

PROBLEMATIK DES RAHMENTHEMAS

Zu Beginn der Schlußdiskussion skizzierten die Herren Hughes und Treitler die Problemlage "Peripherie und Zentrum", im besonderen die Frage nach der Definierbarkeit von "Zentren"; beide faßten ihre Statements nach dem Kongreß zusammen:

David G. Hughes:

A center may be defined for these purposes as a locality in which one or (more likely) several composers have built up an appreciable repertoire of compositions sharing significant stylistic and technical features. Such a repertoire establishes a recognizable common practice, so that (1) other composers of the same locality (presumably younger men) can add to the repertoire by imitating and, to a greater or lesser extent reshaping the original style; and (2) composers from other places may be attracted to the center.

In the latter case, if they remain in or at the center, they become part of it. Their place of origin may be of consequence in determining the specific nature of their own contribution to the reshaping of style, but since they have accepted the basic stylistic conventions of the center, and have stayed on in the same place (thus also accepting the local patterns of demand and acceptance for new music), they are not logically distinct from it.

If, however, any "immigrant" composer — or indeed any composer whatsoever trained in the central style — settles anywhere outside the center, there are two possible results. In one case, the composer finds acceptance at his new location, creates a considerable repertoire, and attracts disciples or colleagues. This of course constitutes establishment of a new center, as defined above. If the style of the new center does not differ appreciably from that of the original, we would be inclined to see the new center as merely a geographical extension of the old one. If, however, as is more likely, local needs and preferences, together with the musical personalities of the composers involved, combine to produce a style perceptibly different from that of the parent center, while still sharing basic stylistic and technical properties, we would not hesitate to regard the new center as in fact "new" and separate.

In the second case, the composer having settled outside the center, produces no more than a few works more or less accurately modelled upon the central style (the accuracy of imitation has, of course, nothing to do with artistic value). Even if other sporadic works of the same sort were thereafter to be produced by others, the result would still be definable as peripheral, for the basic criterion of a center — the achievement of a substantial, style-defining repertoire — would not be met.

Evidently, every center may at any time generate one or more centers or peripheries. A peripheral style, however, may only occasionally beget a new center or even a new peripheral style. In the latter case, the borrowing process that generated the first peripheral style may recur (usually with further stylistic dilution) to create a second — as a story may be passed on by word of mouth, with increasing distortions. In the former case (that of a center being created by the influence of a periphery), one must assume the flourishing of a random seed falling upon randomly prepared ground. Evidence for such an occurrence is, for medieval music at least, lacking.

Note that the model proposed is independent of the distinctions orally transmitted/written or composed/improvised, or any intermediate distinctions of the same sort (e.g. that pieces could be or were re-created in part at each performance). Any center would, by definition, have developed a complex of practices capable of dealing with any non-notated elements of the music it produced, and any periphery would attempt, at least, to imitate the practices of the center from which it derived. Naturally, an attempt at performing music from one

center in another and independent musical locality would probably result in distortion, but that scarcely affects the definitions proposed here.

Leo Treitler:

1. In my paper I asked when, where, and under what circumstances the processes of musical production and transmission became distinct. After our discussions I think we can tentatively answer with respect to polyphony and sacred, non-liturgical monody, in the 12th century, in Paris and in the South of France. I asked what are the concomitants of that fact with respect to style, to the role of notation, and to the situation of music theory and its relation to practice. My impression is that the discussion has provided some beginning answers with respect to style, suggesting that degrees and kinds of concentration, coherence, and design in music making are involved. On these grounds at least, it has been agreed that we can speak of centers. With respect to the other questions, I think that areas and directions have been revealed in which a great deal can be learned. To sketch a central question-complex that has been suggested to me especially by Haas and Reckow, how can we understand 13th century mensural theory against the background of epistemology of which Haas spoke, and in its struggle to establish duration as a subject for rational treatment? How can we understand the tension between the conceptual framework of the "ars metrica", from which mensural theory borrows, and its confrontation with Parisian polyphonic practice? And how can we understand the history of modal rhythm and its notation against this background?

This question-complex, the need for really thorough and deep studies of transmissions, and the need to learn how to distinguish style, model, matrix, etc.; these are the tasks that this discussion has illuminated for me. But I do not think that the concepts "Periphery" and "Center" really help very much to organize them.

2. Haas has referred to my charge that in speaking of the central and peripheral position of music in systems of knowledge, he has performed a verbal trick in order to introduce his subject into these discussions. Now I owe him an apology, for after these three days I have the impression that we have all been forced to play the same trick. The reason is that — in the sense of the distinction between nominalism and realism — we have proceeded as realists, beginning with the concepts of "Periphery" and "Center" as a priori concepts, and asking which phenomena can be accommodated to each. I think at the moment that does more harm than good. For example, it led yesterday to a strange competition about whether Paris is more of a center in respect to musical developments than Aquitania, although there seemed not to be any disagreements about the characterization of the music. Even further, we have been seduced by this exercise into entertaining the notion of a periphery within a center in Paris!

3. There is no denying that Paris and Aquitania can be usefully designated as centers. When we add the concept of "Periphery" the two concepts work together as a system, a paradigm, a model that works in tandem with the orthogenic time model (the "Periphery" concept is required to accommodate those phenomena that do not fit according to the orthogenic time model).

4. I agree with Stenzl's insistence that we cannot work without models, we cannot simply collect facts without any notions about how they fit together. But this brings out the dilemma of the historian: we cannot assimilate knowledge without models, but we are in danger of having our knowledge overdetermined by models. I believe we are in that position with respect to "Periphery" and "Center", concepts that, taken together, have acted as a real obstruction to our understanding of music and musical developments in the 12th and 13th centuries. In my view we would do better to pursue the problems that have been identified here without any reference to that model.