*), allowing its author to pursue the pleasure of a purely musical inquisitiveness without the restrictions imposed by other formal or textual considerations.[16] From this point of view, Zarlino is right in remarking that *comporre di fantasia* and writing counterpoint are not two easily distinguishable concepts. The technique is basically the same. But the flow of thoughts in the musical mind, so to speak, is not. In a fantasia, the imitative fabric of the polyphony does not need to be sustained in a motet-like style or to exhibit an unswerving sense of direction. It can be edgy or serene, can be hijacked by idiomatic passages for the keyboard or the lute, or can be commandeered for denser textural games.

This last point leads us back to the relationship between fantasia and improvisation, a relationship that can be delicate because we can only rely on music preserved in manuscripts or prints. First of all, improvisation justifies stylistic license, which may in turn be presented as the free manifestation of the imagination. Moreover, we cannot assume that the score represents a record of an extemporaneous performance. The same markers of an improvisatory style can be harnessed in pre-compositional strategies in order to reproduce the effect of improvised music. The result is a realistic replica of spontaneity fixed in musical notation. It is clear that Renaissance society recognized and valued the specific qualities of this type of music, whether they were perceived as real or simulated, and the best-selling authors in the genre were themselves celebrated in-

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15. A special case is the so-called parody-fantasia, a freely ornamented instrumental arrangement or elaboration of a polyphonic vocal model (a motet or a madrigal, for example). See WARD (1965, pp. 208-228), and MENGOZZI (1990, pp. 7-17). As far as the use of dance formulas is concerned, exceptions are Galilei's six fantasias based on the *romanesca* pattern in the 1568 edition of *Il Fronimo*. On Galilei's two examples of parody-fantasia see CANGUILHEM (2001, pp. 107-121).

16. This point is already resonant in Thomas Morley's definition of "fantasy": "The most principal and chiefest kind of music which is made without a ditty is the Fantasy, that is when a musician taketh a point at his pleasure and wresteth and turneth it as he list, making either much or little of it according as shall seem best in his own conceit. In this may more art be shown than in any other music because the composer is tied to nothing, but that he may add, diminish, and alter at his pleasure." MORLEY (1973 [1597], p. 296).

strumentalists and improvisers. There is also evidence of a more general use of fantasia as synonymous with improvisation. The best know document in this regard is the exam for the post of organist at San Marco in Venice. One of its tests required the candidates to *sonare di fantasia* on a subject chosen at random from a choirbook. Interestingly enough, the examiners further required that the improvised piece maintain an audible four-part contrapuntal structure, "as if four singers were singing."[17] In an entirely different context, Vincenzo Galilei confirms the correlation between fantasia and improvisation in his discussion of the ancient art of improvised sung poetry. The subject of the dispute is "how the ancients composed their songs." In particular, Piero Strozzi, one of the interlocutors in Galilei's dialogue, wonders how singer-musicians would compose and memorize long poems. Giovanni Bardi argues that, since at that time there was no distinction between poet and singer, writing poetry and adapting it to a suitable musical recitation were not two entirely separate tasks. "Therefore, after studying carefully the poem, history, fable, or whatever it may be, what tonos and harmonia [*modo*] and which air suited it, they then sang it, as they say, 'to the kithara,' impromptu and out of their heads [*di fantasia*]."[18]

The principle of elaboration, and its temporal dimension as a process observable in real time through the lens of an extemporaneous creation (whether real or fictional), will play an increasingly significant role as we broaden our analysis to the multifaceted meaning of fantasia in the philosophical and artistic culture of sixteenth-century Italy. It will also become increasingly important to reflect on the interplay between rule and freedom, norm and license — seemingly contradictory principles whose concurrence is precisely what endows fantasia with its distinctive character. In 1650, in an attempt to make order out of an ebullient multiplying of musical styles, Athanasius Kircher captures the terms of this double identity under the category of *stylus phantasticus*. Freedom is what shapes music that is not bound to words or to a musical subject. But it is significant that Kircher does not find it odd that the same music, free and unrestricted, can also serve as a tool for the apprehension and display of the hidden logic of music:

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[17] "Si apre il libro di capella et a sorte si trova un principio di Kirie o vero di motetto, et si copia mandandolo a l'organista che concorre, il quale sopra quel sugetto ne l'istesso organo vacante deve sonar di fantasia regolatamente, non confondendo le parti come che quattro cantori cantassero." See MORELLI (1998, p. 265). Morelli provides further evidence of the contrapuntal orientation behind the organistic practice of "playing by fantasy." MORELLI (1998, pp. 261-263).

[18] "La onde considerate prima molto bene la poesia, o historia, o favola, o altro quella si fusse, in qual tuono et modo, qual'aria più si conveniva, la cantavano poi alla cithara (per così dire) all'improvviso et di fantasia." GALILEI (2003 [1581], p. 245).

