

Author: Abbatini, Antonio Maria

Title: That the Modes or Tones are six. Recited on 11 September i667

Source: Bologna, Museo internazionale e Biblioteca della musica, MS C.48, f.<1r>-<5v>

[<f.1r>-] [Number 14 add. m. sec.] That the Modes or Tones are six
Recited on 11 September i667.

[<f.2r>-] Since I have discussed the subject of the Modes or Tones several times as to their number, which ones are called Authentic, which ones are called plagal, what is the Nature of Each of them and where they derived third form, and, since I have adduced the opinions of Plutarch, Saint Gregory the Great, Aristotles, Pappus, Bacchius, Censorinus, Cassiodorus, Martianus Cappella, Glareanus, Gioseffo Zarlino, the Reverend Father Don Giovanni Bona, Father Athanasio Kircherio, Boethius, Scipion Cerreto, Vannei, Bartolomeo Parea, Ludovico Zacconi, Guidone aretino, Fogliani, Guglielmo de Podio and of an infinite number of other writers who dealt with the subject of the Tones, it will be made easy for you to listen today to the fact that the Tones [<f.2v>-] can be no more and no less than six, regardless of the different opinions of the writers quoted above. Since I intend to discuss the matter in brief, do let us come to its demonstration. Boethius says at chapter fourteen of the first book of his Music that the variety of the tones derives from the Different species of the Octave, “which they call Trophoi or Toni.” Therefore, the Tones shall be as many as the different species of the octave, if we proceed, however, according to the Diatonic order, and not in any other form. Franchino, in the seventh chapter of the first book ‘On the Diapason Consonance’, says that the species of the octave are seven: “Therefore the Diapason consonance contains seven forms or species,” stating that the first species of the octave is found between Low A la mi re and High a la mi re [[its notes are re mi fa re mi fa sol la]], the second one between low B mi and high B mi [[its notes are mi fa re mi fa sol re mi]], the third one between Low C sol fa ut and High c sol fa ut [[its notes are Ut re mi fa sol re mi fa]], the fourth one between Low D sol re and High D la sol re [[its notes are Re mi fa sol re mi fa sol]], the Fifth one is found on Low E la mi and High e la mi [[its notes are mi da sol la mi fa sol la]], the sixth species is found between Low F fa ut [<f.3r>-] and High fa ut [[its notes are fa sol re mi fa re mi fa]], the seventh and last species is found between Low G sol re ut and High G sol re ut [[its notes are Ut re mi fa ut re mi fa sol]]. After the seventh species one goes back to repeat the first species of the Diapason, which si found between low A la mi re and High A la mi re, as it was said. All the writers agree on this conclusion and on the fact that the Variety of the above mentioned species derives from the different position of the Two semitones which are placed now in a position now in another within the Fifth. In fact, in order to achieve the variety of the above mentioned species, it is necessary that every species of the octave should be divided Diatonically or Arithmetically, which means divided by Fourth or by Fifth, as, without that division, the octave would be of a single species, since every octave is composed of five tones and two larger Semitones. Padre Athanasio at Chapter seventeen of the third book of his Musurgia, entitled ‘on the modern modes’, says: “However, modern musicians seeing the variety of Fourths, Fifths and Octaves, they noted that the octave as well, as we have seen above, was constituted by a fourth and a fifth, and also that different melodies derived from the different position of the semitone, [<f.3v>-] since they found seven species, namely different positions of the semitone, therefore, the established seven Tones.

