Chapter 12

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

VENICE had remained immobile—or so it seemed—but Europe had changed. The last ten years of the seventeenth century in England and France had seen the beginnings of an intellectual revolution that was to destroy the foundations on which Baroque civilisation had rested.[1] The absolute supremacy of any one authority, whether secular or religious, was seriously questioned. Reason slowly took its place as the ultimate criterion of judgement. Little by little and however grudgingly, tolerance and diversity came to be accepted. Trade began to replace landholding as an index of wealth. These great changes at first gradually and then with ever-increasing speed profoundly affected the nature of patronage and the arts. In both England and France royalty and the Church no longer monopolised the leading painters. And the new patrons, whether aristocratic or middle class, rejected the all-embracing cosmology of the Baroque. As the eighteenth century progressed, various styles were encouraged and dropped: a light-hearted rococo, which took over much of the formal language of the Baroque without its moral seriousness; a renewed interest in realism, often tinged with satire or didactic elements; an austere return to neo-classicism. The genesis of all these styles is confused; none of them can be identified with any one social class; all of them frequently overlapped. And combined with all these changes went a renewed investigation into the part that painting should be expected to play in the life of a nation—an investigation more searching than any that had taken place since that inaugurated by the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century humanists.

In Italy, too, new ideas were in the air. The creation in Rome of the Society of Arcadia in 1690 marked a deliberate and symbolic break with seventeenth-century culture—though significantly only in the field of literature. And links with the rest of Europe were greatly strengthened by the vast numbers of foreigners who crossed the Alps either as soldiers or as tourists at the beginning of the new century. Yet despite this, and despite the blossoming of learned journals in touch with Paris, Italy at first saw nothing comparable to the great changes that had shaken France and England, and more and more those Italians—writers, artists and intellectuals—who wished to experience the new developments were compelled to travel to London or Paris. On their return a great stocktaking of the state of Italian culture filled the journals with controversial articles. All this prepared the ground for the diffusion of 'enlightened' ideas which at first travelled only slowly and hesitantly. As late as 1737 the Pope tried to prevent the erection of a mausoleum to Galileo in the Florentine church of S. Croce and his *Dialogo* could not be published until 1744.[2] Although much had been achieved before

[1] Hazard, 1935.
[2] Maugain.

then, the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 is usually taken as the starting-point for a new spirit in Italy. When in 1766 Voltaire turned his attention southwards across the Alps and commented on the great intellectual revival that had taken place he suggested that it had been going on for about twenty years.[1] The changes had been very striking indeed. All over Italy writers had become aware of the distance that separated them from the rest of Europe and had begun to narrow it. In 1749 Muratori published his *Della pubblica felicità, oggetto de'buoni principi* whose title alone proclaimed the advanced ideas inherent in the thesis; in 1750 appeared the Abate Galiani's treatise *Della Moneta*; in 1754 Antonio Genovesi took up his chair in Naples as the first professor of political economy in Europe; in 1764 Beccaria published his epoch-making *Dei delitti e delle pene* and was rapturously welcomed in Paris. For the first time since the silencing of Galileo Italy was in the vanguard of contemporary thought.

In these changes Venice had played little direct part. Though the ideas might filter through the censorship without too much difficulty and be discussed perhaps in Consul Smith's library or by Caterina Dolfin Tron and her intellectual friends, Venetian interest in maintaining the *status quo* was too powerful for the Republic to become the originator of any of the doctrines of the 'Enlightenment'—it was indeed a Venetian who proved to be the most vigorous opponent of Beccaria—nearly all of which presupposed the abolition of rule by aristocracy. Pietro Giannone, Carlo Antonio Pilati, Giuseppe Baretti and other unorthodox thinkers were rapidly expelled from her territory.[2] And yet, especially in those circles which were most in touch with foreign influences, we can trace the gradual spread of ideas which, among other things, were to have important effects on art.

One of the problems that was most discussed in Italian literary and philosophical circles in the early years of the eighteenth century was that of the relative proportions that fantasy and reason should assume in the creative act. The discussion had been stimulated by the formation of the Society of Arcadia with its deliberate call to reason and by contact with French critics who had attacked the style not only of Marino and his followers but of Tasso himself.[3] Among those who made interesting contributions to the debate that followed was a Venetian who sometimes extended the discussion into the field of the visual arts and thus—mainly through his influence on other writers—played some part in their development.

Antonio Conti, of noble origins, was among the pioneers of that growing number of Italian intellectuals who realised that a visit to England and France was essential to avoid the stifling provincialism of Venice.[4] In 1713, at the age of 36, he went to Paris, where he was in touch with Malebranche, Fontenelle and other leading figures. Two years later he crossed the Channel and met Sir Isaac Newton, who was to become the most influential man in his life. At first the relationship was highly satisfactory to both

[1] In a letter of 1766 quoted by Natali, p. 5.
[2] For Giannone's residence and expulsion from Venice see Pierantoni; for Pilati see Brol.
[3] See J. G. Robertson and Moncallero, I.
[4] For Conti see Robertson, Chapter IV, and Vol. II of his *Prose e Poesie*, 1756.

of them: Newton proposed Conti's election to the Royal Society—he was already an amateur scientist—and Conti wrote 200 verses on Newton's philosophy. Later there was a furious break when on a second visit to Paris Conti revealed to the French some confidential notes that Newton had shown him on the dating of classical history.[1] Although he was denounced in a public letter, Conti never abandoned his allegiance to Newton and the many other English writers he had met in London. He showed his appreciation of English literature by translating Milton, Dryden and other poets, and by being the first Italian to write on 'Sasper', whose *Julius Caesar* he imitated in a tragedy of his own. His second visit to Paris lasted eight years between 1718 and 1726, and among the many friendships he made was one with the Comte de Caylus.