> The "fantastic style," suitable for instruments, is the most free and unrestricted method of composing. It is bound to nothing, neither to words nor to a musical subject. It was established to showcase ingenuity (ingenium) as well as to teach the hidden logic of music and the clever combination of musical phrases and fugues. It is divided into works that are commonly called fantasias, ricercatas, toccatas, and sonatas.[19]

At this point, we need to deepen our understanding of the sense in which the concept of fantasia fulfilled the musical experience I sketched above by probing contemporaneous theories of perception and cognition for answers. However, while it is undeniable that a great deal can be inferred by such an approach — as I will seek to demonstrate — the opposite is also true. The study of the musical representation of the power of the imagination can help us to clarify how people understood phantasia in the sixteenth century, especially outside the specialized fields of knowledge cultivated by professional philosophers. That a musical genre labeled fantasia should emerge in this period is by itself an interesting event, because in those years the philosophical debate inspired by humanism and Neoplatonism sparked a renewed interest in the nature, potential, and limits of human imagination. This trend was in part due to an increasing skepticism toward the scholastic interpretation of Aristotle's theory of the mind, to which I shall return. Emblematic is the publication in 1501 of Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola's *De imaginatione*, in which a detailed reexamination of the Aristotelian tradition serves as a starting point not only to reaffirm the importance of this mental faculty in the human mechanisms of knowledge, but also to warn against its dangerous side effects.[20] Obviously, to expect that phantasia would have one univocal meaning is useless. We cannot begin by deciding what phantasia and imagination meant in the Renaissance. It is indeed hard to isolate exact correspondences in meaning cutting through natural philosophy, ethics, rhetoric, or poetics, especially as we approach more colloquial and general usages of language. It is more profitable to think about this issue in terms of a cluster of core ideas taking up residence in different semantic fields, where, at the end of a journey that can last centuries, it adjusts to changing needs and circumstances. Therefore, my primary goal here is to determine what modulations in meaning occur as multiple (yet related) concepts of phantasia are applied in various cultural practices and areas of knowledge.

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[19] "Phantasticus stylus aptus instrumentis, est liberrima et solutissima componendi methodus, nullis, nec verbis, nec subiecto harmonico adstrictus ad ostentandum ingenium, et abditam harmoniae rationem, ingeniosumque harmonicarum clausolarum, fugarumque contextum docendum institutus, dividiturque in eas, quas phantasias, ricercatas, toccatas, sonatas vulgo vocant." KIRCHER (1970 [1650], I, 585). This passage and the examples provided by Kircher are discussed in COLLINS (2005, pp. 29-52); and BREWER (2011, pp. 25-28).

[20] See in particular Maria Muccillo's assessment of Pico della Mirandola's philosophical agenda in MUCCILLO (2007, pp. 11-35).

SHIFTING MENTAL GEARS

Since I have been using phantasia and imagination interchangeably, it bears mentioning that *imaginatio* was the accepted Latin translation of the Greek *phantasia*. There are exceptions, most notably Marsilio Ficino, who, despite his notoriously ambiguous use of the two terms, sometimes distinguishes between the faculty responsible for the combination of sensory data into mental images, which he calls imagination, and a higher faculty capable of a preliminary or pre-intellective form of judgment, for which he uses the term "phantasia".[21] The equivalence of *phantasia* and *imaginatio* had an authoritative source in Thomas Aquinas, and no significant distinction is detectable in the sixteenth-century texts I have consulted.[22]

The Renaissance received the "Aristotelian" theory of the internal senses from Islamic philosophic sources (especially Avicenna and Averroes) through the lenses of the interpretation and systematization elaborated by the Scholastic philosophers.[23] The subdivision of the cognitive operations of the sensitive soul into separate mental faculties is understandable as a response to the difficulties inherent in Aristotle's *De Anima* 3.3, the foundational text of this enormous effort of scholarly imagination. In Aristotle, phantasia occupies an intermediate position between perceiving and thinking, bridging the gap between the two, for the intellect cannot operate directly on the sensory data impressed upon the sense organs. Aristotle's main concern is indeed to demonstrate that phantasia is different from both sense perception and intellection. In the two passages in which a direct definition is provided, Aristotle states that "imagination is that in virtue of which we say that an image occurs to us," and that "the imagination [is] a movement coming about from the activity of sense perception." (ARISTOTLE, 1986, p. 198 and 200). The correct interpretation of Aristotle's thought has been the subject of rich debate among modern scholars.[24] With an eye toward the medieval and Renaissance approach to the question of what phantasia is and how it operates at the intersection of sensation and intellection, I would stress the view that Aristotle's aim is to explain how the external world appears

[21] See MUCCILLO (2007, p. 13 and note 24); GARIN (1988, pp. 3-20); and KATINIS (2002, pp. 217-223).

[22] "Sic ergo ad receptionem formarum sensibilium ordinatur sensus proprius et communis, de quorum distinctione post dicetur. Ad harum autem formarum retentionem aut conservationem ordinatur phantasia, sive imaginatio, quae idem sunt, est enim phantasia sive imaginatio quasi thesaurus quidam formarum per sensum acceptarum" (So the proper senses and the common sense are directed at receiving sensible forms; the difference between the two will be discussed below. Phantasia or imagination—the two are the same—is directed at the retention or preservation of these forms. For phantasia, or imagination, serves as a kind of treasury for forms grasped through the [external] senses). Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 78.4. English translation: AQUINAS, (2002 [c. 1265], p. 75). On the Latin translations of Aristotle's terminology in medieval philosophy see SPINOZA (1988, pp. 119-133).

[23] The most comprehensive study of the theory of the internal senses is still WOLFSON (1935, pp. 69-133). For a briefer survey, see HARVEY (1975). A particularly useful discussion of the issues surrounding the notion of phantasia in a pre-Cartesian world may be found in SEPPER (1996, pp. 13-28).