But, since they marked this order not only according to the Arithmetic order, but also according to the Harmonic one, they established seven other tones, so that the Tones were fourteen in all. However, since the tritone or the semidiapente occurred in two species, these were abandoned and they preserved only Twelve modes according to the rule.” Therefore, one can conclude that the species of the Octave are seven, since they are composed of fourths and of Fourths and Fifths which divide them Harmonically and Arithmetically. Therefore, the number of Twelve Tones is reached with said Division, as you have heard. As I said in the my last speech, the tones were divided into Authentic and Plagal by Saint Gregory the Great in order to facilitate singing. The Authentic ones Divided the octave harmonically, having the Fifth at the bottom and the fourth above the fifth, while the Plagal ones Divided the Octave Arithmetically, namely, they placed the same fourth of the Authentic, which was found above the Fifth, under the same Fifth. The Most Reverend Padre Bona, chapter seventeen, section three ‘On the Ecclesiastic Chant’, says: “The Authentic modes Rise up to the Diapason above the final note, while the plagal modes rise above the final note up to the Diapente, [-<f.4r>-] or Fifth and descend down to the Diatessaron or Fourth.” Saint Gregory divided the Tone in this way into first Authentic and first plagal, the second into second Authentic and second plagal, and so on as to the others, pairing them up in twos. Nevertheless those Two were only one, because they received their composition from the same species of the Fifth and of the fourth, and they terminated together on the same final Note. “Saint Gregory, the greatest of the musicains, decided to divide each Tone into Two, so that those Two Defective Extremes may be avoided, so that the one of these two placed in the High register may be called Authenticus, while the other one placed in the low register may be called Plagal or collateral, as if it was stuck to the side of the other one, or collateral, as the one which consists of the same building blocks, namely, of the same species of the Diapente and of the Diatessaron. The protus or first tone was divided into two Tones, namely the First Authentic and the First Plagal Tone. The Second Authentic and the Second Plagal derives from the second, and we omit the others which must be understood in the same way.” This is what Vannei relates in the first book, chapter forty-seven of his Musica Aurea, ‘On the Tones and what they are’.

Hence, one can deduce from this that, since the Tones were only Four at the time of the Great Gregory, namely, Protus Deuterus Tritus, et Thetrardus, or first, second, third and fourth, since each of the said Four moved through the Lowest, Low, [-<f.4v>-] High and Very High register, since such a large number of Notes produced such a great Difficulty, in order make learning the Roman Plainchant easier, split each one into two, and, consequently, he created eight Tones from four that they were, pairing them up and calling the first Tone first Authentic and first plagal, the second second authentic and second plagal, the third third Authentic and third Plagal, and the fourth fourth Authentic and fourth plagal. Hence, the chant that, For Instance, used to belong to the first one, now is Divided into Two parts, since one of them belongs to the first Tone Authentic, and the Other one to the first plagal Tone. The first Tone was concerned with the melodies contained within the Note of its final which is D la sol re and the High D sol re, dividing the octave D sol re Harmonically. The span of the first plagal was from the Note of its final D sol re up to the Fifth above, namely, A la mi re, or down to the fourth below its final from D sol re to Low A la mi re, dividing the octave Arithmetically. However, if the Melody was all of the first Tone, since each of them had the same final note and the same composition, which they both derived from the first species of the Fifth and from the first species of the Fourth, and the same goes for the third, the fourth,

the fifth, the sixth, the seventh, the eighth, the Ninth, the tenth, the Eleventh, and the Twelfth, therefore I concede clearly that the Authentic and its Plagal create a single Tone, rather than Two, and, consequently, the Tones will not be Twelve, but only six, as I have Demonstrated on other occasions. Nor anyone should be surprised of this, because, since the species of the Octave are seven, and the Octave of B mi cannot be Divided Harmonically and, consequently, a Tone cannot be created from these, the species of the Octave are six., and the Tones are created from the Different species of the Octave, as Boethius says, and many other music writers conclude. Therefore, the tones shall be no more numerous or fewer than six. Nevertheless, because the opinion that the Tones are twelve has such well founded roots in the minds of men that it appears have something of the impossible to uproot them, we say that the Tones are Twelve, and because the plagal and its Authentic never move within the same octave, because one and the Other are placed in Different Notes, albeit they consist of the same species of Fifths and Fourths, and for this reason a certain type of Difference takes place between them, I repeat that the Tones are Twelve. The six Authentic ones differ from each other Essentially, while they differ from their Plagal ones [-<f.5v>-] Accidentally. Because all my Speeches have been ordered so that they might arrive to Art and Composition on the basis of true foundations, since nothing that was necessary to that end has been left aside, with God's help, I shall deal in the next speech with the Elements which constitute Counterpoint, which is the principle and foundation of any Musical Composition.