In 1726 Conti returned to Venice, where he spent most of his time until his death in 1749. He had acquired a very extensive knowledge, unique in the Venice of his day, of modern English and French culture and he proceeded to display it in a series of essays, philosophical treatises, scientific pamphlets and so on, which undoubtedly influenced his friend Francesco Algarotti. From time to time he wrote about the arts, but as his papers were only edited in 1756 after his death and in a very abbreviated form, it is difficult to know just how close was his connection with contemporary painters—a treatise he wrote on painting has been lost. He certainly had some vague ideas about the effects that Newton's optical discoveries ought to have on the use of colour, but these made no impact.[2] He went out of his way to praise Canaletto for his sagacity in using the *camera ottica* to paint views of the Grand Canal.[3] And he made an interesting defence of fantasy in painting which chimed in well with contemporary practice and thus suggests that he was one of the few intellectuals of the day who did not disapprove of the licences taken by Venetian artists—though as it is not known just when he wrote his brief paragraph on painting it is impossible to estimate its polemical intentions. 'The painter's fantasy', he wrote,[4] 'should be expressed in breadth of knowledge, in subtlety and correctness of draughtsmanship, in liveliness and vigour of execution. Moreover,

[1] Apart from the above see Manuel, pp. 86 and 94.

[2] Conti, II, p. cxlviii: 'Leonardo da Vinci cita un suo manuscritto, dove egli parla dell'armonia de' colori in ordine alla pittura. Il manuscritto è nella Biblioteca di Milano, e si renderebbe un gran servigio alle bell'arti di stamparlo, in un tempo che la teoria Newtoniana de' colori ha data occasione a molti il determinare per la regola meccanica de' centri di gravità la loro composizione. Da questa ricavò il suo secreto quel Pittor Tedesco che stampa le pitture, della qual arte ne diede varj saggj a Londra, ed uno ne conserva quì in Venezia il Signor Antonio Zanetti. Io vidi questo Pittore all'Haja, ed egli mi assicurò, che seguendo i principj del Newtono su l'immutabilità e varia rifrangibilità e reflessibilità de' raggi della luce, egli avea stabiliti i gradi di vivacità e d'indebolimento da darsi a' colori per armonizarli. Se ciò è vero, si vede come in ombra, non esser impossibile il determinare nel corpo umano l'armonia de' colori, qual forse l'avea fissata Apelle, che dipingea le cose che non si possono dipingere, come i tuoni, i baleni, i folgori. . . .'

[3] *ibid.*, p. 250: 'S'adopri pure la camera ottica per far la perspettiva d'un canale di Venezia con le sue fabbriche: il Canaletto per la sua sagacità potrà trasferire nella sua pittura più punti di un altro; ma non è possibile che mai tutti li trasferisca. Contuttociò i trasferiti da lui faranno un'impressione così viva nell' occhio, che vedendo il suo quadro a prima vista io sarò persuaso di vedere l'oggetto stesso. . . .'

[4] *ibid.*, p. 278: 'La fantasia pittoresca deve essere secondo lui spaziosa nelle cognizioni, delicata e retta nel dissegno, vivace e ardente nell'esecuzione, appassionata e espressiva del senso e dell'affetto, e graziosa per discostarsi un poco dalla natura ed accomodarsi meglio al giudizio e al piacere del senso. . . .'

it should excite the senses and the passions, and grace requires it to move away somewhat from nature so as to be the better adapted to the judgement and pleasure of the senses.' This seems to be the very justification of a *modello* by Tiepolo or Pittoni.

Such detached references are too brief for us to claim that Conti had any coherent aesthetic ideas or that they played much part in encouraging any particular painters. But we know that he showed an interest in the arts, for it was to him that the elder Zanetti wrote to announce his rediscovery of the process for making colour woodcuts[1]; and we know too that Francesco Algarotti, who was in constant correspondence with him, took over many ideas from this Italian pioneer in the understanding of Newton. As we will see, even in his most neo-classical phase Algarotti never lost his belief in the vital importance of creative fantasy, and it is certain that this belief was largely inherited from Conti. Indeed, a thin trickle of support for the artist's right to make use of his unfettered imagination runs right through Italian eighteenth-century thought until with Saverio Bettinelli's *Dell'entusiasmo per le Belle Arti* (Milan, 1769) it merges into outright acceptance of the 'genius' with all his vagaries.

But there was in Venice during the first half of the eighteenth century a thinker whose artistic ideas were to prove far more immediately stimulating than those of Conti, even if no more effective in practice. Among the men who frequented Consul Smith's palace on the Grand Canal was Padre Carlo Lodoli, a brother of the Minori Osservanti.[2] Lodoli had studied mathematics and French, travelled in Rome and other parts of Italy and returned at the age of 30 to his native Venice in 1720. Here he opened a private school for the sons of some of the leading families as well as those of his friends. This school was run on the most advanced, modern lines. Lodoli's favourite authors were Galileo and Bacon; he took his pupils to visit libraries and distinguished scholars. He brought them up on Cicero and Puffendorf on the duties of man. And he had a brush with the Inquisitori di Stato because he insisted on using State documents as suitable subject-matter for grammatical and literary investigation. He was a keen admirer of Vico and he was among those who persuaded the Neapolitan philosopher to write his *Autobiography*, which was first published in Venice.[3] After some years he was appointed chief censor of the Republic with duties which he carried out conscientiously but in a liberal spirit. He soon became associated with a number of the more enlightened figures in the city—Andrea Memmo, especially, but also Angelo Querini and Giambattista Pasquali, the publisher, who in later years could never mention his name without tears in his eyes. Nearly all these were also friends of Consul Smith and for a time he had a number of admirers among the Venetian aristocracy. Outside Venice he was in touch with Montesquieu and Scipione Maffei.