[24] I will only cite here NUSSBAUM (1978, p. 221-269); SCHOFIELD (1978, pp. 99-130), also available in *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); and WEDIN (1988). For a reappraisal of the debate see CAMASSA (1988, pp. 23-55), and SHEPPARD (2014).

to us in the mind. This form of apprehension is a step forward from the purely passive reception of sensory stimuli impressed upon the sense organs. It requires an active contribution of the mind; however, appearing, in this sense, is not understanding, although understanding and discursive thinking need the mental imagery produced by phantasia. In other words, sense perception sets phantasia into motion, and phantasia feeds the intellect. What it is exactly that phantasia feeds the intellect is one of the principal points of contention. These would be the "mental images" (*phantasmata*) that according to Aristotle are always present in the mind as a precondition for thinking, even when perception itself is absent (I do not need to see a tree to recall the image of a tree). But in what sense *phantasmata* may or may not be understood as mental images is far from clear. To use terminology current in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, sensory stimuli reach the five external senses as sensible forms (or sensible species), and the sensible species are transmitted to the common sense (the receptor of all sensory stimuli). Something happens in the "space" between common sense and intellection. Sensible species are turned into *phantasmata*, sense-based images reduced to a form accessible to the intellect, and as such they become potentially intelligible forms (*intelligibilia*). In the end, the agent intellect illuminates the *phantasmata* by abstracting intelligible species from sense-based mental representations, thus revealing the essence of material objects. The problem is to fill that "space" that in Aristotle is occupied by the somewhat elusive notion of phantasia.

The definition of a mental map of internal senses (five for Avicenna and four for Averroes) had the advantage of providing an analytical framework for a comprehensive assessment of the different tasks that the Aristotelian phantasia seems to perform. However, this resulted in a proliferation of separate faculties endowed with individual and restricted functions, among which was also the Latin *imaginatio*. To paint a picture in broad strokes, Aristotle's concept of phantasia came to be equated with the sum of the functions of the newly created internal senses, which included the redefined faculty of imagination. In Thomas Aquinas's version, mostly based on Averroes, phantasia operates at the level of sensible species (Fig. 1).

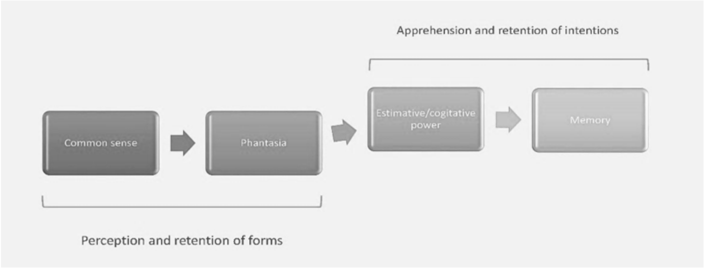
Apprehension and retention of intentions
Common sense
Phantasia
Estimative/cogitative power
Memory
Perception and retention of forms

Figure 1

Its primary function is to store the sensory forms collected by the common sense, and in this capacity it acts as a type of memory, allowing us to recall images of absent objects (*in absentia sensibilium*). However, forms do not just reside in phantasia in an inert state. Phantasia has also the ability to divide and recompose sensible species, "forming different images of things, even ones that have not been taken in by the senses."[25] These new images may not be veridical, but as Robert Pasnau has clarified, phantasia, on Aquinas's account, is not the sole faculty responsible for deceptive mental experiences. Illusions occur when phantasia erroneously sends back nonveridical images to the common sense, which, caught in a sort of short circuit, is unable to distinguish between true sensory impressions and counterfeit sensory impressions caused by phantasia (PASNAU, 2002, pp. 282-284). In Avicenna the passive and active functions of phantasia are assigned to two separate internal sense powers, the formative or retentive imagination and the compositive imagination. Albertus Magnus, whose interpretation of the Avicennian model exerted an enormous influence on the West, prefers to use the term "phantasia" to denote compositive imagination, thus reinforcing the link between phantasia and a basic, pre-intellective form of elaboration.[26] This taxonomy of the internal senses was admittedly confusing, especially to those who were not professional philosophers but who relied upon natural philosophy to explain aspects of the human experience related to poetry, artistic creation, or fundamental passions such as love. But the general association between phantasia and an elemental process of elaboration by division and composition is nonetheless important to understand that nuance of meaning that may have been conveyed by the musical use of the term "fantasia" as contrapuntal device. We should notice that

[25] "One could say that although the first impression on the power of imagination is brought about through the movement of sensible things (since phantasia is a movement made by sense, as is said in the *De anima* [429a 1-2]), still there is a certain operation of the soul in a human being that forms various images of things by dividing and composing, even ones that are not drawn from the senses." AQUINAS (2002 [c. 1265] 84.6 ad 2; p. 152).

[26] There are however important differences between Albertus Magnus and Avicenna, on which see BLACK (2000, pp. 59-75, esp. 63-66). On Albertus Magnus see also STENECK (1974, pp. 193-211).

in Aquinas phantasia is not by itself an apprehensive power, although its compositive operations may be misunderstood as a pre-intellective analogue of reason. And there is also the question of how memory differs from retentive imagination.

As Deborah Black (2000, p. 59) points out, "although the medieval doctrine of the internal senses is often treated as merely physiological and descriptive, Avicenna himself deduces the number of internal sense powers by appealing to three epistemological principles of faculty differentiation." The first of these principles introduces the concept of "intention" to mark the difference between proper and common sensibles available through sense perception, and qualities of those same sensibles that cannot be apprehended through the senses. The classical example is that of the sheep that flees when it sees a wolf. There is nothing in the proper and common sensibles of a wolf (its color, shape, etc.) that suggests danger, and the sheep cannot appeal to a mental category of "wolf" or "enemy" to reach the conclusion that what it is seeing is a wolf, and therefore an hostile animal. Yet, the sheep seems to be able to perceive the wolf 's hostility. The question then simply becomes: how can the sheep become aware of certain qualities of the sensible species that are unavailable through sense perception? Avicenna assumes the existence in nonrational animals of an estimative faculty that does just that. Explaining how humans apprehend intentions as *species non sensatae* became a difficult and controversial issue, and, more generally, the very notion of intention as well as the need to postulate the existence of an estimative faculty came to be viewed as increasingly problematic in the sixteenth century. The only aspect we need to remember here is that in Aquinas *cogitatio* is the faculty handling the perceptual properties known as intentions, which are then stored in the memory. Unlike phantasia, memory allows us to recall sensible forms together with their intentions, the affective properties accompanying sensation — properties such as fear or desire, pleasure or displeasure, friendship or enmity.

It is legitimate to presuppose that on a basic level the cogitative power in humans is the equivalent of the estimative power in nonrational animals. There are however two substantial differences due to the fact that humans have higher rational capacities. The first is the process by which intentions are apprehended. "A sheep, by heeding its natural instincts, manages to transcend its sensory data. Reason, in contrast, transcends instinct and does so only by returning to the sensory data themselves" (PASNAU, 2002, p. 269).[27] Cogitation operates with the assistance of, and in constant communication with, the higher-processing faculties of the intellective soul. The human ability to grasp intentions is not a purely instinctual trigger-response mechanism, but the result of a preliminary evaluation of the content of sensory data. The second difference has to do with the slippery slope leading from intentions to what Aquinas calls sensation *per accidens* in opposition to sensation *per se*. Sensation *per accidens* accounts for a well-known phenomenon, namely the ability that human beings have to apprehend individual objects as belonging to a common category or a class of objects. Within the limits of sensation *per se* I would never see a table as a table or a tree as a tree. I would only perceive surfaces, shapes, colors. But this almost never happens. What I actually see is a table or a tree because human sensation can apprehend proper and common sensibles as incidental sensibles, that is, as an individual object under the conceptual umbrella of "table" or "tree." In this Scholastic version of "seeing as," it is the cogitative power that is responsible for incidental sensation.[28] Therefore, cogitation has for its proper object both intentions and incidental sensibles, the cognition of which requires a certain degree of conceptualization provided by the intellective soul.

In the sixteenth century, the doctrine of the internal senses – its traits pertaining to the topic of this essay sketched minimally here – came under growing strain. Aside from the humanistic desire to return to the lesson of a more authentically Aristotelian philosophy of the mind and a skeptical attitude toward the instruments of medieval scholarship, the reasons and preoccupations undergirding the work of its critics have not yet been fully investigated.[29] What is clear is that a reunified, or at least simplified, conception of the post-sensory and pre-intellective activities of the mind had the effect of shifting the conversation toward a restoration of the central role that phantasia had played in *De anima*. The original and influential treatment of the topic in Marsilio Ficino's Platonism also contributed to resetting the philosophical agenda. To the Aristotelians phantasia began to look more and more like the

[27] See also TELLKAMP (2012, pp. 611-640).

[28] Robert Pasnau analyzes Aquinas's theory of sensation *per accidens* in relation to Ludwig Wittgenstein's discussion of the phenomenon of "seeing as" in PASNAU (2002, pp. 275-278).

[29] This is the subject of four important studies by Francesco Piro (1999-1; 1999-2; 1999-3; 2012). See also the overview of the status of the discussion on the organic soul in the sixteenth century in PARK (1988, pp. 464-484).

sole agent of the operations of the mind in general, the source of all thinking. Promotion typically comes with new responsibilities, and phantasia could be easily celebrated as a positive force in the reformulation of the intellective potential of man or singled out as a source of anxiety for the sensory baggage of its operations. Of course, even within the confines of a fundamentally orthodox Aristotelian framework, this was no longer Aristotle's phantasia. The long reflection that had led to a conceptual topography of the internal senses tainted the work of the sixteenth-century proponents of a simplified theory of perception. This was inevitable. On the other hand, it is also true that the doctrine of the internal senses did not disappear altogether. It continued to exert a significant influence among Renaissance intellectuals, in part as a byproduct of the Aristotelian basis of the university curriculum. This is observable in particular in the spheres of knowledge not directly connected with the work of professional philosophers. The general understanding of the workings of the mind among the educated elite of the time seems to be still grounded in a basic knowledge of the functions of the internal senses.[30] Therefore, before returning to musical fantasia, I would like to discuss two examples of this modulation of meaning in sixteenth-century reflections on the nature of love and artistic creation.

What happens when love becomes an obsession? An answer eschewing a conventionally Platonic perspective is provided by Pompeo della Barba, a physician and man of letters who started his career at the university of Pisa as a student of the Aristotelian philosopher Simone Porzio and reached the position of personal doctor to Pope Pius IV. In his *Espositione di un sonetto platonico*, his literary debut with the Florentine Academy where the text had been originally presented in a series of lectures, Della Barba reflects on the nature of the Platonic concept of the lovers' death.[31] The Aristotelian turn occurs in Chapter 11, on "the causes of the generation of love according to the Peripatetics," by which he means the four Aristotelian causes, carefully reviewed in the first part of the chapter. Having clarified the principles of causality, Della Barba is now ready to describe the psychological mechanism of the origins of love:

[30] It may be worth mentioning that a passage in chapter 8 of the *Sopplimenti musicali* shows that Zarlino was conversant with the principles of Aristotelian faculty psychology. Drawing on the Platonic doctrine of recollection, Zarlino discusses the difference between the innate knowledge of mathematical truths and the sense-based knowledge that proceeds from the phantasms elaborated in the phantasia: "Cotale reminiscentia non cade nell'animo da i sensi esteriori, come fanno i fantasmi o specie che vengono dalle cose sensibili, che si formano nella fantasia, secondo che tiene Aristotele." ZARLINO (1966 [1588], p. 27).