In appearance Lodoli was uncouth and his manner was gruff. He indulged in a degree of outspokenness which would hardly have been tolerated in anyone else; but

[1] Lorenzetti, 1917, p. 49, note 1.

[2] Our only source for Lodoli's life is Andrea Memmo's anonymous *Elementi dell'architettura lodoliana*, first published in Rome in 1786, but there are many scattered references to him in Venetian learned journalism of the first half of the eighteenth century. See also Petrocchi, 1947.

[3] In [P. Angelo Calogerà]: Raccolta, I, 1728. See also Fisch and Bergin, pp. 183-4.

this is almost certainly because he was not taken wholly seriously even by those who most admired him. He enjoyed some of the privileges of the licensed jester. Besides, he knew how to turn back when the situation was becoming awkward. We learn that he 'never objected to the luxury of great noblemen, for without their generosity, ambition or whim countless good craftsmen would die of starvation'—the sort of perverse logic that has often been used by radicals tolerated in a conservative society.

Though Lodoli must sometimes have found it difficult to express openly his moral and political ideas, there was no need for any reticence when he came to deal with the arts—though in his view they were all inextricably linked. As interpreted for us by most of his contemporaries (for his own writings were lost), Lodoli insisted on a wholly functional architecture in which reason and comfort should be the final arbiters of style. In this way he was rejecting not merely the late Baroque of his own youth, but also the classicism that was beginning to replace it. Nothing shocked his contemporaries more than his dispassionate investigation of the architecture of antiquity. He certainly did not condemn it out of hand, but he called its infallible authority into question. Even the Pantheon, he said, was not perfect; and in any case everyone had interpreted classical art in a different manner.

As far as current architecture went, Lodoli's influence was negligible, perhaps because, as one writer complained, 'when he is on his own he is so overwhelming that he gives me indigestion for days afterwards', and even among critics who shared his views of the Baroque he was considered to be an 'impudent impostor'.[1] He himself only practised on one occasion, when he introduced some functional modifications into the monastery of his own Order, the Minori Osservanti, outside S. Francesco della Vigna.[2] He was once invited by the governor of the Ospedale della Pietà to look at Massari's *modello* for the proposed church. When Lodoli began to criticise this on logical grounds, the architect answered: 'If I were to submit some totally new conception, however reasonable, I could be quite sure that the plans of some other architect, imitating for example a façade of Palladio or Vignola, would be chosen instead of mine. And then who would support my family?'

Yet he made an impact on some of the more open-minded thinkers of the day. The essayist Gasparo Gozzi must certainly have had Lodoli in mind when he complained that 'we put so much into ornamentation that we build more for the eyes of passers-by than for the people who actually live in houses: and if someone were to come from a country where houses are used just as shelter from the cold and the rain and were to see our houses and not their inhabitants, he would think that they must all be giants'.[3] Francesco Algarotti was, as usual, somewhat scared of public opinion, and he produced a rather distorted version of Lodoli's opinions which failed to please their author, though he had originally welcomed Algarotti's interest and the intention had been

[1] Letter from the Abate Ortes to Francesco Algarotti of 26 September 1749 in Algarotti, XIV, p. 315, and Temanza, p. 87.

[2] G. A. Moschini, 1815, I, p. 48.

[3] Gozzi, I, p. 26—*Dialogo tra un librajo e un Forestiere.*

friendly.[1] On the whole, however, Lodoli's keenest admirers, Andrea Memmo, Angelo Querini and Filippo Farsetti, all became strong supporters of that very classicism which Lodoli had questioned.

Lodoli's views on painting were also exceptional. Although the two men were satirised together in a bitter and 'reactionary' sonnet which accused them of wanting to 'weigh the moon',[2] he wholly rejected Conti's sympathy with fantasy and adopted a far more austere standpoint. Like Smith's other friend, the Abate Facciolati in Padua, with whom he too was in close touch, he arranged his gallery on didactic lines so as to show the progress of the arts from the Greeks (i.e. the Byzantines) until the moderns.[3] He acquired so many pictures from Jews and second-hand dealers that they not only covered his walls but were stacked on the floor as well. Unfortunately, we know almost nothing precise about his relations with contemporary painters. We are told that they were extensive; that he used to go and watch the leading artists at work; that he would obtain commissions for them and be given pictures by them in return; that he would give advice to people who were decorating their town and country houses. But we have no idea who these painters and clients were. From what we know of his love of reason and authenticity it is very hard to believe that Lodoli can have admired Tiepolo, Piazzetta and the other Venetian 'history painters'. It seems more likely that he may have been in close touch with artists like Canaletto and Visentini, with whose work he must have been very familiar through Consul Smith. Certainly he knew Bartolommeo Nazari and Alessandro Longhi, both of whom painted portraits of him.[4] The latter picture (Plate 48c) was commissioned by a friend of Lodoli's, Pietro Moscheni, and it is one of the very few penetrating studies of the Venetian eighteenth century: no attempt is made to beautify the rather coarse head with its large bulbous nose, lively eyes and straggling hair. The painting was soon engraved and at the base of the print were added the words: 'P. Carlo de Co:ti Lodoli Veneziano forse il Socrate Architetto'. Lodoli himself chose the decorative border and this caused a good deal of controversy. Apart from the usual attributes of the architect—plans, rulers, compasses, etc.—he had his portrait surrounded by a circular frieze on which was written DEVONSI UNIR E FABRICA E RAGIONE—E SIA FUNZION LA RAPPRESENTAZIONE—words derived from Vitruvius which his disciple Andrea Memmo admitted were difficult for most people to understand. At the base of the portrait were two tablets bearing a text from Jeremiah: UT ERUAS ET DESTRUAS UT PLANTES ET AEDIFICES (See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, *to root out*, and to pull down, *and to destroy*, and to throw down, *to build and to plant*)—proof, said his opponents, that he was only interested in destroying. On the contrary, replied his disciples, he was merely following Socrates who believed that prejudice must be uprooted before truth could be appreciated.