[31] Pompeo della Barba, *Espositione d'un sonetto platonico, fatto sopra il primo effetto d'amore che è il separare l'anima dal corpo de l'amante, dove si tratta de la immortalità de l'anima secondo Aristotile, e secondo Platone. Letta nel mese d'aprile nel 1548 nel consolato del magnifico Gianbatista Gello* (Florence: Torrentino, 1549). Torrentino reprinted the text in 1554 as *Spositione d'un sonetto platonico;* quotations are from this later edition. Some of Della Barba's less orthodox ideas on the immortality of the soul attracted the attention of the Inquisition. See MENCHI (1987, pp. 408-409); PRANDI (1990, p. 17), and, for a detailed discussion of Della Barba's interpretation of the relationship between soul and body, MAGGI (2006, pp. 104-138).

> Love originates because the object enters like an arrow through the window of the sense of sight. It first reaches the common sense, which judges it a pleasant and enjoyable thing, and receives it as something that gives great satisfaction. Then [the object] enters further in and finds another faculty called imagination, which, having received that image and species as pleasant, embraces it and stores it. After some rest, [the image] climbs farther up and finds another faculty called cogitation, according to Averroes, and this [faculty], knowing [the image's] greatness and beauty, seeks to recreate it and reform its beauty, and to renew it more beautifully than it actually is, making it into a most rare thing, coupled with all the virtues. From this it happens that the beloved object is deemed more beautiful than it is in reality, and that lovers deceive themselves because they do not see and love the true form, but the form they remade and renewed. Once the cogitative faculty has given [the image] its perfection, it sends it to the fourth faculty called memory, which stores it. As a result, reason can no longer block the path of the image of that beautiful object so as to prevent it from reaching the heart, where the concupiscible or sensitive appetite is located, which embraces [the image] so completely that it cannot desire anything else. And this is the love that arises in the heart in the way I just described according to the Peripatetics.[32]

Della Barba appears to understand phantasia as retentive imagination, a module for the storing of sensible images collected by the common sense. By his account, it also seems that common sense is responsible for the perception of the intentions of the sensible object (in the sense of its affective properties) for he believes that the first of the internal senses has the ability to "judge" the object as pleasant (which would be the task of the cogitative power in Aquinas's account). Therefore, imagination receives the sensible object together with the nonsensible quality of being pleasant. As we proceed along our mental journey, cogitation takes up some of the traits of composite imagination. It composes and recomposes forms or images. However, on a closer look, what I think Della Barba is suggesting is that cogitation "knows" the beauty of the sensible object in a way distinct from the judging activity of the common sense. In other words, it is through the cogitative power that we become aware of the beauty of what is now our object of desire, whereas common sense simply extracts the nonsensible intentions from sensible objects. And inflamed by this awareness, or illusory knowledge of the object's beauty, cogitation becomes fixated on the object itself. Incidentally, we may notice that, in typically early-modern fashion, the experience of love (or perhaps the wrong kind of love) is portrayed as a derailment of the abstractive process of intellection. Under optimal conditions, the sensible object, stored in the memory as an intelligible species, would be known in its proper, rational, and true form through the illumination of the agent intellect. Only then would we be able to apprehend the value of the object *sub ratione boni*. But because of the intensity of the pleasure accompanying sensation, the cogitative power may overestimate the actual value of the sensible image and begin to reproduce nonveridical mental representations of it. At this point, the internal senses, trapped in a sort of mental loop, trigger the response of the appetitive faculties, which effect motion through an obsessive pursuit of an unrealistically high good.

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[32] "E generasi questo amore perché l'obietto come saetta entra per questa finestra del senso del vedere e prima giunge nel senso commune, il quale lo giudica essere cosa piacevole e dilettevole, e come cosa de la quale molto si sodisfaccia la riceve e prende, entra più inanzi e trova un'altra virtù chiamata imaginativa, la quale ricevendo quella tale imagine, e quella spetie, come cosa piacevole, dolcemente l'abbraccia e la conserva. Quivi riposatasi alquanto saglie più oltra e trova un'altra virtù chiamata cogitativa secondo 'l parere d'Averrois, e questa conoscendo la sua grandezza , et la sua bellezza, s'affatica rifarla, e riformare le sue bellezze, e rinovarla più bella che in se non è, facendosela una cosa rarissima, accompagnata da tutte le virtù, e di qui nasce che la cosa amata si stima più bella che nel vero non è, e che gl'amanti s'ingannano, perchè non guardano e non amano la propria forma, ma quella rifatta e rinovata. E come la virtù cogigativa l'ha dato tutte le perfetioni la manda a la quarta virtù detta memoria, che la conserva, talchè poi la ragione no può più impedire la via, ne chiudere la strada a l'imagine di quel bel oggetto, che no scenda al cuore, dove ritrova la concupiscenza, o vogliamo dire l'appetito sensitivo, che sì fortemente l'abbraccia, che altro che lei non desidera, e questo è amore che nasce al cuore nel modo detto, secondo l'opinione de' peripatetici…". DELLA BARBA (1554, pp. 37-38).

We can sympathize with Della Barba if the functions assigned to each internal sense appear in constant fluctuation as we move from one author to another. However, there is a recognizable core theory at work, and one of its recurring elements is the combinatorial mechanism by virtue of which sensible species are turned into *phantasmata*. As we shall see momentarily, this ability to extract, divide, and recompose forms can be construed as reasoning. There is an obvious danger in attributing too much weight to what phantasia and cogitation do, and the distinction between this pre-intellective manipulation of individual forms and true intellection of universal essences can become suspiciously blurred. Indeed, the same elemental analytical capacity of the compositive imagination can drag the soul back down to the world of sensible particulars, with all the errors of judgment and false beliefs that can easily ensue thereby.

One of the most eloquent documents regarding the resonance of this anatomy of the mind in sixteenth-century cultural debate is the lecture on Michelangelo's famous sonnet "Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto" delivered by Benedetto Varchi in 1547 before the members of the Florentine Academy.[33] The opening quatrain offers a miniature theory of the creative process from a sculptor's point of view:

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[33] VARCHI (1858 [1550], pp. 613-627). The philosophical and cultural context of Varchi's lectures at the Florentine Academy is reconstructed in ANDREONI (2012). Although centered on the fourteenth century, Martin Kemp's essay cited above provides an excellent discussion of the notion of phantasia in the theory of art. The vast bibliography on Michelangelo's sonnet is listed (up to 1997) in AGOSTON (1997, p. 552). On Varchi's writings on the visual arts see also COLLARETA (2007, pp. 173-184).

> Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto,
> Ch'un marmo solo in sé non circoscriva
> Col suo soverchio, e solo a quello arriva
> La mano che ubbidisce all'intelletto.
>
> Not even the best of artists has any conception
> that a single marble block does not contain
> within its excess, and *that* is only attained
> by the hand that obeys the intellect.
> (trans. SASLOW, 1991, p. 302)

Varchi carries Michelangelo's account a considerable distance further, and winds up retracing every step of the inner journey from sense perception to intellective cognition and back to the world of the sensible objects recreated by the artist. We can only dwell on two moments of this journey, which coincide with Varchi's explanation of the meaning of "intellect" and "concept."

> *Intelletto*: This word means many things … and it is properly in us that most noble part of the soul through which we understand, and it is often called mind […] But here the word is taken otherwise, that is for that potency or virtue called imagination or phantasia, ... which, although it composes, divides, and finally discourses like the rational soul, nonetheless discourses not about universal things, as reason does, but about particulars.[34]

Varchi's language recalls Aquinas', except for the fact that the faculty that for Aquinas functions as a *ratio particularis* is the cogitative power. Indeed, in relation to this capacity to apprehend particulars, Varchi does not regard phantasia as distinct from cogitation.[35] Phantasia – which in this sense resembles Aristotle's broader conception of the pre-intellective life of the sensitive soul – is for Varchi a lower form of discursive reasoning by virtue of its ability to handle particulars the same way that intellect handles universals. Michelangelo was therefore justified – Varchi continues – in using the term *intelletto* to denote imagination. As a result of its elaborative activity, phantasia, which in its operations precedes intellection by contributing to the production of the *phantasmata* to be presented to the intellect, provides the artist with the idea of the object to be realized in matter. But what is this idea or concept really?

[34] "Questo nome intelletto significa più cose… ed è propriamente in noi quella parte più nobile dell'anima per la quale noi intendiamo, e si chiama molte volte mente… Ma in questo luogo si piglia altramente, cioè per quella Potenza o virtù che si chiama immaginazione, o vero fantasia, … E se bene compone, divide e finalmente discorre come l'anima razionale, discorre però non le cose universali, come quella, ma solamente le particolari." VARCHI (1868 [1550], vol. 2, p. 619).

[35] SGARBI (2015, p. 12) has clarified the terms of Varchi´s identification of phantasia with cogitation in a recent study based on a set of manuscript treatises by Varchi himself, now in the National Library in Florence, devoted to the soul and its functions. The issue is further complicated by Varchi´s additional identification of the imagination with the possible or passive intellect, the former being in potency whereas the latter is in actuality. Varchi not only identifies the passive intellect with the imagination, but also the imagination with the cogitative faculty, or discourse. The cogitative faculty differs from the imagination only in that the latter abstracts solely from the presence of sensibles, while the former also from the accidents of sensibles, such as time and place, forming arguments and thoughts. The first of the philosophical treatises in the National Library on the divisions of the soul (covering the

> *Concetto*: The meaning of this word, which is as beautiful as it is vast, is the same in Tuscan as "idea" in Greek or "notio" in Latin. And in order to better understand its meaning, one must know that nothing can be said or done unless it is first conceived or thought of in the mind, that is, imagined in the phantasia [...] And therefore, the first principle or, one might say, the efficient cause of everything that is said or done is the species, form, image, likeness, idea, example, exemplar, similitude, intention, concept, or model, or, as otherwise one could or should say, simulacrum, or phantasm, which is in the *virtù fantastica*, or, as we may want to say, in the imaginative power of he who wants to "make or say" (VARCHI, 1858 [1550], vol. 2, p. 616).

The most striking aspect of this passage is the reproduction of the linguistic struggle necessary to capture the meaning of the sensory representations that constitute the object of the internal senses. What are they exactly? Forms, images, resemblances, models, species? In the end, the technically correct answer is *phantasmata*. The difficulty is comprehensible, because a phantasm is not, to use an expression borrowed from scholastic philosophy, *quod intelligitur* but *quo intelligitur*; it is not what is understood, but that by which we understand. It is as if in Varchi's words we can still hear the echo of the conversations of the members of the Florentine Academy wrestling with the most esoteric aspects of Aristotelian psychology. But the most important point Varchi makes in the context of this essay is the elevation of the content of phantasia to the first principle of everything that human beings say and make. The perfect artist has the ability to translate the product of the post-sensory activity of the imagination into a material object, thus closing a circle from sense to phantasia back to sense. Citing the most learned commentator of Aristotle (by which he means Averroes), Varchi concludes: "Ars nihil aliud est, quam forma rei artificialis, existens in anima artificis, quae est principium factivum formae artificialis in materia." But he glosses "existens in anima artificis" by restricting the meaning of "anima" to a single faculty, namely the artist's phantasia (*cioè nella fantasia dell'artista*).[36]

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vegetative soul, the sensitive soul, and the intellective soul) is edited in ANDREONI (2012, pp. 338-342).