It is tempting to assume that Lodoli may have admired Alessandro's father, Pietro.

[1] For Algarotti's reactions to Lodoli see Kauffmann, 1944 and 1955.

[2] Biblioteca Correr, Venice—MSS. Correr, Misc. XI/1348 (1140).

[3] Previtali.

[4] The portrait by Alessandro Longhi is in the Accademia in Venice. For its history see [Memmo]: *Riflessioni*, 1788.

For we know that Pietro Longhi was highly thought of in other advanced circles of Venetian society. Significantly, it was in 1750 that Goldoni first hailed him as a 'man who is looking for the truth'.[1] This was the very period when Goldoni was making his deliberate and decisive break with the old masked comedies and was trying to reform the theatre by a return to nature. So it may well have been the painter who inspired the poet—Longhi had already been painting genre scenes for many years—rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way round. Seven years later Goldoni returned to the subject and again praised Longhi for his 'manner of representing on canvas the characters and passions of men'.[2] Goldoni's sympathies were 'advanced', at least by implication,[3] and he was accused by his opponents of being 'a corrupter no less of poetry than of decent behaviour (buon costume)'.[4] Could Longhi's pictures—those little 'conversations, meetings, playful scenes of love and jealousy'—have been interpreted in the same sense? The very idea seems absurd, despite the fact that early in the nineteenth century a Venetian historian claimed (with no supporting evidence) that he 'went so far in depicting the truth that he was several times punished by the laws'.[5] None the less it is significant that the most enthusiastic praise of his work should have come from men who were anxious to look more steadily at the actual circumstances of Venetian life than was usual at the time.

Despite this, Pietro Longhi was certainly admired and collected by a great number of patrician families in no way associated with advanced ideas, and in most people's eyes his break with fantasy can have had no connection with directly political motives. By the middle of the eighteenth century the irrational in all the arts was coming under attack, and the ideas of men like Lodoli were making at least an indirect impact. Thus we hear that in 1749 Gian Domenico Tiepolo's series of paintings in S. Polo representing the Via Crucis met with strong criticism because 'all the figures were wearing different costume—some Spanish, some Slav and some are just caricatures. And people say that in those days that sort of person was not found and that he has painted them in that way only out of personal whim.'[6] One at least of Longhi's admirers made it quite clear that he liked him just because of his rejection of this sort of thing. Gasparo Gozzi, who was also a strong defender of Goldoni, despite the attacks of his brother Carlo, twice wrote about Longhi in the *Gazzetta Veneta* and the *Osservatore Veneto* which he edited on the lines of English journals such as *The Spectator*. On both occasions he compared him to Tiepolo. In August 1760 he reaches the conclusion that Longhi's 'imitations' of the life he sees around him are 'no less perfect' than Tiepolo's great scenes of the imagination.[7]

[1] Goldoni: *Al Signor Pietro Longhi veneziano celebre pittore*—Opere, XIII, p. 187.

[2] Goldoni, II, p. 92—dedication of *Il Frappatore*.

[3] Dazzi.

[4] Goldoni is not actually named, but the allusion to him is clear in the letter from Giuseppe Gennari to Gaspare Patriarchi of 5 November 1761 published by Melchiori, p. 142.

[5] [Paoletti], 1832, p. 122. There is no evidence for this in the Archives of the Inquisitors, and Paoletti. who calls the artist 'Antonio' Longhi, does not seem wholly reliable.

[6] Letter from Pietro Visconti to Gian Pietro Ligari of 19 December 1749 published by Arslan, 1952, p. 63.

[7] *Gazzetta Veneta*, No. 55, 13 Agosto 1760.

Grandeur and grace are each to be found in nature: artistic merit consists in recording them at their best as do both artists. As a general idea this was not very new. Lione Pascoli had made much the same point some thirty years earlier when writing about the *bamboccianti*[1]: 'Whatever the art that man practises, and in whatever manner, as long as he does so well, he deserves success and a good reputation.' But, when applied to actual artists working in different branches of painting in a rigidly hieratical society, the observation gains an entirely new force. Pascoli would never have compared Guido Reni and Cerquozzi in the way that Gozzi was now prepared to compare Tiepolo and Longhi. A few months later he returned to the question with a much more startling observation. Longhi was admired, he claimed,[2] 'because he has left behind figures dressed in the antique manner and imaginary characters, and paints instead what he sees with his own eyes'. The force of this is somewhat weakened by his later insistence on the amiable nature of Longhi's realism, but it is still a remarkable statement, for it implies that Gozzi actually considered Longhi superior to Tiepolo.[3]

Elsewhere Gasparo Gozzi made the same point with far greater social implications, though without directly naming any artist. He describes in a fable a visit he made to an old philosopher thought by the world to be mad but in fact the incarnation of true wisdom.[4] As Gozzi enters his isolated house, he looks at the pictures on the walls. 'Each picture had beneath it a motto of some good intention. The foreshortened figures were not overemphasised, but the movements were all natural, and the figures were all clothed like living men and women, though they were much more beautiful. Seeing that I was carefully looking at these noble images, he said: "Here everything is natural. I know that today most people paint in such a way that everything shown in the picture seems to come from those clouds that float through the sky in summer in which you see and yet don't see what they show. Lots of light, lots of darkness, men and women who are, and yet are not. My painter has beautified nature as it really is, and nothing else." ' In another room the walls are hung with pictures which show various scenes from country life—ploughing, sowing, the gathering of grapes. And the old man explains that whereas he used to own pictures of beautiful women, he has now given them away, and instead wishes to honour 'a class of people, which through its efforts and the sweat of its brow is the main support of all others'. There can be no doubt who is referred to in the jibe about exaggerated foreshortenings appearing through the

[1] Pascoli, I, p. 31.