[36] It is worth noticing that by identifying imagination with cogitation as *ratio particularis* within which the idea of the work is formed, Varchi strengthens the role of phantasia in the creative process. However, he also seems to confine sculpture – and presumably the figurative arts in general – to the domain of the knowledge of sensible particulars, closing the door to the knowledge of universal essences. VARCHI (1858 [1550], v. 2, p. 617).

We can take our cue from Varchi to prod at the idea of musical fantasia one more time. If an artist turns the *forma rei artificialis* into a physical object, what is the outward manifestation of a musician's imagination? In an attempt to comprehend what mode of thought allowed an author to recognize phantasia in the music that he or she knew as fantasia, or the way somebody like Varchi might have listened to a lute or keyboard fantasia as the specifically musical product of the mind's imaginative power, I would suggest the following:

1. The principle of elaboration so often on display in the fantasia seems to resonate with a typically medieval and early-modern notion of compositive imagination. Phantasia assembles, divides, and recomposes sensible forms, often in an "imaginary" fashion, but not an unruly one. Imagination has a logic of its own, even in its nonveridical manifestations, a logic delimited by sensible particulars whose nature it cannot transcend. This way of thinking about imagination draws a subtle line linking *sonare di fantasia* to *contrappunto alla mente*. Viewed from this perspective, "playing by phantasia" becomes synonymous with "making counterpoint in the mind." In other words, if focused on sound, "fantasizing" constitutes a pre-intellective form of contrapuntal "thinking."[37] By the same token, a sixteenth-century listener could argue that contrapuntal elaboration is primarily a property of phantasia as a mental process, and only secondarily a stylistic feature of fantasia as a musical process. Therefore, music thus conceived might as well be called fantasia.

2. The question remains of how to distinguish *comporre di fantasia* from writing counterpoint *tout court*. Even Zarlino considered the two expressions somewhat redundant. One possible answer is that the difference lies in the temporal dimension of fantasia, a dimension implicit in the semantic association between fantasia and improvisation. We can try again to put ourselves in the mind of a sixteenth-century listener. When I hear Francesco da Milano improvising a fantasia, what I am actually hearing is the activity of his phantasia in real time.[38] Conversely, a contrapuntal composition is a structure built step by step through reasoning, under the aegis

[37] It should be stressed that in this context "pre-intellective" does not mean that the operations of the imagination are irrational, but rather that they are limited to particulars rather than universals. It is in this sense that Varchi, for example, understands the rational role of the imagination in the creative process.

[38] Viewed in these terms, one may wonder if "composing by fantasy" went against the grain of the mimetic conception of human arts prevalent in the Renaissance, whether in the general sense of imitation of nature, or in the more specific one of imitation of the affective content of words. As self-generating textless counterpoint, fantasia would represent a non-mimetic type of music conceived and developed in the musician's mind while reflecting upon the properties themselves of musical sounds.

of the intellect, which alone deals with universals and whose proper object is not any individual composition but *musica scientia*. The results are recognizably different as two different kinds of music, one reflecting standard formulas of *contrappunto alla mente*, diversions, and licenses evoking the law of instantaneous judgment, and the other sustaining the structural logic, for example, of a text-bound motet.

3. Fantasia, understood as a dynamic unfolding of the operations of phantasia, substantially differs from a static artifact such as a statue or a painting. The process Varchi sought to explicate applies to *poiesis* in general, the realization of thought into matter in the act of "making." A composition could be described as the product of the same process, involving phantasia as its efficient cause, to use Varchi's words. However, fantasia is something different in that it claims, in this interpretation, to make the movements of phantasia audible in real time, as we listen, downstream, to the flow of phantasia's treasury of musical ideas in motion. In this sense, fantasia is not a composition, or *res facta*, but a snapshot of a mental activity.

4. Despite this temporal and extemporaneous dimension, fantasias could be and indeed were written out in musical notation, printed, and re-performed. As I mentioned at the outset, the relationship between written text and improvisatory practice is an intricate one. One of the insights crystallized within the exam for the post of organist at San Marco, requesting that the improvised fantasia retain the properties of a regular four-voice counterpoint, is that sixteenth-century musical taste appreciated improvised music that mimicked the logic of contrapuntal writing, almost as if the examiners were indeed thinking of phantasia as a *ratio particularis*. The opposite is also true, as in the case of a composed work mimicking the experience of an improvised performance. This distinction in fact becomes practically untenable in a society where there is no meaningful distinction between composer and performer. However, none of this changes the fact that sixteenth-century listeners and musicians invested this type of music with a special meaning, one fixed in its analogical designation as fantasia/phantasia.