[2] *Osservatore Veneto*, 14 Febbraio 1761.

[3] Some years later in 1770 a very vague comparison was to be made between Goldoni and Alessandro Longhi, Pietro's son—see *Poesie in lode del celebre ritrattista viniziano il signor Alessandro Longhi*, In Venezia MDCCLXX. In the dedication to Goldoni, Girolamo Garganego writes: 'La discrepanza, che passa fra voi, e il Signor Alessandro non è, che nei mezzi, di qui vi servite; per altro ambi pingete; e direi quasi, che a Voi tocca supplir à ciò, a cui non può giugner il pennello di lui . . . Sarebbe adunque questa relazione, che passa fra l'uno e l'altro un bastanta motivo per giustificarmi, ma vi è di più. Vi è una vecchia amicizia, che vi lega l'un l'altro dolcemente, e fa che ognuno di Voi goda delle lodi, e degli encomj dell'altro. . . .' Recently the suggestion that there is an affinity between Goldoni and Alessandro Longhi has been made by Michael Levey, 1959, p. 156.

[4] Gozzi, IV, p. 5—*L'abitazione d'un filosofo creduto pazzo.*

summer clouds, but the actual pictures described seem to anticipate Millet rather than anything being produced in contemporary Venice. Gian Domenico Tiepolo, the son of Giambattista, did paint in the *foresteria* of the Villa Valmarana near Vicenza some scenes from rural life which were certainly realistic by the standards of his day, but beautiful and sympathetic as they are, they hardly conform to the programme drawn up by Gozzi's philosopher—if only because the peasants are always shown eating or resting rather than at work. Even so, Gian Domenico was certainly the artist most influenced by the new ideas on society, but he confined his satirical observations of Venetian life to frescoes in his own villa or to drawings which were presumably distributed only among friends. Another artist at the end of the century, Francesco Maggiotto, was so far affected by advanced scientific ideas that he actually invented an electrical machine and wrote a treatise on the subject.[1] But in his many genre paintings he veered rather unsteadily between a coarse version of Longhi and a sentimental interpretation of the more ruthless Zompini, and when showing peasants he was always tempted to revert to a crude Flemish tradition of mockery which did little to assert the dignity of labour.

In later years Gozzi turned again to the didactic possibilities of painting. In 1782 he visited Giotto's Arena chapel in Padua and, struck by the use that the Church had always made of art, he wrote to a friend[2]: 'Who has ever caused to be represented in painting or sculpture the piety of some of our patricians and had these displayed in cloisters or schools or other public places? Or the nobility of certain others? The blood that they have shed for their country, their support for literature, the vast sums spent on great artists, the honour paid to writers—that is what I should like pictures to represent.' In fact, such themes were commonplace in private palaces, but Gozzi's idea to make them public was a new one. He must have been aware, however, that in that very year, in Padua itself, Andrea Memmo was putting into effect a scheme very similar to the one he was calling for, as will be described in a later chapter.[3]

A much more deliberate attempt to make use of the propagandist effects of art was planned at about this time by a man whom one would hesitate to include in a chapter on the Enlightenment were it not for the fact that Gozzi himself and many others saw him for a year or two as an 'advanced' figure battling against the entrenched forces of conservatism. Giorgio Pisani belonged to that class of poor nobles, the *Barnabotti*, which caused the government so much trouble during the eighteenth century.[4] As soon as he entered politics he agitated violently for a series of reforms which were designed far more to improve the conditions of himself and his friends than to help the State as a whole. The remedy for all the evils that afflicted Venice lay in a return to the 'sacred laws of the past'. But, like Angelo Querini a generation earlier, he was driven by the logic of his position to oppose the rich and the powerful and above all the increasingly

[1] See Andrea Tessier, 1882, pp. 289-315, and *Considerazioni elettriche del signor Francesco Maggiotto*—no date or publisher indicated—[Biblioteca Correr, Venice—Misc: 105113].

[2] G. Gozzi: *Lettere familiari:* 1808, I, p. 239—[no date, but 1782].

[3] See Chapter 15.

[4] For Giorgio Pisani see Grimaldo.

active Inquisitori di Stato. And this won him some support—as well as the attentions of a government spy. In 1780, after complicated intrigues, he was suddenly elected Procuratore di San Marco. The appointment was greeted with great enthusiasm. Congratulations poured in, Gozzi wrote a tribute, and in the pamphlets that were printed in his honour were included strange allegorical prints that aroused the hostility of the *bienpensants*: in one frontispiece a nude youth reclined while a putto carried aloft the works of Montesquieu which were highly controversial in Venetian society; on another, steps were shown leading up to a Temple, presumably of Justice, with the implication that Pisani alone was prepared to climb them; a third set of poems was called, significantly, *Il Patriotismo*.[1]

Giorgio Pisani made matters worse by designing a strange visiting-card, which has proved difficult to interpret, but which was considered provocative at the time.[2] It shows a young man, leaning on a ramp to which is attached a sail with the words IL PROCURATOR GIORGIO PISANI. He holds a swan and above his head there shines a star. On the left of the card is a cat on a pilaster which holds between its paws a rod on which is perched the cap of liberty. In the background can be seen the prow of a gondola.