5. The temporal and extemporaneous dimension of fantasia brings to the fore the relationship between retentive imagi-

nation and compositive imagination in a manner that is not essential to the theory of artistic creation as applied to static objects. The idea that phantasia acts as a type of memory is implicit in the empirical experience of improvisation. The pedagogical literature on the topic provided a normative version of the same intuition by making it abundantly clear that memory is a prerequisite of the art of improvisation, the other side of the same coin.[39] We may now add that the doctrine of the internal senses provided the conceptual tools to distinguish memory as a storehouse of sensory building blocks that phantasia can use, even when there is no accompanying sensation, from memory as the property of "being in the past." The latter is memory in the proper sense of the term, the fourth of the internal senses in Aquinas's account. "Being in the past" is stored there as a nonsensible *intentio* extracted from the sensible species by the cogitative power.[40] Therefore, what is in the faculty of memory can be apprehended *sub ratione temporis*. On the other hand, phantasia retains sensible forms (in this case sounds, contrapuntal formulas, etc.) without any additional nonsensible connotation. Its function is to make them readily available independently of the nonsensible "memories" associated with their apprehension. The distinction between retentive imagination and memory may seem to be lost in the words of the humanist Giovan Battista Gelli (1498-1563), who refers to one of the internal senses as "the power that philosophers call fantasy or memory" (GELLI, 1887, p. 530).[41] But despite these fluctuations in the cultural declensions of the vocabulary of faculty psychology (to be fair, Gelli shortly thereafter demonstrates an understanding of the distinction), it was this tradition of thought that fostered such a natural and rich set of musical correspondences between phantasia, memory, and improvisation.

I think it is in these terms that we can understand the ambiguous nature of the musical fantasia in the sixteenth century — ambiguous in its capacity to conjugate rule and license, contrapuntal elaboration and structural freedom, invention and discipline, *ratio* and improvisation. From our vantage point in history, fantasia also offers a rare opportunity to observe a cultural and musical practice aimed at translating the workings of the mind into a sensible object, which the

[39] The link between fantasia and memory is discussed in BUTLER (1974) and further developed in LORENZETTI (2009, pp. 132-142).

[40] See PASNAU (2002, pp. 280-281).

[41] See also LORENZETTI (2009, p. 134).

perceiving subject can then (re)experience as a representation of his own inner life, in the way he himself imagines it.

By way of conclusion, I would like to mention one last terminological variation on fantasia. Between 1552 and 1584, the Flemish publishing house Phalèse issued four collections of lute music on whose title pages the fantasias are advertised, in Greek letters, as *automata* ("ἀυτόματα, quae fantasiae dicuntur").[42] It would seem that human agency had been entirely removed; fantasia stands alone as a self-operating machine. But there are other ways to interpret this unusual synonymic pairing. However peculiar it may appear at first, Phalèse's choice of words does evoke a by-now familiar notion of phantasia. As a matter of fact, it evokes a concatenation of meanings not dissimilar from those of the phantasia/fantasia continuum that I have explored in this essay. We must take one last trip along this continuum without one end having to invalidate the other.

It is possible that the meaning of "automaton" that Phalèse had in mind was closer to Aristotle's use of the term in the second book of *Physics*, usually translated into English as "spontaneity." In this case, fantasia would primarily connote a self-generating form, a contrapuntal procedure that triggers its own occurrence. Zarlino's description of the process of "composing by fantasy" comes to mind again. The contrapuntal device articulated within the musician's mind contains the principle of its own development. Taken together, Phalèse and Zarlino invite us to think of fantasia as the spontaneous combustion of a contrapuntal compound. This interpretation places emphasis on the object and reads "automaton" as an attribute of the music. We can also place emphasis on phantasia and read "automaton" as an attribute of the thinking subject. Fantasia then can be understood not so much a self-articulating mechanism but, as I mentioned above, the outward manifestation of a mental activity — something that occurs as a cognitive antecedent of thought rather than thought itself. If that is the case, in what sense does phantasia exhibit the properties of an automaton?

Gregory Butler finds musical analogies in the following definition of automaton: "a piece of mechanism with concealed motive power endued with spontaneous motion, the result of an unthinking routine or action performed unconsciously or subconsciously" (BUTLER, 1974, p. 610). We can further interrogate the second part of this definition by relocating the "unthinking routine" within the cognitive protocol of the internal senses. Among the many issues surrounding phantasia's mediating role between sense and intellection is also the extent to which its operations may be random and subconscious. Phantasia may indeed be said to operate on a subconscious level, in the simple Aristotelian sense that phantasia is a motion of the soul triggered by sensation. Moreover, phantasia remains active as a processing unit of sensible species and newly formed images even if there is no occurring sensation. In short, phantasia cannot be turned off, not even when we sleep; this is why we dream. There is also a sense in which phantasia can be said to operate in random fashion. As a precursor to thought, its task is to explore all of the possible permutations of sensible data collected by the common sense, even though phantasia has no knowledge of the meaning that its generated images may acquire once they are presented to the intellect. It does not require reason's consent to operate. This ignorance, so to speak, is at the same time its strength and its weakness. It is its strength because the imagination is free to entertain possibilities and to imagine the world as different from how it is. But it is also its weakness because its image-producing engine generates a certain amount of cognitive noise. The combinatorial mechanism under which phantasia operates may appear elusive, bizarre, beyond the grasp of self-conscious knowledge. Its activity is a necessary step in the abstractive process leading to intellection, but the mental images it produces do not have meaning in themselves, even though, under certain circumstances, they may create the illusion that they do. The world that the imagination can conjure up, if unchecked by the intellect and contemplated as an end in itself, can lead to self-deception. The upshot is that such a power can be consciously harnessed and constructively directed towards artistic creation, even if this may mean stretching the boundaries of rational thought.

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[42] See VANHULST (1990, n. 13, 98, 123, and 156). In the *Theatrum musicum* (1571), "praeludium" is added as another synonym of fantasia ("ἀυτόματα, quae fantasiae vel praeludia nuncupantur").

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