It was the custom when a new Procurator was elected to have the palaces along which the procession would have to pass hung with pictures which were very often specially commissioned for the occasion. Here too Pisani and his friends offended the authorities, though the trouble seems to have been caused by a misunderstanding natural enough in the prevailing tension. A few years earlier a pedantic and clearly somewhat crazy Veronese doctor, Lazzaro Riviera, had commissioned a local artist, Felice Boscarati, to paint four allegorical pictures of the most incomprehensible subtlety designed to illustrate a sort of ideal philosophical and educational system for young men. As no one had the remotest conception of what the pictures meant he had them copied in large engravings with a text in garbled Latin underneath and issued an equally incomprehensible pamphlet to explain them. There the matter would have rested but for the fact that Boscarati moved to Venice and was taken up by Pisani as his official painter. At this stage the pictures were resurrected from the obscurity into which they had rightly fallen and displayed along the processional route—either by the artist himself in order to take advantage of his situation or by Pisani's advisers who rather liked abstruse symbolism for its own sake. The Inquisitors could hardly be expected to appreciate this and they decided that the allegories were intended as subversive propaganda.[3] They had some reason to be suspicious, for other pictures, much more obviously

[1] *Componimenti poetici in occasione del solenne ingresso di Sua Eccellenza Missier Zorzi Pisani* . . . In Trevigi MDCCLXXX, presso Antonio Paluello; *Poesie per il solenne ingresso di Sua Eccellenza Mss.r Zorzi Pisani* . . . In Venezia MDCCLXXX, presso Carlo Palese; *Il Patriotismo. Poemetto per l'ingresso di Sua Eccellenza M.r Giorgio Pisani* . . . In Venezia CIↃ IↃ CCLXXX Nella Stamperia Albrizziana.

The set of these pamphlets in the Biblioteca Marciana, Venice [Misc. 212] are all marked in an eighteenth-century hand with indignant comments such as *Perfidioso, Seditioso*, etc. For the reputation of Montesquieu in Venice see Ambri, chapter 6.

[2] See the reproduction and comments in Molmenti, 1908, III, pp. 45-6.

[3] This is the only coherent explanation I can give of this very mysterious episode. The paintings and their destination were referred to by Zannandreis, p. 415, but he is clearly wrong when he says that they

political, were exhibited outside the Procuratie Nuove showing 'the sleeping lion; the scales [of justice] unbalanced, the cap of liberty, the public buildings collapsing, and the Procurator occupied in rebuilding them and encouraging his own sons to copy him'.[1] Even prints that to the unsuspecting eye seem totally harmless caused trouble. Pisani commissioned from Giampiccoli, one of the most prolific engravers of the day, a view of the Campo di S. Maria Formosa in which his palace was situated. At the base of the print were the words ECCEL.MO GIORGIO PISANI DIVI MARCO MERITO PROCURATORI AC UNO EX QUINQUEVIRIS CORRECTORIBUS. UTILIUM SCIENTIARUM CULTU, ET PUBLICAE LIBERTATIS STUDIO PRAECLARO MOECENATI HUMANISSIMO. The combination of self-advertisement and references to freedom was considered dangerous and the print was hurriedly withdrawn.

But the real trouble came on the evening of the procession when a huge celebration was held in the palace. Spies moved among the guests and noted in the main reception room 'a picture showing Pisani with various emblems denoting Freedom, Power, Sovereignty, and the collapse of the present form of government and the adoption of a completely new system'. The atmosphere was fraught with suspicion—even the menus were carefully noted, for on them were printed two lines in French:

> La science, le bon cœur, l'Amour patriotique
> Sont-ils les fondements de la République.

The guests must have felt uneasy, and the saying went around: 'Oggi Bordello, dimani in Castello; oggi l'Ingresso, dimani il Processo. Dio ti guardi.'

The prophecy was apt enough. Four days later the Inquisitors moved into action. Pisani was arrested, and his painter Felice Boscarati, who was dangerously fond of satire, also had trouble after the disgrace of his patron.[2] Such was the intensity of feeling that a later writer thought it worth recording as significant the fact that Cristoforo dall'Acqua, the engraver of the emblematic pictures, had not also been involved in Pisani's downfall.[3] Thereafter politics and art separated until the French Revolution and the collapse of the Venetian Republic.

Among the less offensive poems that had been published to celebrate Pisani's

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were especially commissioned for Pisani's entry. Not only are the prints by Cristoforo dall'Acqua (Biblioteca Correr, Venice—Raccolta Gherro, Vol. VIII) all dated before 1780 when there was as yet no question of Pisani's election, but Riviera's own explanatory pamphlets (*La Educazione Virile*), one in French and one in Italian, were published in Verona in 1773. [Copies of both versions of this rare pamphlet can be found in the Biblioteca Correr—Op.P.D. 3577-8.] On the other hand there is good reason to believe that the pictures or the prints were exhibited in 1780, for this is stated not only by Zannandreis but also implied by the well-informed Moschini (1924, p. 145), who refers to Dall'Acqua's prints 'nell'ingresso del procuratore Giorgio Pisani' and we also know of the very close relations between Pisani and Boscarati.

A version of one of the pictures turned up in a London saleroom some years ago (*Settecento Paintings* —Arcade Gallery, February-March, 1957), but this is unlikely to be one of the originals, which are described by Zannandreis as being large.

[1] Grimaldo and *Memorie Storiche della Correzione 1780, raccolte in XXIV Lettere Familiari scritte al N.U. S.r Francesco Donado . . . dal N.U. S.r Gio. Mattia Balbi*—Biblioteca Correr, Venice, MSS. Cicogna 2229.

[2] Zannandreis, p. 416.

[3] Moschini, 1924, p. 145.

election was one called *Il Filosofo dell'Alpi*.[1] As the title suggests, this enthusiastic work about the Alps and Nature, which had been translated from the French, was strongly influenced by Rousseau; and the spirit that informed it was partly responsible for the outstanding success of almost the only Venetian artist of the eighteenth century who won unqualified praise from every different kind of patron. Francesco Zuccarelli was called 'non mai abbastanza lodato' by the elder Zanetti as early as 1738, only a few years after his arrival in Venice from his native Tuscany.[2] Consul Smith employed him constantly and his success with the English, whose love of country house life and landscape painting was already famous, is easy to understand. More significant is the praise that he won even from those who most strongly rejected the whole conception of Arcadia. Thus Baretti, chief scourge of the effeminate culture of Venice and close friend of Dr Johnson, wrote enthusiastically of him.[3] And, above all, Giambattista Biffi, the friend of Beccaria and Verri,[4] speaks of him with a rapture that he expresses for no other painter[5]: 'If only you could see this King of landscape painters! What softness, freshness, waving of leaves! His prints alone are not enough to reveal his merits, good though they are. Those limpid waters seem like glass on his canvas, and those lively and brilliant *macchiette* carry one up to Paradise. Dear Zuccarelli—thanks to you we do not have to envy the ancients.' The language alone would betray a follower of Rousseau, and indeed when Biffi heard later of that philosopher's death, he wrote in his diary[6]: 'The greatest genius of the century is dead. . . . He was my father, my guide, my master, my idol. . . .' This appreciation of Zuccarelli by such a dedicated disciple shows that the more scrupulous and deeply felt treatment of nature that was adopted by later artists was by no means a necessary consequence of that philosopher's teaching. Purely artificial Arcadias, suffused in a golden mist, were convincing enough for the most impassioned believers in the natural life: while Giuseppe Zais, a more authentic and robust interpreter of the countryside, was wholly neglected.

Various individuals might support different painters, but towards the middle of the century there was another, more basic problem that was being widely discussed. How far could painting be deemed to be of any importance whatsoever in modern life? Gasparo Gozzi was among the first to tackle the problem in Venice. Writing in 1760 he admitted that he had been attacked for devoting too much space in his journalism to buildings, altars and pictures.[7] After making the traditional reply that these represent

[1] *Il Filosofo dell'Alpi—Ode del Signor de la Harpe dell'Accademia Francese liberamente ridotta in Versi Sciolti italiani da Giuseppe Fossati Veneziano.* . . . In Venezia per Giacomo Storti, MDCCLXXX.

[2] Letter from A. M. Zanetti to A. F. Gori of 23 August 1738 in Biblioteca Marucelliana, Florence —MSS. B. VIII, 13 p. 289r.

[3] Baretti, I, p. 279.

[4] F. Venturi, 1957, pp. 37-76.

[5] In an unpublished letter to Signor Vacchelli in 1773 in the Biblioteca Governativa, Cremona, MSS. aa.I.4., the knowledge of which I owe to Professor Franco Venturi: 'Se Lei vedesse questo Rè dei pittor paesista [sic], che morbidezza, che fresco, che batter di fronda; Le carte sue unicam.te non bastano a farne conoscere il preggio, quantunque belle. Quelle acque limpidi veri Cristalli anche sulla tela, le più vive, e significanti macchiette spiritosissime imparadiscono. Caro Zuccarelli per te non abiamo ad'invidiare gli antichi. . . .'

[6] F. Venturi, 1957, p. 45.

[7] *Gazzetta Veneta*, 26 Luglio 1760.

the finest claim to glory of the country that produces them, he refers almost tentatively to their social value. The arts employ people; consequently money circulates and families are kept alive. It is plain that Gozzi is here implicitly answering charges by the new political economists. Eleven years later A. M. Zanetti the Younger obviously feels that a more considered reply is needed, and he develops at some length the view that painting must be thought of as one of the useful arts.[1] He too begins with the old, accepted theory of the didactic function of painting: sacred and heroic subjects inspire sacred and heroic deeds. But he then brings the theory up to date with a notable concession to the art of his city and century. Painting not only teaches; it also provides mental relaxation. Even this, however, is merely a fashionable adaptation of the old theory of 'diletto ed utile', and a few pages later, Zanetti feels bound to take part in the more modern 'utilitarian' discussion and justify painting, or rather its patronage, on rather different grounds. Flourishing artists attract foreigners to their schools; these foreigners take back works of their masters to their own countries where they are noticed and encourage foreign princes to buy Italian pictures. Even more, these princes often invite Italian artists to come and work in their own countries, where they are extremely well paid; consequently when these artists return to Italy they bring large sums of money with them. 'And so,' he concludes, 'we cannot doubt that Painting has its part to play in trade.' Alas, whatever else might help the Venetian economy at this stage, it was certainly not the sums—however great—brought back by her artists from England, Spain, Germany and Russia. None the less, the same sort of argument was echoed in 1772 by an official committee set up to consider the general economic situation: the liberal arts, it concluded, provide attractions and pleasures and a certain reputation to the State, for they encourage foreigners to come here.[2]

It was ideas of this kind that persuaded the State to make its single important venture into the realm of art patronage. As early as 1724 it had been planned to found an Academy of Painting and Sculpture 'so as to attract and encourage to remain here those foreigners who have to pass Venetian territory on their way to Florence, Bologna and Rome'.[3] When in 1756 the Academy was finally established (after a number of similar institutions in other towns of Italy and Europe), the Senate hoped, with a mixture of shrewd calculation and naïveté which is characteristic of much of its legislation at this period, to gain some commercial benefit from the arrangement. The actual organisation of the body, however, reflected none of the new theories about the value of paintings that had been attracting attention, for the rigid stratification of subject-matter, based on the absolute supremacy of history painting and the complete subordination of such inferior branches as view painting, looked back to a much earlier period rather than anticipated the opinions of the neo-classicists. And the artists themselves were firmly graded in a hierarchy according to the subjects that they painted.

Very shortly after the institution of the Academy the position of the artist in society

[1] In the preface to *Della Pittura Veneziana*, 1771, p. xiii.
[2] *Relazione per le riforme*, 18 Agosto 1772—quoted by Agostino Sagredo, 1857, p. 208.
[3] E. Bassi, 1941, and Fogolari, 1913.

was debated again, but with much more insight into real problems. Andrea Memmo, himself a patron of great interest to be discussed in a later chapter, was one of the Inquisitori alle Arti, who were concerned with the reorganisation of the guilds. Among his papers there survives a sheet on which he briefly scribbled some queries to himself when preparing his report.[1] 'It will be necessary', he begins, 'to show how important it is for the liberal arts to free from the subjection of dues those men who practise them, and to explain how strange is the temperament of Painters. An example is the famous living Venetian painter C. Why does C. claim to be freed from taxes?'[2] Memmo looks to other towns for suggestions of reform—Rome, Florence, Bologna and, above all, Paris. What about the new Academy of Arts at Parma? And to other professions. What about musicians? And engravers? He looks to the past and reminds himself to read Vasari's life of Montorsoli.[3] He even wonders what is the device and the name of the Venetian Academy and whether they could not be improved. Under the protection of which saint is the Academy placed? And at the end of his remarkably open-minded survey of the situation he concludes: 'It is right that the imaginative side of painting should be exercised freely and with nobility; genius should not be fettered in the practice of the fine arts. That is why they were called liberal.' But Memmo, with his interest in the concept of genius and his appreciation of certain anarchic tendencies in artists, was exceptional among administrators, even if his ideas in themselves were not wholly new. The status of the artist remained unchanged, and the only theoretical question that was seriously discussed—particularly at the Academy prize-giving sessions—was whether patronage of the traditional kind was necessary for the survival of art or whether, as Francesco Algarotti maintained, the existence of great art would of itself bring patrons into being.

One other development reflected the impact of new ideas on the organisation of the arts in Venice and helped to bring painting in touch with a more informed, if less powerful, public opinion than had yet been possible. By the early years of the eighteenth century there were two spots in the city which were given over to art exhibitions.[4] In the Piazza S. Marco, by the left-hand projecting wing of the Procuratie Nuove adjoining

[1] Published in full in Appendix 6.

[2] This almost certainly refers to Canaletto although he died in 1768 before Memmo began work.

[3] This *Life* contains an account of the formation of the Accademia di Disegno in Florence.

[4] For a full discussion see Haskell and Levey, 1958, pp. 179–85. For the sake of completeness I add here the only three references to the S. Rocco exhibitions that I have discovered since this article was published:—

(i) A report from the papal Nunzio of 20 August 1729 in the Archivio Vaticano—*Venezia*, n. 180: '. . . e in tal congiuntura si viddero esposti diversi Quadri di antichi, e moderni Pennelli, con numero concorso di Popolo . . .'.

(ii) Thomas Martyn, p. 448: 'On S. Rocco's day, the Signory goes in procession to that Saint's church: and the painters of the present Venetian school exhibit their performances in the Scuola.'

(iii) *Nuova Gazzetta Veneta*, 21 Agosto 1762: 'De' Quadri fu al sommo applaudito il Ritratto del Serenissimo nostro Doge Marco Foscarini, fatto dal Signor Nassi [*sic*—Nazari?], e incontrato a segno che nulla più si potrebbe desiderare. Vi si videro anche altre Opere de' Pittori antichi, e viventi, e tutti ebbero la dovuta lode.'

the church of S. Geminiano, painters sometimes chose to show their work to the public in a thoroughly casual way when other means were not available. But there were also far more systematic exhibitions at the Scuola di S. Rocco which probably grew up quite informally from the processions which the Doge and Senate made to the church each 16 August (Plate 56). The occasion was a fixed one and every year a number of artists took part. By 1751 Francesco Algarotti could write to Mariette that the exhibition was 'in some ways the tribunal of our painting like the Salon in Paris'. In fact, however, the S. Rocco showings never approached the Salon in complexity of organisation or the attention they attracted. Scarcely any written criticism has survived, and it is difficult to estimate how seriously they were taken. None the less, in a smaller way than in Paris but for the same reasons, these exhibitions did help to bring artist and public together, and did provide a forum where values other than those established by the State and the aristocracy could be discussed.

In 1777 a much more official type of exhibition was organised when a number of nobles asked the members of the Academy to display their work each year at a stand in the Piazzetta. The artists viewed the arrangements without enthusiasm as they themselves were required to meet all the expenses, which were heavy. Many of them did not have pictures available for exhibition, and the Academy had to resort to loans to make up the required numbers. Complaints were frequently made and by 1787 the cost had become crippling and the shows were discontinued. Thus ended State interference in the arts which had at no time proved very happy.